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EXPLORING TRENDS IN BIG DATA, STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION.
RESULTS OF A SURVEY IN 43 COUNTRIES.



A STUDY CONDUCTED BY THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC RELATIONS
EDUCATION AND RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (EUPRERA) AND THE
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNICATION DIRECTORS (EACD)
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10 STARTING POINTS ...

1 **BIG DATA IN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

72.3% of European communication professionals believe that big data will change their profession. But only 59.3% have given (close) attention to the debate and a minority has a comprehensive understanding of the topic. 21.2% of communication departments and agencies have implemented big data activities until now, leaving clear room for improvement.

2 **AUTOMATION IN PR AND COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT**

Three out of four respondents (75.0%) agree that communication activities should be aligned with external algorithms of search engines or social media platforms. Yet only 29.3% state that their communication departments or agencies have implemented such routines. Even less use the power of algorithms proactively for automatically adapting or creating content.

3 **COMMUNICATION PRACTICES**

Communicators employ a variety of tasks. In a typical week, they spend 36.2% of their productive time at work for operational communication, 27.8% for managing, 18.8% for reflective activities (alignment with internal goals and stakeholders) and 17.2% for coaching, training and enabling members of their organisation. They employ different approaches when supporting either senior managers or other staff.

4 **STRATEGIC ISSUES**

Longitudinal data collected over a decade (2007-2016) indicate that digitisation, mediatisation and new demands from business and society have changed communication management dramatically. Responses from more than 21,000 practitioners across Europe show that the strategic alignment of communication and organisational goals is the most stable issue, mentioned as a challenge by more than 42% in every single year. Digitalisation and building trust are additional topics that keep many leaders awake at night.

5 **COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND INSTRUMENTS**

Face-to-face communication is the most relevant instrument today, taking the top position for the first time in 10 years of data. Social media was rated important by a minority between 2007 and 2011, today 76.2% favour such instruments, and 88.9% believe they will be important for addressing stakeholders in 2019. On the contrary, traditional media relations with print media is on the decline. 64.1% believe in its importance today, but this figure drops to 30.2% in 2019.

6 SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS

Third party endorsers shaping stakeholder attitudes through blogs, tweets and posts are important for a majority of organisations across Europe (58.4%). But only 42.9% use specific strategies to communicate with such social media influencers and even less (40.1%) have specific approaches to identify them.

7 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is a much-debated but often misunderstood concept in today's societies and organisations. The study reveals that communication professionals conceptualise engagement mostly as a communication activity. Emotional drivers and institutionalised interactions might be overlooked.

8 SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT

Staff competencies are a key driver of organisational success. However, the level of social media competencies of communicators is rather mediocre. Only 65.2% report high capabilities for delivering messages via social media. A similar picture emerges in the field of management competencies. There is a clear gap between training offered by employers and the development needs of practitioners – technical skills and knowledge are underrated.

9 SALARIES

The annual income of communication professionals in Europe is quite diverse. Longitudinal data proves that the portion of communication heads and agency CEOs with a salary of more than €100,000 is relatively stable since 2009 (between 13,4 and 18.4%), and there is also a stable portion earning the same without being at the top of the hierarchy (up to 4.7%).

10 CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS

Excellent communication departments are forerunners in big data, deal more intensively with social media influencers, and invest significantly more in personnel development. They employ practitioners with stronger management and social media skills, who spend less time on operational work, put more effort into strategic tasks and focus on supporting top management.

... FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

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More than 4,500 communication professionals from over 80 countries are surveyed in each wave of the European, Latin American and Asia-Pacific Communication Monitor, making this the largest and only truly global study of the profession based on sound empirical standards.

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