

Strategy Communication

77E00200



Aalto University
School of Business

Pekka Pälli

2021

Today's agenda

- **(Note to self: remember to record the lecture...)**
- **Introduction to the course plan and practicalities**
- **Introduction to the theoretical focus of the course**
- **Forming teams (and starting team work)**

Now that we're online..

- Zoom etiquette: to avoid noise and distraction, please keep you microphone muted during the lecture. And, please be there in time when the lectures start.
- Online interaction: following the standard of normal class room teaching; that is, please ask clarifying questions or give comments: you may use 'raise hand' tool or put your question/comment in the chat. (Notice however that there are some limitations for the teacher regarding the chat or even the raise hand notifications for the teacher when in sharing presentation mode)

Intended learning outcomes

After completing the course, students

- know the theoretical principles of organizational strategy work upon which effective strategy communication is based on
- understand strategy communication as a means of stakeholder dialogue and engagement
- know how to interpret, communicate, and negotiate strategy content and objectives
- have acquired knowledge and skills to analyze and plan strategy communication

On achieving the learning goals

- **Lectures (incl. in-class exercises) and readings regarding the topic**
- **Learning assignments**
 - Reflection papers & Learning Summary (individual)
 - Group work on strategy communication in a chosen case organization

Practical issues

- **Class hours on Wednesday and Friday 12.15–13.45**
- **Materials, assignments, grading etc. > Mycourses course page**
- **No mandatory attendance (except for this meeting and the workshops where you present your small group work)**

Course schedule

See MyCourses, course home page.

<https://mycourses.aalto.fi/course/view.php?id=27688#section-0>

Assignments and grading

- **Reflection papers & Learning Summary (individual)**
- **Group work on strategy communication in a chosen case organization**

Reflection papers (weekly papers), 25% of the grade

A short, 300-400 word paper that reflects on the article

- Effective formula: summarize it in your own words, and then reflect on what is there to be learned from the article, what you perhaps personally see as important, or how you perhaps connect it to what you know from other sources (working life experiences, things learned in previous courses etc.)

6 articles to be reflected (see MyCourses: Assignments) (6 x 300-400 words...)

Deadlines:

- First two papers (please upload you two reflections as a single file,yet consisting of two separate reflections) Monday 18.1. (23:55)
- Next two papers, Monday 25.1.
- Last two papers, Monday 1.2.

Learning Summary, 25% of the grade

- Learning summary is a paper in which you display and reflect upon what you have learned during the course. You are expected to address three important facets or arenas for learning: class sessions, readings, and group work
- Word count: 1500-2000 words
- Academic style & citing conventions
- Deadline: 26 February

Group Work, 50% of the grade

a) Choose an organization (in teams of 4-5 students): your are to analyze the organization's current strategy – on the basis of how the organization communicates its strategy or how and what the organization communicates in general.

- Deliverable: Presentation in class in Workshop 1

b) Building on your analysis, produce and present a strategy communication plan for the organization)

- Deliverable: Presentation in class in Workshop 2

As a final delivery incorporating a & b: a short text document presenting your strategy communication plan, deadline: February 22



Pekka Pälli

Ph.D, Senior University Lecturer Organizational Communication

Teaching

Currently responsible of teaching MSc and BSc courses

- Organizational Communication
- Strategy Communication
- Workplace Communication
- MSc thesis supervision

Research

- ✓ Interest & expertise on strategy work, managerial interaction, performance appraisal interview interaction.
- ✓ Work published in journals such as *Long Range Planning*, *Discourse & Communication*, *Text & Talk*, *Organization*, *Management Communication Quarterly*, and *Language & Communication*.

