



COMMUNICATION MANAGER ROLES GRID

The 8 strategic and operational roles communication managers play

- ▶ Communication leaders have manifold responsibilities, ranging from reputation management, to steering communication teams and counselling top managers in decision-making processes. The newly developed Communication Manager Roles systematizes those roles in eight dimensions.
- ▶ The tool can be used for setting and reporting personal targets, developing job profiles and reflecting on the prioritization of daily tasks. It also helps you to assess individual competencies and thus supports in building a team with a diversity of skills.

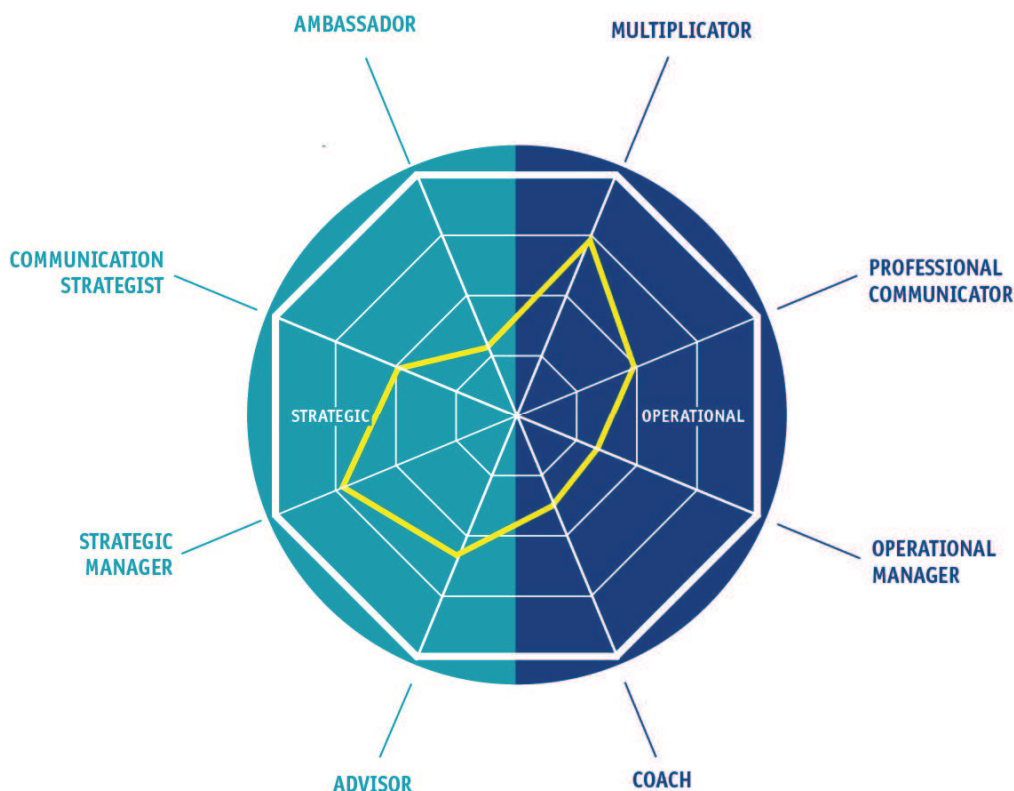
Communication Manager Roles Grid

Today's communication managers are more than press officers or event managers. They provide information for corporate management decisions, act as personal advisor to business units or the top management, and co-design corporate strategy. In large corporations, CCOs may head teams of up to several hundred specialists, steer agencies and service providers around the world, and handle budgets of up to several million Euros.

Across the profession, a transition from being an executor to a consultant, and from a producer of communication materials to a business supporter is well underway.

Although a variety of role concepts exist in communication and management research, our study revealed that they are not universally applicable for corporate communications. The distinction between the different roles remains mostly fuzzy and is of little help for practitioners.

That is why we developed a new tool - the Communication Manager Roles Grid. It depicts the role diversity of communication leaders in eight dimensions. Having a solid understanding of the different roles you play will help you to prioritize your work load and better demonstrate your personal or team contributions to corporate success.



➤ The Communication Managers Roles Grid introduces a clear distinction between **strategic and operational roles** known from management research. This helps you to speak the same language as your top management.

➤ Depending on your personal preferences and skills, you might spend more time in operational or in strategic roles. However, **balancing the different roles** and setting the right priorities is essential for success.

➤ In everyday practice, the eight roles should not be seen as mutually exclusive as they will **overlap** to a certain extent. Strategic and operational tasks often go hand in hand.

» If communications officers want a seat at the table when decisions are being made, we must be more than just storytellers.«

Arthur W. Page Society

The eight strategic and operational roles*

- 1 As an **ambassador**, the communicator speaks on behalf of the organization. He provides direction and a compelling vision to turn strategic issues into action. The ambassador or visionary is a popular concept in management research.
- 2 The **communication strategist** must have a good understanding of the company's strategy to be able to break it down into concrete communication targets. He defines the communication strategy and ensures that it is aligned to corporate strategy.
- 3 The **strategic manager** has to run his team effectively. He needs leadership competencies for steering communication staff and external agencies. He should be able to identify innovation potentials in order to support the long-term growth of the department and the entire organization.
- 4 As an **advisor** the communication manager draws the attention of top management or other business partners to potential communicative risks, societal expectations and critical issues, and provides advice on strategic decisions. To fulfil this role, he has to act as a boundary spanner between the external and internal business environment and maintain a good relationship with key stakeholders.
- 5 As **multiplicator** the communication manager is responsible for providing platforms and channels to articulate strategic management decisions internally and externally. Multipliers break down the corporate strategy into clear and easily remembered messages.
- 6 The **professional communicator** implements communication measures that have been defined in an overall communication plan, and hence operates at a tactical level.
- 7 The **operational manager** focuses on routine tasks such as budgeting, staffing, controlling and analysis in the department. Communication experts in this role must have competencies to manage resources and coordinate integrated messaging processes efficiently.
- 8 As a **coach** the communicator enables other employees to communicate professionally. He offers media trainings or rhetoric workshop. The role also includes the orchestration of the many different voices of an organization.

*Gender-specific terms used here should be understood as referring to both genders.

How to use the Roles Grid

- ✓ **Reflection:** The Grid helps you to understand your roles within the organization. It allows you to set personal targets that can be measured and that support corporate growth.
- ✓ **Reporting:** Have you set the right priorities and have you performed well in these roles? Use the Grid to report your performance in all eight role dimensions.
- ✓ **Analysis of competencies:** The Grid outlines competencies for each of the eight roles. Use the Grid to match competencies of your staff to build up teams with a diversity of skills and to ensure that the right people are in the right positions. The grid assists with creating job profiles, too.
- ✓ **Individual development:** The Grid can be further used to identify individual needs in order to advance competencies. But be aware that nobody has to have excellent skills for performing every role. Instead you need a team with a variety of skills.

About the research project

The Communication Manager Roles Grid is one of many applied results of the research programme "Value Creating Communication" initiated by the Academic Society. A team of researchers at the University of Leipzig headed by Professor Ansgar Zerfass explored how communications add value to the company. More than 800 journal articles on value creation were reviewed and in-depth interviews with CCOs of international organizations were conducted. Results have been comprised into several conceptual frameworks and have been empirically tested.

Read more

Communication Insights (Issue 3, 2017): How to play the game. Download at www.academic-society.net



The Academic Society for Corporate Management & Communication is an initiative of leading companies and universities in Germany and beyond. It aims to shape the future of corporate communications through joint research projects and knowledge sharing.

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