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An Analysis of Employee Print Media Content

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An Analysis of

Employee Print Media Content

(TITLE)

BY

Michelle M. Accardi

THESIS

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An Analysis Of Employee Print Media Content

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Running Head: EMPLOYEE PRINT MEDIA

Abstract

This content analysis studies an area that has had limited research: university print media. University print media helps maintain communication between management and employees. Past research links three communication categories together: organizing, relationship and change. Organizing is found to be the dominant content category in business newsletters, according to past research.

The uses and gratifications theory, exchange theory and structural-functional theory all play an integral part in the communication process. Continuous two-way communication between management and each public can lead to a successful organization. Internal communication, wants vs. needs, and finding common ground are additional variables that determine the effect that employee print media will have on a given organization and the management/employee relationship. Most of the research completed concerned specific content recommendations which incorporate a combination of the three communication functions.

Emphasis of organizing, relationship and change in University employee print media is the first research question. Overall, relationship was found to be the dominant factor, followed by organizing and change. Only one university had a higher percentage for organizing rather than relationship.

The second research question compares the totals and percentages against proposed content recommendations of past research. Relationship was found to have the highest percentage of column inches, followed by organizing and change.

Many of the earlier mentioned specific content recommendations were found to be present in the University employee print media. One conclusion that is formed from this content analysis is that each organization is unique, therefore, there may not be a universal set standard for the three communication functions. Each organization will need to research ways to find the content that will best relate to their specific organization goals and relationships between management and employees.

Introduction

Publicity was the precursor to public relations. Today, the term public relations has become much more diverse, including such terms as: communication, public affairs, issues management, government relations, investor relations, employee relations, advertising and promotions (Lesly, 1991).

With the wide variety of areas that are included, it is not surprising that a single definition of public relations has not been widely accepted. A study conducted by Rex Harlow showed that the definition of public relations has changed over the years (Hiebert, 1988). A definition given by Lesly (1991) defines public relations as:

helping an organization and its publics adapt mutually to each other...that definition conveys the vital fact that the essence is mutual accommodation, rather than one-sided imposition of a viewpoint" (p. 5).

In public relations, there are two broad classes of publics: internal and external. Internal publics are groups within the organization and external publics are groups outside the organization. External publics can range from media, government, community, to consumers. Internal publics include such groups as investors and employees.

A unique channel is required to reach each public, whether internal or external, because individual publics have different needs (Newsom & Carrell, 1991). Shockley-Zalabak defines channels as "the means for transmission

of messages" (p. 52). There are several available channels, such as face-to-face interaction, group meetings, memos, letters and use of computer technology.

In any given situation, a channel is chosen for different reasons. Baird (1977) claims that the source's attitudes toward the receiver and the message are reflected through the chosen channel. Lewis (1987) adds speed, feedback, selectivity and monetary cost to the list of variables that decide the chosen channel. Shockley-Zalabak (1991) named power and status, work requirements, technical capability and judgments about channel effectiveness as elements that influence choice of one channel over another.

There was a time when internal and external communication were viewed as distinctly separate, but that is slowly changing. Foltz (1982) states that "the fine line between internal and external communication is fading, and internal public affairs is moving to the bottom line--where it should have been from the beginning" (p. 29). 'Bottom line' refers to a higher level of importance. This indicates that internal communication is perceived as equally important to an organization's success as is external communication.

Organizations have also realized that there is more to business success than just pleasing the customer. Other important organization "publics" include investors,

employees, consumers and the community (Cantor 1989).

The key to success appears to be continuous two-way communication between management and each public.

Employee Print Media

One division of internal public relations that requires constant attention is employee relations. Effective employee relations help construct the foundation for a strong organization. Although there are many ways management communicates with employees, an area of particular interest is the employee newsletter or newspaper. Oftentimes, print media is the most universal form of communication between management and employees. Vice President of Cuneo Press, Inc., Fred H. Sides summed up the importance of print media when he stated that employees need the publications to keep up with the activities of the company (McCahey, 1968).

However, instead of thinking the newsletters serve a purpose only for management, companies are now moving to the idea that employee relations means actually having relations (communicating) with the employee. Kampe and Christenson believe that "it is essential to avoid the trap of becoming 'too corporate' and insensitive to the human side of the organization" (Reuss & Silvis (eds.), 1981, 111). This means that at the same time these newsletters are providing for management, they are also

providing for the employee. Of course, this depends on the employee receiving the proper message and responding accordingly. Bivins (1991) summed up this idea by stating that "in the ideal organizational structure, communication flows vertically (upward and downward) and horizontally" (p. 97). Although print media is a useful source for downward communication, it also presents a channel for employee feedback, such as letters to the editor, articles written by employees and surveys.

Companies are also realizing that the information that is important to management may differ from that which is important to employees (Pavlik, Nwosu & Ettel, 1982). Benn (1982) adds that the temptation is to "communicate in the ways most convenient and comfortable to management" (p. 143). Northart (1982) claims the "one key to success...is the relevance of the communication to the bottom-line interests of the employees" (p. 4). This can range anywhere from where the employee fits into the company to future plans for the company. The basic idea is that employee print media should cover topics that are most important to the employee.

Introduction to the Communication Functions

Employee print media is one way management can provide employees with information that it deems valuable to everyone in the organization. Cole (1981) stated that

the house organ (newsletter/newspaper) is "the most popular method of getting information to personnel, and the cornerstone of any internal communications program" (p. 133).

