Increasing power and taking a lead - What are practitioners really doing? Empirical evidence from European communications managers[1]

Incrementar el poder y asumir el liderazgo - ¿Qué hacen realmente los profesionales? Evidencias empíricas sobre los gestores de comunicación en Europa

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Abstract

The aims of the paper and presented research are to monitor trends in communication management and to evaluate specific topics that include decision-making style, leadership style, role enactment and the power of communication departments in Europe.
This paper is based on data from the European Communication Monitor (ECM) annual research, the most comprehensive analysis of communication management worldwide. The ECM is an annual research project conducted since 2007. The ECM 2011 collected quantitative data through an on-line survey from 2,209 participating professionals from 43 European countries, with representation of every European region.

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This paper presents original connections about previous theory and offers empirical evidences about vertical and horizontal power of communication departments into organizations. On despite of the limitations of a self-reported survey, these evidences open new directions or research on hierarchical and social dimensions of power.

The aim of this paper is to deepen the understanding of the power of communication management in organizations. Concretely, the paper aims to develop knowledge and understanding about horizontal and vertical power and the relationships established between these dimensions of power and strategic roles, decision-making and leadership styles that communicators play.

The paper presents original ideas by critiquing and re-focussing the literature and theory of power and leadership in organizations. The paper also presents new empirical data to support these arguments.

Keywords: Public Relations, organizational communication, power, decision-making, leadership, communication professsionals.

Resumen

Las meta de este artículo y de la investigación que en él se presenta es hacer un seguimiento de las tendencias en gestión de comunicación mediante la evaluación de los estilos toma de decisiones, el estilo de liderazgo, los roles representados y el poder de los departamentos de comunicación en Europa.

Este artículo se basa en datos del European Communication Monitor (ECM), el análisis más amplio de la gestión de comunicación en el mundo. El ECM es un proyecto de investigación anual desde 2007. El ECM recogió datos cuantitativos mediante una encuesta online a 2.209 profesionales de 43 países europeos con representación de todas las regiones europeas.

El artículo presenta conexiones originales sobre la teoría previa y se ofrecen evidencias empíricas sobre el poder vertical y horizontal de los departamentos de comunicación en las organizaciones. A pesar de las limitaciones de ser una encuesta de autopercepción estas evidencias abren nuevas direcciones de investigación sobre las dimensiones jerárquica y social del poder.

Pretende profundizar en la comprensión del poder de la gestión de comunicación en las organizaciones. Concretamente, pretende desarrollar conocimiento y comprensión sobre el poder horizontal y vertical y las relaciones que estas dimensiones de poder establecen con los roles estratégicos, los estilos de toma de decisiones y los estilos de liderazgo que desempeñan los comunicadores.

Se presentan así ideas originales a través de la crítica y la re-visión de la literatura y teorías sobre el poder y el liderazgo en las organizaciones junto con nuevos datos empíricos para apoyar estos argumentos.

Palabras clave: Relaciones Públicas, comunicación organizacional, poder, toma de decisiones, liderazgo, profesionales de comunicación.

1. INTRODUCTION

The question of power is discussed in the evolution and development of every profession (Freidson, 1983). On reviewing power in public relations Smudde and Courtright (2010) distinguished three different ways by which power have been understood in the trade publications: as a capability, as something to be harnessed or as a source of cultural transformation. They assess that the study of professionalism in public relations and communication management has been currently associated to the research of the social power dimension of the practice, focusing on the way that the behaviour of practitioners determines views of the field and on the role played by practitioners in their workplace.

From a critical approach, a profession is not neutral but related to political and economic systems and ideologically constructed (see e.g. Pieczka and L'Etang, 2000).

It is in the ideological, or the cultural dimension, that the structure of meaning plays a fundamental role. As pointed out by Heath, Motion and Leitch (2010: 191) "Meaning matters; it socially constructs the ideology by which each society shapes its power resources to organize and give individuals and institutions their contextual and enactment integrity".

