

Commandment 1

Globalised: The World We Live In

We live in a globalised world. Like it or not, we affect people living on the other side of the globe and they affect us. We are interdependent. And public relations is a profession concerned with management of interdependencies between organisations and their stakeholders.¹ Political, economic, social and technological changes in the second half of the twentieth century have brought us closer together than ever, and the term evolved to describe this new condition is globalisation. But what does that have to do with excellent communication? Everything. Today, if you want to know how good you are, and furthermore, if you want to become better, you have to compare and learn globally. You don't have to go physically everywhere (although it helps), but you have to be willing to let that 'everywhere' come to you, at least mentally. That said, if you look deeply enough, you will see the whole world coming to us all the time: ideas, food, goods, services, money, plants, animals and people, whatever, sometimes legally and at other times illegally. Globalisation is unequivocally here and winners have embraced it.

Globalisation means different things to different people. Jan Aart Scholte, a professor of global studies in Sweden, identified four redundant concepts of globalisation and proposed the fifth as the transformative one: internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation, Westernisation and

¹ Verčič and Grunig (2000).

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globality (see [Box 2](#)).² All of them are true and they affect communication. Therefore the first commandment of being excellent is: be globalised. Being globalised in this context means first and foremost that the organisation is connected to its local and global environment through communication. Excellent communication helps the organisation to do that by having an eye for the five aspects of globalisation: internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation, Westernisation and globality. Excellent professionals are aware of these aspects and how their organisation, small or big, is a part of these developments while at the same time realising the consequences of globalisation for the profession of communication.

Box 2 The G word

Globalisation as

1. **Internationalisation**
Intensification of cross-border movements of ideas, goods and services, capital and people
2. **Liberalisation**
Disappearance of restrictions on movements of ideas, goods and services, capital and people
3. **Universalisation**
Homogenisation of ideas, goods and services, capital and culture(s) everywhere around the globe
4. **Westernisation**
Worldwide spread of rationalist modernisation from the West (Europe and the United States) to the rest of the world
5. **Globality**
Transplanetary relations and suprateritoriality: development of transplanetary connections between people developing a social space in its own right that transcends territorial geography.

Internationalisation

There is no doubt that internationalisation is deeply affecting strategic communication practices. In the European Communication Monitor, we found that 8 out of 10 professionals have international communication as a

² Scholte (2008).

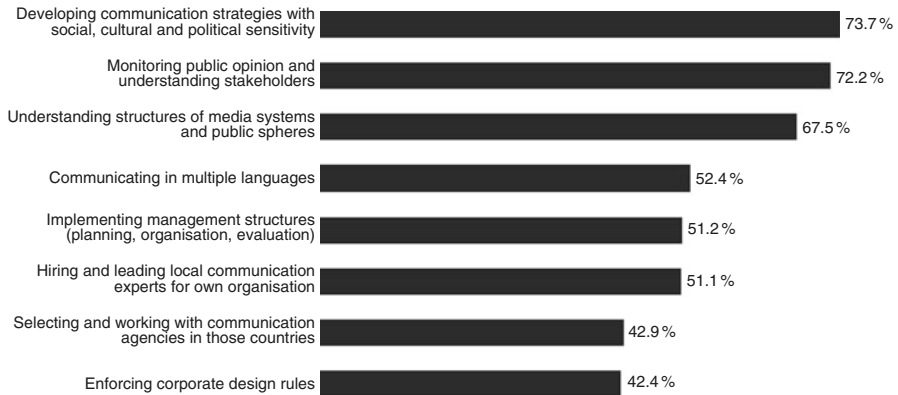


Fig. 4 Major challenges of international communication³

part of their daily business, with nearly a quarter of those reaching more than 20 countries in their daily work. If we differentiate between different sectors, more than 90 per cent of corporate Chief Communication Officers operate internationally on a daily basis, while professionals in non-profit and government sectors lag behind.⁴

Communication across countries and cultures is a unique challenge. It is only in the presence of others that we become aware of our identities and limitations. European studies in societal cultures started with explorations of Africa and the Americas. Organisational culture gained in importance with the arrival of Asian products and companies to the United States. International communication poses many challenges. The results of the European Communication Monitor show that communication professionals think that developing communication strategies with social, cultural and political sensitivity, monitoring public opinion and understanding stakeholders and structures of media systems are the most important challenges when dealing with non-European countries (see Fig. 4).