Farace, Monge and Russell (1977) break communication down into three categories: system level, function and structure. System level communication consists of four major system levels: 1) an individual communicating to and receiving communication from the larger environment in the organization, 2) two-person units such as manager-subordinate, 3) group, a set of individuals bound by common work or friendship relations and 4) organization as a whole, meaning collective behavior is at interest.

Function deals with the role of communication to achieve goals and objectives within the organization. Communication functions are explained in further detail later in this section.

According to Farace et al., structure deals with the patterns or repetitions that occur in the communication exchange. The threesome believe that structure and function are distinctly different areas, but they are also related to and rely on each other. For the purposes of this paper, function is the main focus.

Organizational communication functions have been written about for many years. There has yet to be an

accepted definition of categories for these functions. For the purposes of this study, organizational communication can be categorized by how it fulfills each of three communication functions. Farace, Monge and Russell (1977) devised a structural functionalism model, which consists of three communication functions: 1) production, 2) maintenance and 3) innovation. The production function deals with activities that lead to the output of an organization's product or service. The maintenance function involves regulation of an employee's feelings and the value of work relationships, as well as policies and rules. The innovation function concerns change within the organization.

Conrad (1985) also discusses three communication functions similar to production, maintenance and innovation. They are the command, relational and ambiguity-management functions. Conrad believes that the command function relies on direction and feedback. Direction involves sending and decoding the message correctly and feedback relates to whether accurate feedback was given and perceived correctly.

The command function is similar to the production function of Farace et al. because it specifies how things should be done.

The second function, relational, deals with working relationships. Working relationships are not voluntarily chosen, which means they are generally less stable than natural relationships. Because of the lack of stability, perceptions tend to play a major part in influencing an employee's actions. Conrad points out that "since perceptions influence a worker's decision on whether to follow a command, the relational and command functions are interdependent and interactive" (p. 12). Without one, the other function could not be as successful.

The third function, ambiguity-management, has similarities to the earlier mentioned innovation function because it deals with adaptation to the organization and/or the organization's adaptation to a situation. This function uses communication to make sense out of a situation (create structure) and analyze a problem to find the best solution. Through communication, decision-making is improved and ambiguity is reduced (Conrad, 1985). In his conclusion, Conrad argues that "for any organization to succeed, each of the communication functions must operate at or above some minimal level of effectiveness" (p. 13).

However, Eisenberg (Daniels & Spiker, 1987) suggests that the functions of organizational communication are all related to the reduction of uncertainty. Although some companies need predictability to survive, he believes

there are companies that count on the uncertainty because it serves a purpose for the individual or the entire organization. Eisenberg claims that strategic ambiguity can "promote cohesion by highlighting organization members' agreement on abstract, general ideas and obscuring their disagreements over specific details" (p. 27). Since people have different ideas about the meaning of words, it is impossible for there to be complete understanding or agreement within the organization at all times.

Shockley-Zalabak (1991) adds to the discussion by describing the functional approach as a way to understand messages and how they move through organizations. Message functions are defined as "what communication does or how it contributes to the overall functioning of the organization" (p. 45). The three categories of message functions are: (1) organizing, messages that establish the rules and regulations of a certain environment; (2) relationship, communication that helps individuals define their roles and assess the compatibility of individual and organizational goals; and (3) change, messages that help organizations adapt what they do and how they do it.

These functions are important for creating a healthy, open system. An open system is one that constantly takes in new information and maintains the lines of communication within the organization (Shockley-Zalabak, 1991). Since

information processing is considered a primary function of organizational communication systems, past research of employee print media content can be categorized as to how it addresses the three variables mentioned above.

While these functional approaches provide a theoretical framework for understanding employee print media, they also help provide insight into the specific content of employee print media. Several theories that will aid in the understanding of employee newsletters include the "uses and gratifications" theory, the structural-functional theory and the exchange theory. These theories will be discussed in terms of how they reflect the functions of organizational communication.

"Uses and Gratifications" Theory

One approach to determining the appropriate content of newsletters employs the "uses and gratifications" theory. This theory states that the content of a newsletter should be useful to employees and gratify their needs regarding organizing, relationship and change; it focuses on employee interests (Netteburg, 1984).

The "uses and gratifications" theory attempts to bridge the informational gap between management and employees, therefore creating stronger relationships, clarifying organizing discrepancies and enhancing effective change. As mentioned earlier, management was the main communicator

at one time. Pavlik (1987) defined this theory as "an attempt to look at the process of communication from the point of view of the receiver--in this case the employee" (p. 111-12). The key point is that the audience is considered an active participant by using the media, rather than a passive receiver. Being active, the employee needs information from the three functional areas to perform productively.

Viewing the employee as an active participant, Pavlik, Vastyan and Maher (1990) applied the "uses and gratifications" approach to study employee readership of a hospital newsletter. Pavlik et al. believe that people have different reasons for reading employee newsletters. Consequently, readership increases for certain types of newsletter content. By using a three part questionnaire which covered readership patterns, importance of different reasons for reading the newsletter and background information of the employee, Pavlik et al. found that employees do have content preferences. Because of this, stories and other content can be targeted for particular employee publics. The organizing, relationship and change functions define how information is processed in an organization; therefore, the three communication functions can build the foundation to provide the information that employees desire.

Pavlik, Nwosu and Ettel (1982) attempted to discover why employees read company newsletters by applying the "uses and gratifications" theory. They addressed three variables: 1) length of employment, 2) position in the decision-making hierarchy and 3) level of career aspirations. Neither length of employment nor employee position in the decision-making hierarchy were found to be related to higher readership, however, the level of career aspirations was positively related to readership of a company newsletter. Since employees have different reasons for reading newsletters, it seems evident that the content of the employee newsletter could be a determinant of employee readership. If this is true, management needs to evaluate the reading audience to find the content that would meet the needs of their particular target audience.