The critical theories of power, from classic Marxism and the theories of hegemony to the Frankfurtian cultural turn (Moreno, 2004), argue that the structures of power are intrinsically correlated with ideology and culture. Every culture is conceived as ideology

(Althusser, 1971) and works in the production and reproduction of power relations. The Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1991) explains the dynamic of power in social relations: different social groups fight in diverse ways, including through ideology, to obtain supremacy over the rest. Communication management professionals, through the management of the corporate intangibles and their communicative acts, play a core role in the construction of meaning, identity and legitimation for their organizations. They develop relations of power inside their own workplaces as practitioners, as well as with the communication management function through the organizational structure. To the environment, they also position their organization in the social arena and by doing that they also produce and reproduce unequal power relations (Moreno,2007). In Bourdieuian terms, Edwards (2012) argues the practice of public relations is a cultural intermediary which she also sees as inextricably linked to the acquisition of symbolic power on the part of the organizations for whom practitioners work (Edwards,2006). From this perspective private companies systematically manage their reputation not only to brand their products and services but also the organization behind them. As observed by Althuser (1971) the subject is constructed into the discourse.

Foucault (1980) argued that history contains relations of power and each discursive formation produces their institutional apparatus, their knowledge or general politics of truth. It is into the discourse where the subject is created and its behaviour regulated into relations of inequality. On producing communications, communication manager practitioners have a privileged position to "create" the organization, the stakeholders and themselves. Paradoxically, despite their important role in the construction of the discourse, communication management practitioners have had difficulties gaining access to the decision making position in their organizations and creating a good reputation in society and even to maintain a positive and generally accepted meaning for their labels. For example, the European Communication Monitor 2011 shows that most practitioners in Europe prefer diverse denominations for the practice such as communication management or corporate communication (Zerfass et al., 2011) rather than just public relations.

The aim of this paper is to deepen the understanding of the power of communication

management in organizations. Concretely, we want to develop knowledge and understanding about horizontal and vertical power and the relationships established between these dimensions of power and strategic roles, decision-making and leadership styles.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Smudde and Courtright (2010) define power from a community-based approach:

"power is a community-based phenomenon that people confer on each other through their relationships with one another based on hierarchical positions they hold, the rhetorical manifestation and recognition of relationships and positions through communicative acts, and the social implications these dimensions have on individuals and, especially, communal views of the system of relationships that exist and evolve among people" (Smudde and Courtright, 2010: 177).

This broad definition outlines three dimensions of power: hierarchical, rhetorical and social. The hierarchical dimension of power refers to the political dynamics among people within an organizational structure. It is also identified as vertical power in an organizational context. This hierarchical dimension is formally represented by the internal structural chart of the organization, but power can also flux through informal mechanisms sometimes rejecting or by-passing the formal systems such as organisational structure.

The social dimension of power concerns the relationship between people. Through their interactions individuals, organizations or groups achieve power and confer power to others.

The social dimension of power in communication management is about the interactions between practitioners and others within and outside their organizations (Smudde and Courtright, 2010: 180). Outside their organizations practitioners develop relations and transferences of power with the external stakeholders with which they establish relationships. A clear example is the media and the interplay of power between the two has been documented (Cameron, Sallot and Curtain, 1997; Cho, 2006). In public relations the internal social dimension of power has focused on the role and influence played by professionals into the workplace (Smudde and Courtright, 2010: 181).

The rhetorical dimension of power focuses on the way that practitioners utilize knowledge and discourse. From the rhetorical perspective the power of professionals can be analysed through their capacity to create symbols and language through their daily activities. Dialogue and empowerment of society is also present in this approach. As Heath, Motion and Leitch (2010) underline, rhetoric implies the necessity to engage publics in a dialogue. The three dimensions of power are inseparable. Power is present in every kind of human interaction. Individuals, groups and organizations interact socially, generating hierarchies and they do it through diverse codes of language and representations that create and recreate meanings.

