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# FROM THE TOP: IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITY IN EXECUTIVE-AUTHORED WEBLOGS

by

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ABSTRACT

This research examines impression management strategies high-ranking organizational executives employ to create an identity for themselves and their companies via executive authored Weblogs (blogs). This study attempts to identify specific patterns of impression management strategies through a deductive content analysis applying Jones' (1990) taxonomy of self-presentation strategies to this particular type of computer mediated communication. Sampling for this study (n=227) was limited to blogs solely and regularly authored by the highest-ranking leaders of Fortune 500 companies. The study revealed that executive bloggers frequently employed impression management strategies aimed at currying competency attributes (self-promotion), likeability (ingratiation), and moral worthiness (exemplification) to construct and shape a positive identify for themselves and their organization for their publics. Supplication strategies were used less frequently, while intimidation strategies were rarely used.

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This process has been one of the most demanding and rewarding experiences of my life, and I will remember this time with great fondness and immense gratitude for all the help I received along the way.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, organizations are turning to new forms of online media to communicate with their various publics. More than ever, organizations must carefully manage impressions in computer-mediated communication (CMC) forums to maintain a positive company identity and ensure stakeholder loyalty and positive affiliation with the organization.

The ability to successfully manage impressions to create or support a particular corporate identity - the way an organization presents itself to others - in these rapidly evolving forums should be a critical concern for organizational members. Corporate identity has been positively linked to business performance, including favorable feelings toward the organization (Abimbola, 2009; Dowling, 1993; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Kelleher, 2009; Sha, 2009); increased market share (Scott & Lane, 2000; Sillince, 2006); and strong stakeholder commitment (Brown, 1997; Scott & Lane, 2000). Previously an organization's own discourse primarily shaped its identity, but as organizational discourse has become more public-facing and open in CMC forums, organizational identity has become increasingly malleable. Audience reception, interpretation, and response to such discourse in publicly accessible and visible channels can also play a role in shaping identity. As a result, communication in this current climate of dynamic discourse is also becoming increasingly important to the success of the organization's highest ranking employee, the chief executive officer (CEO), who must carefully manage organizational reputation through strategic impression management, while at the same time communicating transparently and interacting with employees, management, and stakeholders (Prince & Hoppe, 2007, p.7).

Corporate weblogs (blogs) represent one such new form of CMC that high-ranking executives are using with increasing frequency to communicate to and interact with their various

publics (Barnes, 2010; Barnes & Mattson, 2009; Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki, 2010) because blogs can help organization's project a more "human voice," which can lead to increased levels of "trust, satisfaction, control mutuality, [and] commitment" for the organization (Kelleher & Miller, 2006, p. 395).

Because of the interactive and accessible nature of blogs, they are uniquely both a mass communication channel as well as an interpersonal one (Kelleher & Miller, 2006). Even more distinct, members of the general public had little opportunity to interact with company CEOs until now. Traditional communication channels, such as phone and email, were held private by organizations and rarely accessible to non-organizational members; public speaking engagements offer very restricted opportunity, if any, to interact with chief company officials; and press releases, memos and letters, and other official company communications are explicitly a one-way transmission. Blogs on the other hand are wholly unique in that they afford access to the CEO to virtually anyone. Blogs also facilitate a direct and visible way for the public to challenge an organization's identity claims. Any person can respond and dispute any assertion a representative makes about the organization. For example, a marketing representative for Starbucks, the popular coffee shop chain, blogged about the company's reward program, and in his post he claimed that the program was not designed to increase sales but rather it was created to "show our appreciation [to customers] simply for stopping by" ([www.blogs.starbucks.com](www.blogs.starbucks.com), February 8, 2012). The post garnered more than 50 comments, with more than half the readers directly and vigorously disputing this claim. Readers of the blog instead asserted that Starbucks knew their customers were unhappy with the program because, in their view, it did not aptly

reward them for their patronage. Readers counter-claimed that the company has not taken steps to improve the program precisely because it would negatively impact sales.

While research interest in corporate blogging (Boje, 2001; Briggs, 2007; Cho & Huh, 2010; Hathi, 2007; Kelleher, 2009; Smudde, 2005; Verna, 2010; Weil, 2010; Zickuhr, 2010) and impression management in CMC forums (Boyer, Brunner, Charles, & Coleman, 2006; Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007; Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; McCullagh, 2008; Rains &Young, 2006) is growing, there is very little research about the identity management activities high-ranking officials perform in blog discourse. Previous research about self-presentation and impression management strategies in online forums has focused on chat rooms (e.g., Becker & Stamp, 2005) and social communities such as Facebook and MySpace (e.g., Boyle & Johnson, 2010; Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011), and online dating forums (e.g., Ellison et al., 2006).

This study aims to add to existing organizational communication scholarship by investigating, identifying, and describing the impression management strategies that high-ranking executives use to help construct, negotiate, and maintain the image an organization projects, or attempts to project, to internal (employees) and external (the public) constituencies. Impression management strategies (IMS) refer to activities an individual undertakes to actively influence impressions about him or herself by others (Jones, 1990). Erving Goffman (1959) termed these types of deliberate impression management activities "performances." The author suggests that chief executive bloggers actively utilize IMS to project a particular impression or identity for their organizations and attempts to identify distinct patterns and differences, if any, in IMS usage. To discern patterns and variation in use, this study employs a content analysis of executive discourse on blogs hosted by Fortune 500 companies, those companies listed annually

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as America's largest corporations by annual revenue. Two independent coders analyzed all text

entries for five different executive-authored blogs for a randomly-drawn sample from the entire

pool of blog entries, which includes the very first entry and the last post unless the executive is

still currently blogging.

Text analysis of the corporate blog medium provides insight into the way impression

management tactics are employed and better illustrates the way organizational representatives

manage the identity of the organization. Analyzing locally situated texts has great import for

identity research because it can reveal specific discursive and mitigating strategies organizational

actors undertake to construct and sustain a particular identity (Van Der Mieroop, 2005, p. 109).

Analysis of blogs, specifically those where content is solely or overwhelmingly authored by

CEOs, should provide a line of insight into the impression, and ultimately, the identity that the

high-ranking executive purposefully attempts to create for the organization, and in so doing

bolster the growing body of research about organizational identity construction and computer-

mediated communication phenomena.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following review begins with a general description of the types and uses of blogs in general and corporate blogs more specifically. Attention then turns toward describing previous research findings with regard to self-presentation activities in online forums and blogs in particular. Next, organizational identity is defined and relevant literature is reviewed, focusing on gaps in previous research and with an eye toward the import and challenges of organizational identity formation in CMC forums. Finally, impression management is explained and impression management strategies are defined.

Weblogs

New forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) are creating opportunities for CEOs and other high-ranking organizational leaders to communicate with their internal and external constituencies in real time and across continents. Online communication channels are fast supplanting much face-to-face (FtF) communication as impression management tools for corporations because they allow organizations to communicate directly with their publics, unrestrained by time and distance.

Daft and Lengel (1984) asserted CMC, because it does not allow for physical or verbal cues and immediate feedback as a way to clarify more complex information, can be a less "rich" communication channel than FtF communication depending on the difficulty of the communication task to be completed. However, Ellison et al. (2006) found participant perception in online dating channels to be markedly more favorable because interactants were less likely to unwittingly display unflattering or contradictory verbal cues that could negatively affect their

self-presentation attempts. In other words, the online channel afforded interactants increased opportunities to more selectively communicate information about themselves. In contrast to Daft and Lengel's work, a growing body of research has found support for the "richness" of CMC, linking it to increased organizational effectiveness (e.g., Santra & Giri, 2009), relationship formation and maintenance (e.g., Keller & Miller, 2006), and improved interpersonal communication (e.g., Herring, Kouper, Scheidt, & Wright, 2004; Walther, 1996, 2007).

Weblogs, or blogs, are a type of computer-mediated communication only recently available to high-ranking organizational executives. Communication scholars have just begun to study this form of CMC, particularly in organizational settings. According to Herring et al. (2004), blogs are "frequently modified webpages containing individual entries [posts] displayed in reverse chronological sequence" (p. 1). Those who write and post original content to the blog are called bloggers. Blogs typically include features that allow the blogger to post hyperlinks, or clickable links that will take readers to other websites of personal or topical interest to them, and readers to post their own comments in response to a given topic (Herring et al., 2004). Blogs are much like a personalized, yet public, online diary of ongoing musings about any subject that a blog author wants to discuss. Weil (2010) offers the following practical definition for blogs: "an easy-to-publish Web site…written in informal, conversational style that tells the 'real' story" (Kindle Locations 2222-2223). Blogs are interactive in nature - the blogger invites responses from readers by allowing them to post feedback and comments directly to the site. Blogs may be authored by one person or several individuals.

Recent data points to a growing trend in the popularity of blogging. In 2010, the Pew Internet and American Life study reported blogging had increased from 11% in 2008 to 14% in

2010 (Zickuhr, 2010). As of June 2011, popular blog search engine Technorati had tracked more than 1,275,804 blogs, including personal, topical, and corporate blogs, which Weil (2010) defines as "the use of blogs to further organizational goals" (Kindle Location 215). In fact, many organizations have corporate blogs that can be read by anyone, anywhere in the world. According to Verna (2010), 34% of companies in the United States use blogs for business-related purposes. The number of Fortune 500 companies with a corporate blog has also steadily grown over the past three years, indicating a positive trend in corporate blogging. In fact, some corporate blogs have become so popular they have been parodied. "The Secret Diary of Jonathan Schwartz" is a blog meant to satirize Sun Microsystems blog. (The humorous subhead reads: "Dude, I was the first CEO to even have a blog," giving readers an obvious clue as to the spurious nature of the blog.) As of 2010, 23% (116) of Fortune 500 companies hosted a public-facing blog, up from 7% in 2008, which would seem to lend evidence to the viability and popularity of blogs as a useful and acceptable business communication channel (Barnes, 2010; Barnes & Mattson, 2009).

Corporate blogs can assume a variety of formats. They can be public-facing – accessible by any person with access to the Internet – or inward-facing with private content meant for a specific audience, such as employees of a particular company. Content from blog to blog is disparate but often includes business strategy, product announcements, value statements, and customer or employee narratives. Some companies maintain multiple blogs, each authored by a different senior officer, while other companies maintain blogs where employees at all levels can participate. Many of the latter take the form of informational blogs authored by a group of employees. There is even an instance of a company blog authored by a fictitious character. Geico

Insurance's well-known advertising icon, the Gecko, blogged on the company's website (http://www.geico.com/fun/blog/) from 2004 to 2006.

Kelleher and Miller (2006) further define organizational blogs as having "characteristics of both personal and professional communication" (p. 397). Because of their inherent interpersonal quality wherein readers can interact with bloggers by posting comments, blogs offer high-ranking executives a much more informal and personal means of communicating with their various publics as compared to other forms of communication previously available to them, e.g., stakeholder reports, media interviews, press releases, company memos, websites, etc. However, because blogs are more participative than websites and other unidirectional online sites, they also present unique challenges for CEOs.