Netteburg (1984) found the "uses and gratifications" approach relevant for his study concerning readers of a church publication. His study differs a little from research mentioned previously by asking "the uses to which people put the media and how those uses gratify certain needs" (p. 65). Netteburg incorporated the importance of the organizing and relationship functions by arguing that employees have different needs, such as social (relationship) or work-related (organizing), which affect

their reading of the newsletter. Therefore, given differences in their perceived needs, there should be differences in who reads the newsletter and what they read.

It was believed that a target audience of younger males was left out of a church publication readership. Using three scales to measure readership, Netteburg found that their main audience was active members of the church. Integration (the employee's involvement with work and extracurricular activities at the organization) played a major role in the members' readership.

Netteburg's findings suggest that content will have an impact on audience readership. The organizing and relationship functions are once again supported as important content for employee print media.

Structural-functional Theory and Exchange Theory

Prior-Miller (1989) adds two more applicable theories. The first approach to newsletter content deals with social (relationship) and functional (organizing) integration. Prior-Miller believes "the structural-functional theory suggests that social phenomena occur as a result of the interaction of social structures and the functions that those structures serve" (Botan & Hazleton, p. 75). This theory argues that a bond exists between the organizing and relationship functions, which was also supported earlier

by Netteburg (1984), Pavlik et al. (1982) and Pavlik et al. (1990).

The structural-functional theory also proposes that in order to understand an organization, a researcher should analyze the whole instead of individual departments. In other words, Prior-Miller suggests looking at the communication functions as working together instead of as separate entities, which is a perspective shared with Farace et al. (1977), Conrad (1985) and Shockley-Zalabak (1991).

Consequently, Prior-Miller (1989) also applies the exchange theory which states that "social structures result from social exchanges between individuals" (p. 71). Simply, the organization would not be able to exist without relationships. Employee publications were mentioned earlier as one way to strengthen management/employee relationships. Therefore, it would seem natural that the relationship function would be a mandatory variable in employee publications.

This theory also holds that people remain in social relationships when benefits exceed costs (Botan & Hazleton, 1989). If this is true, then, from the perspective of the exchange theory, the strength of an organization may lie in the relationship function or in the employee's

understanding of and effective use of organizational communication functions.

Newsletters can help reduce costs resulting from ambiguity and confusion over organizing, relationship and change functions. By effectively addressing the three communication functions, management can promote a more rewarding exchange for everyone.

Additional Factors

Limited Research on Change

All of the preceding information has focused on content relevant to organizing and relationship functions. There seems to be a lack of research concerning the change function. Managers need to be careful not to overlook this function. Organizations are ever-changing. For this reason, Ellison (1980) states that internal communication systems must be continually planned, implemented and evaluated to be effective. Change (adaptation/ambiguity reduction) is imperative to keep an organization successful. If this is not the case, rumors, misinformation and speculation will become part of the norm concerning communication.

Internal Communication

As mentioned earlier, the perceived value of internal communications is increasing. One implication of the value of internal communication is its apparent contribution

to the image of organizations and companies externally. Robert N. Mara (1982) suggested that employees will be more productive if they feel good about the work they are doing and the organization they are working for. Simply put, "Employees want to know they count" (p. 26). They are in an organization and they want to feel they are part of the group (Cantor, 1989).

Not only do employees want to belong, they also need to feel a sense of importance concerning status and function (Cutlip & Center, 1952). This would mean that the relationship and organizing function both play a big part in employee satisfaction and productivity. As satisfaction increases, employees communicate positively about their organization to external publics.

Wants vs. Needs

To secure employee satisfaction, there may be more to focus on than giving employees what they need. Goodman and Ruch (1982) suggest that management must also consider what employees want. Through their studies they found that employees' view of senior management influenced workers' attitudes, which relates back to the relationship function. Employees want to see management play a personal role in the communication process. However, before that role can be filled, management should be aware of certain problems. Cole (1981) found that "finding the happy blend

of what employees want and what they need to know is the greatest challenge facing internal communicators" (p. 137). The content of the newsletter should establish a common ground between what management thinks employees need and what employees think they need.

Finding Common Ground

Part of the problem with newsletters and newspapers is finding that common ground between management and employees. Both management and employees have different views concerning the content of print media. Researchers continue to debate about the dominance of concentrating on one function versus another. Sperber (1982) claims that a bond between management and workers can be easily strengthened if a newsletter contains more than social events (Sperber, 1982). Bailey (Lesly, 1981) mentions a survey of 46,000 U.S. and Canadian organizations which found that "employees are interested in information about the company itself, and their future in it" (p. 229).

Although there is clearly a need for the organizing function, research has also shown that the relationship function is just as necessary. Newsom and Carrell (1991) list employee work-related accomplishments as a common topic among newsletters. They explain further that corporations and institutions use newsletters to "give employees, retirees and others who identify with the

organization a common experience and a feeling of belonging, and to promote identity and unity" (p. 381). If researchers cannot decide on either the organizing or the relationship function, maybe the answer is both.

Specific Content Recommendations

There is a great deal of speculation concerning the content of employee newsletters. Most of the advice incorporates a combination of the organizing, relationship and change functions. For example, Brubaker (1990) listed several "tried-and-true" topics that employees want to read about, including fringe benefits, features on employees' outside activities, changes taking place within the company and profiles of local managers.

