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CHAPTER 10

The Future of Internal Communication

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The Future of Internal Communication

Companies today operate in an increasingly complex world. The fast-changing, competitive, diverse, and dynamic business environments are far less predictable than ever and cast both challenges and opportunities for organizations' communication practices. For organizations to keep up with the growing pace of change in the market, sustain a competitive advantage, and achieve business success, building an engaged, committed, and happy workforce and retaining talent is essential. Furthermore, in this increasingly connected, globalized, and transparent digital age, the line between internal and external is blurred. Internal stakeholders' voice is amplified and able to travel across borders in real time. Employees' roles as corporate ambassadors and brand advocates are far more salient than ever before. And more commonly than ever before, an engaged workforce is offering a competitive advantage to employers.

The evolving environment, technology, audiences, and macro- and micro-level issues are reshaping organizations' communication landscape and internal communication practices. Although anticipating what will happen tomorrow is often quite impossible, these attempts help us to plan for the changing expectations of employers and employees as well as the implications of such change for the workplace and society. In this chapter, we discuss the upcoming trends and issues that may alter internal communication practices in the upcoming years.

Trends and Issues Reshaping Internal Communication

The trends and issues affecting internal communication practices have been an ongoing discussion topic among professionals and scholars. People may hold different views on how the future will unfold for employees and workplace communication practices, but six major trends

and issues that are happening or are about to happen are identified from our research and trade publications.

Digitized Workplace

The rapid growth and internal adaptation of digital technologies by organizations have transformed the workplace and the internal communication landscape. New media tools, such as blogs, social messengers, social networking sites (SNSs), and interactive videos, have not only altered how information can be transmitted inside organizations, but also how organizations and management listen to their employees, how content is created and shared, how employees are connected, and how internal communities are formed. These sweeping changes and disruptions, referred to as the "Digital Renaissance of Work" (Miller and Marsh 2014), have changed multiple aspects of an employee's life. On the one hand, interactive and human-centered digital tools enable organizations to personify themselves and to put a human face behind "cold" names. They also blur the communication hierarchies between top management and employees, foster direct leadership engagement and conversation with employees, and promote horizontal communication among peers. On the other hand, using social media platforms internally creates a democratic, equal, transparent, empowering, and open environment where employees may feel encouraged and safe to voice their opinions and share their thoughts, ideas, and talent with others. The rich data produced on internal social media provides organizations invaluable information to truly gauge what employees think, feel, or need. Despite the enormous and unparalleled opportunities to engage all internal stakeholders offered by the digitized workplace, it does not come without challenges. In addition to the fact that many organizations are not digitally equipped, or are unaware of how to set up an effective social media use policy, which tools to adopt and which not, and privacy and security issues all require organizations to exert efforts to resolve. Further, although communication is faster with digital media forms, it is also more fragmented and offers more chance for the introduction of inaccuracies that may be difficult to correct (Bowen 2013).

Generational Differences, Diversity, and Inclusion

The workforce in the United States and globally is growing increasingly diverse, as the world becomes flatter and more connected. Diversity and inclusion were suggested to be a top priority for businesses in 2016 (Bersin 2015). As Boomers leave the workforce, more influence will be asserted by Gen X, millennials, and Gen Z (identified as anyone born in 1998 or later). How to communicate effectively against this new theater of generational differences will be a new challenging issue for future organizations (Burton 2016). Indeed, diversity in the workplace not only refers to multigenerational or race, gender, and age differences, but it is also about the differences in employees' background, education, cultures, personalities, physical abilities or challenges, and so forth.

Research proves that companies with greater diversity outperform their peers by a significant margin. For instance, McKinsey's research (Hunt, Layton, and Prince 2015) showed that gender-diverse companies are 15 percent more likely to outperform their competitors; that ethnically diverse organizations are 35 percent more likely to outperform their peers. Inclusive teams outperform their peers by 80 percent in team-based assessment (Bersin 2015). Diversity and inclusion contribute to companies' increased adaptability, attraction to talent, broader range of skills and experiences, and innovation and creativity (Greenberg 2004), although challenges exist as well, such as language and cultural barriers, prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination (Green et al. 2012). These challenges show where the importance of communication comes in. Internal communication initiatives, in relation to the diversifying workforce, can help maximize the benefits of diversity and overcome challenges by segmenting internal publics for more micro-targeted communication, developing a culture of genuine inclusion and openness, and fostering collaboration, mutual understanding, trust, and respect. Furthermore, the macro trends of globalization, technology, and an increasingly migratory workforce have offered companies opportunities to tap into the diverse talent pools that were hardly reachable before.