Chen (2010) suggested authors are in control of interactions that occur in virtual spaces (p. 29), and while the blogger does have a great deal of control, because the blog environment is inherently more discursive than other electronic organizational communiqués, the executive blogger, like all bloggers, must relinquish some power to readers. As a result, readers, through their responses, can actively and immediately play a part in shaping the message/image being constructed or presented through their acceptance or rejection of it (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008).

Further, Daft and Lengel (1984) proposed that certain forms of CMC were not as "rich" as FtF communication and could not be used as effectively for transmitting complex messages. They posited that because certain forms of CMC do not allow interactants to provide and gauge real-time feedback or use voice inflection or volume or gestures, they could not be as effective at accomplishing more complex message tasks. Therefore, they emphasized the need for organizations to select the appropriate channel for best achieving a particular communication

goal: one that would reduce the risk of ambiguity and allow for clear transmission of communication messages. For example, they might suggest that a phone call is a more effective communication channel than email because it allows for interactants to ask clarifying questions and receive immediate additional information, thereby increasing the likelihood for the accurate transmission and receipt of information. However, many scholars have since argued that CMC can in many ways be just as rich as FtF or oral interactions.

Dickey, Wasko, Chudoba and Thatcher (2006) argued that any misunderstandings that resulted from CMC channels were the result of a "lack of shared understandings among the individuals communicating" rather than the type of media being used (p. 66). While Cable and Yu (2006) found some support for a medium's richness, specifically FtF interactions, and enhanced perception of organizational identity, the researchers also found evidence that the effectiveness of any type of medium depends on how effectively it is used. That is to say, a poorly executed in-person meeting is bound to be a less effective medium than a well-written and informative email.

In fact, the CMC nature of blogs, which allows for more strategic use of self-presentation activities by organizational members than many FtF interactions, may actually improve the quality of messages (Walther, 2007). Unlike FtF interactants who must attend to nonverbal cues and behaviors, online interactants are unencumbered by such concerns and can more deliberately edit, select, and employ self-presentation strategies to more selectively present themselves the way they want (Walther, 1996). Actors are able to control cues and more carefully consider and select how they will present themselves to form more positive impressions. And unlike in real-time, FtF communication, the blogger can assess how his or her message is being received

through reader comments/feedback and regroup as necessary before posting the next message. Because of this, CMC interaction in some instances transcends the limits of impression management goals that can be accomplished in FtF (Walther, 1996).

What's more, because impressions are created almost solely through what is communicated onscreen, Goffman's (1959) notions about performances, "the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants," virtually unfold on screen, right before the reader's eyes (p. 15). Because blog discourse, unlike FtF interactions, is documented as it occurs and then staticized, blog text allows for the careful and leisurely examination of the use of communication phenomena, including impression management strategies - how they are presented, received, and re-positioned, re-received and further negotiated. The text in blog posts can be used to identify and piece together the types of impressions that are being employed in order to create a particular performance (Chen, 2010).

As a result, many interpersonal communication scholars have begun to look more closely at organizational blogs as a rich source for the study of various types of communication phenomena. Researchers have investigated the medium's ability to build and maintain relationships (Cho & Huh, 2010; Kuhn, 2005). Kelleher (2009) found that organizational blogs facilitated conveyance of conversational voice and led to the successful employment of relational maintenance strategies with the organization's publics. Other empirical research has focused on the use of corporate blogs as an internal communication channel (Briggs, 2007; D'Urso & Pierce, 2009; Hathi, 2007) as a public relations tool (Croft, 2007; Marken, 2006; Pauly, 2007; Porter,

Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007; Smudde, 2005; Yang & Lim, 2009), and as a crisis communications tool (Jin & Liu, 2010; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007).

While communication scholars have examined impression management activities in CMC channels for the past decade, little attention (see Chen, 2010) has been paid to the specific impression management activities organizational leaders undertake in blogs, a uniquely interactional CMC channel, to manage the organization's identity with its various constituencies.

Organizational Identity

Communication research distinguishes organizational identity and organizational identification as separate constructs. Where identification is concerned with internal message production and the way it affects individual members to identify with the organization, identity is concerned with the external messages produced by an organization (Aust, 2004). This body of research recognizes the important distinction between the two constructs, and focuses explicitly on organizational identity.

Albert and Whetten first presented the construct of organizational identity in 1985 (Whetten, 2006), defining it as those features that are "central, enduring, and distinctive" to the organization (p. 220). Whetten (2006) also distinguished organizational identity as a collective actor, and further defined organizational identity as that which makes it unique among other organizations precisely because of its central and enduring features (p. 220). However, Gioia, Schultz, and Corley (2000) contend that organizations should be viewed as dynamic and changing rather than lasting entities. Similarly, Deetz (2001) argued that organizational identities are constructed, explained, and negotiated through the organization's own discursive practices

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and the discursive practices of its members. Brown (2007) found further support for this viewpoint with his characterization of organizational identity as "multifarious and highly subjective" (p. 22).

Along these same lines, Aust (2004) asserts that organizational identity may be constructed through the deliberate transmission of messages to external audiences, messages that can be studied by the communication researcher to gain a better understanding of the construct. Scott and Lane (2000) also hold that organizational identity is an iterative process arrived at through give and take negotiations among its members and publics. Sillince (2006) further affirmed organizational identity as a fluid and transient process.

Attempts to answer questions such as, "What are we?" or "Who am I?" are necessary for organizations to exist and interrelate with individuals and other organizations (Albert, Ashforth & Dutton, 2000). Albert et al. (2000) consider identity to be "root constructs in organizational phenomena…a subtext of many organizational behaviors" (p. 13). Similarly, Gioia (1998) argues that "identity is arguably more fundamental to the conception of humanity than any other notion" (p. 71). However, research has yet to fully capture the communicative phenomena that comprise the construct making the performance of identity worthy of greater, more detailed examination (Aust, 2004).

There is also practical evidence that carefully managing organizational identity to ensure positive attributes can ultimately strengthen stakeholder relations and ties to the company (Sha, 2009). Williams and Moffitt's (1997) research on organizational identity found that the messages an organization sends ultimately come to define it to its publics. And this constructed identity can have a negative or positive impact on stakeholder loyalty and make the organization appear

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more or less legitimate (Sillince, 2006). Indeed, stakeholders can challenge and influence an organization's self-conception (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), therefore, it is in a company's best interest to understand how audiences perceive it and to undertake certain strategic activities to make sure the impression is a positive and desired one (Aust, 2004). Ran and Duimering (2007) also assert that identity is constantly subject to change and thus it's in the best interest of the organization to manage impressions in order to positively affect the way audiences perceive it (p. 156).

According to Sillince (2006), organizational identity is "driven by endogenously situated and contingent selection of salient identities in different rhetorical situations" (p. 207). Blog discourse, because of its iterative nature, is one such rhetorical situation in which CEOs can construct, negotiate, and maintain audience perception of the organization and its identity. The blogger's voice, message, and conversational tone help humanize the organization (Kelleher & Miller, 2006).

What is particularly interesting about high-ranking organizational executive bloggers, unlike other bloggers, is the dual nature of their self-presentation: they are concurrently creating an identity for themselves and for their company. Their thoughts, written and publicly displayed online, are, in essence, the company's thoughts; their voice is the company's voice. Scott and Lane (2000), in emphasizing the discursive and dynamic process of identity construction, found that senior managers who often held higher profile, more publicly visible roles within the organization and more frequently interacted with internal and external constituencies were more likely to strongly identify with the organization.

Van De Mieroop (2005) found organizational representatives frequently used "we" pronouns when speaking on behalf of or about the organizations thereby linking their own identity with that of the organization. Because organizational identities are closely tied to member identities (Brown, 1997), when an executive blogs that, "we are performing stronger than ever," he or she is attempting to construct and portray an identity for the organization as much as for him or herself. Such identities are "directly connected to practitioners' actions such as choosing a salient identity and presenting resources in such a way as to maximize the rhetorical effect of that identity" (Sillince, 2006, p. 205). In fact, in looking at the institutional construction of identity, Van De Mieroop (2005) examined 40 speeches from varying business seminars and found evidence that organization identity construction was a primary focus for each speaker, even more so than the speaker's own identity construction.

Ran and Duimering (2007), in studying communicative processes that organizations use to make positive identity claims, a process they refer to as "imaging" (p. 178-179), found that "a single identity claim does not socially construct an organization's identity any more than a single encounter between social actors constructs a social institution" (p. 180); rather identity claims are socially negotiated by the organization and its various constituencies until an agreed-upon identity is established. And one of the ways organizations construct and negotiate their identity with external constituents is through efforts at impression management.

## Impression Management

Organizational impression management is "any action purposefully designed and carried out to influence an audience's perceptions of an organization" (Elsbach, Sutton, & Principe,

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1998, p. 68). Organizations undertake impression management activities to positively shape

public perception of who they are, what services they provide, how well they provide them

(particularly in contrast to competing companies), and the good they do...with the overarching

goal to shape and communicate a positive identity and preclude a negative one. It is in an

organization's best interest to undertake such activity because effective organizational

impression management has been linked to talent acquisition and employee retention

(Highhouse, Brooks, & Gregarus, 2009), competitive advantage (Fuller, Barnett, Hester, Relyea,

& Frey, 2007), and even shareholder value (Pollach & Kerbler, 2011; Scott & Lane, 2000;

Sillince, 2006; Westphal & Graebner, 2010). For example, in investigating organization

impression management, Siegela and Brocknerb (2005) found evidence that CEOs' use of

proactive performance claims can affect investor perceptions and firm value.

This section overviews salient impression management literature, discusses Jones and

Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of impression management strategies, and suggests its potential in

understanding how top executives can construct and negotiate organizational identity through the

use of deliberate impression management tactics in weblog discourse.

Goffman's work on the presentation of self provides a theoretical lens for examining

impression management work by organizational members in constructing an identity for the

organization. Goffman (1959) describes social interaction as an individual undertaking certain

actions or expressions to "convey an impression to others which it is in his (sic) interests to

portray" (p. 4). He asserts that when we communicate with others, we knowingly assume a

particular type of role, just as an actor would in a play, and we give a "performance" in order to

make another individual or individuals assume a specific type of impression about us. For

example, the statements organizational leaders make affect the way audiences perceive them and lead to inferences about their intelligence, capability, and reputation (Terilli & Arnorsdottir, 2008). Organizational leaders, in their role as spokespersons for the company, are giving a deliberate performance in which one "accentuates certain matters and conceals others" (Goffman, 1959, p. 67). And the main elements of such performances involve the strategies of impression management.