Cole (1981) added several mandatory topics to the list, including safety and health, opportunities for advancement, classified ads, and deaths, retirements and service announcements. Bailey (Lesly, 1991) stated important topics to employees are organization plans, personnel policies and practices, productivity improvement, and effects of external events on the job. Also of interest would be the organization's competitive position, news of other divisions, the organization's use of profits, its stand on current issues, and community involvement. It seems that news about the organization and how it affects

the employee are popular topics, which support all three functions.

There seems to be little research on trying to promote employee print media. Bailey (Lesly, 1991) takes a different angle by suggesting that editors should try to incorporate ideas that increase readership. Included in these would be the use of features, question-and-answer columns, humor, crossword puzzles, cartoons, contests, and directories. Newsom & Carrell (1991) agree that humor can be incorporated as long as it is written in good taste. All of these support the relationship function and can be used to benefit the company and employee, as well as be entertaining.

Because there is no set standard for employee print media content, it seems impossible to come up with a universally acceptable answer for all employee print media at this time. However, Bivins (1991) prescribed an overall measurement of content areas for an employee audience. His divisions allow 50% space for organization information, 20% employee information, 20% relevant noncompany information and 10% small talk and personals. No definitions were provided for the separate divisions.

After accepting the importance of listening to employee needs and expectations, management may adopt a two-way communication system. Hill & Knowlton, Inc. (1975) claim

that the "trend in employee communication today is to stop beefing up the transmission devices and start refining the receiving system" (p. 167). Responding to employee concerns is a main part of the entire two-way communication relationship and it serves all three communication functions.

Whatever information is presented, the organization should have goals that the newsletter helps to achieve. These goals could be relationship-oriented, such as showing employees that management cares about them, or they could be organizing-related, like convincing employees that the organization is a good place to work (Cole, 1981). It may be difficult for an organization to succeed no matter how strong the organizing and relationship functions are if there are no goals or direction. Without a focus, change cannot be managed effectively and without effective change, the organization cannot succeed. Ellison also claimed that many assume that just because everyone is at the same place, they all share the same information and hold the same beliefs. Without evaluation and feedback, management has no way of knowing what employees think except through assumption.

Nager and Truitt (1987) suggest a communications audit that could be used to help clarify organizing, relationship and change functions. This audit includes reviewing

surveys/newsletters, interviewing employees, and then presenting a proposal for improvement. A communications audit is one way an organization can find out how well they communicate with their employees. Management can test their coverage of the earlier mentioned management and employee wants and needs.

Statement of the Problem

It is obvious that more attention should be focused on employee needs when making content decisions for employee print media. There are many ideas about what specific content should be in a newsletter/newspaper, but agreement concerning whether or not the content should address the functions of organizing, relationship and change or how much of each is still unclear.

All of this literature has addressed nonacademic organizations. This study seeks to apply the theory from previous research on newsletters to the university setting. Results should show whether or not the theory and advice regarding employee print media is reflected equally well in an academic setting.

Newsom and Carrell (1991) believe "employee publications can help generate support among employees for corporate goals and objectives" (p. 332). If used effectively, publications strengthen the relationship between management and employees. Because this relationship

is so important, an organization should be aware of the information that the employee needs and wants to receive from the newsletter. A misunderstanding of these needs could cause serious problems if upper management believes that employees are receiving the information employees desire when, in fact, they are not.

Considering the previous research, it is possible that University employee print media may not contain the information employees desire with the emphasis deserved. With management just recently beginning to realize the importance of employee uses of employee publications, there needs to be some type of adaptation to the new information. An evaluation of the employee newsletter/newspaper would assure that employees receive the needed information. This study evaluates employee print media for the purpose of discovering content emphasis. This study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) How much emphasis is placed on each of the three communication functions in University employee print media?
- 2) How does the emphasis as expressed by total column inches and percentage of space compare to the proposed content recommendations of past research?

Methodology

After learning how the three communication functions fit in with organizational communication, a deeper understanding of the importance of the content in employee print media can be gained. Finding a way to analyze the content in university employee newsletters/newspapers was not easy because there are many different styles and formats that can be utilized. A content analysis was thought to be an effective method to use to answer the presented questions and provide a start toward a virtually untouched, but relevant, area.

Three concepts help define the term content analysis: 1) systematic, meaning the content to be analyzed is selected according to explicit and consistent rules; 2) objective, refers to eliminating or controlling personal biases which may affect the findings; and 3) quantitative, which adds precision to the results found (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). Wimmer & Dominick (1987) believe that each medium has its own unique aspects of content that can be used for a content analysis. For example, this study will concentrate on the three communication functions provided by Farace, Monge & Russell (1977), Conrad (1985) and Shockley-Zalabak (1991).

There are many different ways to use a content analysis, for example, testing hypotheses, assessing the

image of particular groups in society and establishing a starting point for studies (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). The intention of this study is to identify what exists concerning the three communication functions in university employee print media.

Wimmer and Dominick (1987) list ten steps involved in completing a content analysis: 1) formulate the research question, 2) define the population in question, 3) select an appropriate sample from the population, 4) select and define a unit of analysis, 5) construct the categories of content to be analyzed, 6) establish a quantitative system, 7) train coders and conduct a pilot study, 8) code the content, 9) analyze the collected data and 10) draw conclusions and search for indications (p. 171). The following procedure section will explain and describe the use of these ten steps within this study.

Procedures

A total of 14 universities were contacted by telephone and asked to send employee print media. Of these, ten responded with the requested number of newsletters/newspapers. Eight newsletters were randomly selected by the staff of 10 public universities in Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. These newsletters or newspapers were from the 1991-92 academic school year. A total of 80 newsletters were evaluated.

