1 Conceptual and Operational Evolution of PR and Corporate Communication

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The objective of this introductory chapter is to define what public relations and corporate communication are from the point of view of both concepts and contents and tools, in order to illustrate the role that this profession is able to play in organizations and, more in general, in the economic and social realities. To this end, it is important to look both to the past and to the evolution in progress, and therefore in a certain sense to the future. To understand what public relations and corporate communication are today, it is necessary to accurately analyze and evaluate where they come from and where they are going.

Public Relations: past and future

It is also necessary to examine the theoretical-conceptual evolution of the discipline, as shown by the analyses and reflections of the leading scholars, and the development of the public relations profession, of its services and of its operational contents, with particular reference to the influence deriving from the demand for communication expressed by companies and more generally by organizations.

These trends are strongly linked to the evolution taking place in the economic and social reality, in technologies and in the organizational development of companies and institutions that carry out activities and use communication and public relations tools and services. In fact, the demand for communication and public relations expressed by companies profoundly affects their evolution.

The past is also important as the imprinting and experiences made in the very first phase of the life of public relations are able to condition its

evolution, leaving an indelible trace in its contents and influencing its development, for better or for worse. The analysis of the origins of public relations, of the contents of its first services is therefore able to reveal the essence of those contents that still today represent a relevant part of it.

In order to outline the framework of public relations, it is therefore worth recalling the main features of its origins and of its later development, as results from the classic typology produced by Grunig (1984), which identifies the four models of public relations which also represent four stages of its historical development.

1.1 The historical evolution of public relations interpreted by Grunig

The four models

The four models of public relations developed by Grunig represent a conceptual abstraction whose value consists in the fact that each model captures the salient features of a well-defined way of doing public relations, born in a specific historical period. Although they were developed in 1984, they are still current, even if today Grunig himself argues that reality has perhaps become too complex to be interpreted by those models in all its nuances.

Today, continuing to study Grunig's models is important for two reasons. The first is that they allow us to understand the origins, obscure and unethical, of the discipline, as highlighted in the Press Agentry-Publicity model, which will be described shortly. Grunig's models tell us that manipulation of reality, constraint of the masses, propaganda are the ingredients of public relations at its origins, ingredients that still condition opinions on the legitimacy to act and on the ethics of the professionals in this field. Public relations professionals who, not by chance, have earned over time the nicknames of hidden persuaders (as Packard defined them in 1957) or spin doctors. The second reason why Grunig's models are still relevant today is because they represent the communication models that can be implemented by companies.

Table 1.1 shows the four models of public relations activities, Press agentry-Publicity, Public information, Two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric. The models are described using four criteria chosen to differentiate and define them: the objective of the public relations activity, the nature of the communication activated, the communication model carried out, the nature of the research carried out before starting or after carrying out the activity of communication.

In order to illustrate the contents of the table, it should be specified that the person who activates the communication is defined as the "sender", while the one who receives it is defined as the "receiver". These roles tend to integrate into the third and fourth models. It is therefore worth

illustrating how each of the four models is defined through the criteria indicated.

	Press agentry-Publicity	Public information	Two-way asymmetric	Two-way symmetric
Objective/Goal	Propaganda	Diffusing truthful information	Scientific persuasion	Mutual understanding
Nature of the communication	One-way: the truth is not essential	One-way: the truth is essential	Two-way: effects are not balanced	Two-way: balanced effects
Model of communication	Sender -> receiver	Sender -> receiver	Sender -> receiver <- feedback	Group < -> Group
Research activity	Rarely used: just counting votes	Rarely used: evaluation of effectiveness	Formative, evaluation of attitudes	Formative, evaluation of competencies

Table 1.1
The four models of public relations.
Source: reworked from Grunig, 1984

Press agentry-Publicity Model

The *goal* of the activity of public relations, represented in the Press agentry-Publicity model, is to perform a real propaganda function, in order to develop the organization's notoriety and fame.

The *nature of the communication* is one-way, from the organization to the public, with little attention to the truthfulness and completeness of the information provided. The *model of communication* stipulates that it flows from the organization to the public, from the sender to the receiver, without any analysis of the needs or feedback. Finally, the *research activity* is rarely used by press agents other than verifying the use of press releases by the media or the number of people who participated in the organized event.

Established in the 1800s

It was established in the United States shortly before the mid-1800s and remained predominant until the end of the century. In fact, it was around 1830 that what could be defined as the first public relations professionals, the *press agents*, began to operate. They helped create many Western heroes, from Buffalo Bill to Wyatt Earp, from Calamity Jane to Wild Bill Hickock, writing for Eastern readers, eager for adventures.

In those years, press agents, as Wilcox recalls, helped populate the Far West by attracting people to new villages, each described as "*The garden spot of the West*". Many articles emphasizing the beauties of the new lands were in fact published in the press, which was often financed by the same landowners of the advertised places.

"There's no such thing as bad publicity"

In particular, Grunig recalls how the birth of the *New York Sun* and its being sold at a very popular price spurred press agents to create stories that had little to do with reality. Master of this technique was Phineas T. Barnum, the founder of the *Barnum & Baley Circus*, that made him

known and popular all over the world. Barnum's creed was that "*There's no such thing as bad publicity*", that is, the important thing is that you talk about the subject in question, even if you talk badly about it or say false things.

Following this belief, Barnum created completely non-existent characters, such as the black slave who nursed the first president of the United States, George Washington, a nurse, at the time, about 160 years old. He also used human phenomena in his shows, such as the two siamese sisters, or the miniature man, Tom Thumb, or the Cardiff giant. In any case, he became rich using the technique of making the press talk, creating characters that he then showed in his circus.

Advertising was also growing at that time and the activities of *press agentry and publicity* were mixed up with advertising. For example, those who bought advertising spaces in a newspaper also asked that articles in favor of the event or organization advertised be published in that same newspaper. These were later defined as editorial articles in Italy.

"The public be fooled", "The public be damned"

This era of press agentry was later defined by Eric Goldman (1948) as the era of "*The public be fooled*". Moreover, this way of thinking corresponded, in business circles, to that of "*The public be damned*", whose authorship is of an authoritative representative of that world: William Vanderbilt, president of the New York Central Railroad. Its meaning was that businessmen did not have to worry about what the public thought of their companies and their business.

Although, as Wilcox recalls, the arrogant behavior and the savage exploitation of resources and of people between the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century created strong criticism in public opinion. It was fed by writers who attacked the corruption and illegal practices of some large companies of the time. It is in this climate that the professional activity of the man who is unanimously defined as the first public relations consultant, Ivy L. Lee, was developed. He marks the transition to the second model of public relations.