Rosenfeld, Giacalone, and Riordan (1995) define impression management as a fundamental process where people strategically undertake certain communication activities in order to influence the way other people perceive them and create a certain impression that will help them achieve a specific goal, such as being well-liked. Gioia and Thomas (1996) also assert that identity management is possible through communication activities. The organization that wants to be perceived as caring, for example, can construct such an identity by talking to their audiences about the many good works they do. Similarly, Bolino and Turnley (2003) found that the impression management activities organizations undertake shape the way audiences perceive them.

Walther (1996) found evidence that individuals can more successfully manage impressions and relationships in many CMC contexts than would be possible in FtF transactions because interactants in computer-mediated communication forums need not worry about unintended non-verbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, etc. He found that actors, unencumbered by non-verbal communication cues, were able to exercise greater control over their behavior and more strategically manage (and censor) their messaging in online forums.

The communication is clearer or more pure in the sense that non-verbal cues do not distort the message.

And because blogs involve two-way communication, unlike a speech or other unidirectional communication, bloggers can adjust their use of impression management strategies based on reader response to a particular strategy. Bloggers receive real-time feedback, but they are not governed by social rules that require them to respond immediately as would be required in face-to-face transmission. The blogger can take the time to consider the message before responding, allowing for the very purposeful use of impression management tactics. In other words, bloggers can more strategically edit and select a particular self-presentation strategy in order to present their best self to their audience (Walther, 1996).

In attempting to gauge the types of impression management strategies that bloggers employ, Jones (1990) cautions that self-report methods are unlikely to reveal the motives and reasoning behind specific tactics individuals select and use. He explains that "there is no encompassing single method that will reveal the mysteries of interpersonal perception in all its diversity of content and levels of meaning as one person holds conversation with another" (p. 11).

But we can begin to understand identity goals by looking at strategic self-presentation, activities meant to influence the characteristics that other individuals ascribe to the presenter (Jones, 1990). The information we disclose about ourselves is driven by the goals we hope to achieve through interaction with others, and thus, can be very telling. In fact, Jones asserts that an individual's attempt to shape others' impressions is the overarching goal in nearly all interpersonal interactions (p. 168). And given Connolly-Ahern and Broadway's (2007) assertion

that individuals and organizations impression manage to achieve "financial and social goals, secure cooperation or support from others, vie effectively with or discourage competitors, and avoid the consequences of negative actions" (p. 343), it is hard to imagine any communication exchange in which impression management would not be a primary concern for organizational interactants.

Jones (1990) also emphasizes that outcomes are a critical and inseparable part of interactions for actors. To gain the desired outcome, actors must be keenly mindful of their actions and whether or not they are creating the desired impression on their target audience. Rosenfeld et al. (1995) caution that organizations need to be active and deliberate impression managers. Because they are often viewed as "abstract entities (not people with feelings, families, coauthors, etc.)," the public tends to be less trusting and more critical of organizations overall (p. 184). Therefore, to successfully create a desired image, actors must monitor feedback from their audiences and adjust their actions as needed to achieve the desired response (Sosik & Jung, 2003). Because with blogs, readers can affirm or challenge the blogger's identity in real time, organizational executive bloggers must carefully and strategically attend to their identity when responding to such affirmations or challenges in an ongoing effort to maintain or renegotiate their identity with their various publics.

Following Goffman's groundbreaking work, Jones and Pittman (1982) identified five impression management strategies that social interactants may use to create certain attributions for themselves: self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. This taxonomy for identifying specific types of impression management provides the framework for this study; therefore attention now turns toward defining and explaining each type of strategy.

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*Self-Promotion*

Actors engage in self-promotion to create an impression of competence (Jones, 1990; Turnley & Bolino, 2001). According to Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of impression management strategies, actors use self-promotion to call attention to their abilities or accomplishments because they want audiences to see them as competent. Self-promoters make claims to persuade others to see them as competent: users of this impression management strategy will give positive performance accounts of themselves, brag, and/or name-drop.

In examining company websites, Connolly-Ahern and Broadway (2007) found that, overwhelmingly, sites emphasized the organization's competency again and again…so much so that it became clear to the researchers that creating and projecting an image of competency was a critical objective for corporations (p. 345). However Jones (1990) warns that there are inherent dangers with this tactic because actors who self-promote may become less likeable (p. 186). Actors who impression manage using self-promotion risk being seen as conceited or arrogant or intimidating (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Sosik & Jung, 2003).

*Ingratiation*

Jones (1990) found ingratiation, "making salient one's most favorable characteristics" in order to create an impression of likeability (p. 178), to be the most commonly used impression management strategy. Ingratiation is employed when the user or actor wants to construct an identity of being likeable. Conversational activities to achieve likeability may include praising, agreeing with, or flattering a target audience. Jones asserts that most people have a pressing need

or inherent desire to be well-liked. Actors can encourage positive feelings with their audiences through such communicative activities as agreement, flattery, compliments, compassion, and reciprocity (Gardner & Cleavenger, 1998; Jones, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 1995).

Rosenfeld et al. (1995) found that when used sparingly, "ingratiation can facilitate positive interpersonal relationships and increase harmony within and outside of the organizational setting" (p. 32). Successful use of ingratiation helps increase feelings of familiarity by audiences, encourages reciprocity, facilitates in-group acceptance, and can actually be "a binding and unifying force, melding diverse subgroups in the face of tendencies that seek to divide them" (p. 32). Affability increases with the more two individuals have in common, such as shared interests or shared attitudes, and ingratiators can use these positive feelings for shared similarities to their advantage (Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Wayne & Ferris, 1990).

Jones (1990) warns, however, of the dangers of overusing ingratiation as an impression management tactic, which he termed the ingratiator's dilemma (p. 180). He asserts that a higher-status actor can use ingratiation more successfully when impression managing to lower-status individuals because ingratiation is more apt to be well-received when presented in a higher- to lower-power direction (p. 180). There's considerable risk that a lower-status actor will appear insincere or disingenuous when using ingratiation with a higher power actor: while the goal is to increase likeability, the actor risks coming across as a "sycophant" (Turnley & Bolino, 2001, p. 351). For this reason, Rosenfeld et al. (1995) warn that ingratiation is not a prescriptive solution for achieving likeability; rather it requires certain deftness on the part of the actor, or else he or she may appear manipulative and insincere. The authors cautioned that unsuccessful ingratiation tactics could result in the user being even less liked than before using the tactic (p. 44).

The authors further warn that the risk of detection increases as the need to use the IMS increases: the more pressing the need to use the tactic, the more risk there is that the effort will be discovered and backfire (p. 44).

*Exemplification*

Exemplification, an actor's attempt to create an impression of moral worthiness, is one of three communication strategies that Jones (1990) classifies as power-oriented (p. 1994). Through exemplification strategies, an actor will attempt to create an identity of dedication, sacrifice, commitment, and/or moral worthiness. Exemplifiers use this impression management strategy to try to appear as if they are willing to suffer for a cause. Rosenfeld et al. (1995) explain that exemplifiers try to "influence and control through inducing guilt or attributions of virtue" (p. 54).

However, actors who regularly engage in exemplification risk being perceived as "sanctimonious and hypocritical" by others (Jones, 1990, p. 195). Jones further asserts that "truly virtuous people do not claim virtue; those of high moral standing presumably are known for their selfless acts" (p. 195). To use exemplification successfully, Jones advises actors to find relevant contexts or situations where it makes sense to demonstrate exemplary or commendable actions. The key to successful use of this particular impression management tactic is consistency…actors should try to unswervingly appear honest and morally worthy no matter what the context or occasion (p. 195).

*Intimidation*

Intimidation is another power-oriented impression management strategy. Intimidation is used to construct an identity of authority using threats, anger statements, and other power-imposing tactics. Whereas actors use exemplification to create an impression of moral worthiness, intimidators want to project attributes of danger and elicit fearful respect from their audiences (Jones, 1990, p. 194). Rosenfeld et al. (1995) characterize this impression management strategy as the opposite of ingratiation: "while the ingratiator dangles a carrot, the intimidator wields a big stick" (p. 53). The authors also stress that intimidation is likelier to be used in non-voluntary interactions (p. 52). They found that intimidation is most often used by higher-status organizational members when communicating downward to lower-status members; the tactic is used less frequently in instances where lower-status members are communicating with other members with more power (p. 53).

Rosenfeld et al. (1995) warn that intimidators run the risk of believing their actions are "liked and accepted when in fact it is loathed and detested" (p. 53). Jones (1990) calls this the intimidator's dilemma: "while intimidators may get their way by projecting a capacity and the inclination to provide negative outcomes, they rarely become endearing in the process" (p. 195). Because the risk of creating a negative impression is high for this strategy, intimidation is most often found in non-voluntary interactions. Explains Jones (1990): "If someone is always threatening to make my life difficult, I shall be highly motivated to avoid interacting with that person" (p. 196).

*Supplication*

Jones (1990) refers to supplication as a "last resort" strategy (p. 196). Actors in conversations perform supplication to gain sympathy from their target by disclosing shortcomings or undervaluing themselves through modesty. This impression management strategy tends to more often be used successfully by actors with less power in lower-status positions, and particularly when an actor's competency is called into question. Actors who undertake this strategy will behave in a humble manner and belittle or undervalue themselves…what Jones (1990) refers to as "bending over backwards in acknowledging inadequacies, flaws, and weaknesses" (p. 181).

Rosenfeld et al. (1995) describe supplication as the art of looking incompetent for the greater gain without permanently damaging one's reputation. According to Jones (1990), actors who use this impression management strategy will call attention to their weaknesses in hopes that social norms or rules governing superior-subordinate relationships will obligate others to feel more kindly and forgiving toward them (p. 196). Jones offers the example of an elderly woman who may act helpless as a way to persuade a friend to carry her luggage. Supplication works by triggering "a powerful social rule known as the norm of social responsibility that says we should help those who are in need" (Rosenfeld et al., 1995, p. 56).

The success of employing this impression management strategy rests with the supplicator's ability to admit an inadequacy while still appearing capable, "to let modesty reflect the secure acceptance of a few weaknesses that are obviously trivial in the context of one's strengths" (Jones, 1990, p. 181).

Jones (1990) cautions that this tactic is most effective when there is some chance of reciprocity or an "exchange of benefits" (p. 196). For example, a person may agree to help a friend move with the expectation that the friend will return the favor when the individual is in need of similar assistance. Jones warns that without such "compensatory benefits," the supplicator may discourage "potential benefactors" from offering support (p. 197). Rosenfeld et al. (1995) also caution that blatant use of this impression management tactic can make an actor appear incompetent or socially inept. They also admonish that frequent supplicators "may gain a reputation as a malingerer, one who would rather feed at the public trough than do things for himself" (p. 56).

All individuals attempt to create a particular impression, and management of the tactics used to create such impressions is an inseparable part of identity construction (Jones, 1990). It would follow that when individuals are speaking on behalf of organizations for which they work, they would also undertake similar activities to manage impressions on behalf of the organization.