Out of the 10 universities, nine provided weekly editions of their print media for faculty and staff. Indiana State University produces their newspaper bimonthly. Some of the other schools produce a bimonthly edition over the summer when there is less news to report. The University of Illinois had just moved their public relations department and many of the Fall and Spring editions were unavailable, so smaller, summer editions were submitted. One public for some of the print media was retirees and/or alumni, however, the focus of the media was directed mainly to faculty and staff. The universities ranged in enrollment from 10,000 to 40,000 students (See Appendix A).

The content topics were categorized in terms of the communication functions discussed by Shockley-Zalabak (1991). To check the reliability of the chosen communication function for each content type, five professionals were asked to read definitions of the three functions. Three of the professionals are employed with Eastern Illinois University and two are from businesses in Effingham, Illinois. Each was given 30 notecards (in no particular order) defining different types of content that could appear in an employee print media. Next, each professional was asked to put the content topic under either the organizing, relationship or change function. Although it was explained that each content could fit in two

functions if the participant saw it that way, each content type was put under a single function. The back of each notecard was coded with letters for easy identification. A coder reliability test was used to find the highest percentage of where each content type was placed by the professionals.

The coder reliability test consisted of a simple formula $2(M)/N1+N2$ (Holsti, 1969). The M in the numerator stands for the number of similar answers by each participant, which is multiplied by two. The denominator is reached by adding the number of variables that were used by each participant. For this study $N = 30$, so the constant denominator was 60. Five of the groupings rated 70% or better, the highest percentage being 73. The other five ranged from 67 to 50%, the lowest percentage (See Appendix B).

Two of the content categories were split between the organizing and change functions. The content categories were 1) productivity, sales profits and projections on the company's future and 2) nationwide surveys pertinent to the university employees. There were only two articles that fit into these two categories, which resulted in their not being counted in either category. Sales profit, productivity and nationwide surveys are perhaps closer related to businesses rather than universities. Next,

the content elements chosen to study were divided into the three categories (See Appendix C for category listings and definitions).

The next step entailed the analysis. Each content category was studied in two ways. First, the number of times the category was addressed in each edition was counted. The researcher looked at the heading and introductory paragraphs to determine placement. Second, the amount of space (measured in column inches) devoted to each topic was measured (See Appendices D-M). Both methods signify an aspect of importance as perceived by management or the print media editor. The data were coded and calculated only by the researcher.

Validation is important to assure that a researcher is testing what they are supposed to be testing (Wimmer & Dominick, 1987). To check this, five different participants were given 40 sample articles along with the definitions of the three communication functions. One hundred and eighty of the 200 articles were put in the same categories the researcher put them in.

Results

After calculating the percentage of the number of articles and the total column inches devoted to each communication function category, the following comparisons occurred (See Appendix E). First of all, the relationship

function reflects the highest percentage of articles and the highest number for column inches in nine out of the ten employee print media. Eastern Illinois University was the only newsletter producing a higher percentage, 56.7%, for the organizing function with a 36.4% for the relationship function. Likewise, EIU's column inches were also higher for organizing than for relationship, showing 884 and 593, respectively.

Another finding is the low percentages for the number of articles concerning change, although the majority of column inch totals show a fairly good amount of space devoted to these articles. While there are few clear issues of change, when change issues arise, space is devoted to them. This is especially evident for Michigan State University. The percentage of articles is 7.9%, lower than both the organizing and relationship functions; however, once the column inches are added, the change function total is 396 inches greater than the organizing function.

Out of the ten university employee print media, six showed the relationship function percentages and column inches higher by a large majority. The remaining four universities, Western Illinois University, Northern Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University and Southern Illinois at Edwardsville ended up with close averages

between the organizing and relationship functions. WIU produced the most balanced percentage with the organizing function receiving 46% and the relationship function 47%. As for column inches, only 53.75 column inches came between the organizing and relationship function for SIU-E.

The overall percentages list relationship as the function with the most emphasis, followed by organizing and then change (See Appendix N). Another finding shows that in the percentage of articles totals, the change function (6.8%) is not even one-third of the organizing function (27.2%); however, the change function (2717.25 column inches) is over one-half the organizing column inches total (4022 column inches) (See Appendix O). Again, although less articles fit in the change category, the total column inches show that space is devoted for content related to this category.

In comparison to the earlier mentioned specific content recommendations, many of the suggested topics were included in university employee print media. Brubaker (1990) listed fringe benefits, features on employees' outside activities, changes taking place within the company and profiles of local managers. Few articles related to employees' outside activities included in any of the print media. Most of the stories concerning employees dealt with their dedication or contribution to the organization.

An exact number of each specific content subject was not counted.

Cole (1981) added opportunities for advancement, classified ads, and deaths, retirements and service announcements to the list of content specifics. There was an abundance of these articles throughout the newsletters/newspapers. Also, there were several articles concerning safety and health; however, not as numerous as the previously mentioned topics.

Bailey (Lesly 1991) lists organization plans, personnel policies, productivity improvement and effects of external events on the job as mandatory content categories. These topics fall under the organizing function in this study, meaning they were not as numerous in the percentage of stories, although there was sufficient space devoted to them as shown in the total column inches.

Bailey (Lesly, 1991) suggested that editors should try to incorporate ideas that increase readership, such as features, humor and contests. Michigan State University, the University of Michigan and Northern Illinois University used comicstrips; however, the comics were related to universities. Features were used by all the print media except Eastern Illinois University.