Public Information Model

The second model, that of *Public information*, prevails starting from the beginning of the century until the end of the First World War, but it does not completely disappear even afterwards, it is no longer dominant while still explaining, at least in part, the behavior of different professionals and companies. It was used for the first time, as mentioned, by Ivy L. Lee who proposed a new way, quite different from the past, of dealing with public opinion.

The *goal* is to disseminate truthful information to the public. Also in this case, the *nature of communication is* one-way, but with the commitment to provide truthful and complete information. The *communication model* establishes, also in this case, that the communication flows from the organization

to the public, from the sender to the receiver, without any form of listening or feedback. The *research activity* is not very widespread, although readability tests can be conducted to assess the degree of difficulty of the texts and research on readers to verify if the texts in question are really read.

Ivy L. Lee, a Princeton graduate and formerly an economic reporter for New York's *World*, began his freelance business in 1904. When he became a consultant to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company after a train wreck, he persuaded president Rockefeller to change his politics towards the press. Lee provided reliable information and issued comprehensive press releases. The era of "*The public be informed*" had begun.

"The public be informed"

Lee's idea was very simple. It is important to give truthful information about the activity and behavior of the organization. If that news damages the organization, then it is high time you changed your behavior. This statement was certainly revolutionary for those times, but soon the facts proved Lee right: in fact, the big companies were gradually realizing the positive effects that could derive from telling the truth.

The example of the strike at the Coal Roads and Mine Company

A paradigmatic example is a strike that broke out in 1906 in some coal mines, during which the Coal Roads and Mine Company sought Lee's advice. He sent to the press, along with the information relating to the strike, a statement of principles which can be used as the best description of the Public information model:

"This is not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news. (...) Our plan is, frankly and openly, to supply to the press and public of the United States prompt and accurate information concerning subjects which is of value and interest to the public to know about. (...) I send out only matter every detail of which I am willing to assist any editor in verifying for himself. I am always at your service for the purpose of enabling you to obtain more complete information concerning any of the subjects brought forward in my copy" (Grunig, 1984: 33).

Summing up, the professionals who used this model were dedicated to making organizations visible in order to develop their accountability to the public. Lee and the professionals of the time were also beginning to ask themselves how to make the management of organizations aware of the point of view of the public.

Their suggestions to the management, however, derived more from their intuitions than from in-depth and scientifically conducted analyses of public opinion. It would be only with the contribution of another pioneering professional (and after the experiences conducted during the First World War) that research on public opinion would assume greater importance.

After the First World War, Americans developed a great fear of the power of propaganda, to the point that President Wilson appointed a Committee on Public Information. Its results were that mass persuasion is possible and that the ways in which it can be exercised must be established by the social sciences and controlled by governmental authority.

The Two-way asymmetric model

The third model, the Two-way asymmetric, asserts itself in this climate, around the 1920s and Edward L. Bernays is the professional who more than any other interprets its contents and he was also the intellectual invited by New York University in 1922 to deliver the first university course in public relations. Moreover, in 1923, he wrote the book *Crystallizing Public Opinion*, in which he defines the concept of public relations and illustrates the consultancy activity.

Scientific persuasion

The *goal* is that of scientific persuasion, aimed at getting the organization's point of view accepted. The *nature of communication* is two-way and asymmetrical, as the effects of communication between organization and public are biased in favor of the former. The *communication model* establishes that the communication flows from the organization to the public, however with the presence of feedback to monitor the results. The *research activity* is planned and aims to identify the preferences of the public and measures its attitudes and behaviors before and after the public relations intervention.

Bernays is the author of the so-called scientific approach to public relations, through which he highlights the importance of public opinion surveys in order to know its attitudes and propensities before planning a public relations campaign. In fact, he changed the concept of public relations from the aforementioned "*The public be informed*" to the new concept that he defined with the sentence "*The public should be understood and its need considered*".

"The public should be understood and its needs considered"

Grunig describes Bernays' way of consulting as that typical of the model he represents. It consists in researching the values and attitudes of the public and, more specifically, those aspects of the organization that the public appreciates the most. It also consists in designing a communication campaign in order to make known and emphasize those aspects of the organization that most correspond to the preferences of the public.

"Although practitioners of this model claim to advocate the public's view inside the organization, generally the only way they do that is by telling management what the public will accept" (Grunig, 1984). In fact, it would be necessary to wait for the next model to become prevalent, for professionals to begin to represent and describe the views and opinions of different audiences to the management of an organization, telling the same management how to change in order to be in tune with those same audiences.

The Two-way symmetric model

The *goal* of the fourth model, the Two-way symmetric, is mutual understanding between the organization and its audiences while the professional acts as a mediator between one and the other, even if at the service of the former.

The *nature of communication* is two-way and consists more of a dialogue than a monologue, in the sense that, ideally, both the management of the organization and the public will see something change after the intervention of public relations. The *communication model* envisages such a reciprocal influence that the organization and the public can no longer be defined as sender and receiver, but rather as "subjects in a relationship". The *research activity* is used in order to assess whether the public relations intervention has improved the understanding that the public has of the organization and that that management has of its audiences.

The period in which the fourth model, Two-way symmetric, prevails

The fourth model, the Two-way symmetric, has much more uncertain origins than the ones before, also because there is no strong reference figure whose thought and writings define it specifically, as had happened with the previously. Grunig argues that the Two-way symmetric model begins to be used in the 1950s in the USA and that the professionals and trainers who support it most convincingly, also describing many examples of how it is applied in practice, are Cutlip and Center with their text *Effective Public Relations* published in 1952.

It is worth reflecting on the difference between the Two-way asymmetric and the Two-way symmetric model, that is, on the very concept of symmetry of the communication process. When a communication process is asymmetrical, the interests of one party (usually the organization) prevail over those of the other party (usually the public). This means that the organization communicates with the public to convince it to share its own position, to bring it to its side, to make it change its views on a given issue. When a communication process is symmetrical, there is a balance between the interests of the parties involved and the organization is open to listening to the needs of the public to the point of partially changing its own position. The result of an asymmetrical communication process is that the organization is able to make its position and its beliefs prevail. The result of a symmetrical communication process is a third position, born from the negotiation process of the parties involved, from their mutual comparison and listening.