Globalized and Multicultural Workforces

Globalization has been an ongoing trend for decades. Today, the greater openness of economies, trade liberalization, growth of labor migration, and technology advancement have accelerated the global expansion of businesses. Many companies have stretched across borders to a point where they have larger operations and more employees in other parts of the world than in their home countries (The Economic Intelligence Unit 2015). At the same time, skilled and well-educated workers from developing countries seek higher wages and better opportunities across borders, thereby shaping a globalized, diverse, and multicultural workforce. Cultural diversity in general contributes to organizational success, with a positive effect on innovation and creativity. However, organizations face challenges in balancing corporate culture with societal culture. Management struggles to develop effective management and communication styles that are tailored to the needs of multicultural employees, who come from different backgrounds with diverse beliefs, values, and communication orientations and may react differently to news and information because of cultural, social, language, and historic differences (Burton 2016). As the changing demographics, changing patterns of mobility, and globalization continue to transform the nature of work and workers, how to engage and integrate a global and multicultural workforce is a new puzzle for modern organizations. Diversity also includes many other factors for inclusion such as physical limitations, thought diversity, veteran status, age and gender equality, religious liberties; these factors are further complicated by cultural differences. Communication is the key to overcoming such a challenge and to building cross-cultural understanding, although it requires cross-functional collaboration among management, human resources, technology, and communication.

Social Conscience and Impact

The future workforce will be led by millennials and Gen Z ers. Although the millennial generation was responsible for the disruption, Gen Z will be tasked with building a new social order. Recent research showed that 91 percent of Gen Z individuals were optimistic that their generation

would build a better world. Both the millennial and Gen Z generations take into account a company's social responsibility (Bowen and Gallicano 2013; PwC 2011). In the era of greater demands for ethical accountability and transparency, organizations' stakeholders, including customers, investors, and employees, want to analyze the organizations' social behavior, not only their share price (Ignatius 2015). Thus, companies' ability to demonstrate a social conscience, show employees that they champion their causes and beliefs, and give them more influence, power, and opportunities to create meaningful changes has become a modern competitive advantage for organizations. Employees often express a greater commitment to the organization when that company expresses a clear and actionable set of ethical values (Bowen 2015, 2016a).

A *PR Week* study reported that by 2015, 85.7 percent of employers would be involved in their communities, 81.7 percent would offer employees time to take part in charitable work, and 49.3 percent would set aside a percentage of the revenue for charities or nonprofit organizations (Daniels 2015). As Jay Haines, founder of Grace Blue, noted:

> People have to understand on a day-to-day basis what they are coming to work to do; what they are expecting to achieve, and what the company is all about… That has become fundamental to whether people select to move or stay with a company. (Daniels 2015, 31)

Organizations need to identify a cause and find an area on which they can have the greatest influence, a cause that plays to a company's greatest strength, and incorporate such values into their vision, mission, and purposes, which are constantly communicated and reinforced to all company stakeholders. An established social conscience that is aligned with employee passion, meaning, and purposes not only sets the organization apart from its competitors, but also helps employees realize their values in life to build deeper connections and organizational identification. Internal communication professionals can help identify employee role models who live by organizational values, spotlight, and recognize their contributions, linking their efforts to the corporate values they hold sacrosanct and telling their stories to inspire and mobilize others (Burton 2016).