To compare this study's findings to Bivins' (1991) prescribed measurements of 50% organization information,

20% employee information, 20% relevant noncompany information and 10% small talk and personals, one would need clearer definitions of the mentioned categories. If the comparison can be made between the organizing function and organization information, this study's percentage of 27.2% is well below the prescribed 50%.

Discussion

It is interesting to find that the relationship function was emphasized the most in university employee print media. Compared to the prescriptions of earlier mentioned research, organizing seemed to be named as the dominant function. Since past research focuses on non-academic settings, one may be led to believe that employees from different environments require information emphasizing different content areas.

As for the reasoning behind the percentages showing that Eastern Illinois University focuses mainly on the organizing function, there could be many explanations. Eastern's format for its newsletter is unique as compared to the other nine. There are fewer features in EIU's newsletter, which is the main part of the relationship function for the other print media. Additional factors are the events and news that occur when the newsletters were created. If not as many activities that would fall into the relationship category are happening, consequently

there would not be as many articles containing relationship function content.

Something to note about the three functions is that the organizing and change functions are dictated by the university for the most part, meaning that events are going on or policies are changing without the influence of the employees; however, the relationship function is the one that can be accessed easily by employees. For example, contributions, features of departments, and a calendar of events can fill up space when there is no organizing or change news to report.

This leads to another aspect of Eastern Illinois University's newsletter. The size of EIU's print media varied with the different issues, while the other newsletters and newspapers had a fairly consistent page number. Because EIU's newsletter does not focus as much on relationship functions, according to this study, there is not as much information to fill a determined amount of space every week. This may be an area for further research.

Another limitation deals with the universities chosen. There are some obvious differences in size, which could account for differences in available funding and technology that could lead to a difference in content.

There were some problems with the coder reliability test. To be reliable, the percentages should be at least 80%, while the percentages in this content analysis were, at the highest, 73%. Obviously, the definitions for each of the thirty variables should have been more specific. Further research in this area may include several articles for examples of each variable, so the coder is provided with more information.

Although the design of a publication is important, it was not considered for two reasons: 1) Funding for a newsletter can vary from university to university, and 2) Style is considered to be less important to content. This is an area that future study might explore. Another aspect that was not considered in this study was photographs. Due to the fact that pictures add more to the design and, also, cannot be afforded by all universities, it was decided not to include photographs as content.

One area of future study that should be considered is there may be only two communication functions: organizing and relationship. Change may not be a separate category, but simply a part of the organizing and relationship functions.

It is important to note that several limitations accompany the use of a content analysis. Wimmer & Dominick

(1987) claim that the "content analysis alone cannot serve as a basis for making statements about the effects of content on an audience" (p. 170). There is another potential problem with categories and definitions being limited to specific findings of one study. It is important to realize how representative the results are across the realm of communication theory.

The results of this analysis do not set any standards for university employee print media. There is something that can be gained from this information, though. The results here showed that the relationship communication function plays a large role in university employee print media. The organizing function and the change function were shown to play a large role in the print media as well. Past research states that all three communication functions are important, but also that each situation is unique. This only touches the surface of research for an area that well-deserves the attention.

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Appendix B

Coder Reliability Results

2(M)

----- = C.R. (Coder Reliability)

N1 +N2

Person #1	42	Person #2	44
	-- = 70%		-- = 73%
Person #2	60	Person #4	60
Person #1	42	Person #2	34
	-- = 70%		-- = 56.6%
Person #3	60	Person #5	60
Person #1	40	Person #3	36
	-- = 67%		-- = 60%
Person #4	60	Person #4	60
Person #1	42	Person #3	30
	-- = 70%		-- = 50%
Person #5	60	Person #5	60
Person #2	42	Person #4	30
	-- = 70%		-- = 50%
Person #3	60	Person #5	60

Appendix C

Communication Functions

Organizing- messages that establish rules and regulations of a particular environment are a part of this function. Content under this function also convey information about how the organization expects work and what it requires of its members. Other topic areas include defining and clarifying tasks, developing work instructions and evaluating task accomplishment.

- 1) Company's stand on current issues
- 2) University funding - Available scholarships or research funding (grants)
- 3) Fringe Benefits - vacation, time off, retirement/insurance, etc. Programs, opportunity for advancement
- 4) salary policies (raises, possibility of bonuses, deductions)
- 5) Personnel Policy - formal rules within the organization (something as simple as dress code or as strict as state laws)
- 6) University Business - contract negotiations, housing eligibility requirements
- 7) General Information - (University related) - hours building will be open, meeting time and place for whatever group
- 8) Company's Competitive Position - plans for marketing/advertising

Relationship- This function deals with communication that helps individuals define their roles and assess the compatibility of individual and organizational goals. It also helps contribute to an individual's identification or sense of "belonging". This function is referred to as integrative and contributes to employee morale.

- 1) Features on employees' outside activities (hobbies, family, other organizations they are involved with)
- 2) Customers' use of company products (employees taking classes)
- 3) Profiles of local managers (department chairs or deans)
- 4) Features on employees who have contributed to the company (ideas, research or long service)
- 5) The company's involvement in the community
- 6) Features on safety and health (recreation, diet, fitness)
- 7) calendar of events - university-related open to all
- 8) Other - comicstrips, quizzes (related to universities)
- 9) Baby/Wedding announcements
- 10) Honors or awards received by employee
- 11) Feature of employees who passed away or retired
- 12) Feature on an upcoming university event
- 13) University funding - scholarships or research funding (grants) awarded to employees
- 14) Notice of a death or retirement
- 15) Personnel hirings and firings
- 16) Classified Ads

Change- This function includes messages that help organizations adapt what they do and how they do it. Organizational problem-solving, individual decision-making and feedback from the environment are all a part of this function. This function is essential for adaptation to an environment, processing of new ideas and information as well as the altering of existing procedures and processes.