Internationalisation of the communication function follows the implementation of traditional management models for planning, organisation, execution and evaluation, communication in multiple languages, enforcement of corporate values and logos, and the use of agencies in other countries.⁵

³ Zerfass et al. (2013), p. 68. $n^{\min} = 1,324$ communication professionals working in communication departments across Europe who are communicating internationally in their daily job. Q: How challenging are the following aspects when communicating internationally, especially in non-European countries? Scale 1 (not challenging) – 5 (very challenging). Percentages: agreement based on scale points 4–5.

⁴ Zerfass et al. (2013), pp. 60–69.

⁵ Verčič et al. (2015).

Liberalisation: In the Search of Excellence

Liberalisation of trade in the second half of the twentieth century brought unprecedented wealth to the West, but also unexpected downsides and crises. There was a real shock when between the 1960s and 1980s Japan upgraded its exports from toys through electronics to cars that were cheaper and better than those produced in the United States or Europe. It was this external shock that led many Western management consultants and researchers to study and understand why some companies are better than others. This was the impetus that led to Tom Peters and Robert Waterman publishing *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies*.⁶ What they concluded was that organisations are composed of hard (structure and strategy) and soft (systems, shared values, skills, staff and style) elements, and that managers in the West often overlook the soft side, while excellence can be achieved only with the right balance of the two sides. Interestingly, they discovered exactly what they were trying to explain: some companies are better than others because of their culture(s). Japan's success between the 1960s and 1990s was in large part founded in the values and cultures of their key corporations. The most known code of values is the 'Seven Spirits of Matsushita', named after its creator Konosuke Matsushita. They are service to the public, fairness and honesty, teamwork for the common cause, uniting effort for improvement, courtesy and humility, accordance with natural laws, and gratitude for blessing (see [Box 3](#)).⁷

Box 3 The seven spirits of Matsushita

Code of values for organisations:

1. Service to the public
2. Fairness and honesty
3. Teamwork for the common cause
4. Uniting effort for improvement
5. Courtesy and humility
6. Accordance with natural laws
7. Gratitude for blessing

⁶ Peters and Waterman (1982).

⁷ Kippenberg (2002).

Strategic communication and public relations can certainly play an important role in developing the soft side of organisations and help to find a balance between the hard and the soft side.

It is a kind of a paradox that Western scholars became interested in business excellence stimulated by the presence of Japanese management practices that were largely developed with the assistance of an American statistician trying to help the Japanese catch-up with the West after the Second World War. His name was William Edwards Deming, and in 1950 he started preaching innovation and quality to leaders of Japanese industry. Today, the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers sponsors a global quality award for contributions to total quality management with his name: the Deming Prize.

Excellence models for improvement and self-assessment are one of the consequences of liberalisation and internationalisation: it is only by being in contact with (better) others that we become aware of our limitations and can discover opportunities for growth. As the Japanese industry learned from an American statistician, and American consultants from Japanese businessman, these days Chinese researchers learn from Western scientists: in 2003, the Centre for World-Class Universities, Graduate School of Education of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, started studying higher education around the world. They developed six objective indicators to rank world universities and the initial purpose of the exercise was to find the global standing of top Chinese universities.⁸ Today, the so-called ‘Shanghai list’ or ‘Shanghai ranking’ (officially: the Academic Ranking of World Universities) is the most important and authoritative list of universities in the world. The Chinese developed it to self-assess and improve their universities. Thirteen years later, the fastest supercomputer in the world uses a Chinese-made microprocessor chip: ‘Supercomputers are viewed in scientific circles as an indicator of national technology leadership, and they are vital for research in areas ranging from the development of new weapons and medicines, to the design of cars and consumer products’.⁹ To know how good you are, you have to go and compare yourself globally.

Universalisation

Between 1992 and 2002, a group of researchers led by James Grunig from the University of Maryland developed and tested a theory to explain how public relations and communication management contribute to

⁸ ARWU (2016).