Work–Life Balance

Although technology has penetrated work life, the drivers of change in internal communication are not reliant on tools or technology—they come from the people. How people are treated and what they experience in the organization are at the center. Many authors have noted that competitive remuneration must be given to succeed with employee recruitment and retention, but what truly determines winning or losing the battle is whether or not the employer offers a great place to work (Daniels 2015). The issue of work–life balance is at the center of discussion on creating a pleasant work environment. *Flexibility* has become increasingly important for organizations, especially for attracting millennials and Gen Z, who place great emphasis on work–life balance, to enter the workplace. According to recent industry research, 92 percent of the employers today offer the ability to work from home, and more and more employers are striving toward more flexible work arrangements, providing employees with the skills and tools needed to work wherever they may be (Burton 2016).

Many companies provide clear paths to senior-level positions and offer cross-functional training, mentoring, and various career development opportunities, as good talent is constantly seeking for new experiences, opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities. Equally important, a collaborative, open, and fun work atmosphere and culture contribute to employees' perception of work–life balance. As Oscar Suris, Head of Corporate Communications at Wells Fargo noted, "Everyone wants the financial rewards and bonuses. They are important and we do them, but if you're still working in a climate that feels stoic, unappreciated, and not friendly, the value of those specific benefits gets undercut" (Daniels 2015, 31). Internal communication is irreplaceable in communicating the values and efforts of work–life balance of organization and in creating a supportive, appreciative, collaborative, and fun environment.

Radical Downsizing of Technology

The advent of *nanotechnology* and the myriad applications across numerous industries are set to revolutionize the entire technological world. *PR Week* offered nine separate industries that nanotech will revolutionize

(Bowen 2016b), from surgery to humanitarian relief to manufacturing. For example, one nanobot can replicate itself into thousands and then work to excise only potentially cancerous cells. But who controls it and how, what happens to the jobs of traditional surgeons, and which factors should determine access to the technology?

Additionally, neurotechnology has advanced to the point that brain-to-computer interfaces are now possible (Bowen 2016c). Artificial intelligence (AI), thought reading, and memory alteration are in development and have implications of all kinds for numerous industries. Manufacturing controls and efficiencies will soon be revolutionized in a manner just as dramatic as the industrial revolution, but this time it will be the nanorevolution. Human–machine interfaces will become so common in the workplace that many new work efficiencies and questions will emerge as both neurotechnology and nanotechnology revolutionize not only manufacturing, but also data gathering (Bowen 2016d). Perhaps the biggest challenges for both neurotechnology and nanotechnology are ethical questions that remain, as yet, unanswered (Bowen 2016d). Ethical questions of both the use of, control of, and access to nanotechnology will become a common challenge in public relations of the next years.

Mobile devices will become even more commonplace than they are today with nanotech, and their size and convenience will change how we interact with these devices. For example, mobile phone or data devices may be worn in contact lenses. They may also be implanted in the body, but who controls that data during work hours? How can we adapt these new technologies to speed the flow and efficiency of the internal workforce, without invading privacy or personal boundaries? Who has access to human and user-generated AI data, and what data will be tracked and stored? How will it be used in evaluating employees? The power of nanotech to radically alter workflow in manufacturing and numerous other functions is staggering. Nanotech and the far-reaching implications of neurotech and AI offer thousands of implementation issues and ethical questions for internal communications.

Future of Internal Communication Practices

The world is changing; the business environment is evolving and so do organizations and their internal stakeholders. The aforementioned macro

trends and issues will inevitably change the practice of internal communication in the future. Although specific implementation will vary, the following transformation and trends of internal communication practices can be predicted.

Multimedia, Digitization, and Mobilization

With the day-to-day advancement of technology, companies will possess a greater variety of tools to reach and engage internal stakeholders. Although traditional channels, such as face-to-face communication, print media, videos, and e-mails, can hardly be replaced, the practice of internal communication is becoming digitized, multimedia, and multidimensional with the integration of online, social, and offline activities. As more and more digital "natives" will enter the workforce, organizations' embracing of new technology and social media in employee communication will become a must. Among the various emerging digital trends, mobile technology, especially social messaging apps, represent the new wave of digital communication and is expected to overtake SNSs in becoming the dominant platform (Ballve 2015). Mainly as a one-on-one communication channel, social messengers are naturally a more private, intimate, and personal communication tool. With the relational focus of mobile platforms, the internal adoption of social messaging enables companies to connect with employees virtually anytime and anywhere in a personable manner (Lien and Cao 2014). Furthermore, future workforces will demand greater flexibility and mobility, the way that employers communicate with employees will likely evolve and become more mobile. Accordingly, internal programs may gradually embrace the "mobile comes first" movement and design content suitable for mobile technologies, such as shorter, "snackable," and visual content. Eventually, these platforms can be used on AI and nanotechnology-based devices.