When considering the dynamics inside organizations power is a complex and continuingly changing strength (Hodge, 2003: 351). Individual professionals and their related functions can achieve power in the organizational structure, for example, horizontally by expanding their relationships with other functions through diverse sources of power, and vertically by achieving higher internal responsibility, influence and position. The theory of strategic contingencies of Hickson et al. (1971) explains that strategic contingencies are external and internal facts and activities core for achieving organizational goals. On the horizontal direction, departments related with strategic contingencies tend to achieve more power. Pfeffer's research about 'strategic contingency' states five sources of power for a department: dependency, financial resources, centrality, irreplaceably and face the uncertainty (Pfeffer, 1992; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1974).

When considering power in the vertical direction, public relations and communication management research has largely focussed on the access to the top management and the decision table (e.g. Lauren and Dozier, 1992; Plowman, 1998; Berger, 2007). The managerial function of public relations has been conceptualized in the literature about professional roles (e.g. Grunig and Hunt, 1987; Verçiç et al., 2001; Van Ruler and Verçiç, 2004, Van Ruler and Verçiç, 2005). Luratty and Eppler (2006) and Zerfass (2008) focus on the orientation of practitioners to corporate strategy and describe four kinds of strategic roles distributed though two axis: the vertical one refers to the capacity to help the business strategy and the horizontal one the capacity to support business goals managing communication. On this schema the strategic facilitator role is the profile that most helps to define strategies and also support goals. Also the business adviser role significantly helps to define strategies but

doesn't support the business goals managing communication. On the contrary the operational supporter role strongly contributes to supporting the organizational goals through communication but doesn't intervene in the definition of business strategies. The ECM data has found evidence that the isolated expert role does not contribute to either the definition of business strategy or to supporting the achievement of business goals by managing communication (Zerfass et al., 2008).

In the 2010 version of the ECM Zerfass et al. (2010) found positive correlations between the facilitator strategic role and the influence of communication management on top managers. This influence was conceptualized in two dimensions: the advisory influence (that is the perception of how seriously senior managers take the recommendations of communication professionals) and the executive influence (that is the perception of how likely it is that communication representatives will be invited to senior-level meetings dealing with organizational strategic planning). Although both ways of influence mean that communication management practitioners have power, the executive influence indicates the most complete participation at the table of executive decision-making. Reber and Berger (2006) had previously faced the self-perception of practitioners with regards to their influence on decision making. Moreover, power can be related to the style of decision making behaviour by professionals. Werder and Holzhausen (2011) propose four styles of decision-making for strategic communication practitioners: (1) rational decision-making, when decisions are based on evaluation and all possible information, (2) group-decision making, when shared responsibility for group decisions are preferred, (3) risk-acceptance decision making, when risk is taken as an opportunity and (4) technology-oriented decision making, when the development of new communication methods guide decisions.

At the same time, styles of decision-making can be determined or influenced by the style of the leaders in an organization. The achievement of power for the function of communication management in an organization has also been connected with leadership (see e.g. Smudde and Courtright, 2010: 179). The perspective of empowerment in organizational theory considers that the total amount of power can be incremented by planning tasks and by interactions in the organizational network through the hierarchy.

Communication management leaders it is argued are crucial for taking strategic and effective decisions in organizations (e.g., Berger and Meng, 2010; Berger and Reber, 2006; Berger, Reber, and Heyman, 2007; Choi and Choi, 2009; Meng and Berger, 2010; Werder and Holtzhausen, 2009). Berger and Meng (2011) define the strategic decision-making capability as a dimension of leadership referring:

> "to the extent to which public relations leaders understand external socio-political environments and internal organizational structures, processes and practices, and are able to translate relevant knowledge into effective advocacy and become involved with strategic decision-making processes in the organization" (Berger and Meng, 2011:7).

Werder and Holzhausen (2009) define three leadership styles for communication management. Transactional leaders draw on their authority and remind followers of common standards, transformational leaders define a vision and appeal to followers' ideals and values and inclusive leaders name challenges and involve followers in shared decision making.