In looking at the process of organizational identity construction, Scott and Lane (2000) cited a lack of research into the role impression management plays in discovering an organization's identity. There is some, albeit very little, precedent for the types of IMS organizational members use in managing their identity through their online communication with various publics. Connolly-Ahern and Broadway (2007) investigated the use of impression management strategies on corporate websites and found that, overwhelmingly, corporate representatives most frequently used self-promotion and exemplification strategies to create an online impression of competency and trustworthiness (p. 345).

There is also limited research for IMS use by organizational leaders. Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) investigated the relationship between IMS use and transformational leadership and found that exemplification and supplication strategies were positively associated with the perception of leaders as effective and charismatic, while self-promotion and intimidation were negatively associated with leadership effectiveness.

Bolino and Turnley (2003) called for more research into the outcomes of impression management tactics. They also called on researchers to investigate contexts in which "different impression management profiles might emerge" (p. 156). In 2008, Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley, and Gilstrap more specifically identified the use of impression management tactics in organizations as an area of research in need of exploration.

Purpose of Study

This study attempts to identify the kinds of IMS that are used by corporate bloggers and investigates patterns of usage to better understand why actors employ a particular impression management strategy. Blogs are uniquely interactional in that readers can affirm or challenge the blogger's identity in real time and the blogger can respond to affirmations or challenges and attempt to renegotiate his or her identity. The real-time availability of blogs means that Jones' (1990) taxonomy of self-presentation strategies can be as usefully applied to the analysis of these computer-mediated communication forums as that of face-to-face interaction. Therefore blogs should provide an ideal opportunity to document and examine the deliberate and strategic use of self-impression and identity construction strategies.

As noted above, however, there remains a paucity of analysis of the specific communicative performances by organizational leaders that shape their online discourse in organizational blogs. Such investigation should reveal important aspects of self-presentation strategies and identity formation and maintenance. This research would thus add to the growing body of computer-mediated communication scholarship and assist communication practitioners who want to influence and shape public opinion of organizations. From a practical standpoint, this research will aid practitioners who, as Aust (2004) asserts, want to better understand impression management in order to "ensure positive impression formation and transmission" (p. 515).

Given the lack of research to date regarding organizational impression management in CMC channels, the goal of this study is to describe the strategies organizational leaders use in blogs to manage impressions and make identity claims about themselves and the organization. Therefore, in lieu of testing a specific hypothesis, the following research questions are proposed to examine impression management tactics in executive-authored weblogs:

RQ1) Which impression management strategies do high-ranking executives use in their organizational blogs?

RQ2) What differences, if any, exist in the frequency with which high-ranking executive bloggers use particular impression management strategies in their organizational blogs?

RQ3) What organizational identity is being constructed, negotiated, managed and/or supported by the use of certain impression management strategies?

To understand the identity claims individuals, or in this case, organizations, make, Jones (1990) suggests researchers look for patterns of impression management strategies used by actors

in their different interactions. Thus attention now turns to the methodology for conducting this analysis.

Summary

This chapter began with a review of weblogs, a relatively new and increasingly prevalent form of CMC used by organizations, and their uses and challenges in an organizational context. Next, the theoretical framework of organizational identity was introduced, and the process and importance of organizational identity formation and maintenance was reviewed. The chapter concluded with a descriptive explanation of Jones' taxonomy of impression management strategies, including features and hazards unique to each one. Throughout this chapter, extant salient research was discussed and limitations addressed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study will employ a quantitative content analysis of corporate blogs. To provide greater clarity in the procedures used in this study, this section will overview content analysis, sampling procedures, and coding methods, which researchers Trammell and Gasser (2004) cite as an acceptable analytical framework for investigating blogs.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of manifest content of communication" (Berelson, 1952, p. 18). Weber (1990) further clarified the method as a way to separate text content into smaller, more controllable pieces of data, where text is subdivided and coded into meaningful categories according to defined rules. More recently, Stacks (2006) explained content analysis as:

An informal research methodology (and measurement tool) that systematically tracks messages (written, spoken, broadcast) and translates them into quantifiable form via a systematic approach to defining message categories through specified units of analysis; the action of breaking down message content into predetermined components (categories) to form a judgment capable of being measured (p. 4).

With content analysis, the researcher can "predict or infer phenomena that they cannot observe directly" and "seek answers to questions that go outside a text" (Krippendorff, 2004 p. 10). In fact, there is a growing body of research in which organizational messages are being content analyzed to make inferences, examine textual patterns, and draw conclusions about organizational processes and objectives (Aust, 2004; Gallivan, 2001; Kim & Rader, 2010; Kohut

& Segars, 1992; Simonsen, 2009; Tian, 2008; Waters, Friedman, Mills, & Zeng, 2011; Young, & Foot, 2005).

Content analysis is a particularly useful methodology for examining online discourse because of its wide range of application. It can be used to identify and even explain communicator attributes, attitudes, and behavioral interactions (Weber, 1990, p. 9). It is also an appropriate methodology for "both qualitative and quantitative" analysis of "text or transcripts of human communication" (Weber, 1990, p. 10).

Sampling Procedures

A sample was constructed using the Fortune 500 Blogging Project (2010), a list of Fortune 500 companies with "active public blogs by company employees about the company and/or its products" (Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki, 2007). This list was then cross-referenced with Fortune 500's listing of top companies in the United States and a Fortune 500 Business Blogging Wiki (2007). The majority of corporate blogs were found to be authored by marketing or public relations officials, overwhelmingly less social and more informational in nature, and include content that primarily highlighted the organizations products and services and industry-related news. Since this study seeks to identify self-presentation strategies used in executive-authored blogs, sampling was limited to blogs solely and regularly authored (purportedly) by company CEOs, chief technology officers (CTOs), or other high-ranking leaders.

Five executive-authored blogs were identified: Intel (Justin Rattner, CTO – now retired), Marriott International, Inc. (J.W. Marriott, CEO), General Motors (Bob Lutz, Vice Chairman –

now retired), Whole Foods (John Mackey, Chairman), and Sun Microsystems, Inc. (Jonathan Schwartz, Chairman – now retired). Each of these blogs are authored by the highest-ranking executives in the organization and are featured on the company's website. Of these five blogs, two are written by a CEO or a CTO in the technology sector and the other three are written by CEOs in the retail/hospitality sector.

One executive-authored blog was identified but excluded from the study because the author had posted only one entry in the past nine months: http://spaces.msn.com/members/rayozzie/Blog/. Another (Mike Critelli, Executive Chairman for Pitney Bowes, Inc.) was excluded from the sample because the executive did not start blogging until after he retired from the organization; as an unofficial spokesperson for the organization, his association would be too markedly different from those organizational leaders blogging as paid employees of the company to invite analysis and comparison. A cursory review of the blog found the content to be overwhelmingly personal in nature with only incidental references to his former employer. In order to ensure a consistent data set, blogs authored by other organizational members such as Chief Reputation Strategists, Chief Marketing Officers, Vice Presidents, or even Chief Blogging Officers were not considered, and as a result, eight other blogs were not included in this study.

Two of the blogs identified for this study, written by Bob Lutz for GM and Justin Rattner for Intel, were no longer available directly through the organization's website. Despite this, the entire population of available blog posts was collected for this study by using the Wayback Machine (http://www.archive.org). The Wayback Machine allows one to search by date to view any previously published, public web page from 1996 to the present, whether it is still available

to be viewed on the original host site or not. In those instances where the original blog post could not be viewed via the organization's website, posts were collected via the Wayback Machine, which has been validated as an acceptable research tool for website content retrieval (Murphy, 2008).

A total paragraph count of all posts was conducted for each of the five blogs to be analyzed, beginning with the very first blog post for this group that occurred on June 28, 2004 (Jonathan Schwartz for Sun Microsystems) through April 22, 2012, which was the last date posts were collected and analyzed for this study. As of April 22, 2012, only two executives were still blogging: J.W. Marriott and John Mackey; Bob Lutz, Jonathan Schwartz, and Justin Rattner have since resigned their positions with their respective companies.

Within the time period used for this study, Marriott's blog included 1,712 total paragraphs of content; Lutz's blog included 1,030 paragraphs, with the last entry announcing his resignation from GM posted on April 30, 2010; Mackey had authored 625 paragraphs on behalf of Whole Foods; Rattner wrote 227 total paragraphs from June 26, 2006 to August 16, 2010 before resigning from Intel; and Schwartz' blog contained the most paragraphs at 2,169 before his last entry dated Jan. 28, 2010, his last day working for Sun Microsystems (see Table 1).

Because only 227 paragraphs of content were available for analysis from the Intel blog, all paragraphs, or the total population, for this blog were included in the data sample. A randomized sample of 227 paragraphs, or not less than 14% of the total population, was then drawn from the four remaining blogs using an online random date generator (http://www.random.org), which utilizes a simple random sampling technique. In order to

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identify self-presentation strategies used by company CEOs and other high-ranking executives only, guest blogs (stray variable) within this final sampling were excluded.

Coding

As mentioned earlier, for the purposes of this study the author used an operational definition for "executive-authored" weblogs as: a blog post written by CEOs, CTOs, or other highest-ranking executives in an organization. Impression management strategies were defined using Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy, and organizational identity was defined as noted above.

To investigate executive bloggers' attempts to create or maintain a particular organizational identity, this study employed a deductive coding scheme to look for patterns of impression management strategies that high-ranking executives use when blogging on behalf of their organization. A codebook (Appendix B) was developed for this study utilizing Jones and Pittman's (1982) impression management taxonomy, which is, according to Bolino and Turnley (2003), the "only theoretical model [of organizational impression management] that has been validated empirically" (p. 143).

Using Jones and Pittman's IMS taxonomy, Bolino and Turnley (1999) developed an impression management coding system to give other communication researchers a method to investigate the use of IMS within organizational contexts, citing the need for "a measure that is both grounded in theory and well-suited for organizational use" in light of an increase in impression management research (p. 204). Therefore, the codebook developed for this study also relies on the coding system developed by Turnley and Bolino (1999) that was designed to

categorize and measure Jones and Pittman's five impression management tactics in organizational settings. More specifically, the Bolino and Turnley coding system measures "the extent to which individuals in organizational settings engage in ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and intimidation" (2003, p. 145). The reliability and validity of the Bolino and Turnley coding system itself was recently re-measured, assessed, and supported by Kacmar, Harris, and Nagy (2007).

The posts identified for the data sample were copied from the actual online blog and pasted into a Word document in a table format. The posts were delineated by author/blog, date of post, and individual paragraphs to create coding sheets to be used by each coder (see Appendix B).