Personalized, Humanized, and Employee-Centric Communication

People are always at the heart of all communications. Along with the coming of the digital age, our voices are amplified and individual values are heightened. In the workplace, to build deeper employee connections

and satisfy employees' higher-order and psychological needs, communication will become more humanized and personalized with an emphasis on employees' well-being, happiness, and development. Employers' efforts to promote work–life balance, such as flexible hours, unlimited vacation, paid maternity leave, and other career development opportunities, will become more prevalent, as it communicates the organization's employee-centric value and care about employees as individuals and addresses their real needs. Additionally, communication efforts will likely be more personalized by micro-targeting employee segments or one-on-one personalized communication, based on their own, real-time data. These targeted efforts will enable organizations to achieve specific outcomes with certain groups (e.g., mothers with children under five, international workers, early technology adopters, and so on) to connect with them on a regular basis with resonant information and activities.

Transparency and Authenticity

The open, transparent, and decentralized spirit of social media has escalated stakeholders' expectations of organizational transparency, including those of employees (Men and Stacks 2014). This trend will likely grow in the future with more organizational information made public and readily accessible. To improve employee trust in management and businesses, being ethical, transparent, and accountable is the first necessary step (Bowen, Hung-Baesecke, and Chen 2016). In addition, the quest for authenticity will continue. On the one hand, in the relentlessly commercialized world, people have learned to doubt, probe, and question anything and anyone they suspect of spinning them a line. An ethical organization is an authentic enterprise that values truthfulness, genuineness, transparency, and consistency; it is highly appreciated by all stakeholders. On the other hand, it requires the dedication and resources of the organization to support ongoing efforts in this area. The growing digitalization will offer organizations more invaluable opportunities to be authentic. As part of the personification process, the organization's social profile and social-mediated communication with employees can add a human touch, keep a human scale, and create a level of intimacy to balance the impersonal nature of many other traditional communication

tools. Overall, transparency and authenticity are vitally important ethical attributes. The ethical consistency they create will go far in shaping the organization's future communication practice with employees and nurture quality and committed employee–organization relationships.

Symmetrical Communication, Empowerment, and Engagement

Over decades, the practice of internal communication has transformed from a one-way information dissemination model to a two-way symmetrical, dialogical communication approach. With the growing diversity of the workforce and the facilitation of interactive and conversational tools, two-way symmetrical and relational communication will continue to be a central theme in internal communication and employee engagement practices. Promoting dialogs involves management's willingness to listen, allowing employees to voice their genuine thoughts and even criticism, and providing them channels to do so. Employee meetings, town-hall meetings, and management one-on-one are all dialogical and potentially relational. Interactive features built in traditional newsletters, intranet, and social media tools also promote conversations. Another method is the suggestion box, which is a practice that originated hundreds of years ago and has been proven useful in soliciting ideas and opening up venues for innovation. Behind the idea of symmetrical communication are the employee-centric values and organizations' genuine care and concern for employees' interests. Eventually, employees will be more empowered with greater access to management, ability to share opinions, having their voice heard and valued, and finding deeper meaning in the workplace by exerting greater influence. Such a feeling of empowerment contributes to building an engaged future workforce, which is a constant theme for organizations and their internal communication practices.