⁹ Markoff (2016).

organisational effectiveness. They postulated that organisations develop excellence in response to environmental pressures. The theory proposes nine generic principles, or characteristics, that public relations needs to contribute to organisational effectiveness:

1. involvement of public relations in strategic management,
2. empowerment of public relations in the dominant coalition or a direct reporting relationship to senior management,
3. integrated public relations function,
4. public relations as a management function separated from other management functions,
5. a public relations practitioner in a management role,
6. two-way model of organisation-stakeholder relationships,
7. a symmetrical system of internal communication,
8. knowledge potential for managerial role and symmetrical public relations and
9. diversity embodied in all roles.¹⁰

Based on additional research, Dejan Verčič, James Grunig and Larissa Grunig proposed the nine generic principles as the global, universal principles of public relations valid around the world.¹¹ They supplemented them with specific (local) applications mediated by five environmental variables: political ideology, economic system (including the level of development of the country's economy), degree of activism (the extent of the pressure that organisations face from activists), culture and media system(s) (the nature of the media environment in a country).¹² This was collapsed from five environmental variables into three factors: a country's infrastructure (composed of political system, economic systems and level of development, legal system and social activism), media environment (with media control, media diffusion and media access) and societal culture.

There are clear tendencies for universalisation of communication functions, as expressed by a Head of Corporate Communication of an Austrian company mentioned in one of our qualitative studies: 'Central structure (with standards and policies) is key! The rest may be democratic, but causes

¹⁰ Grunig (1992); Grunig et al. (2002).

¹¹ Verčič et al. (1996).

¹² Sriramesh and Verčič (2009).

chaos and unwanted “independency” with strange strategies and statements’. But her colleague from Switzerland advocates: ‘Aligned decentralisation: meaning headquarters responsible for corporate story (vision, mission, values, global strategy, targets), corporate standards (global messages, policies such as corporate design and key-wording); while regional/national communications units should ensure aligned transformation in regional/national/local statements. However: online communication remains global due to the “flat world” we live in’.¹³

Excellence, as long as it stands for a model enabling self-assessment and comparative improvement, must contain some elements of universalisation, otherwise we can only compare apples to oranges.

Westernisation: Worldwide Modernisation

Westernisation means a particular type of globalisation and universalisation that got its ultimate expression in political scientist Francis Fukuyama’s article and book *The End of History*.¹⁴ There can be no doubt that the public relations profession as we know it, originated in Europe and in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century, and that it has been globalising since.¹⁵ It is easy to underestimate the triumph of Westernisation over the rest of the world: Fukuyama, an American social scientist at the end of 1980s and in early 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Berlin Wall fell down, said that Western liberal democracy may present the endpoint of human political evolution and the final form of government.¹⁶ What a difference a decade makes! At the beginning of the twenty-first century, China, Russia or the Middle East, to name just three, present viable alternatives to liberal democracies, and any notion of the end of history is clearly premature, if not completely refuted. The question is whether these presented alternatives are temporary downturns in an ongoing process of ‘rising freedom’ as the German political scientist Christian Welzel has put forward¹⁷ Based on the World Value Survey, Welzel found evidence for

¹³ Verčič et al. (2015), p. 790.

¹⁴ Fukuyama (1989, 1992).

¹⁵ Verčič (2013).

¹⁶ Fukuyama (1989, 1992).

¹⁷ Welzel (2013).

multiple trends in the direction of human empowerment and emancipation. These trends are centring around people gaining more control over their lives in combination with the spread of emancipative values emphasising free choice and equal opportunities. Studying the results of the World Value Survey shows that emancipative values are universal and not just a Western construction. They are driven by so-called action resources (the possibility to act and gain control over your life, especially economically) and by technological developments (e.g. media technology).¹⁸ For communication professionals the question is how to position the profession within these global developments and how to handle these on the level of the individual practitioner, the organisation and the local and global societies.

It is easy to underestimate how Westernised the public relations industry is. While the so-called emergent and developing economies in the second decade of our century overtook the so-called advanced economies in the share of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) produced, it is only in 2016 that the first non-Western public relations agency entered the list of top 10 global public relations agencies: Chinese firm BlueFocus ranked 9 in the 2016 Global PR Agency Ranking produced by The Holmes Report.¹⁹ And we are talking about a US\$20 billion industry by 2020.

