

# 2010 - a year of communication achievements

 By [Daniel Munslow](#)

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It feels like yesterday that we sat down with a crystal ball and tried to predict how the face of communication would change throughout the course of 2010. Now, it's already time to reflect and take stock of the year that has been. A busy year; a tough year; an exciting year; an unpredictable year! Of the [10 trends](#) discussed in January 2010, the first eight were action items. Have these trends from January come true?

## 1. Corporate governance raises the role of communication

The year started with a definitive push to understand what King Report III had done for communicators.

There is no doubt that the code of good governance has fundamentally changed the way in which communicators operate and also drives measurement and accountability to another level. Executives are asking more questions about communication, as it now becomes a board responsibility.

Sadly, many communicators have still not read King III, or section 8, which define the way in which communication strategies are constructed.

## 2. Closer synergy between internal and external communication

There has been a shift to consolidate and align the activities of internal and external communication - a long time overdue. This is a core value embedded in the 2010 Stockholm Accords, ensuring consistency of messaging irrespective of who the target audience is.

It's critical to ensure that what you say you do, what you actually do, and what people experience, are synergistically aligned.

## 3. Focus on value

The economic climate has necessitated companies to seek tangible return on investment from communication - be it external or internal. They are looking at ways in which ROI can be calculated to reflect sound returns and real change.

## 4. From corporate communications to culture and behaviour modification

This shift has taken the communications discipline by storm. The focus is no longer on the wallpaper or internal branding, but rather on the experience the company creates for its employees.

This, in turn, determines their level of engagement and buy-in, which results in the display of a specific set of behaviours. When employees are not engaged, they do not behave in accordance with the values required to deliver the mission statement (which is the business objective).

## **5. Management training**

There has been a substantial increase in the demand for leadership communication training and the role leaders play in the communication cycle.

This year revealed that only 20% of employees place any significant trust in their senior leadership, while 80% trust their line manager. These are critical touch points that need to be nurtured and effectively trained on communication.

## **6. Robust measurement principles**

Measurement practices have changed drastically over the past year.

The Barcelona Declaration came at the right time to further explore the area of measurement and better align global players. We now sit with a situation where measurement can be comparable to performance in different countries. AVE has been accepted as incongruent to the value of public relations, and qualitative measures must be put in place.

The principles that were included in the Barcelona Declaration, and overwhelmingly supported by global public relations practitioners, include:

1. It is important to align goal-setting with measurement
2. Measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs
3. The effect on business results can and should be measured where possible
4. Media measurement requires quantity and quality
5. Advertising value equivalency (AVE) is not the value of public relations
6. Social media can and should be measured
7. Transparency and 'replicability' are paramount to sound measurement

## **7. Alignment between brand promise and employee behaviour**

A synergistic approach, between the brand promises made externally and the ability of employees to deliver that promise, is still an area that requires attention. Employees are the ones who shape the customer experience, not only the marketing.

While headway has been made into this alignment, it has not gone far enough. We see it in everyday life - retailers, the banks, and companies in the service sector - they make brand promises in their advertisement that are not materialised into tangible actions by staff.

## **8. Use of social media**

We have not seen as many companies as expected adopting extensive social media campaigns. In fact, many companies are now strategically assessing the long-term return of social media before getting absorbed in the 'shiny objective syndrome'.

That is not to say social media is not hugely popular; but in business, the questions are now about long-term forecast planning and ensuring the usage models are sustainable.

Now we look forward to an exciting 2011, which will no doubt see more changes to the face of public relations and corporate communications. Some of the specific areas elaborated on here will also be in the spotlight next year, as companies seek to adopt and align their practices to good governance (King Report III), global management standards (Stockholm Accord), and effective outcomes-based and impact driven measurement (Barcelona Declaration).

## ABOUT DANIEL MUNSLOW

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