Peer-to-Peer Communication and the Blurred Line Between Internal and External Communication

Organizations are gradually moving from hierarchical to horizontal communication. Employees constantly go to their peers to seek or verify information, especially in today's increasingly connected workplace with the

aid of digital media. The importance of peer-to-peer communication is increasing, thereby transforming organizations' internal communication from a top–down or bottom–up dominant approach to a multidimensional model—information flow through employees' informal communication networks (with their peers) plays an increasingly important role. Furthermore, the line between internal and external communication is blurred. Anything internal can transcend boundaries and travel to external stakeholders in real time in this transparent and connected digital age. In other words, employee peer communication not only occurs internally with coworkers, but also externally with friends, family, and personal networks. Recognizing the powerful peer influence of employees, organizations may invest more resources to prepare employees to be better communicators, such as identifying opinion leaders, providing them with the correct information and messages, and offering communication training and easy tools for sharing internal communication content. However, employees have to tell the story in their own words, which are perceived to be more authentic. As Bradley (2016) noted, "If you want to work with influencers, you have to equip them and empower them to tell your story in their own words and have the guardrails in place so you can be comfortable letting them do it" (p. 30).

Internal Stakeholder-Generated Content, Sharing, and Collaboration

As stakeholder authentic voices and personal stories will be more greatly emphasized and valued, a shift will likely occur that enables employees to create internal communication content. Future internal communication programs may move from a centralized model of public relations department that creates the bulk of content to one that uses a citizen journalist model, in which employees create, publish, and share their own content or that of their peers. Employees will be more involved in the internal communication process as *storytellers* instead of information recipients. Additionally, fostering collaboration will be one of the foci of future internal communication programs, especially in the increasingly diverse and multicultural workplace. Collaboration will help promote innovation, mutual understanding, and overcome cultural barriers and prejudices. A participative,

collaborative organizational culture will also bring together management and employees, reduce the power distance, and empower them by inviting their participation and free sharing of their thoughts. Ideally, a participative, collaborative, and inclusive cross-enterprise communication force that includes CEOs, all levels of leaders, and employees should be formed.

Emotion- and Behavior-Driven

Offering employees the information they need and keeping them informed and updated is only one of the basic goals of internal communication. A more important purpose of internal communication is to establish employees' deeper-level emotional connection with the organization. More and more companies today are striving to develop an emotional culture, which emphasizes how employees feel, such as experiencing joy, fun, happiness, and compassionate love at work, compared with the traditional cognitive culture that sets the tone for how employees think and behave at work, such as a customer-focused, innovative, and competitive culture (Barsade and O'Neill 2016). With the competition for talent continuing to be a top challenge facing global businesses, future internal communication efforts will be geared toward building emotional connections and cultivating a favorable organizational emotional culture. This culture may cast new challenges for internal communication professionals. Unlike cognitive culture, which is often conveyed verbally, emotional culture tends to be conveyed by nonverbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, which may require new skill sets for communication practitioners. Ultimately, the cognitive- and emotional-level communication efforts will drive employees' behavior change. As the public relations profession is developing a new emphasis on *behavior change*, future internal communication programs are anticipated to have the same focus, that is, changing employee behavior such as increasing productivity, participating in prosocial activities, or engaging in positive communication behavior. Behavioral science, neuro-linguistic programming (Burton 2016), AI, and "big data" analytics can offer insights for internal communication managers to fulfill such purposes. The result will be communication practices that not only inform, involve, and inspire, but also build a community of efficient and engaged employees.

Future Internal Communication Research

Research guides and informs practices. Theory can help internal communication become more effective. Although internal communication is among the fastest-growing specializations in public relations and communication management, scholarship in this area has yet to keep pace with the initiatives from practitioners (Verčič, Verčič, and Sriramesh 2012). Considering future trends and issues, the ongoing transformation of internal communication practices, and the gaps in internal communication literature, we identified the following eight topics worthy of further scholarly investigation.

Internal Public and Audience Segmentation

Theories about stakeholders and publics in public relations have been well-established by previous scholars, such as Grunig's situational theory of publics (Grunig 1983; Grunig and Repper 1992). However, little empirical evidence exists on how these theories may hold when applied internally. In consideration of the growing sophistication of the workforce and the issues of multiple generations, diversity, and digitization, developing theories and knowledge to effectively analyze internal publics and segment employee audiences is important to attain better targeted communication. What criteria can be used for segmentation (e.g., demographics, psychographics, netgraphics, or behavioral characteristics)? Which factors will determine stakeholder level of activeness in internal issues (e.g., situational theory of internal stakeholders)? How can "big data" analytics inform the process of internal stakeholder analysis and audience segmentation? All these questions need to be addressed in the future. Theories from management, leadership, organizational behavior, and marketing will inform research in this arena.