Finally, the style of leadership has to be developed into the social group of a given organization. It has to connect, interplay and be part of the culture of the organization. Ernest (1985) established a model of organizational cultures based on two dimensions: (1) orientation to people and (2) answer to the environment (proactive or reactive). From these two dimensions four types of organizational cultures are defined:

1. Integrated culture –participative and proactive–;
2. Interactive culture –participative and reactive–;
3. Entrepreneurial culture –non-participative and proactive– and
4. Ssystematized culture –non participative and reactive.

With regards to the understanding of power in communication management first it is important to describe the reality of the practice and the way in which practitioners interact with society from the perspective of their employing organization. Secondly it is also important to determine which conditions provide effective vertical and horizontal power for communication management in the organization. Using the abovementioned theoretical

sources in this research we have operationalized and empirically investigated diverse elements of the vertical and horizontal power of communication management practitioners in organizations and their relationships with strategic role enactment, decision-making and leadership styles.

The aim of this paper is to clarify these power relations answering the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the vertical power of European communication management professionals as shown in their position, reporting lines and level of responsibility?

RQ2. What is the perceived horizontal power of the European communication management professionals?

RQ3. What influence do European communication managers perceive themselves to have in their organizations?

RQ4. What are the strategic roles European communication managers play in their organizations?

RQ5. What kind of decision-making styles are used by communication management professionals who hold higher positions and responsibilities?

RQ6. What kind of leadership styles are preferred by communication management professionals in culturally diverse organizations?

3. METHODOLOGY

The European Communication Monitor is conducted by a group of professors from 11 universities across Europe and organised by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA), European Association of Communication Directors (EACD) and Communication Director Magazine. The research project was sponsored by Infopaq and Grayling. This is a longitudinal research programme which has been run annually since 2007.

In March 2011 an online survey was conducted targeting communication management practitioners who are actively working in agencies and departments in public and private

sector organizations (joint stock companies, private companies, governmental organizations, non-profit organizations and agencies).

Invitations to join the survey were sent to more than 30,000 professionals using the database of the EACD and additionally to professionals of each country through national associations and other private databases. Incomplete questionnaires and questionnaires from not targeted individuals (students, academicals and not active professionals) were removed, leading to a final sample of 2,209 practitioners from 43 European countries.

The questionnaire was constructed in English and pre-tested by experts from practice and academia from different European countries. The questionnaire consisted of twenty items, several of them including different questions and multiple answers. Six items focused on several aspects of decision-making, professional roles and vertical and horizontal power in organizations. Styles of leadership and culture were also questioned in two items and finally socio-demographic profile of participants and descriptions of their organizations were asked. These items are relevant for the research questions in this paper and are used for the analysis.

The majority of the respondents are female (55.6%, n = 1229). Every European region is represented in the sample: Northern Europe (27.9%, n = 617), Western Europe (29.2%, n = 645), Southern Europe (32.4%, n = 716) and Eastern Europe (10.5%, n = 231). All different kinds of organization are also represented in the sample. Most respondents are CCOs (48.8%, n = 1077), work in communication departments in joint stock companies (28%, n = 618), have more than 10 years of experience in the profession (56.7%, n = 1252) and are 41 years old on average (SD = 9,6). Most respondents hold an academic degree in communication (44.5%, n = 982), with the highest number hold Master's degrees (58.8%, n = 1299). Data have been analysed using SPSS. A statistical descriptive and analytic analysis has been applied. Results and correlation of variables have been statistically tested with chi-square, t-tests and variance analysis (ANOVA) with test Post Hoc Scheffe.