It is very important to underline that the communication model adopted does not depend on the tools used. It is a widespread belief that the use of social networks leads organizations to automatically activate symmetrical communication processes with their digital audiences. In reality, this is incorrect. For example, an organization can publish a post on Facebook to express its position and can respond to criticisms and comments received by trying to persuade people to change their mind. In this case, Facebook is used asymmetrically. Otherwise, a social network can be used as an authentic dialogue platform to discuss issues considered relevant by its audiences, understand their opinions and consequently modify organizational positions and behaviors. In this case, the social network is used symmetrically.

Grunig's models therefore express all their usefulness and relevance because they indicate the mutually exclusive models of communication that a company can employ, going beyond the communication activity envisaged by the Press-agentry Publicity model.

Historical notes on public relations in Italy

The history of public relations in Italy, according to the reconstructions of Roggero and Setaro (1994) and Muzi Falconi (2004), is extremely simpler and much shorter than the one employed in the United States. Even professional development is much more limited when compared to that of the United States, to the point that the aforementioned authors agree that its origins date back to a century later than that of the US. The official date of birth in Italy is established in 1943, when the allied troops, landed in Italy and marching north, recruit some Italian public relations operators.

In particular, Roggero and Setaro identify three stages of development. The first, from the Liberation to the mid-fifties, during which the main activity is defined as "a mixture of press office and high-level lobbying". The professional activity is mainly carried out by big British and American companies. But in this period Muzi Falconi highlights the communication activity made not only by large American and British companies such as Esso and BP, but also by Italian companies such as Eni, Fiat, Enel and above all Olivetti.

Three phases of public relations development in Italy

The second phase, placed by Roggero and Setaro between 1955 and 1970, sees the great increase of small Italian agencies, whose main activity is to organize "lunches and receptions". In this period, however, some real public relations agencies were born, such as the one founded by Aldo Chiappe in 1961. The role of most public relations agencies, however, is confined, according to Roggero and Setaro, to a position of support for advertising and marketing.

It is only in the third phase, starting from the 1970s according to Roggero and Setaro, that public relations begins to take on a distinct professional role and consolidate as a discipline. In 1970 from the merger of two pre-existing associations, the FIERP of Milan and the FIRP of Rome, the Federation of Italian Public Relations (Federazione delle relazioni pubbliche italiana - FERPI) was born, which would represent in the years to come a point of reference for the development of the profession. In the mid-1970s, ISFORP (Istituto di formazione delle relazioni pubbliche - Training institute of public relations), was founded, and other important consulting firms were created, such as SCR. In 1982, ASSOREL (Associazione delle agenzie di relazioni pubbliche - the Association of public relations agencies), was created that provide the full range of services. The latest developments see in 2020 the merger of ASSOREL into UNA (Aziende della Comunicazione Unite - United Communication Companies).

Especially in the 80s and 90s, public relations activities spread widely in companies and specialize in various branches related to specific types of service or production sectors. Muzi Falconi recalls the stunning development of some areas such as those of dedicated to cultural sponsorship, fashion and public communication.

The spread of public relations in the 80s and 90s

In the field of specialized training, although some private centers were born in the early 1980s, it would be necessary to wait until 1992 for the first university course in public relations to be activated in Italy at IULM University in Milan. Since then, and particularly in the early years of the new century, the development of new degree courses in public relations and business communication has been decidedly consistent and corresponds to the expansion of the number of professionals in organizations and freelancers. Since the 2000s, public relations has experienced alternating moments of expansion and contraction of investments. However, especially since the last decade, public relations has experienced a Renaissance that has enhanced its distinctive characteristics: orientation to relationships and attention to the public. In the next paragraphs, the distinctive characteristics of PR will be explored and compared to those of corporate communication.

1.2 Current trends in public relations

Already at the beginning of the Nineties it was noticed that communication was becoming a central component for the management and organizational development of the company, for the control of relationships with its markets and, ultimately, for the governance of the company in terms of management and evolutionary changes in the corporate structure (Golinelli, 1991).

More specifically, today it can be argued that communication has become, from a marginal tool to support the corporate image, a crucial feature for the strategic and operational management of the company and for its success. The main reason is that the company is increasingly considered as a complex system of relationships supported by (and governed through) different forms and methods of communication.

Nowadays, a substantial and clearly perceptible development of corporate communication and of the public relations profession is in progress, which highlights its increasingly strategic role in post-industrial societies and in the governance of single companies and organizations as widely demonstrated by research carried out annually both in Europe (European Communication Monitor conducted by EUPRERA) and in the United States (Global Communication Report conducted by USC Center for Public Relations), and in Italy (Center for Strategic Communication of the IULM University).

The development of corporate communication and public relations

The change is particularly visible in Italy, compared to English-speaking countries, precisely because of the speed with which it has manifested itself in recent years in our country. If we take the last few years as an observation period, we can indeed notice profound and in some ways surprising changes, at least on three levels.

1. In the *theoretical-conceptual framework*, which defines and frames communication and public relations and their relationship with the organizational and economic theory.
2. *In the role that public relations*, and consequently communication professionals, plays in the strategic and operational governance of organizations.
3. *In the content of the specialist and managerial skills*, now essential to professionals and consequently in their training courses.

The goal of this reflection is precisely to summarize the most relevant changes at these three levels. In fact, they are interesting because they give an idea of current trends, both considered individually and for the synergies they activate.

1.2.1 Theoretical-conceptual changes

Public relations and corporate communication have become increasingly consolidated scientific disciplines, thanks to the development of a body of knowledge and ad hoc theories, the birth of specialized scientific journals, the growth of academic and professional associations to stimulate the evolution of the profession (Ihlen, Van Ruler, 2007). The origins are multidisciplinary as they range from mass communication, to economics and management, to sociology, to psychology. According to Botan and Hazleton (2006), having drawn on such a large number of different disciplinary bodies to build its own body of knowledge is also a sign of the maturity of the discipline that contains different schools of thought and conceptual reference perspectives.

In this manual, the terms public relations and corporate communication are used as synonyms, almost interchangeably. In reality, on a theoretical-conceptual level, there are some specificities, which appear to be increasingly attenuated in the professional world. For public relations scholars, the relationship with the publics is central, therefore they reflect on how relations can be developed, maintained and evaluated over time, on how publics are segmentable, on how initiatives and tools can be used to cultivate positive relationships with the publics. Concepts such as coherence and management are central to corporate communcation scholars who thereby reflect on how communication professionals can manage different messages, in different channels, for multiple audiences, constantly controlling consistency and avoiding unpleasant repetitions and cacophony. Both public relations and corpo-

rate communication professionals plan activities, define tools, create messages, segment audiences, evaluate results, but adopting different focuses and perspectives. In public relations, the focal perspective is represented by the publics and, therefore, by the strategies to connect with them in order to ensure that the organization grows and develops harmoniously with the relevant stakeholders. In corporate communication, the focus is on structures, processes, management models in order to ensure that the company is communicated as a unitary entity, with a unique personality, a distinctive identity. If there are differences, what remains common is the ultimate goal of the communication activity. Both PR and corporate communication have the ultimate purpose of developing the organization's reputation, while preserving its distinctive identity.