Examples:

- ✓ Lehtinen, E. & Pälli P. (2020) On the participatory agency of texts. Using official forms in performance appraisal interviews. *Text & Talk*.
- ✓ Nissi, R. & Pälli, P. (2020) Textual artefacts at the center of sensemaking. Constructing shared understanding in organizational development workshops. *Discourse Studies*.
- ✓ Pälli, P. (2018) Ascribing Materiality and Agency to Strategy in Interaction: A Language-based Approach to the Material Agency of Strategy. *Long Range Planning*.
- ✓ Pälli, P. & Lehtinen, E. (2015) Practical Genre Knowledge as Professional Competence: The Case of Managerial Meetings. Grujicic-Alatriste, L. (ed.) *Linking Discourse Studies to Professional Practice*.
- ✓ Pälli, P. & Lehtinen, E. (2014) Making objectives common in performance appraisal interviews. *Language & Communication*.
- ✓ Sorsa, V., Pälli, P. & Mikkola, P. (2014) Appropriating the words of strategy in performance appraisal interviews. *Management Communication Quarterly*.

Course focus

- a. **Strategy communication = implementation** of strategy
- b. **Strategy communication = doing** strategies (strategic planning in action)

Our approach to strategy communication

- **Two sides:**
 - Communication in strategy making
 - Communication after the "made" strategy

BUT... there is a theoretical catch here...

- In the strategy as process perspective, **strategies are never finalized products that just can be implemented or communicated** (E.g. Chia & Mackay (2007) Post-processual challenges for the emerging strategy-as-practice perspective: Discovering strategy in the logic of practice. Human Relations.)
- In the strategy as practice perspective, **strategy is a practice consisting of routinized ways of doing strategies and doing things related to strategies > strategies are born and emerge from these activities/practices** (Vaara & Whittington (2012) Strategy-as-Practice: Taking Social Practices Seriously. The Academy of Management Annals.)

...cont'd

And this all means in terms of communication

- ✓ that strategies are ongoing achievements of communication
- ✓ that strategy work (doing strategies, interpreting strategies) is communicative in nature

Conception of communication

Communication is action that gives meanings to "what is communicated", or even communicates that into being ("constitutes" it)

(The overall theoretical idea of social construction, Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1966) The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge.

Related theoretical idea: Barthes, Roland 1967. "The Death of the Author" (French: La mort de l'auteur)
(Simplification: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YkQsRVrWM6c>)

Applied to organizations and communication: e.g. Putnam, L. & Nicotera, A. (2009). Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication. London: Routledge.)

A simple, basic understanding of strategy planning & implementation



But, while there exists activities of planning and implementing, planning and implementing may not be separate activities, and the form (what strategy is) is an ongoing achievement, produced as much through implementation as through planning

Terminology related to strategy communication

- Word **‘strategy’** comes from **‘strategos’** in **Greek**
 - First in military contexts, meaning ‘the art of the general’
 - Over the last century, the word has spread first to the context of management (and to business organizations) and finally to all kinds of organizations
 - (Not to be confused with ‘tactics’; tactics is the actual means to get something done, gain an objective, and strategy is the overall “game plan” that governs tactical execution)

Terminology, cont'd: Strategic and strategy – meanings

Strategic 1 = something that is in accordance with strategy

Strategic 2 = something that is just important

Strategic 3 = as an attribute to actions, or processes etc. that are conducted so that they include an element of 'doing things by being aware of the contextual, causal effects of doing something' as if playing chess (e.g. strategic thinking vs. thinking???)

Strategic communication 1 = either *strategic 1* or *strategic 2* or both at the same time

Strategic communication 2 = saying (communicating) 'X' with an intention of 'Y'

Strategy communication = strategic communication???

- Just semantics?
- Big difference: **strategy communication** implies to activities
 - of communicating about the strategy, or
 - of implementing/executing the strategy by means of communication or
 - communication involved in the making of strategies,
- while **strategic communication** could mean any communication that is conducted for the purposes of the organization's business interests

Strategy Communication (re-iteration)

- **Two sides:**
 - Communication in strategy making
 - Communication after the "made" strategy

BUT... following the process thinking and strategy-as-practice line of thought:

Strategy communication means communication that, for its part, forms, creates and gives sense to strategy