4. FINDINGS

Strategic influence and roles

Communication practitioners in Europe continue to increase their influence inside organizations. On a seven point scale European professionals rate their advisory influence, the perception that senior mangers takes their recommendations seriously, with an average of 5.28 (SD = 1.4) Executive influence, operationalized as the impact of communication management professionals on strategic planning, scores a little bit higher, an average of 5.36 (SD = 1.5). Communication professionals seem to be more engaged in the business strategy of their organization every year. Supporting the business strategy of the organization is perceived to be high on a seven point scale (M = 5.79, SD = 1.10) and so is the responsibility for helping to define the business strategies (M = 5.14, SD = 1.50). These scores are significantly higher than in 2010, t (2208) = 10.949, p <.001.

Looking more closely at the general data, we see that a majority of the European practitioners play the strategic facilitator role (67,6%). This role correlates moderately, but significantly, with the degree of participation and supporting business strategy, r = 4.63, p <.001. The second role most played by practitioners in Europe is the operational supporter (23,2%) followed by the much more infrequent isolated experts (6%) and business adviser (6%).

Reporting lines and responsibilities

Along the lines of strategic influence, more communication managers have a seat at the table where decisions are made and are part of the dominant coalition. The majority of top level communication managers, 59.9%, report directly to the CEO; 17.8% sit on the board; 17.7% report to another board member and 4.6% have to report to someone outside of the board. Reporting lines do not differ significantly between various types of organizations, but they do between regions. In Northern European countries, nearly a quarter of the top-level communicators, 23.9%, sit on the board and in Southern Europe a fifth of the communication managers, 19.9% sit on the board. An ANOVA with Post Hoc test shows that this is a significant difference compared to Western and Eastern Europe where respectively

11.2% and 13.2% of the communication managers sit on the board, F (3, 1446) = 9,527, p <.001.

In most organizations, communication leaders have a broad level of responsibility for stakeholders. Most practitioners have responsibility for all kind of communication and stakeholders, 41.7%, or for at least three of them, 41.7%.

Nevertheless, levels of responsibility differ significantly within European regions, χ2 = 28.891, p <.001. In Southern Europe, the highest percentage of communication directors is only responsible for media relations, 7%, and for media and internal relations, 16.4%.

In contrast, Northern Europe has the highest level of concentration of responsibilities, with nearly half of practitioners, 47.9%, taking care of every kind of communications, with Sweden on the top with 61%. With regard to the types of organizations, the responsibilities differ significantly, χ2 = 37.414, p <.001, with the most striking difference being that in governmental organizations, one in ten of them, 9.7% are only responsible for media relations.

The data show that reporting lines and responsibilities are weakly, but significantly, associated, χ2 = 62.374, p <.001; C = .20, p <.001. The more responsibilities a communication leader has, the more they have access to the board. A big majority of communication managers hold broad responsibilities, for all or at least three communications fields or stakeholders e.g. for public/media and communities, marketing/consumers, internal/employees, financial/investors or lobby/politicians. First, those who have a position on the board have the broadest responsibilities, 91.9% of them is responsible for at least three fields or stakeholders. Secondly for those who report directly to the CEO 84.1%, are responsible for at least three fields, followed by those who report to other members of the board, 77.8%, and finally those who report to other functions in the organization, 61.2%. On the other side 38.8% of the practitioners who do not report to the board have only responsibilities for media relations and internal communication, followed by 22.2% of those who report to other board members; 15.9% of those who report to the CEO and 8.1% of those who sit on the board.

The formal position is correlated with the influence of communication managers on the business strategy of the organization. The data show a weak, but significant, positive correlation between sitting on the board and perceived influence on the management of the organization, r = .10, p <.01. The same applies to the influence of strategic planning, r = .20, p <.01.

Horizontal power

According to the data the communication department establishes various levels of connection with other functions within the organization. In Europe, working relationships are especially close with the CEO. On a five point scale the working relations with the CEO scores a 4.32 on average (SD = .84), followed by the marketing department (M = 4.09, SD = 1.04) and other members of the executive board (M = 4.02, SD = .87). There are also close relations with strategy and organizational development units (M = 3.66, SD = 1.05). At the other end of the scale, relations with auditing and controlling units are the weakest (M = 2.56, SD = 1.08).