A quick look at the top academic programmes in public relations and communication management at US universities reveals a growing cohort of Asian students and professors, mostly Chinese and Korean. They are also very productive in research, but so far mainly reproducing ideas of their American professors. Their cultural background is still largely absent in their publications, but that is only a matter of time: we can clearly foresee non-Western ideas fertilising public relations and communication management thinking in the very near future.

Anybody who wants to stay at the top of the global communication game has to start paying attention to communication practices beyond the borders of the Western world. Besides that, excellence is also in perseverance and sustainability of one's ambition, consistently communicating the purpose of the organisation and its value to the global society is also part of excellent communication practice.

¹⁸ Welzel (2013).

¹⁹ The Holmes Report (2016).

Excellence in Globality

Globality is the term proposed by Jan Aart Scholte to describe the current state of globalisation, characterised by transplanetary relations and supra-territoriality.²⁰ There can be no doubt that the contemporary global society emerged out of Western modernisation that produced a Westernistic global society²¹ with interdependence at its core.²² Transplanetary relations between people are different from international relations as they are truly transcending borders, while the notion of international relations still carries with it the primacy of countries and relations between them. The British sociologist Anthony Giddens defined globalisation in transplanetary terms a quarter of a century ago: ‘Globalization can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa’.²³ Since then the Internet, social and mobile communications has brought us all even closer and into a network society.²⁴

Commandments in Practice: Globalised



Acknowledging and Delivering Globality Through the Communication Strategy

Founded in 1857 as a small, local bank with the aim to foster international trade between the city of Santander in Spain and Latin America, Banco Santander today is one of the most important financial institutions in the world. The leading bank in the eurozone by market capitalisation, it has 3.6 million shareholders and a

²⁰ Scholte (2008).

²¹ Debeljak (2012).

²² Levy (1996).

²³ Giddens (1991), p. 64.

²⁴ Castells (2010).

retail presence in ten core markets in Europe and the Americas where its 190,000 employees serve more than 120 million clients through a network of 13,000 branches.

Santander believes its business model has been the key to turn itself from a small local bank into a globally renowned financial institution. Many companies in the banking sector have failed over the last few years due to their business models and risk management practices. However, Santander, with a diversified and client-oriented retail banking model, has weathered the difficulties better than others. Its financial strength, risk management culture and profitability have been widely recognised; as well as the bank's retail focus, geographical diversification, subsidiaries model and its brand, which is unified across the markets where the Group is present.

In 2004, after a process of rapid international expansion which began in the mid-1990s, the Group was composed of many local brand names without a common identity. It was missing the chance to make the most out of a strong single brand, which unifies objectives and generates synergies and efficiency. It is also a shield against potential crisis – as was later demonstrated. In April of 2004, the bank's board of directors addressed that need by approving a communication plan to implement common management of its corporate identity in all of its countries, units and divisions with the goal of creating a global brand capable of transmitting the Group's common purpose and values. Aside from setting guidelines to unify the Santander brand throughout its markets, the project put a shared communication policy in place which integrated views from the teams in all its markets.

The plan's main goal was to position the bank internationally to fully exploit the advantages of a global brand. These include a strong corporate culture with goals and values shared by all of the Group's employees; the ability to promote global business and product lines; to increase client loyalty and the value investors place on the brand; to generate synergies and cost efficiencies; to facilitate access to new markets and attract the best talent.

Reflecting internationalisation, in 2007 the bank was moving towards a single brand. In fact, in Spain, Mexico, Brazil and Portugal it was already a reality. Once the Group had created and implemented its single global brand, the next challenge was to place Santander among the most reputed brands in the world. This was the beginning of its 2007–2010 Brand and Identity Plan which was launched with the broad support of the Group's top management. That same year, coinciding with Santander's 150th anniversary, and taking advantage of the synergies generated by a single brand, Santander started the cooperative project 'Santander is you', aimed at communicating to all its employees the benefits of being part of a common project and to foster a sense of belonging.

Externally, the bank launched its first global advertising campaign for the whole Group in international financial media. We believe institutional advertising is essential to reinforce and cement global positioning. The bank's corporate message has always focused on attributes such as capital strength, financial soundness and a geographically diversified business model, but also customer proximity, trust and commitment.