Because it was often difficult to determine the type of IMS being used based on a single word or sentence, each paragraph of text within the original blog post was used as the unit of analysis, which is an acceptable recording unit for content analyses (Harris, 2001; Weber, 1990). Frequently a single sentence was not enough to infer the use of a particular strategy because in many instances the strategy was not apparent until a following sentence or sentences were also read. In other words, strategies were more discernible when examined in the context of the entire line of thought, which frequently spanned more than one sentence but were seldom longer than a paragraph. Budd, Thorp, and Donohew (1967) assert the paragraph is a more "natural unit" for analysis of narrative text (p. 78), and this view is supported by Guthrie, Petty, Yongvanich, and Ricceri (2004), who argue the paragraph as a unit of analysis is "more appropriate than word count in drawing inferences from narrative statements as we commonly establish meaning with paragraphs rather than through the reporting of a word or sentence" (p. 288).

From February 17 through April 28, the author and another trained coder independently

analyzed each paragraph to determine if the blogger appeared to demonstrate praise or flattery of

others, performance claims, threats or force, dedication or moral worthiness, or self-deprecation.

Relying on the Bolino and Turnley coding system and Jones and Pittman taxonomy, coders then

noted which, if any, of the five impression management strategies (ingratiation, self-promotion,

intimidation, exemplification, and supplication) was present in each paragraph.

To ensure intercoder reliability, coders were trained using a 10% (n=23) sampling of

posts selected with a random date generator (http://www.random.org). Coding was conducted

independently by each coder using the codebook until a clear understanding of each strategy was

agreed upon by the coders. Specifically, the first coder coded all usage of IMS in posts from the

sample according to the codebook (see Table 2). A second coder then independently coded all

posts and responses from the same sample according to the codebook. Afterward, coders

compared coding sheets and discrepancies were noted to help achieve acceptable inter-coder

agreement.

Cohen's kappa was used to measure intercoder reliability for the five IMS variables.

Initial reported scores ranged from 0.78 to 0.86 across the five categories, which is considered

minimally acceptable (Neuendorf, 2010).  To improve intercoder reliability, disagreements in

each IMS category assignments were noted, discussed, and resolved by more clearly defining the

categories to ensure understanding of the coding system. Operational definitions were further

refined to help provide a clearer basis for coding data which did not readily fit within the coding

scheme. Coders then independently coded another 5% of the sampled posts, and intercoder

reliability was satisfactory with scores for the five categories ranging from 0.86 to 0.94, well

above the acceptable level of 0.70 for Cohen's Kappa (Neuendorf, 2010). To control for coder drift, intercoder reliability was assessed again at the halfway point and for the last 5% of sampled posts using Cohen's kappa, and scores for all five IMS variables remained at .82 or higher, still well above the acceptable limit of .70. The remaining sampled posts were then divided equally between both coders, and IMS instances were recorded and tabulated.

In all, coders independently content analyzed 1,135 paragraphs (equivalent to more than 175 pages of single-spaced text) to identify and isolate all instances where any of the five impression management strategies occurred.

Paragraph data from the blogs noting the presence or absence of IMS were hand-written on each of the coding sheets by type of strategy employed, and then all scores were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and tabulated appropriately. Paragraphs that did not include any evidence of IMS were coded as 0. Paragraphs that included more than one instance of the same IMS were only counted once. In those instances where more than one type of strategy was used, both or several strategies were noted separately as having occurred.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

A non-parametric chi-square test was performed to determine which impression management strategies executive bloggers used most frequently. The null hypothesis states that the distribution of IMS strategies will be independent of the bloggers who use them (i.e., no differences across bloggers). The significant chi-square test, $\chi^2$ (4, N=227) = 49.33, p < .0001, indicates that the use of IMS strategies does indeed depend on the blogger. In other words, IMS use differs across the CEO bloggers. Table 3 depicts the frequency of each impression management strategy used across all five bloggers.

Patterns of Use of Impression Management Strategies

Executive bloggers used self-promotion (40.03%) and ingratiation (31.42%) impression management strategies most often (see Table 3). The test showed moderate use of exemplification (18.30%), while supplication was rarely used (6.22%). Intimidation, which Jones (1990) identifies as the least successful of all impression management strategies, was employed the fewest number of times (4.02%).

With the exception of J.W. Marriott, CEO of Marriott International, Inc., the bloggers used self-promotion more frequently than any other strategy throughout their posts. This impression management strategy was the most-used tactic for Lutz (GM), Mackey (Whole Foods), Rattner (Intel), and Schwartz (Sun Microsystems). Across all five blogs, self-promotion activities most often took the form of emphasizing the organization's superiority of products or services and calling attention to their expertise in their particular industry, as in this post from Rattner, CTO of Intel:

Parallel computing has been in Intel's blood for more than two decades. Our experience as a long-time developer and supporter of current parallel programming standards, such as OpenMP, and as a leading provider of parallel software development tools, such as our Threading Building Blocks, helps us understand how much work there is to be done (Rattner, 2008).

By emphasizing his organization's know-how, experience, and leadership, Rattner is attempting to convey an impression of expertise and capability. However, emphasizing one's capabilities carries a risk that the one will be perceived as arrogant, conceited or boastful (Jones & Pittman, 1982), and frequently the bloggers used other strategies and ploys to offset the potential for negative impression outcomes. For example, Rattner sometimes couched his use of self-promotion in a positive and celebratory tone, as in this post about a new product launch: "What an exciting week this has been. We unleashed the 'Era of Tera' by showcasing the world's first programmable processor that can deliver Teraflops performance with remarkable energy efficiency" (2007). His tone here is one of simply sharing some good news with readers and serves to temper the possible appearance of arrogance.

In other instances where executive bloggers used self-promotion, they cleverly disguised it as ingratiation. For example, Bob Lutz, CEO of General Motors, blogged, "if anything, it proves that we've been listening… to the rear-drive faithful […]. I think our design staff did a great job on the concept, which really demonstrates the renewed focus on design throughout GM" (2006). According to Jones (1990), "framing of our performances is a crucial part of the more general framing of competence" (p. 191), and while Lutz is complimenting drivers and fans of a particular type of car, he's also giving the organization the proverbial "pat on the back" for

listening to its customers and designing a great product; here the compliment serves as an ingratiation strategy. It would appear Lutz understands his audience might be turned off by the use of blatant self-promotion, so he tries to soften his promotional claims by acknowledging the hard work of his employees and recognizing fans ("rear-drive faithful").

In another instance where self-promotion claims were abundant: "selling the best vehicles in the world," "GM has always had great talent," "more product-centric than ever," Lutz also used ingratiation, e.g., "people here are truly the best and the brightest," as well as supplication, "while we didn't always use it to its maximum potential" (2010). This again appears deliberate, as if Lutz is aware that such claims could be perceived as conceited and so seeks to temper the heavy use of self-promotion with other strategies.

Ingratiation tactics, the second most frequently used impression management strategy, were likely to be targeted toward one of three different audiences: general readers of the blog, employees, and/or vendors. In one instance, ingratiation was also directed at a rival organization, when Lutz took to his blog to compliment a competitor, writing that he "wasn't surprised in the least" when another company's car won the top award at a national car show (2007). While ingratiation was directed at the competitor-as-audience for this message, the use of ingratiation in this particular instance also functioned as exemplification by making the complimentary organization, GM, seem humble or modest. Readers of the blog, who were likely the true target audience for this post, "witnessed" Lutz in the act of complimenting or praising a competitor, so making GM appear to be "nice guys" who took the high road and were willing to offer kudos to deserving recipients. This is a clever use of ingratiation, and this passage was classified as both ingratiation and exemplification.

Overall, the extensive use of self-promotion and ingratiation strategies would seem to indicate the executive blogger is most interested in constructing and presenting a persona of competence and friendliness.

Exemplification was the third most-used impression management strategy, and it was frequently employed when executives wanted to elicit admiration for themselves and their organization, as demonstrated in this post by Marriott:

> About two decades ago, I ignored our lawyer's advice and supported the
> Americans with Disabilities Act. They told me it would cost a lot of money to
> retrofit our hotels, to make them accessible to people with disabilities. I said,
> 'Look, we're a hospitality company, we welcome everyone' (2007).

Here he positions his organization as a champion of rights for disabled patrons, which is undoubtedly an admirable characteristic for an individual or organization. Exemplification strategies frequently took the form of talk about the organization's care and commitment to its employees and/or customers, as discernible in this post:

> This is always how I've tried to live my life, and how we try to run Marriott.
> Our culture is about taking care of people, because after all, that's the business
> we do. It's very important to give them opportunities to grow and develop
> (Marriott, 2009).

Marriott is letting his blog readers know that, beyond running a business, he *and* the organization aspire to a higher cause, that of taking care of employees and customers.

Given that self-promotion was the most used impression management strategy, it follows that supplication strategies would be used less frequently since supplicating tactics would

undermine or conflict with organizational leaders' attempts to appear competent. Indeed, in the few instances where supplication strategies were used, they were often not truly supplicating. For example Jonathan Schwartz, CEO of Sun Microsystems, equivocated: "And maybe I'm being too academic in my definition (2004)." On the surface, Schwartz allows that he may be doing something wrong, e.g., "being *too* academic," and at the same time, the choice of words also seems to insinuate intellect…in order to provide an academic definition of something one would need to know very well what they were talking about.

While intimidation was used the least by all executive bloggers, in instances when it was employed, it was often in response to a challenge or accusation, as in this post from Lutz: "Some of the material generated has been ill-informed and off the mark.  Some have used the same old and outdated anti-Detroit rhetoric and bias we've been seeing for years" (2008). Here Lutz challenges recent public statements as mischaracterizations of the auto industry. This is a good example of when an intimidation strategy may be employed without risk of alienating an entire audience. The challenging statement here is directed at a small portion of the public…those who would write critically about the auto-industry, while fans of GM's products may feel the use of the intimidation tactic is justified in this case, especially since it is not directed at them.

Of the five executive bloggers in this study, Schwartz used intimidation the most, but only marginally so. And when he did use the intimidation IMS, it was applied in direct response to a challenge.

> And to be clear, once again, we have no interest whatever in suing NetApps –
> we didn't before this case, and we don't now. But given the impracticality of
> what they're seeking as resolution, to take back an innovation that helps their

customers as much as ours, we have no choice but to respond in court

(Schwartz, 2007).

Note that his message is directed at a competitor, not the general readers of his blog. Schwartz

also uses exemplification here as a way to offset any risk of appearing greedy or threatening, a

possible consequence of using the intimidation impression management strategy. He asserts such

action is necessary in order to prevent a product that is helpful to customers from being removed

from the market. In other words, he is claiming that Sun's reason for suing NetApps is a moral

one. Rather than being driven by financial concerns, their action is motivated by their desire to

protect their customer's best interests.

In most instances where intimidation occurred, it was often employed along with self-

promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, or supplication as a way to avoid any perceived

negative connotations. For example, Schwartz writes:

I announced a few organizational changes this morning, and I want to be sure

everyone hears directly from me about my motivations and expectations. As

you know, we've opened a world of opportunity by ensuring Solaris is available

on Dell, HP and IBM hardware […] (2007).