The five factors of horizontal power, as described by Pfeffer (1992), do not all score highly in Europe. On a five point scale the level of dependency on the communication department in the organization is rated an average of 3.18 (SD = 1.13), followed by an average of 3.30 (SD = 1.15) for generating financial and immaterial assets for the organization and 3.90 (SD = 1.08) for the irreplaceability of the communication department. Anticipating situations and conflicting issues scores highest (M = 4.06, SD = .92) together with the importance of the role communication departments play in overall performance of the organization (M = 4.02, SD = .94).

These last two aspects of horizontal power together seem to strengthen the internal position of communication departments, because they correlate moderately, r = 0.46, p < 01.

Regarding the connections between formal and horizontal power the results show that horizontal power of communication departments is stronger when the top communication manager has broader responsibilities. Communication managers with responsibility for at

least three fields or stakeholders scores significantly higher on all five Pfeffer aspects than communication managers that are only responsible for media relations and/or internal communication (see table 1 for an overview of the scores).

Table 1: Differences on Pfeffer aspects for two groups of managers

Aspect	Broad responsibilities		Small responsibilities		t-value	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Dependency	3.28	1.10	2.71	1.12	7.358	.000
Finance	3.38	1.13	2.88	1.13	6.335	.000
Centrality	4.14	0.88	3.57	1.06	7.737	.000
Irreplaceability	3.97	1.06	3.54	0.07	5.450	.000
Uncertainty	4.13	0.87	3.71	0.07	5.717	.000

Decision making style

In general results show that European communication managers do not feel attracted by taking risks in decision making. The rational style of decision- making is preferred by most. When asked how communication professionals take decisions they say to make a thorough evaluation based on all available information (M = 4.20, SD = 0.82 on a five point scale). Relying on previous good practices of other organizations comes second (M = 3.78, SD = 0.84), followed by decision taking based on shared responsibility (M = 3.48, SD = 1.05) and reviewing scientific and professional literature and research (M = 3.47, SD = 1.03). Furthermore assumptions of risks (M = 3.33, SD = .98) and technological determinism (M = 3.08, SD = 1.07) are the least used resources.

Patterns of decision-making utilised by European communication professionals differ from the behaviour of their counterparts in the United States. This is demonstrated through a comparison with research in the USA (Swerling et al., 2012) and the ECM (2011) data. Both groups of professionals prefer rational decision-making based on an evaluation of all information available, but only a minority of practitioners in Europe accept that a risk not taken is an opportunity lost. However, the shared responsibility offered by group decision-making is more popular in the USA. Europeans are more likely to share decisions (55.9%

versus 52.9) and US professionals to the acceptance of risk (53% versus 45.1%) although both report that practitioners rely mainly on the rational approach.

With regard to professional roles identified in the survey, all of them including business advisers, strategic facilitators, operational supporters and isolated experts, reportedly use rational decision-making, with strategic facilitators and business advisors reporting this kind of decision-making more frequently than the other two groups, $F (3, 2205) = 8.973$, $p < .05$, Post Hoc Scheffe.

When making decisions, strategic facilitators score best on the more rational style ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .80$). They take a lot fewer decisions based on best practices ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .86$) or on research ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.02$). Operational supporters report a more risk-averse decision making style ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .98$) and tend to copy best practices ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .77$) together with the rational style as well ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .78$).

Leadership style

Communication managers practice diverse styles of leadership depending on location, namely the country and kind of organization where they operate. Results of this study show that professionals with the highest position in communication who apply an inclusive leadership style hold more power. Inclusive leaders involve their team in decision taking. It is the leadership style that is practiced by 46.6% of Chief Communication Officers in Europe. The transformational leadership style, where leaders define a vision and appeal to followers' ideals and values is practiced by 34.9% and the transactional leadership, in which leaders draw on their authority and remind followers of common standards is practiced by 18.5% of the respondents.