One of the most meaningful theories of public relations that underlines the importance of the most advanced communication model, such as the *two-way symmetric*, is the *Excellence Theory of Public Relations*.

The Excellence Theory

The Excellence Theory is a milestone for scholars and communication professionals, as it was built thanks to over fifteen years of studies and analyses of best practices in the field of public relations within complex organizations. It consists of six key principles that represent the guidelines for effective management of public relations, from a systemic perspective (Grunig, Grunig, Dozier, 2002).

1. *Public relations must be considered by management as a strategic function* for the organization and the public relations professional must participate in the dominant coalition of the company, thus taking part in decision-making processes.
2. *The public relations profession is characterized by four role components*: managerial, consultancy, technical and media relations.
3. For proper management of public relations, it is necessary to create a unitary unit responsible for the integration of all communications made by the organization. It is equally essential that this supervision is headed by a public relations executive separated by the other company function.
4. *Among the four public relations models, the Two-way symmetric represents the ideal model*, as it is capable of pursuing the correct balance between the interests of the organization and the expectations of its audiences.
5. *The communication plans created by the public relations executive must be managed at a strategic and not just a tactical level*, using research to evaluate their effectiveness.
6. *As far as the context conditions are concerned, organizations that represent best practices in the field of public relations* have five characteristics: a participatory culture, a symmetrical communica-

tion network, an organic structure, programs that enhance equal opportunities between employers and employees highly satisfied with their work.

Having said this, the key concepts that are distinctive and common to PR and corporate communication are analyzed in the following pages. In particular, three main concepts are explored: publics, relationships and image / reputation / identity.

The concept of publics

One of the key concepts of public relations is the difference between stakeholders and publics. Stakeholders are those who have an interest (stake) in the organization, therefore they can influence its objectives and can be influenced by them (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholders considered fundamental by an organization can be employees, investors, customers, trade unions, suppliers, the local community, the media.

Stakeholders and publics

Publics are those stakeholders who have an issue in common with the organization (Grunig, Hunt, 1984). Therefore, stakeholders are potential publics, and they become so to all effects when a problem arises. For example, some of McDonald's customers may become publics when they are interested in topics such as obesity and diet, and organize a campaign to get healthier menus and regulation on TV advertising for children's food (Tench, Yeoman, 2006).

The situational theory of publics

One of the most important theories developed by Grunig in the late 1960s is the situational theory of publics. It explains how actors make their own decisions in an economic context, starting from the search for information that appears to be relevant, rather than selectively processing messages, as studies on cognitive dissonance claim.

There are three variables that explain the communicational behavior of publics: problem recognition, the level of involvement, and constraint recognition. The problem recognition is linked to the ability of individuals to recognize the existence of a problem or not. The level of involvement indicates to what extent a problem has a personal relevance for the individual who recognized it. Constraint recognition indicates whether there are some real or psychological constraints that may hinder the individual's ability to solve the problem.

Moreover, there are two further variables that respectively describe the active or passive communication behavior of individuals: the search for information and the activity through which this information is processed.

The theory represents a useful tool for segmenting an organisation's publics into active, passive or latent based on their response to certain problems, their communicational behavior and their willingness to take part in solving relevant problems (Grunig, 1997, 2003). The situational theory of publics also represents the basis for selecting the most effective messages based on the characteristics of the audiences.

The concept of relationship

The systemic approach to public relations, starting from the organizational theories, puts the relationship between the organization and its publics at the center. In this sense, maintaining and cultivating relationships becomes the ultimate goal of public relations. Ledingham and Bruning (2003), the fathers of PR theory as relationship management, argue that effective relationship management between an organization and its audiences around common interests and shared goals leads over time to mutual understanding and benefits. For these reasons, the effectiveness of public relations must be evaluated in terms of the effects on the quality of the relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. Effective relationship management is the most challenging and demanding goal for the public relations professional.

The dialogue-oriented path to relationships

Kent and Taylor (2002) argue that the base of a good relationship is dialogue and propose a dialogue-oriented path to stakeholder relationship management. Dialogue, which is the prerequisite of the Two-way symmetric communication model, consists of an ethical approach to communication because it implies not seeing the other subject according to one's own goals, but rather putting them on the same level as oneself. For this reason, dialogue is more an ethical orientation than a technique to learn or a process to manage.

The model of the ten relationship cultivation strategies

Hung (2004; 2011) identified eleven strategies for cultivating quality relationships between the organization and target audiences: *access, positivity, openness, assurances of legitimacy, networking, sharing of tasks, dual concern, cooperation, being unconditionally constructive, saying win-win or no deal, keeping promises.*

The *access* strategy aims to ensure that the publics, their representatives or opinion leaders, have access to organizational information and company decision-making processes.

The *positivity* strategy is based on the organization's intention to improve the level of satisfaction of stakeholders by maintaining a relationship climate oriented towards respect and listening.

Openness, on the other hand, refers to the ethical component of public relations and consists in the company's search for direct, open dialogue-oriented relationship, showing a high degree of willingness to deal with topics of different nature.

Ensuring legitimacy implies the implementation of a strategy aimed at explicitly enhancing the commitment on both parts involved to maintain the relationship over time.

The *networking* strategy is aimed at building networks of relationships and alliances with publics, representatives, interest groups of which its stakeholders belong or to which it attributes importance.

The *sharing of tasks* focuses on the involvement of stakeholders in the management and discussion of problematic issues or issues that are particularly relevant for the organization, for the publics or for both.

The *dual concern* strategy consists in acting with the aim of balancing the interests of the company with those of the stakeholders.

The *cooperation* strategy, on the other hand, consists in the constant search for mutual benefits for the organization and the publics.

Being unconditionally constructive presupposes the willingness of the structure to regulate its behavior according to the needs of the stakeholders.

This strategy is linked to the subsequent decision of a *win-win agreement or no deal*. In other words, between the organization and the publics there is the will to enter into an agreement that can have mutual positive effects (win-win) or, on the contrary, not to enter into any agreement but to continue in the search for the maximum result obtainable for both parties.