By stating he has "expectations" for everyone, Schwartz is asserting his authority, but at the

same time, he uses a self-promotion strategy in claiming that the changes have "opened a world

of opportunity."

Mackey, CEO of Whole Foods, often used supplication in lieu of blatantly disagreeing

with certain statements, which could be interpreted as an intimidating tactic. Consider this

example, where Mackey responds to arguments by American Economist Milton Friedman's assertion that a company's paramount responsibility is to create shareholder value.

> This position sounds reasonable. A company's assets do belong to the investors, and its management does have a duty to manage those assets responsibly. In my view, the argument is not wrong so much as it is too narrow. (Mackey, 2005).

Mackey uses supplicating behavior, positing an alternative view for consideration by readers, rather than overtly challenging Friedman's assertion.

Along similar lines, when executive bloggers went on the record to speak about an issue or decision that might elicit some opposition, they did not use intimidation as their impression management strategy. There was no "I made this decision because I'm the boss, and I have the final say so" language used, as might be expected of high-ranking executives.  Rather, statements were made under the auspices of taking care of the customer or employee. For example, when Marriott decided to ban smoking at all of its properties, CEO Bill Marriott announced the organizations reason for doing so in his blog post on February 12, 2007.

> With the Surgeon General's report on the dangers of second hand smoke, we felt it was really our duty to take care of the health of our guests and the people who work with them.  Taking good care of our employees has been the hallmark of Marriott's success ever since we were founded by my mother and father 80 years ago this year.  […]

Rather than cite his authority to take such action, he used an exemplification impression management strategy – that of helping and being dedicated to his employees' and customers' well-being – by saying the ban was enacted to protect employee and guest health.  This again

points to the likelihood that executive bloggers are more concerned with projecting concern and moral worthiness than asserting authority in an attempt to construct relations with their publics rather than challenge them.

In another post, Marriott takes a stand on immigration reform. This is particularly interesting because he tempers his remarks with other impression management strategies as a way to avoid alienating those who may not agree with him – a sensible tactic for a company that's in the business of pleasing everyone. In talking anecdotally about an immigrant in his employ, Marriott uses an ingratiation strategy to curry favor with his employees, as well as the exemplification IMS in talking about the opportunities for growth made possible by the company:

> She started out making beds, and she's still doing it, but she now supervises
>
> others and teaches them how to clean a room right. […]Ana's done very well in
>
> our company. […] She's been a great contributor all these years (2007).

Certainly there is a risk that some members of the general public will not agree with Marriott's stance on immigration reform, but his effusive praise of this employee is likely to appeal to most people. Even though he's blogging about a controversial topic, he's doing so in a way that will allow him to maintain a positive and friendly corporate identity and lessen the risk of alienating members of his external publics who may be reading his posts. Further, his clearly expressed admiration for one of his employees is likely to be well-received by other employees regardless of their own personal views on immigration reform.

Differences in Frequency of Use of Impression Management Strategies

The second research question investigated differences in types of impression management strategies employed by each executive blogger, and the chi-square test was significant, $\chi^2$ (4, N=227) = 56.96, p < .05 (see Table 3), indicating that the type of strategy employed depended on the blogger.

Marriott used ingratiation no less than twice as often as any other tactic (49.16%), and he used it more frequently than any of the other executive bloggers. For a company whose customer base could potentially include any person anywhere in the world, it would make sense for Marriott to frequently employ an ingratiation impression management strategy in his posts as this strategy is the most likely to be successful when the performer wishes to cast a wide net (Jones, 1990). After all, just about everyone likes to be flattered, praised, or complimented. Rosenfeld et al. (1995) also found that ingratiation strategies were successful when employed toward diverse audiences (p. 32). Potential hotel guests from around the world would certainly qualify as a very diverse group. As mentioned previously, ingratiation can positively influence organizational relationships with external audiences (Rosenfeld et al., 1995), and certainly it would seem for a company such as Marriott that makes its living in the hospitality sector, being perceived as likeable and friendly would be a critical identity claim.

While Mackey used self-promotion most often (35.59%), he used exemplification (33.10%) almost as frequently. He also used exemplification twice as often as any other CEO blogger except for Marriott (20.11%). In this post, Mackey uses exemplification by maintaining that love and care are the two most important qualities of a good leader.

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The leadership must embody genuine love and care. This cannot be faked. If the leadership doesn't express love and care in their actions, then love and care will not flourish in the organization. As Gandhi said: "We must be the change that we wish to see in the world" (Mackey, 2005).

By emphasizing qualities of love and care over other commonly ascribed leadership qualities, such as decisiveness, good communication skills, experience, business acumen, instinct, etc., he is attempting to convey an identity for Whole Foods as a loving and caring organization.

As leaders of organizations in highly-competitive sectors (automotive and technology), Lutz (46.85%), Rattner (44.29%), and Schwartz (45.51%) used self-promotion more often than any other strategy. Conversely, they used intimidation or supplication strategies much less frequently. Certainly these bloggers do not want to appear inept or inferior, particularly in a forum that can be easily viewed by competitors. In one of the rare instances where supplication was employed, Schwartz used a supplication strategy to relate a personal mistake, yet at the same time he was careful to convey that his own shortcoming was not reflective of his firm's professional competency in any way.

So I made a few DVDs. And I distributed them around my house, and gave some to other family members. Suffice it to say, most non-professional system administrators are non-professional for a reason –most of the DVDs were lost (2007).

Schwartz admits that he made a mistake by giving DVDs to his "non-professional" relatives; at the same time, in making the distinction, he subtly conveys that his firm is made up of professional administrators and implies that they could certainly keep track of a few DVDs.

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Rattner and Schwartz, both leaders of organizations in the technology sectors, used

ingratiation somewhat frequently and most often when speaking about vendors with whom they

partner and rely on to a great degree. In this example, Schwartz praises a new partner:

> For those that don't know who <u>KKR</u> are, they're a (very) large private investor,
>
> one of the smartest and most successful in the history of investing. They're less
>
> well known outside of financial circles, but their track record is one notch above
>
> stellar (2007).

That Sun Microsystems and Intel's ingratiation strategies are deployed most often toward third-

party vendors makes sense for organizations that are highly dependent on business-to-business

relationships.


Organizational Identity and Use of Impression Management Strategies

The use of certain impression management strategies in attempting to create, manage, or

support a particular organizational identity claim was detectable not just in the individual

postings, but cumulatively throughout the entire body of sampled data.

For example, Mackey's frequent use of the exemplification strategy (33.10%) makes

sense given that Whole Foods mission emphasizes "customer satisfaction, improvement in the

state of the environment, and local and larger community support" as well as "efforts to

communicate more often, more openly, and more compassionately"

(http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/company/declaration.php). Mackey appears to frequently

use an IMS (exemplification) that is reflective and supportive of the organization's identity as a

compassionate and concerned retailer. That he uses this particular strategy nearly twice as often

as the other executive bloggers provides support for the claim that CEOs deliberately employ IMS to create or support a particular organizational identity.

Similarly, Lutz's frequent use of self-promotion (recall that he used it nearly twice as often as any other tactic) to promote the excellence of GMs products and services may be of critical importance in maintaining an overarching identity of competency in an industry characterized by exceptionally high levels of competitiveness (see Regassa & Ahmadian, 2007; Sussan & Kassira, 2006; Tong & Wheaton, 2006).

It also makes sense that Marriott would employ ingratiation more often than any other tactic. In the hospitality arena, the importance of appearing hospitable, i.e. friendly, is inarguably a primary identity goal.

Finally, as previously mentioned, both Schwartz and Rattner, in their roles as leaders of organizations in a notoriously competitive industry (Hughes, Martin, Morgan, & Robson, 2010; Metcalf, 2011; Tellis, Yin, & Niraj, 2009), overwhelmingly used self-promotion to construct an identity of competence and know-how. They rarely used supplication, perhaps because the risk of being perceived as less competent than "the other guys" was too great.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION


This research investigated patterns of impression management strategies used by high-ranking executives in their organizational weblogs. Specifically, the author analyzed blogs to find evidence of how such executives attempted to discursively construct and shape the organization's identity through the use of five different impression management tactics. That bloggers in this study employed certain impression management tactics to a greater degree than others indicates that executives are trying to construct and shape a particular identity for their organization. In other words, executive bloggers most often used strategies that would uniquely support the type of identity the organization aspires to project for itself.

Overwhelmingly, the corporate bloggers in this sample used self-promotion strategies more than any other. The goal to create an identity of an expert was a common one among all five bloggers. This finding supports previous studies, which found organizations and popular bloggers used competency claims to a greater degree than any other impression management strategy (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). In the current study, self-promotion was enacted through frequent claims about *both* individual and organizational accomplishments, superiority of products and services, and expertise in a particular industry or sector.

Perhaps to offset the possibility of being perceived as boastful or arrogant, a risk with self-promotion IMS (Jones, 1990), executive bloggers also frequently used ingratiation, largely by flattering or complimenting their employees and vendors, and even readers of the blog where possible. Ingratiation tactics often included thanking readers for visiting the blog site or asking

them for their opinion on a particular topic. Bob Lutz frequently ended his posts by asking,

"Well, what do you think of it?" (2006).

Supplication and intimidation were rarely used by any of the executive bloggers in this

study. This parallels findings from previous studies (Connolly-Ahern & Broadway, 2007;

Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005) and provides additional evidence that competency is a critical

identity concern for organization. Appearing incompetent may be too risky a proposition for

organizations, particularly when competition is rife. Similarly, organizational members likely

avoid using intimidating tactics for fear of alienating or scaring off readers (and potential

customers). Recall that intimidation strategies, when used, were always directed at a specific,

non-friendly audience, e.g., an investigative reporter or competitor.

This study also adds to a growing body of research that affirms the capacity of

communication activities in CMC channels to supplant, if not surpass, traditional communication

channels, and to do so effectively (Dickey et al., 2006; Walther, 2007). Because the online

medium of a blog frees executives from having to attend to other cues, such as watching hand

gestures or maintaining a stoic countenance (Walther, 2007, p. 2541), blogs can actually help

them accomplish their communication and impression management goals better than FtF

activities. Executive bloggers can take more time and care to manage the impression

management tactics they use to ensure their own identity goals do not inadvertently conflict with

organizational identity goals. Plus, bloggers post entries at their convenience, which allows for

more careful editing of messages, and as a result, minimizes the risk of accidentally or

unintentionally revealing information (Walther, 2007). This makes blogs a particularly useful

communication channel for organizational spokespeople.

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In addition to affording executive bloggers more control than other traditional organization communication channels, blogs also offer a host of benefits to organizational members beyond traditional FtF interactions. Blogs offer virtually unlimited space for text; posts can be hundreds of pages long if so desired. Blogs also allow for the use of visuals, including static photos or video. Blogs can be introduced online for a limited time to address a particular issue, such as a crisis (Jin & Liu, 2010; Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007) and then removed, or they can be a permanent part of an organization's online presence similar to company websites.