- 1) New or improved company products - new books, new classes or new programs being offered
- 2) Changes taking place within the company (building additions, department move, employee meeting changes)
- 3) Features on upcoming/past conferences and workshops
- 4) Effects of external events (marketplace, legislation, etc. on university and jobs

Other

- 1) Productivity, sales, profits and projections on the company's future
- 2) Nationwide surveys pertinent to the university employees

Appendix D

Eastern Illinois University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 20, 91	27	11	2
Jan. 24, 92	9	9	5
Jan. 31, 92	17	13	0
Feb. 14, 92	20	10	3
March 20, 92	18	13	5
April 17, 92	12	15	1
May 8, 92	16	10	0
June 18, 92	21	9	1
<hr/>			
Totals:	140 56.7%	90 36.4%	17 = 247 6.9%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 20, 91	134	62	23.75
Jan. 24, 92	105.25	47	21
Jan. 31, 92	120.5	60.25	0
Feb. 14, 92	106.75	64.25	7.25
March 20, 92	97	89	16
April 17, 92	89.25	68.5	16
May 8, 92	133.25	106.5	0
June 18, 92	98	95.5	4.5
<hr/>			
Totals:	884 59.5%	593 39.9%	8.5 = 1485.5 .6%

Appendix E

Illinois State University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Aug. 16, 91	3	10	1
Sept. 13, 91	5	15	2
Oct. 18, 91	3	13	1
Nov. 8, 91	5	12	2
Dec. 13, 91	5	19	0
Jan. 17, 92	3	8	5
Feb. 28, 92	4	19	3
March 20, 92	4	13	1
<hr/>			
Totals:	32 20.5%	109 69.9%	15 = 156 9.6%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Aug. 16, 91	15	53.5	5
Sept. 13, 91	19	69	11.5
Oct. 18, 91	15.75	83.5	10.75
Nov. 8, 91	10.75	65	25
Dec. 13, 91	13.25	86.75	0
Jan. 17, 92	30.5	47.5	22.75
Feb. 28, 92	12	80.25	20.25
March 20, 92	9.75	98.5	4.25
<hr/>			
Totals:	126 15.7%	584 72%	99.5 = 809.5 12.3%

Appendix F

Indiana State University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 16, 91	11	20	3
Nov. 11, 91	6	28	1
Nov. 25, 91	5	24	1
Jan. 27, 92	10	19	6
Feb. 10, 92	7	22	1
March 30, 92	4	33	3
April 30, 92	8	26	3
May 18, 92	2	24	1
<hr/>			
Totals:	53 19.8%	196 73.1%	19 = 268 7.1%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 16, 91	68	359.5	19
Nov. 11, 91	23	325.5	4
Nov. 25, 91	13	341.75	8
Jan. 27, 92	32.25	288	38.5
Feb. 10, 92	33.5	404.25	3
March 30, 92	15.5	381.5	8
April 13, 92	29.5	317	18
May 18, 92	21	350.5	9
<hr/>			
Totals:	235.75 7.5%	2768 89%	107.5 = 3111.25 3.5%

Appendix G

Indiana University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
July 26, 91	0	23	4
Sept. 13, 91	1	15	0
Sept. 27, 91	2	13	0
Oct. 25, 91	1	29	0
Jan. 31, 92	2	16	1
March 6, 92	0	27	2
April 24, 92	0	26	1
May 29, 92	1	28	0
<hr/>			
Totals:	7 3.6%	177 92%	8 = 192 4.2%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
July 26, 91	0	358	47.25
Sept. 13, 91	11	257.75	20
Sept. 27, 91	18	306	0
Oct. 25, 91	9	385.5	0
Jan. 31, 92	37	480.5	20
March 6, 92	0	263	8
April 24, 92	0	304.5	9
May 29, 92	1	410	100
<hr/>			
Totals:	77 2.5%	2765.25 90.8%	204.25 = 3046.5 6.7%

Appendix H

Michigan State University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 26, 91	5	29	1
Oct. 24, 91	18	37	4
Nov. 7, 91	1	25	3
Dec. 5, 91	5	23	0
Jan. 30, 92	2	37	7
Feb. 20, 92	3	25	3
March 5, 92	11	26	2
April 30, 92	8	37	5
<hr/>			
Totals:	53 16.7%	239 75.3%	25 = 317 7.9%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 26, 91	35	563.5	7
Oct. 24, 91	229	744.5	96
Nov. 7, 91	10	359.75	23
Dec. 5, 91	63.5	362.5	0
Jan. 30, 92	25.5	586	254
Feb. 20, 92	32	377	730
March 5, 92	156	393.5	31
April 30, 92	279	543	85
<hr/>			
Totals:	830 13.9%	3929.75 3929.75%	1226 = 5985.75 20%

Appendix I

Northern Illinois University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Aug. 26, 91	19	23	5
Oct. 14, 91	17	20	6
Nov. 18, 91	8	15	1
Dec. 9, 91	7	33	8
Jan. 27, 92	8	15	1
Feb. 10, 92	11	8	1
March 2, 92	16	23	0
April 27, 92	11	10	1
<hr/>			
Totals:	97 36.3%	147 55.1%	23 = 267 8.6%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Aug. 26, 91	45.75	83.75	13
Oct. 14, 91	39.5	74.5	20.5
Nov. 18, 91	15	54.5	6
Dec. 9, 91	13.75	119.75	15.25
Jan. 27, 92	10	56.25	1.75
Feb. 10, 92	28.75	44.25	1.25
March 2, 92	48.75	100.5	0
April 27, 92	30.5	39.75	2
<hr/>			
Totals:	232 26.8%	573.25 66.3%	59.75 = 865 6.9%