Finally, the strategy of *keeping promises* presupposes the willingness of the company to keep the word given to the publics with the aim of improving trust and increasing the credibility of the organization.

The concepts of image and reputation

One of the most significant changes that have occurred in recent years in the field of public relations and corporate communication is the change of the strategic purpose of communication from building the corporate image to strengthening the identity and reputation (Invernizzi, 2004). The first useful step is to start from explaining the profound difference between the concepts of image and reputation.

Image and reputation

Image is based on external and superficial aspects, while reputation is rooted in consistent, deep and consolidated aspects with particular reference to the behaviors adopted.

Image represents the dimension of external appearance of a company, on which one can act and that can be affected quickly through propaganda or spin-doctoring, a derogatory term used by Anglophones to indicate the manipulation of information and the representation of reality to make it look positive even if it isn't (Gregory, 2002).

The most accredited scholars of corporate communication and public relations warn of the risks that exist in indicating the purpose of corporate communication and public relations in improving image.

This was already happening in the 60s and 70s, when Finn (1961) and Bernays (1977) were ahead of their time by claiming, the former, that "if an image fails to be individual and distinctive, it will have no relation to reality, i.e. the actual corporate personality, it will be only a fabrication" and, the latter, that "the word image makes reader or listener believe public relations deals with shadows and illusions".

Many scholars and professionals have been echoing these precursors, especially since the 90s, in suggesting abandoning the concept, and therefore the term, of image: at least when referring to the objective of business communication and public relations (Invernizzi, 1991).

In 1993 Grunig stated that "image has many negative connotative meanings: the average person sees image as the opposite of reality, as an imitation of something". Olins (1994) also attributed a negative value to the concept of image, associating it with something false and opposite to reality and underlining its manipulative dimension

Abandoning the concept of image for that of reputation

At this point it is still to be proven how the concept of reputation differs from that of image.

Like image, reputation also has a perceptive nature but there are two main characteristics that distinguish it from the concept of image (Invernizzi, 2004).

The first is that reputation can be forged only over time and that it can be lost, but it cannot be quickly improved, for example through targeted public relations interventions or through an advertising campaign.

The second, crucially, is that reputation is based on the behavior and actions performed by the organization (Fombrun, Rindova, 1996; Balmer, Gray, 1999) and therefore on its real history.

Communication and reputation

Replacing the objective of image construction with that of reputation management involves significant changes for communication and public relations activities, which are increasingly capable of exerting an important, indirect but also direct influence on the reputation of the company.

We will see how these new potentials derive from the strengthening of the organizational role of communication and from the expansion of communication activities and fields of intervention.

Both these expansions allow communication and public relations to affect and influence in an increasingly way both the strategies and actions of the companies and the relationships with their stakeholders and the perception that the latter have of the company and its way of acting, economically and socially.

How is the relationship between communication and reputation created and consolidated in modern networked organizations? The traditional tools of communication and public relations, from advertising to media relations, can help to consolidate reputation (Ries, Ries, 2002), but they certainly do not represent the main tools for creating and strengthening it (as can happen for image).

The methods of communication and public relations capable of creating, strengthening and consolidating reputation are only those based on relationships with the various internal and external stakeholders. The reason is that relationships are much more consistent and incisive than just communication, as they are made up of the mix of communication initiatives connected and consistent with management and production actions.

Relationships can in fact be defined as "the complex of acts, manifestations and communication that make a specific connection operative" (Devoto Oli, 2002). As if to say that a relationship cannot be consolidated if it is not based on actions as well as on communication.

Developing relationships to build reputation

Communication in organizations, especially in successful ones, therefore becomes important not only because budgets and the number of dedicated professionals grow but also, and above all, because the communicational component can be assessed for each action and because a relationship of mutual influence between communications and actions is established.

Starting from corporate strategies, which are defined with the support of the communication manager, a function manager in their own right and part of the dominant coalition of the company. And arriving at products-services and their production processes, of which the communicational impact towards the different stakeholders must be assessed, in terms of environmental and social sustainability.

Alignment between identity and reputation

For students of corporate communication (van Riel, 2005) the concept of organizational identity is also particularly relevant. It includes culture, values, the deepest personality of the organization. For this reason, a communication strategy must be clear, authentic and must express the distinctiveness of the organization in its most specific characteristics (Cornelissen, 2005).

1.2.2 Changes in the organizational role of communication

The changes in public relations in the last few decades

Significant changes also emerge at the second of the three levels indicated at the beginning, that of the role that public relations and communication professionals play in the strategic and operational governance of organizations.

In Italy, particularly, over the last few decades the communication activity has changed to the point that it is no longer fragmented into single units, each with a specific technical-operational task, such as media relations or event management.

Today, all activities are carried out by a single entity that performs them in an integrated and coordinated way. This unit is mostly under the direct supervision of the General Manager, and therefore placed inside the Executive Committee of the company, in the same way as the more consolidated company management, such as Human Resources, Production, Finance and Control and Sales.

The director of communications joins the "dominant coalition"

Consequently the communication directors become part of the so-called "dominant coalition", as they become the members of the strategic management that governs the company. This means a greater specific weight of public relations and communication both in the definition of company strategies and policies and in the different management phases. This also means that the required specialist services, both regarding communication and public relations, are increasing.

Therefore, the most frequent situation in large companies and organizations is that of a Communication Department which includes the more traditional or basic services (i.e. organization of events, press office) and some services that we could define as specialized in the activities of public relations and communication (i.e. Public affairs, Crisis communication, CSR communication). The other services, on the other hand, are often activated by the departments with which they have greater affinity in terms of content, such as Financial Communication in the Finance and Control Department or Marketing Communication in the Sales and Marketing Department.

In line with the tradition of the Excellence Theory developed by Grunig, and described in the previous pages, the characteristics of the Excellent Communication Department have been defined (Fig. 1.1).

Figure 1.1
The framework for the Excellent Communication Department.
Source: Vercic, Zerfass, 2016.

The Framework underlines how Excellent Directions have two characteristics: they are able to exert influence in the organization and record excellent levels of performance. There are two types of influence that the director of communication can exercise. Influence advisory, when the managers of the organization seriously consider the advice and recommendations from the director of communication and the professionals of his function. Influence Executive, when the communication director is invited to the Board of Directors to discuss corporate strategies with the other managers and the CEO. Performance, on the other hand, is expressed in success and competence. The Excellent Communication Department is more successful than the communication departments of competing organizations, that is it brings higher and more recognizable qualitative and quantitative results. The quality of the skills and ability of the Excellent Communication Direction is higher than that of the communication directions in competing organizations.