Organizational culture and leadership style are interdependent. The inclusive style is prevalent in organizations with an integrated culture, 52.4%; while organizations with a synthesized culture apply a more transactional style, 46.5%. The differences are significant, $\chi2 = 225.010$, $p < .001$, and the correlation too; $C = .30$, $p < .001$.

Top communication managers tend to apply the inclusive leadership style if they have a broader area of responsibility. Nearly half use the inclusive leadership style when they have broad responsibility for communication fields or stakeholders, 46.5%, or at least for three kinds of communication, 46.2%, versus only 36% or 34.3% when they are responsible for media and internal communication or just for media relations.

Conversely departments that focus on mostly press/media relations use the transactional leadership style, 48.8%, compared to those with a higher level of responsibility, 17.5%.

These differences are all significant, $\chi 2 = 39.932$, $p < .001$. In line with these findings, the results also show that leaders tend to apply the inclusive leadership style if they sit on the board, 48.1%, or report directly to the CEO, 45.7%. On the other side, the transactional style is prevalent when practitioners do not report to the board, 47.8%, and restrict their functions to media relations, 24.9%. These differences are also significant, $\chi 2 = 41.374$, $p < .001$.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Communication managers in Europe have power in the organizations they work in. They have advisory and executive influence and they perform the strategic facilitator role, as conceptualized by Luratty and Eppler (2006) and Zerfass (2008), assuring the participation of communicators in the strategies for the whole organization. In line with this strategic influence a relatively large group of communication managers have a seat at the table where strategic decisions are made. In addition in most organizations, communication leaders have a broad level of responsibility for diverse communication fields and stakeholders. A higher level of responsibility is related positively to the access to the board of the organization. The formal position is also associated with the influence of communication managers on the business strategy (Zerfass et al, 2010).

Those who sit on the board have more executive influence. These are positive empirical answers to the academic question which is frequently asked which focus on organizational access to the top managers and the decision-making table (e.g. Lauren and Dozier, 1992; Plowman, 1998; Berger, 2007) and provide deeper understanding of the actual hierarchical dimension power (Smudde and Courtright, 2010) of public relations into organisations.

With respect to horizontal power in the organization, communication departments have a rather weak position in European organizations in Europe when viewed in the context of the five sources of power described by Pfeffer (1992). With regards to the connections between formal and horizontal power, horizontal power of communication departments is strongest if the top communication manager has broader responsibilities.

European communication managers are not attracted to risk taking in organizations and every professional role tends to use rational decision-making. They are also more oriented to group decision making as defined by Holzhausen and Werder (2010), in line with integrated cultures (Ernest, 1985). They are also more likely to employ an inclusive leadership style (Werder and Holzhausen, 2009). Professionals who apply an inclusive leadership style seem to hold more power. The inclusive style is used mostly by professionals who have a higher level of responsibility, sits on the board and work in organizations with an integrated culture.

These results strongly support the relations between power and decision-making (Reber and Berger, 2006) and leadership (Werder and Holzhausen, 2009).

This research gives empirical evidence to explore and explain the power of communication professionals in organizations in Europe and shows some associations between styles of behaviour that can be discussed as patterns of achievement of power for the profession. A limitation of the data is that the information being analysed and discussed about power in this research is based on a self-reporting survey. This could mean there is some subjectivity and bias in the answers. The question of power and communication would need to be tested further in various contexts and with various methods. Participative observation of day-to-day practice of communicators would be a suitable method to test the findings of this self reported survey. Our results are based on thorough empirical research and analysis, but we cannot claim representativeness for Europe, due to our lack of knowledge about the population of communication departments and agencies in Europe. Furthermore the survey has been conducted in the English language, which might also restrict the participation of practitioners from some countries in the European landscape.

This paper presents original connexions about previous theory and offers empirical evidences for the actual relations between vertical and horizontal power with strategic role enactment, decision-making and leadership styles. These evidences open new directions for research on hierarchical and social dimensions of power (Smudde and Courtright, 2010) in communication management and for professional discussion about patterns of behaviour into the workplace.

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