Appendix J

Southern Illinois University -Edwardsville

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Oct. 8, 91	5	4	1
Nov. 19, 91	3	7	1
Feb. 18, 92	3	3	4
April 14, 92	5	4	1
April 28, 92	4	6	1
May 12, 92	6	7	1
May 26, 92	3	7	0
June 30, 92	1	3	0
<hr/>			
Totals:	30 37.5%	41 51.2%	9 =80 11.3%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Oct. 8, 91	49	23.5	19.5
Nov. 19, 91	25.5	47	30
Feb. 18, 92	18	20	69
April 14, 92	57.5	50	5
April 28, 92	39.25	57.25	9
May 12, 92	33	26.5	36
May 26, 92	24	58.25	0
June 30, 92	16.5	34	0
<hr/>			
Totals:	262.75 35.2%	316.5 42.3%	168.5 = 747.75 22.5%

Appendix K

University of Illinois

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Aug. 22, 91	12	29	5
Oct. 3, 91	8	39	1
Nov. 7, 91	7	36	8
April 16, 92	9	24	2
May 14, 92	3	1	2
June 4, 92	2	13	1
June 18, 92	4	7	3
July 2, 92	1	14	0
<hr/>			
Totals:	46 19.9%	163 70.6%	22 = 231 9.5%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Aug. 22, 91	38.5	420.5	56
Oct. 3, 91	47	587.75	6
Nov. 7, 91	46	487	56.5
April 16, 92	34.25	286.25	39.5
May 14, 92	136	18	37
June 4, 92	7	144	28.25
June 18, 92	40	128	32
July 2, 92	2.5	164.25	0
<hr/>			
Totals:	351.25 12.3%	2235.75 78.7%	255.25 = 2842.25 9%



Appendix L

University of Michigan

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 23, 91	18	30	4
Sept. 30, 91	15	33	4
Oct. 21, 91	16	62	0
Feb. 3, 92	19	66	2
March 2, 92	18	70	4
April 6, 92	12	57	1
April 20, 92	19	60	2
June 22, 92	17	44	2
<hr/>			
Totals:	134 23.3%	422 73.3%	19 = 575 3.3%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 23, 91	101.5	769	29.5
Sept. 30, 91	24.75	462.25	29.25
Oct. 21, 91	50	659.5	0
Feb. 3, 92	77.25	844.25	71.5
March 2, 92	157	724.25	41
April 6, 92	2.75	610.75	84
April 20, 92	67.5	653	69
June 22, 92	184	648	95
<hr/>			
Totals:	664.75 10.3%	5371 83.2%	419.25 = 6455 6.5%

Appendix M

Western Illinois University

Total Number of Articles

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 6, 91	8	10	1
Oct. 4, 91	16	12	5
Nov. 15, 91	13	18	3
Dec. 6, 91	12	18	1
Jan. 17, 92	21	11	1
Feb. 14, 92	11	12	3
March 27, 92	15	9	1
May 15, 92	10	17	1
<hr/>			
Totals:	106 46%	107 47%	16 = 229 7%

Total Number of Column Inches

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Sept. 6, 91	21.25	79.75	3.5
Oct. 4, 91	45.75	74.5	26.5
Nov. 15, 91	50.75	89	20.5
Dec. 6, 91	39.25	113.5	2.75
Jan. 17, 92	81.25	68	0
Feb. 14, 92	33.75	95	26.75
March 27, 92	73.75	80.25	3
May 15, 92	48.75	101	5.75
<hr/>			
Totals:	394.5 33.3%	701 59.2%	88.75 = 1184.25 7.5%

Appendix N

Total: Number of Articles In Each Content Category

Content Categories

	<u>Organizing</u>		<u>Relationship</u>		<u>Change</u>	
Eastern Illinois Univ.	140	56.7%	90	36.4%	17	6.9%
Illinois State Univ.	32	20.5%	109	69.9%	15	9.6%
Indiana State Univ.	53	19.8%	196	73.1%	19	7.1%
Indiana Univ.- Bloomington	7	3.6%	177	92%	8	4.2%
Michigan State Univ.	53	16.7%	239	75.3%	25	7.9%
Northern Illinois Univ.	97	36.3%	147	55.1%	23	8.6%
Southern Illinois Univ.- Edwardsville	30	37.5%	41	51.2%	9	11.3%
University of Illinois	46	19.9%	163	70.6%	22	9.5%
University of Michigan	134	23.3%	422	73.3%	19	3.3%
Western Illinois Univ.	106	46%	107	47%	16	7%
Totals:	698	27.2%	1691	66%	173	6.8%

2562 articles

Appendix O

Total: Number of Column Inches In Each Content Category

Content Categories

	<u>Organizing</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Change</u>
Eastern Illinois Univ.	884	593	88.5
Illinois State Univ.	126	584	99.5
Indiana State Univ.	235.75	2768	107.5
Indiana Univ.- Bloomington	77	2765.25	204.5
Michigan State Univ.	830	3929.75	1226
Northern Illinois Univ.	232	573.25	59.75
Southern Illinois Univ.- Edwardsville	262.75	316.5	168.5
University of Illinois	315.25	2235.75	255.25
University of Michigan	664.75	5371	419.25
Western Illinois University	394.5	701	88.75
<hr/>			
Total:	4022	19,837.5	2717.25
			26,576.75 articles