In conclusion, the concept of public relations that is adopted in this manual is a concept that overlaps with that of corporate communication. By using this juxtaposition and making this choice, the desire to bring closer together the two concepts of public relations and corporate communication is automatic. Although referring to the same conception and the same professional reality, they have evolved as separate disciplines, each with its own scientific journals and ignoring each other. All this with serious harm to the theoretical evolution of the two disciplines, which lacked that cross-fertilization so important in the scientific field.

At the same time, the choice made in this manual is to take into consideration and develop in the various chapters all those contents that refer to the professional specializations that together define the concept of public relations understood in a broad sense and therefore similar to that of corporate communication.

Once these premises and choices have been clarified, we can define public relations and corporate communication in terms of objectives, service contents and methods of production and management of the services themselves.

Public relations and corporate communication activities of an organization *consist of listening and reflective, relational and communicational activities handled with managerial techniques in order to collaborate in the definition of corporate strategies, to support the achievement of corporate objectives and to strengthen the reputation, through a high degree of consistency and synergy created between the set of communication initiatives and management and production actions*.

These activities are divided into *basic services, specialized services, managerial activities* and *strategic activities*.

The *basic services* are represented by media relations and event management.

The *specialized services* are represented by the communication of the corporate social responsibility, public affairs, crisis communication, international communication, marketing communication, environmental communication and internal communication.

Managerial activities are those with which public relations services are designed, managed, coordinated and with which results are evaluated and measured.

Strategic activities are those with which support is provided to top management and individual company functions to define the communicational component of the company's management and production acts that have a particular influence on internal and external stakeholders.

1.2.3 The changes in the skills of professionals in organizations

Connected to the change in the organizational role of communication and public relations is that of the content of the role of professionals. With only a few exceptions consisting mainly of multinationals, in the past, in companies, the PR professional role was mostly limited to carrying out the role of communication technicians. In fact, they dealt with activities that often did not go beyond corporate press, media relations and event management. The exception were marketing communication and advertising which, in most companies, were among the first to be created.

The roles of the professional according to the Bled Manifesto

Today the role of the communication and public relations professional in general, and in particular that of the communication director in large companies, has greatly expanded. In fact, alongside the role of specialized communication technician, which has also seen important expansions and insights into its various specialist components, there are often other three, as was well highlighted in the Bled Manifesto (van Ruler, Verčič, Balmer, 2002). Wanting therefore to summarize the most important changes in the role of the communication and public relations professional, we can highlight the following four.

1. *The first role is that of technical-specialist of communication and relations*, which includes the specific and traditional activity of the communicator-public relator. This role component has deepened and expanded since traditional activities, such as media relations and event organization, and sponsorships themselves, have become more sophisticated and complex. The specialized activities have increased in number and have realised the importance and complexity of crisis communication, communication of corporate social responsibility, environmental communication and internal communication grow.
2. *The second role is that of consultancy-training*, which consists in providing consultancy to the other company departments, which are more and more often carrying out directly public relations and communication activities in managing the training of the various categories of employees, with particular regard to the dissemination of interpersonal communication skills.
3. *The third role is the managerial*, which consists in governing the set of public relations and communication activities with the management tools of audit, planning, management control and monitoring. Managerial competence, which takes place mostly in the various forms of coordination described in this paragraph, represents an important novelty in the role of the public relator and communicator. To fill the managerial role, which is certainly the most complex as it refers to the governance of the sets of communication

activities aimed at the success of the organization, the PR professional can use numerous specialized technical methods and tools. The following box proposes a method of communication design and planning, the OASIS method.

The OASIS method for designing and planning communication

The OASIS method can be used for planning and scheduling communication initiatives. The method is based on the implementation of five phases: definition of objectives (Objectives); audience identification and scenario analysis (*Audience / Insight*); formulation of communication strategies and ideas (*Strategy / Ideas*); Implementation of tactics (*Implementation*); and finally evaluation of the results of the proposed communication activities (*Scoring / Evaluation*).

Definition of objectives. The objectives of a communication plan must be clearly and unambiguously explained. The communication professional can use the SMART method, which summarizes how to formulate communication objectives and the characteristics that these must have in order to be defined correctly. In fact, the objectives must be specific for categories of publics and for the type of effect generated (Specific), they must be expressed in a measurable and quantifiable way (Measurable); they must be realistic for the organization (*Achievable*), relevant for the organization (*Relevant*) and finally temporally defined (*Timely*) (Institute for PR, 1999).

Audience identification and scenario analysis. Once the objectives have been defined, the communication professional must clarify who the publics of the initiatives are and analyze the scenario in which they operate. The most common segmentation is based on the use of demographic variables (age, gender, profession, marital status, ...). However, this segmentation does not allow the audience to be correctly identified as it does not take into account their communicative behaviors and their needs. In this regard, the communication professional can use two methods: the power-interest matrix and the situational theory of publics.

The power-interest matrix identifies publics on the basis of two variables: power, i.e. the level of influence that stakeholders can have on the implementation of the communication plan; interest, i.e. the level of interest of stakeholders with regard to the content of the communication plan. From the intersection of these two variables, four potential categories of stakeholders emerge, that require different communication efforts: stakeholders characterized by a low level of power and interest, towards which it is sufficient to carry out an information activity through a minimum communication effort; stakeholders characterized by a high level of power but a low level of interest, who should instead be involved in the communication initiative; stakeholders with a high level of interest but a low level of power, who should be consulted; and finally, stakeholders with a high level of power and interest who represent the main publics to whom an engagement strategy should be addressed.

The situational theory of publics is based on the concept of publics, which can be defined as stakeholders who have an issue (problem) with the organization. The theory involves the use of three variables to segment the

target audiences: problem recognition; level of involvement; constraint recognition (the recognition of the obstacles to solve the problem) and finally compatibility with the organization's objectives. Based on these four variables, it is possible to identify three categories of audiences: latent audiences who do not recognize a problem, are not involved, do not recognize the presence of obstacles and do not have a high compatibility of objectives; passive publics, who recognize the presence of a problem and obstacles to be able to solve it, but have a low level of involvement and of compatibility with the objectives of the organization; active audiences, who instead recognize the presence of a problem, underline that there are no obstacles and that they can act to solve it, are strongly involved and share the communication objectives.

After having identified the audience, it is advisable for the professional to collect scenario information. In this regard, the managerial tools available to the professional are: PEST analysis, to identify which external factors may affect the communication plan; SWOT analysis to integrate the analysis of external factors with information regarding the internal context of the organization, identifying its strengths and weaknesses; monitoring of the digital environment.