Blogs also allow for instant delivery of messages (executives can post at any time, day or night), accessibility (they can post from home, from another country, or even while traveling on a plane), and the ability to affordably span boundaries for large groups who are geographically dispersed (Santra & Giri, 2009).

Further, executives can not only communicate to their audiences…blogs make it possible for those audiences to talk back, giving the public access to previously unreachable (and often inapproachable) executives at the highest levels of the organization. The two-way nature of blogs makes it possible for executives to also receive feedback, and for longer durations. Where FtF communication is finite – it ends as soon as the interactants part ways – blog conversations can continue for hours, days, weeks, or longer. Audiences can respond to blog entries for as long as the blog exists, which could be years. Likewise, executives can continue to reply to those responses, and so on.

The informal nature of blogs also provides a channel for corporate executives to talk more casually with their various publics. For example, Lutz frequently used light banter to engage with readers. In one such instance, he blogged, "I encourage you to take a test drive […].

If you like them, tell somebody about it. And if you don't, well, maybe you can just tell me"

(2005). This was much like the digital equivalent of nudging someone with your elbow, and

certainly not something likely to be experienced in a company meeting, shareholder presentation,

or news interview.

Computer-mediated communication channels are fast becoming a common and

sophisticated communication tool across all organizations as publics increasingly turn to online

channels for organizational information (Anderson & Rainie, 2010). Blogs present an

opportunity for executives to expand their communicative repertoire because they provide a

continuously available means of communication to employees and customers based in ever-

widening geographic locations. But as Jonathan Schwartz posted in his blog on March 27, 2007,

"pace matters," and practitioners would do well to understand the benefits and drawbacks

inherent in these types of communication platforms before allocating and investing resources in

them.

Establishing identities and constructing relationships in these fast-moving, constantly

shifting forums will also continue to be a key concern. Rosenfeld et al. (1995) cautioned that

despite universal use of impression management strategies, "there are individual differences in

the form, frequency, and success of impression management attempts" (p. 23). Practically

speaking, it would help to know, for example, if readers of Schwartz' blog respond better to

exemplification strategies than self-promotion tactics so that he can help the organization

construct a more accurate representation of its identity…and accurately reinforce it through his

own communication.

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Because executive bloggers act as the voice and face of the company, organizations will want to ensure that individual use of impression management strategies in these types of public, online forums does not run counter-culture to the organization's other self-presentation tactics. Despite a number of companies who employ interns to manage their blogs, organizations are better served having their most highly-engaged and committed employees "voicing" key messages on behalf of the company. As Rosenfeld et al. (1995) stated, "it should be noted that consistency in impression management can be important because inconsistency can lead an audience to question the accuracy of all communications" (p. 22). Simply put, this is not a job for the intern.

Limitations

This study only analyzed IMS from the blogger's point of view and did not attempt to gauge reader response to the different types of IMS employed. This limitation presents several opportunities for future research to investigate the extent to which audiences are receptive to certain strategies to better determine if identities are being successfully constructed through blogs and other similar forums.

An additional limitation to this study is sample size. The limited number of executive-authored blogs means results cannot be generalized to a larger population.

Further, this study does not take into account contextual factors or certain characteristics of the executive bloggers, such as gender, that have been shown to have possible bearing on the types of IMS an individual chooses to employ in CMC (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Walther, 2007).

Finally, this research does not attempt to investigate self-awareness in the use of particular impression management strategies, e.g. the author did not ask each blogger if they were aware they were using a particular strategy or deliberately chose to employ one type of IMS over another.

Future Research

The purpose of this study was to examine the use of impression management strategies in executive-authored weblogs in the context of organizational identity theory. While this study sheds some light on the types of IMS corporate bloggers use most frequently, a logical next step to continue this line of investigation would be to gauge reaction to particular types, usages, and contexts for self-presentation strategies to determine which are most effective at furthering organizational identity goals. Future research should build on existing studies and attempt to measure and analyze reader response via their comments, sharing, hyperlinking, and reposts, to determine how IMS and other self-presentation strategies are received by online audiences.

Because of the nature of CMC, blogs offer organizations a unique opportunity to "test" their identity goals so that they can manage them more deliberately. Unlike a publicly-given speech or a broadcasted news interview, if a particular strategy is not well-received by readers of a corporate blog, as apparent from their comments and reactions, the organization can simply "throw out" a different strategy via the next post until one strategy is gauged to be more effective than another. Impression management tactics are not always successful, therefore identifying the circumstances in which one tactic fails and another succeeds could further enrich understanding of the entire process (Bolino & Turnley, 1999, p. 204).

A content analysis of audience response to specific strategies, i.e., whether audience response to a particular IMS was positive, negative, or neutral, would likely be quite revelatory, because in many cases, the use of IMS may be less effective than the actor intends. Consider ingratiation, which is a frequently used IMS. According to Jones (1990), the ingratiator runs the risk of being perceived as having "ulterior motives" (p. 177). Therefore, future research might investigate specifically the use of flattery or praise in CMC. Is there an even more heightened risk that the ingratiator will appear insincere in online communication channels where the message is directed to a wide and veritably unknown audience? In other words, if an organizational blogger compliments a reader, might the reader be less likely to believe the flattery since the blogger doesn't really know the reader? It would appear that the risk for misfire with this tactic could be elevated in CMC channels. As Rosenfeld et al. (1995) cautions: "Far from being a simple prescription, however, successful ingratiation is an interpersonal minefield that requires skill to prevent detection and avoidance of the attribution that one is a deliberate manipulator" (p. 34).

Since impression management strategies are employed by interactants to socially construct a desired identity, future studies could survey target audiences to see if their perception or impressions match the organization's own understanding of its identity.

Because organizational culture was not considered in this study, future research could investigate cultural influences on interaction with online constituencies, e.g., does organizational culture affect the type of IMS employed? To what extent is an organization's culture reflected in their online use of IMS?

Of the 40 Fortune 500 companies that have corporate-authored blogs, one, Wal-Mart, has been the target of a particularly scathing adversarial blog. Because blogs offer a widely accessible instant form of communication, yet another interesting area for future research would be to investigate use of them to see if they could be an effective channel for countering negative public opinion in the face of extreme criticism. This would add to research begun by Sweetser and Metzgar (2007).

It would also be interesting to compare CEO "blog speak" to internal memos, documents, and other traditional forms of communication to explore differences in types of impression management strategies used in different communication channels.

Finally, there is virtually no literature examining how IMS may change in the long-term, as certain environmental changes occur, e.g., a public crisis, or the economy changes, e.g., a recession, or the culture changes, e.g., replacement of current CEO. A unique aspect of this line of research is that, because CMC can be downloaded, copied, pasted, forwarded, saved, and printed. The data is available almost indefinitely, unlike FtF transactions, so scholars can conduct longitudinal studies and investigate the long-term effects of impression management activities. This would help close a significant gap in this line of research (Bolino & Turnley, 2008, p. 1089).

Managing identity is not a new goal for organizations, but there are new challenges and opportunities with computer-mediated communication that have yet to be fully understood. As the "face" of the intimidating or impersonal corporation, executive bloggers must also simultaneously manage impressions for themselves while at the same time helping the organization "maintain suitable alignment between their identity claims, their projected images,

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and their acquired reputation" (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, p. 410). And unlike other more traditional communication channels where an organization's own discourse primarily shaped its identity, the two-way nature of blogs, non-members to post contradictory claims about the organization in a publicly visible way, thus contributing to the communication processes that shape an organization's identity.

Unfettered by time or geographic constraints, blogging is one way organizations can manage identity goals to both broad audiences and key constituencies, and simultaneously realize a plethora of other benefits, such as encouraging authentic interaction with various constituencies, overwriting and responding to critical public and media discourse with its own compelling narrative, creating closer relationships with consumers of the organization's products and services by being responsive to their concerns and feedback, and directly sharing news that can positively influence public perception of the organization.

Managing impressions in online channels will continue to be critical to achieving identity goals, especially as organizations come to increasingly rely on new technology as a part of everyday organizational life. The findings from this study begin to lay the groundwork for the further investigation and understanding of communication processes organizations undertake to manage such goals in computer-mediated communication channels.

APPENDIX A: TABLES

**Table 1: Sampled Data**

| Blogger | Total Paragraphs | Total Posts | Blog Start Date | Blog Stop Date |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| J.W. Marriott | 1,712 | 343 | Jan. 15, 2007 | Still blogging |
| Bob Lutz | 1,030 | 103 | Jan. 25, 2005 | April 30, 2010 |
| John Mackey | 625 | 26 | Sep. 28, 2005 | Still blogging |
| Justin Rattner | 227 | 21 | June 26, 2006 | Aug. 16, 2010 |
| Jonathan Schwartz | 2,169 | 241 | June 28, 2004 | Jan. 28, 2010 |

**Table 2: Impression Management Strategies**

| Presentation Strategy | Presentation Goal | Example of Presentation Behaviors |
|---|---|---|
| Self-Promotion | Present self as competent | Talks about own or company's accomplishments<br>Talks about own or company's expertise<br>Talks about importance of organization<br>Talks about quality of product/service |
| Ingratiation | Presents self as likeable | Compliments or praises others<br>Commends others for accomplishments or expertise<br>Acknowledges others competencies |
| Exemplification | Presents self as morally worthy | Talks about giving back to the community<br>Asserts willingness to do the right thing despite costs<br>Gives of his own time to help out or get it right<br>Talks about working long hours or after hours |
| Intimidation | Presents self as threatening | Challenges others to disagree with statements<br>Threatens employees with disciplinary action<br>Disparages a competitor or their products or services |
| Supplication | Presents self as needing help | Admits doesn't have all the answers<br>Confesses when something is beyond area of expertise<br>Asks readers for more information<br>Asks for assistance |

Source: Adapted from Jones and Pittman's (1982) taxonomy of impression management strategies and Bolino and Turnley's (1999) Impression Management Scale.