Enterprise Social Media

As new technologies and social media tools begin to proliferate across organizations, we must develop a thorough theoretical understanding of how organizations can capitalize on the advantageous characteristics of enterprise social media to achieve positive employee and organizational

outcomes. Research questions may tap into the aspects of motivations of employees' use of enterprise social media, how social media can influence internal communication issues such as interacting with new hires, community building, knowledge sharing and management, organization–employee relationship maintenance, social capital building, and so on (Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield 2013). In addition to building empirical linkages between social media use and various outcomes, theoretically deliberating how the process works is equally important (i.e., identifying the mediating or moderating factors and exploring in-depth and behind-the-scenes reasons why enterprise social media work or does not work for organizational success). Eventually, research should provide evidence that documents the investment on enterprise social media returns. In addition to building soft assets, such as employee social capital and relationships, does organizations' internal use of social media matter for the bottom line (Li and Stacks 2015), such as improving employee job performance, sales, or organizational productivity? Do any negative effects exist? How can internal social platforms be administered? Given that enterprise social media is still in its infancy, both exploratory and qualitative approaches (e.g., case studies, in-depth interviews, and focus groups) and quantitative methods (e.g., survey and model building) can help establish early theories.

Empowerment and Engagement

The concepts of internal stakeholder empowerment and engagement are intertwined. Neither is new, as many studies in the management arena have explored the antecedents, measures, processes, and consequences of employee empowerment and engagement. In internal communication, however, although empowerment and engagement have been buzzwords that often appear in trade publications and industry reports, research has been scarce on how exactly communication factors contribute to employees' feeling of competence, control, autonomy, and engagement in the organization. Future research should examine specifically how organizational culture, structure, management style, communication climate, strategies, messages, and channels (e.g., traditional vs. new media channels and interpersonal vs. mediated channels) could affect empowerment and

engagement. Further, CEOs' and supervisors' communication effectiveness is speculated to affect stakeholder engagement. Establishing the linkages between leadership communication (e.g., styles, channels, and strategies) and employee empowerment and engagement could be another area of exploration. Additionally, with social media increasingly being implemented in work organizations as communication tools with and among employees, whether and how enterprise social media would affect empowerment and engagement would be an interesting topic for researchers.

Work–Life Integration

Work–life balance has been an ongoing discussion in the business world and has been recently brought to the spotlight by the media. A great volume of research has been devoted to the area in the past decade, which provides managerial implications on how to effectively balance employees' work and life roles to maximize business success. More recently, a modern concept of work–life integration has gained scholarly attention. Instead of emphasizing that work competes with life, work–life integration suggests employees could harness the passions and powers of the various parts of their lives and bring them together to achieve the "four-way wins" (i.e., work, home, community, and the private self)—actions that result in life being better in all four domains (Friedman 2014). How could internal communication factors play a role in helping internal stakeholders' achieve greater outcomes of work–life integration? How would the influence of internal communication on employees expand beyond the boundary into their personal lives? These are challenging but novel research questions that remain underexplored. Employees' knowledge, skills, and happy and positive emotions, as well as personal fulfillment, accomplishment, and success experienced at work, could all spill over to their personal lives (Haar 2013). Thus, management communication may help make employees' successful work–life integration happen.

Emotional Culture

Despite a renaissance of scholarship on the ways that emotions affect employees' behavior at work, emotional culture is rarely managed or

studied as deliberately as cognitive culture (Barsade and O'Neill 2016). Barsade and O'Neil's exploratory research on emotional culture showed that positive emotions, such as joy, compassionate love, and fun, are consistently associated with better employee performance, quality, and customer service across industries and various organizations. Therefore, examining how internal communication practices can contribute to building a positive emotional culture in the organization is imperative. Subtopics such as which communication channels are most effective in communicating employee emotions (e.g., face-to-face, video, e-mail, or social media), what leadership communication styles and corporate communication strategies work the best for building an emotional culture, and how can emotional culture interact with communication factors to influence employee–organization relationships and employee engagement need to be further explored.