Formulation of communication strategies and ideas. The analysis of the audience and the scenario allows the professional to identify the strategic approach to be used to communicate with the stakeholders / audiences. The strategy indicates the orientation to be followed through the communication plan. In this phase, it is especially necessary to clarify the creative idea and identify the key message to be conveyed. In this regard, the message can be rational, that is, based on conjectures, facts, evidence or emotions, which instead recalls feelings, values, opinions and attitudes. The key message must also be defined in terms of format, tone of voice, context and time of diffusion. The communication professional can choose to adopt different strategies for formulating the message (Werder Page, 2015): informative, based on the objective presentation of facts; facilitative, which aims to facilitate the public and put it in a position to act; persuasive, based on a non-neutral language in which facts are presented selectively and with explicit reference to the values and emotions of the public; coercive, which is based on the use of punishments, threats or rewards; and finally cooperative, which stimulates collaboration and cooperation to solve the problem.

Implementation of tactics. In this phase, the communication professional must select the operational practices, tools and initiatives that are needed to achieve the objectives defined in the first phase. The tactics available to the communication professional can be different and fall into multiple categories among which it is possible to mention: media relations (e.g. press conference, press releases; interviews, ...); events (e.g. special events, customer relations, trade shows, social events, fundraising, ...); customer relations (e.g. direct mail, sponsorship activities, newsletters, ...); internal communication (e.g. business TV, intranet, meetings, emails, ...); corporate identity (e.g. logo, building, publications, merchandising, ...); financial reports (e.g. annual report, briefing materials, website, ...) etc.

Evaluation of the results of the proposed communication activities. The last phase involves the evaluation of the results obtained through the communication plan. The assessment can take place at three

levels: formative level, in which it is assessed whether the communication plan has worked efficiently, effectively and appropriately; summative level, in which it is assessed whether the communication plan has generated intangible value for the company, that is, it has had a certain impact on the relationship system or on the reputation of the company; accountability level, in which it is assessed whether the communication plan has had an impact on the business performance of the company.

4. *The fourth role is the strategic-reflective.* The strategic part concerns the participation, within the executive committee, in the definition of corporate strategies, the reflective part concerns the activity of listening, analyzing the dynamics of values, expectations and opinions spread among the various stakeholders of the business. The goal is to bring them back within the company, properly evaluated and processed. The advantage is to keep business strategies and policies aligned with the evolution of the prevailing cultural and value principles in the external society.

The importance of this dimension of the role of the Communication Director or *Chief Communication Officer* (CCO) defined as reflective, is reiterated by various scholars and researchers in both management and communication who have dealt with the subject (Moss, Newman, De Santo, 2005; Grunig, Grunig, 2006). And in 2008, from the contributions presented at the Euprera Conference and collected in the book "Institutionalizing PR and Corporate Communication" (Invernizzi, Muzi Falconi, Romenti, 2009) it emerged strongly that communication has consolidated in large companies and plays that fundamental role indicated in the Institutionalization Theory and aimed at supporting organizations to evolve in a way that is consistent with the society in which they operate.

Institutionalization Theory

The consolidation of the Communication Department and in particular of its activities in support of the need for isomorphism and coherence of the organization itself with respect to the social economic reality in which it operates, indicated by the Institutionalization Theory, certainly represents a significant affirmation of the importance of communication deriving in particular from its listening and reflective role.

But if the objective we pursue is to assess whether communication has really reached a strategic dimension, perhaps it is not enough to consider the support that it is able to provide, through listening and reflective activities, to the institutionalization of the company in the economic and social environment in which it operates. In fact, there is another dimension of communication that is essential in order to define communication as a truly strategic lever of government and for the success of companies: it is the dimension that supports the differentiation of the company within its competitive context.

It may sound like a paradox but an organization, in order to be successful, must in fact not only be consistent with the values of the society in which it operates (as claimed by the *Institutionalization Theory*), but also differentiate itself, in particular through the processes of innovation and creation of its distinctive resources (as claimed by the *Entrepreneurial Organization Theory*).

Therefore the core question becomes: are there signs and empirical evidences, as in the case of the Institutionalization Theory, that show that communication supports those processes that the Entrepreneurial Organization Theory (Alvarez, Barney, 2004; Burns, 2005; Busenitz et al. , 2003; Bygrave, 1989; Dew, Ramakrishna, Venkataraman, 2004; Foss, Klein, 2005; Ireland, Hitt, Sirmon, 2003) indicate as fundamental to innovation and entrepreneurial development in businesses and organizations?

Some research results, which were first presented at the 2011 International Communication Association conference in Boston (Invernizzi, Romenti, 2011) and then published in the Handbook of Strategic Communication (Invernizzi, Romenti, 2015), seem to support this. In fact, precisely from the analysis of cases of excellence of Italian companies belonging to different production sectors, such as Granarolo, Ferrari, Pastificio Rana, Banca Monte dei Paschi di Siena and Illycaffè (Invernizzi, Romenti, 2011, 2012), it emerged that the communication activated by those companies is increasingly aimed at the type of activity that the *Entrepreneurial Organization Theory* (EOT) indicates as crucial for entrepreneurial development and for the success of companies. We refer in particular to *Orientation to Innovation*, to *Transformative Leadership* and to *Enactment*, the latter understood as the activation of the competitive environment of the company.

Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm

In particular, a communication correspondent can be identified for each of the dimensions of the EOT. The four dimensions of communication as a whole identify those activities that we can define as entrepreneurial and which highlight the most strategic purposes that communication tends to set itself. In other words, the four dimensions of communication defined as entrepreneurial represent a communication model, the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm (Invernizzi, Romenti, 2015), as indicated in Figure 1.2.

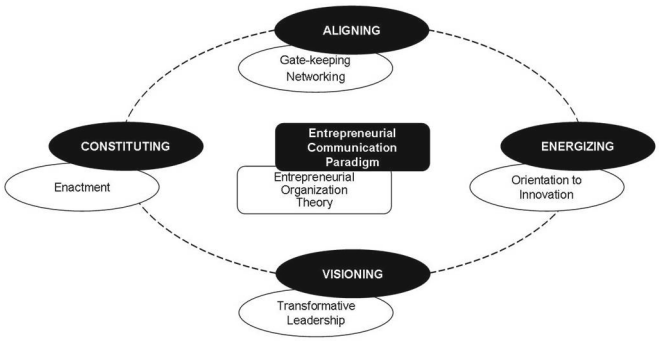

Figure 1.2
The four dimensions of the Entrepreneurial Communication Paradigm.
Source: Invernizzi, Romenti, 2015.

