

The elusive C-suite for communicators

 By [Daniel Munslow](#)

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The challenge to secure a seat at c-suite for communication is not new and is faced by communicators in all markets. It's also a challenge that doesn't seem to have a single solution. In fact, at the 2016 IABC World Conference held earlier this month in the United States, there were a number of sessions tackling this very issue, presented by David Grossman, Stephen Welch, and Kellie Garrett.



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In order for the voice of communication to be echoed among business leaders, communicators are faced with the challenge of changing the way we focus and report. It's a question of moving away from tactics and intangibles, and placing greater emphasis on the strategies business intends to use to move the organisations forward.

What are the "hot button issues" that define regional macroeconomic business climates? What has changed in the past year and how has communication supported that change? By demonstrating a better understanding of business, communication will shift from a cost centre that provides a service, to a centre of excellence that manages organisational reputation.

Grossman emphasised that to join the executive ranks, communicators need to master intangible facets of leadership, such as presence, managing one's impact, dealing with power, emotional intelligence and political savvy. This marks a shift in the skills areas for communicators, which are increasingly moving away from the narrow and specialised communication capabilities, to broader leadership, financial, risk management, coaching and business acumen.

Welch added that building strong organisational cultures, leading others and driving results, will always require more of leaders than just being intellectually capable. As market conditions continue to face headwinds, leaders are turning to communicators to drive better stakeholder engagement, manage crises more proactively, and as a result shape, build, maintain and grow corporate reputation.

High-impact leadership

High-impact leaders, the kind that can inspire, motivate and influence others, require a specific skills-set too. It's about how to shape ideas and deliver them in more powerful and engaging way, both to leaders to secure buy-in and to stakeholders to create engagement and commitment. Very often ideas are very good – solid, creative, and even strategic – but are not presented within a business framework. Enhanced influencing skills go a long way in driving business buy-in.

When it comes to leadership communication, a topic of high importance for organisations globally, communicators need to become more reliant on using leaders as an important communication channel to inform, encourage and stimulate organisational change.

A solid recommendation from Garrett is the use of toolkits to secure a higher level of skills that shapes key stakeholder perceptions like confidence, trust and authenticity. Of course, core communication skills such as the strategic management of how information is positioned, remain key.

Communication professionals, as part of their role, need to help leaders find their voices and build trust with their teams. This will in turn enable communicators to leverage enhanced leadership interactions through content provided in the toolkits. While there is no formula to authentic leadership, there are strategies that can help leaders be more engaged and perceived with greater credibility.

ABOUT DANIEL MUNSLOW

Daniel Munslow is the owner and founder of MOC Consulting and former director on the International Association of Business Communicators' International Executive Board. He has 16 years' experience in business communication consulting. He has worked across Africa, as well as in the Middle East, the US, Europe, and AsiaPac.

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