**Table 3: Frequencies for each IMS overall and across bloggers**

| Category | Self-Promotion | Ingratiation | Exemplification | Intimidation | Supplication |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lutz/GM | 46.85 | 27.62 | 10.84 | 5.59 | 9.09 |
| Mackey/Whole Foods | 35.59 | 18.86 | 33.10 | 6.05 | 6.41 |
| Marriott | 27.93 | 49.16 | 20.11 | 0.00 | 2.79 |
| Rattner/Intel | 44.29 | 35.71 | 14.29 | 4.29 | 1.43 |
| Schwartz/Sun | 45.51 | 25.75 | 13.17 | 4.19 | 11.38 |
| AVERAGE | 40.03 | 31.42 | 18.30 | 4.02 | 6.22 |

APPENDIX B: LIST OF BLOG POSTINGS

**Still Open for Business** - Posted by Bob Lutz, April 7, 2005

**Solstice Delivers** - Posted by Bob Lutz, July 25, 2005

**How You Can Help Hurricane Victims** - Posted by Bob Lutz, August 31, 2005

**Awareness is Everything** - Posted by Bob Lutz, August 11, 2005

**Passing the Corvette Baton** - Posted by Bob Lutz, October 27, 2005

**Happy Holidays from FastLane** - Posted by Bob Lutz, December 22, 2005

**One for the Ages** - Posted by Bob Lutz, January 9, 2006

**A Friendly Reminder** - Posted by Bob Lutz, January 7, 2006

**E-Flex Update** - Posted by Bob Lutz, June 19, 2006

**The Wonderful World of Oz** - Posted by Bob Lutz, October 11, 2007

**Thank You, Citizens of Volt Nation** - Posted by Bob Lutz, April 1, 2008

**Our Suggested Holiday Reading List** - Posted by Bob Lutz, December 22, 2008

**You're Not Rid of Me Yet** - Posted by Bob Lutz, February 9, 2009

**The New GM: Poised for Success** - Posted by Bob Lutz, April 30, 2010

**CTS-V Answers the Challenge** - Posted by Bob Lutz, October 29, 2009

**Stupid Human Trick** - Posted by Bob Lutz, May 1, 2009

**Jetting Around** - Posted by Bob Lutz, August 5, 2007

**Chicago and More** - Posted by Bob Lutz, February 9, 2007

**Summer Update** - Posted by Bob Lutz, July 14, 2006

**Weekend with a 'Bu** - Posted by Bob Lutz, July 27, 2007

**To Brazil and Back** - Posted by Bob Lutz, June 22, 2005

**Only the Best** - Posted by Bob Lutz, June 10, 2005

**(Almost) Summer Driving** - Posted by Bob Lutz, June 2, 2005

**GM Charging Ahead with Volt** - Posted by Bob Lutz, March 24, 2007

**Let Me Tell You a Few Things...** - Posted by Bob Lutz, April 19, 2007

**Global A-Go-Go** - Posted by Bob Lutz, April 5, 2007

**Showing the Goods** - Posted by Bob Lutz, January 11, 2007

**The People Have Spoken…** - Posted by Bob Lutz, May 3, 2007

**Rethinking the Social Responsibility of Business** - Posted by John Mackey, September 28, 2005

**Back To Blogging** - Posted by John Mackey, May 21, 2008

**Creating the High Trust Organization** - Posted by John Mackey, March 9, 2010

**An Open Letter to Michael Pollan** - Posted by John Mackey, May 26, 2006

**Dear Stakeholders,** - Posted By John Mackey, July 17, 2007

**Keeping Our Executive Team Together** - Posted by John Mackey, May 12, 2010

**Our 80th Anniversary** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, May 23, 2007

**A Tip on Tipping in Restaurants** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, October 8, 2007

**Celebrating My Birthday at Camelback Inn** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, March 27, 2008

**How Do I Blog?** – Posted by J. W. Marriott,  July 24, 2008

**Living a Healthy Life at Renaissance Clubsport** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, August 11, 2008

**Remembering Slinging Sammy Baugh** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, January 29, 2009

**Delivering the News, and the Best Customer Service** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, April 15, 2009

**Being a Friend to Our Local Communities** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, May 13, 2009

**Marriott's Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, May 27, 2009

**My Message to The Class Of 2009: There is Light at the End of the Tunnel** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, June 4, 2009

**Health Care Coverage for Our Marriott Associates** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, July 9, 2009

**Statement Related to Jakarta Explosion** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, July 16, 2009

**What's in the Marriott Name?** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, July 16, 2009

**Marriott Celebrates 20 Years in Eastern Europe** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, October 20, 2009

**Colombia: The Newest Stamp on My Passport** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, October 23, 2009

**Analysis Is the Key to Making Good Decisions** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, November 5, 2009

**Hosting North America's Premiere Polka Weekend** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, December 21, 2009

**The Earthquake in Haiti** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, January 14, 2010

**Towneplace Suites Spreads Warmth to Children's Hospitals** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, January 22, 2010

**Celebrating the First Marriott-Branded Hotel Built On U.S. Tribal Land** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, February 25, 2010

**Marriott Welcomes the First Hotels to the Autograph Collection** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, March 18, 2010

**Taking in Some History and Spending Time with Family "Across the Pond"** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, June 17, 2010

**Launching a Loyalty Program for Our Ritz-Carlton Customers** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, September 14, 2010

**Partnering With Ctrip: China's Largest Online Travel Booking Website** – Posted by J. W.

Marriott, December 22, 2010

**Congratulating the Fairfield Inn & Suites Small Business Challenge Winner: Ecycler** –

Posted by J. W. Marriott, March 8, 2011

**"Hands-On" Teaching Is Key to Success** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, July 18, 2011

**Blogging with "The Boss Man" - Our Summer Interns** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, August 8,

2011

**Making the Tough Call** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, August 22, 2011

**Fairfield Inn & Suites Prepares Parents for College** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, August 30,

2011

**Booking With Marriott While on the Move** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, September 29, 2011

**The Super Bowl and Super Brands** – Posted by J. W. Marriott, February 6, 2012

**The end of applications?** – Posted by Justin Rattner, August 10, 2006

**Mind the Gap** – Posted by Justin Rattner, December 4, 2006

**Polaris Points the Way to Terascale Computing** – Posted by Justin Rattner, December 18,

2006

**Your Cards and Letters** – Posted by Justin Rattner, July 7, 2006

**The Green Flash** – Posted by Justin Rattner, June 26, 2006

**Cool Codes** – Posted by Justin Rattner, September 1, 2006

**80 Isn't Nearly Enough** – Posted by Justin Rattner, February 20, 2007

**Tera-Scale: What Would We Do with All These Cores and How Would We Feed Them?** –

Posted by Justin Rattner, February 20, 2007

**Intel, WiMAX – The Role of Technical Policymaking** – Posted by Justin Rattner, November 19, 2007

**Improving Energy Efficiency across the Technology Ecosystem** – Posted by Justin Rattner, September 14, 2007

**Less is More: Increasing the Dynamic Operating Range of Intel Processors and Chipsets** – Posted by Justin Rattner, July 31, 2008

**Introducing two "Universal Parallel Computing Research Centers"** – Posted by Justin Rattner, March 19, 2008

**Immersive Science** – Posted by Justin Rattner, November 20, 2008

**Rattner: The Promise of Wireless Power** – Posted by Justin Rattner, October 2, 2008

**Celebrate Inventor's Day…5 Predictions from the CTO** – Posted by Justin Rattner, February 11, 2009

**Get Out the Tech Vote at CES** – Posted by Justin Rattner, January 6, 2009

**Talk from the Tech Industry: Letter from Intel to the Incoming Obama CTO** – Posted by Justin Rattner, January 19, 2009

**Announcing the Intel Visual Computing Institute** – Posted by Justin Rattner, May 12, 2009

**Driving Enterprise R&D: the SAP and Intel Collaboratory** – Posted by Justin Rattner, October 19, 2009

**And the Winners Are….** – Posted by Justin Rattner, September 17, 2009

**Intel and DARPA Collaborate on $49M Research Effort in Extreme Computing** – Posted by Justin Rattner, August 16, 2010

**Competition in the Software Industry** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, July 18, 2004

**$1/cpu/hour - the industry's first "computing plan"** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, September 25, 2004

**Bubbles Precede Build Outs** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, February 19, 2005

**The Analog Hole in Your Datacenter** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, August 20, 2005

**A Simple Request to Sun's Employees** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, September 16, 2005

**Recipe for Winning Chip Battles** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, November 11, 2005

**Recommended Reading** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, February 10, 2006

**We're the Dot in Web 2.0?** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, July 25, 2006

**Tomorrow's Fortune 500** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, November 28, 2006

**Moving A Petabyte of Data** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, March 12, 2007

**Blackbox on a Shake Table** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, June 10, 2007

**Will We Make a Dent?** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, July 11, 2007

**Value of Design** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, September 25, 2007

**ZFS Puts Net App Viability at Risk?** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, October 24, 2007

**Solaris and Dell… and Virtualization, Of Course** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, November 14, 2007

**The World's Largest Supercomputing Cloud** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, March 3, 2008

**Who Picked Your Search Engine?** – Posted by Jonathan Schwartz, August 25, 2004

APPENDIX C: CODEBOOK

Instructions for Coders:

1. You are looking for evidence of the use of five different types of impression management strategies in five weblogs.

2. Read the entire post before coding any data.

3. Review Table 2 and familiarize yourself with types of IMS that are likely to be present.

4. Read each paragraph and note any instance of IMS use.
   a. Code as SP if blogger uses Self-Promotion (talks about his skills or accomplishments. Talks about the organization's capabilities or accomplishments. Talks about his own importance or importance to the organization. Talks about importance of the organization and/or its products and services to the community, workforce, industry, etc.)
   b. Code as I if blogger uses Ingratiation (compliments, praises or positively recognizes blog readers, a vendor, a customer, or an employee for their accomplishments, skills, products, or services.)
   c. Code as E if the blogger uses Exemplification (characterizes himself or the organization as having good morals or values, taking the high road, doing the right thing even if it costs more, giving back to the community because it's the right thing to do, etc.)
   d. Code as N if the blogger uses Intimidation (threatens or aggressively challenges blog readers, another company, employees, vendors, the media, or other people or entities, dares a competitor or employee to question what he's asserting, etc.)
   e. Code as SU if the blogger uses Supplication (defers to others as having more expertise or knowledge, asks for help, admits he does not know or understand something)

5. If the same IMS is used more than once within each paragraph, only code it once.

6. Do not code comments or hyperlinks.

7. Do not code guest-authored content or any content by others that has been republished on the blog.

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF CODING SHEET

GM – Bob Lutz - April 7, 2005

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1.** | **Still Open for Business** | |
| **2.** | Some of you may remember my opening salvo for this blog back in January: "After years of reading and reacting to the automotive press it is finally my turn to put the shoe on the other foot. In the age of the Internet, anyone can be a journalist." | |
| **3.** | What began as an experiment has become an important means of communication for GM. It has given me, personally, an opportunity to get much closer with you, the public. Often, I find your comments insightful and compelling. At times your criticism is harsh. But the fact that you have remained interested and continue to have faith in our efforts to develop great products is a worthy motivator. | |
| **4.** | Questions have been raised as to whether I will continue to be involved in FastLane given my re-focused responsibilities. The answer is an unequivocal "yes." From its inception this blog has been a forum for GM's leadership to discuss important issues with a spotlight on product... product plans, product virtues and truths. In fact, I hope to see more GM leaders begin to engage in this conversation on the FastLane over the coming weeks. | |
| **5.** | We hear your words loud and clear. We're redoubling our efforts to build great cars and trucks and we'll continue to talk about them, right here. | |

| **Self-Promo.** | **Ingrat.** | **Exemp.** | **Intimid.** | **Supp.** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

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