Change Communication

Organizations inevitably face and deal with change. With improving technology, keen market competition, and globalization of businesses and consumers, change is happening at a faster pace than ever before. Successful change management cannot be achieved without the support of effective communication (Elving 2005). Although consensus has been achieved on the vitality of communication in *strategic* change among internal communication scholars and professionals, specific communication actions, approaches, and effects remain unexplained (Elving 2005). Research should further investigate the topic by examining change in communication audiences (e.g., employees' psychological reaction to changes), messages and effectiveness (e.g., type of messages, message sources, and timing of messages), communication channels (e.g., which medium is most effective in communicating change at different stages), communication strategies (e.g., transparent, authentic, responsive, and upward communication), leadership involvement (e.g., CEO and supervisors' role in change communication), and so on. However, a realistic challenge faced by change communication researchers is accessing organizations that have recently undergone change. Given the sensitivity of the topic, companies are usually reluctant to share information about their

change process. A collaborative approach between change communication professionals and scholars may help solve this problem.

Leadership Communication

Leadership communication has been recognized as a major component of an organization's internal communication system, along with corporate internal communication and peer (horizontal) communication. Despite the many studies that have been conducted examining supervisors' leadership communication with followers, including supervisor communication style, channels, competence, and quality, among others, a gap exists, particularly in CEO and executive communication (Men 2015). Growing demands for servant leadership, candor, virtue, and ethical accountability from leaders are evident (Bowen 2009, 2016a). Future research should examine the issue by investigating senior management's internal communication role, including CEO communication style, ethical values, channels, and social media engagement, and how these factors affect employee job satisfaction, relationship quality with the organization, and other outcomes, such as feeling of empowerment and engagement. Considering the transformation of the workforce into a more diverse, digitalized, globalized, and multicultural one, modern leaders need to equip themselves with an open mindset and develop unique communication competence and skill sets to adapt to the changing workplace. Leadership theories from the management arena should be informative and offer inspirational perspectives in developing research on leadership communication.

Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement strategies can help boost the effect of internal communication on organizations' bottom line. Data and metrics not only show the value of the internal communication team' work, but also provide foresight to guide future communication efforts. Effective measurement and evaluation have been a challenge for communication professionals. Knowing what to measure is not sufficient as the more important question is how to measure it. Empirical research is needed to reach a consensus on what should be the core set of criteria for internal communication

effectiveness at the outputs, outtakes, outcomes, and business impact levels. A predictive, reliable model to measure the work in employee communication and engagement that is tied to behavioral outcomes is needed (Burton 2016). Furthermore, research on how to measure each type of result will provide invaluable insights for communication managers. Research on research methods and analytics is needed. Given that no industry standard presently exists to measure internal communication, future endeavors can take a stance toward developing a theory-informed and data-evidenced internal communication measurement standard (e.g., Stacks 2016).

Summary

Internal communication remains one of the fastest-growing communication practices. The rapidly changing business environment, workplace, and workforce have brought both opportunities for and challenges to internal communication practitioners. This chapter summarizes the macro trends and issues that aim to transform the practice of internal communication, such as digitization, globalization, diversity and inclusion, work–life balance, and growing concern for corporate social conscience. It predicts that internal communication in the future will be digitized, multimedia, mobile, and eventually, nano, AI, or neurotech-based, with blurred lines between internal and external, and will be emotionally and behaviorally driven. With the digitization of the organization and the workforce as well as the evolvement of the field, future internal communication practices will also emphasize more personalization, human touch, ethical accountability, transparency and authenticity, dialogs, employee participation, sharing, and collaboration to truly connect with, empower, and engage employees. To accelerate the development of the field, we suggest that scholars should keep pace and add to the body of knowledge on internal communication by tapping into the under-researched topics of internal public segmentation, enterprise social media, change communication, work–life integration, and measurement and evaluation issues. Indeed, the future is here.