In particular, the dimension of Aligning includes the analysis of the external environment and the boundary spanning function, thanks to which the organization is able to cover a privileged position of observation and interpretation of the context in which it operates. This dimension also includes the components of engagement and bridging with the most important stakeholders to develop solid symmetrical and long-term relationships with them.

The *Energizing* dimension includes the role that communication can play in stimulating the innovation orientation of the partners of the organization and in the creation of collaborative networks that drive innovation through the combination of existing resources, skill development and distinctive knowledge.

The *Visioning* dimension concerns the definition and dissemination of the organizational mission, strategies and guiding values to offer the organization a common, clear and shared vision. This dimension therefore enhances the role of communication in directing collective energies towards common goals consistent with the strategy.

The dimension of *Constituting* consists in the activation (enactment) of the competitive climate and in the organizational setting through the communication activities and the processes of attribution of meaning by the organizational stakeholders. This dimension plays a fundamental role in analyzing the potential communicative impact of corporate strategic decisions.

What can be argued on the Entrepreneurial Communication side is that it looks like a new chapter in the development of communication has been opened, in which communication is requested and sometimes managed directly by entrepreneurs and top managers, rather than by communication directors. In fact, there are more and more entrepreneurs and top managers who, in taking the most relevant decisions for their business, use the leverage and the communicational dimension together with others, more traditionally considered as relevant, such as the marketing or financial dimension.

Communication, a strategic lever for the success of organizations

We can therefore argue that communication is becoming an increasingly strategic lever for the government, the development and therefore the success of businesses and organizations. The results of the quantitative and qualitative research cited seem to strongly support the hypothesis that the institutionalization of communication in organizations supports their process of isomorphism, that is the processes of getting closer to the dominant values in the reality in which they operate. On the other hand, the equally strategic role of communication in the differentiation process of the company compared to its competitors deserves further

study and in particular the role that Entrepreneurial Communication seems to be able to play in an increasingly consistent way in support of the most important decision-making processes, crucial for success of business.

1.2.4 Conclusions: towards strategic communication?

The framework of corporate communication and public relations, as has been briefly outlined, appears to be in strong and positive evolution, especially since the mid-90s of the last century. Indeed, it emerges very clearly that companies demonstrate a real need for communication that often already in fact occurs in organizations, in a conscious way and according to the achievement of the objectives pursued, taking into account the expectations of the stakeholders.

In this regard, the signs of quantitative and qualitative development are unequivocal, in terms of expansion of the range of communication services offered and the role of influence both on the strategy of the company and on the various management and production acts that the Communication Department exercises in large companies, as shown by the research cited (Invernizzi, 2004, 2012).

The change taking place in the role that communication plays in large companies is also important. From technical activity that deals with how to communicate effectively, to professional activity which enters into the merits of what to communicate, thus influencing the consistency between communication initiatives and management actions, which has already been mentioned in the previous pages. It also evolves towards an increasingly rooted and relevant managerial activity in corporate governance and in the management of an increasingly varied and complex communication activity, aimed at affecting the behavior of the organization by influencing its strategy.

We have also seen that the communication activity is less and less aimed at building the image and more and more oriented towards the governance of reputation. This paradigm shift is underway, both at a conceptual and operational level, in the reality of large Italian companies. It is carried out through an increasingly broad specialized technical activity aimed at important sectors such as that of corporate social responsibility, but also with a strategic activity that tends to influence, more and more consistently, decisions regarding the strategy and the management of the company.

The three levels of corporate action

In this sense, the considerations made on the strengthening of the organizational role and on the expansion of professional content of communication and public relations are such as to considerably increase the impact that the communication function is able to exert, directly or indi-

rectly, on reputation. Today, in fact, with the expansion and strengthening of his organizational and professional role within the company, the communications manager is able to significantly influence three levels of action of the company and therefore three components of its reputation (Baccarani, Golinelli, 1992; Balmer, Gray, 1999).

1. *First of all, the communication and public relations professionals are able, through their strategic role played within the dominant coalition, to act on the company's strategies and on its behavior and therefore on its reputation.* In particular, they contribute to influencing and defining the choices relating to the products and services to be provided, the production processes of the company, their economic and social characteristics and their impact on the environment, the different types of relationships that are activated every day with the different internal and external stakeholders.
2. *Secondly, professionals, especially through their managerial and consultancy-training role, are able to govern that complex network of relationships with internal and external stakeholders, in particular with influential publics, which allow the key messages of the company to be spread.* Relationships that also make it possible to influence the way of being and acting of the different categories of subjects who operate within the different functions. It is about the activation and management of word-of-mouth processes, using social media more and more, through opinion makers, loyal customers and employees involved, which make it possible to transfer the guiding values and make known those company behaviors that qualify its action in terms of ethics and social responsibility. It is also about training: both the explicit type that takes place in the classrooms and concerns the dissemination of communication skills, and the explicit that is carried out in support of the various company production activities.
3. *Thirdly, through the expansion and strengthening of technical-specialist communication activities, professionals are able to strengthen and consolidate the key messages contained in the mission, guiding values, actions and behaviors of the company.* These are intentional communication activities, from the more traditional ones, such as event management and media relations, to the more recent ones such as environmental communication, Corporate Social Responsibility and the creation, curation and dissemination of the business narrative content. These communication activities, and in particular those with a high strategic content, acquire particular relevance and are less and less classifiable as spin doctoring activities, as they refer to ethically founded guiding values and are above all connected and consistent with corporate behavior and actions.

The picture of current trends therefore seems particularly positive for the development of the role of the public relations professionals and for the expansion of their strategic and managerial contents, which we have defined as *entrepreneurial communication*. It is therefore an evolution that, over the last few years, has seen the role of communication and public relations in companies and organizations deepen into new specialized technical sectors and expand towards new managerial, entrepreneurial and strategic content. It has also seen this role expand to the point that it increasingly affects corporate behavior to make it consistent with the mission of the company and its declared guiding values.

It therefore seems possible to argue that PR and communication play an increasingly strategic role in companies and organizations as they are aimed at building and supporting policies for defining objectives and positioning, governing the most economically relevant initiatives and managing key resources. And, finally, that PR and communication play a strategic role (Holtzhausen, Zerfass, 2015) in building and maintaining a solid reputation of companies in the public sphere, which is essential for their consolidation and success.