It was also time to put together a plan to raise the awareness of the brand worldwide and the Group opted for a corporate strategy to assure a consistent and international positioning. We decided to have a corporate sponsorship platform instead of running it individually from the different countries. At that

time, the Group thought global corporate sponsorships, which can be exploited locally in its different markets, would enable it to

- (1) generate synergies and efficiency;
- (2) have better control of the brand and its international expansion;
- (3) reach out to diverse audiences, especially young people, with non-financial communication codes.

Regarding sponsorship, it is widely recognised that there are two sports that generate enthusiasm worldwide, F1 and football. Santander first sponsored the McLaren Formula 1 team and later began a long-lasting partnership with Scuderia Ferrari, which proved to be extremely successful. The average return on investment of the sponsorship turned out to be 5 to 1: we created value in communication. In Latin America, the bank became a key sponsor of the Libertadores football competition.

Santander's broad strategy bore fruit: in 2010, Banco Santander was included for the first time in the Interbrand ranking, becoming one of the big global brands. This was a breakthrough in the history of the bank, but it was just a starting point. Santander's aim since then has been to escalate its position in this ranking to become one of the top brands in the world. Today, it is the leading international retail brand by the prestigious Brand Finance Global 500 ranking published by The Banker magazine.

Challenges to the Strategy

The financial crisis, the worst in almost a century, proved the strength of the Santander model. Santander was among the very few banks to continue to pay dividends to its shareholders throughout the crisis period and to avoid a single quarter of losses. Moreover, the crisis offered the Group the opportunity to increase its presence in some of its key markets. Santander was perceived as a strong, trustworthy brand thanks to the recurrence of its results and the soundness of its balance sheet.

However, the financial crisis and its aftermath broadly changed the industry's landscape and posed a huge challenge in terms of business trends, regulation, consumer preferences and, of course, reputation. Banks around the world have to respond to unprecedented emerging difficulties in the economic, financial and regulatory environment, where there are increasingly strict frameworks for action. Moreover, they have to provide differential value to the main target audiences in an environment where there is a lack of trust in banks and where customer behaviours are rapidly changing as a result of the digital revolution.

In 2014, following the appointment of Ana Botín as the Group's executive chairman, Santander carried out an in-depth review of its priorities in view of the changes the industry was facing. Strengthening its culture, adapting and updating it to the needs of its customers and of the communities where the Group operates emerged as one of them. It became clear to the bank and its top management that in order to succeed, it was key to pursue a cultural transformation that required it to focus not only on the nature of the business Santander conducts, but also on the way it actually performs.

As a bank, Santander's purpose is to help people and businesses to prosper. We are convinced that if we fulfil that purpose, it will make us a better bank and

the business will also prosper. And it must do it by being Simple, Personal and Fair in everything the bank does and by fostering corporate behaviours which we believe respond to the needs of all our stakeholders: its team members, customers, shareholders and the communities where the bank operates. In line with its local approach, communicating its purpose and the Santander way of doing business is adjusted to local cultures. The bank strives to be Simple, Personal, Fair in the United Kingdom; Easy, Personal, Fair in the United States; Simples, Próximo, Justo in Portugal or Simples, Pessoal, Justo in Brazil.

While the cultural transformation that is underway goes well beyond a communications issue, it is necessarily at the heart of Santander's communications strategy because it clearly requires evolving the way the bank delivers its messages to its stakeholders and, more importantly, the way it listens to them. It is a process that will sit on the Group's solid grounds and track record to help the bank respond to the unprecedented challenges and make Santander thrive.

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About Banco Santander

Banco Santander is a leading retail and commercial bank, based in Spain, with a meaningful market share in ten core countries in Europe and the Americas. Santander is the largest bank in the eurozone by market capitalisation and among the top banks on a global basis. Founded in 1857, Santander had €1.52 trillion in managed funds, 12,500 branches and 190,000 employees at the close of June 2016. In the first half of 2016, Santander made an underlying profit of €3,28 million.

From a communication perspective, it is supraterritoriality that makes the major difference (see [Box 4](#)). It means that we share media and channels that make information available to us in seconds or even fractions of a second. For example, this has important consequences for crisis communication where scholars talk about 'cross-national conflict shifting'.²⁵ Issues become global but have to be handled locally, without losing the mission and the original context of the organisation as the Danish company Arla experienced. They became involved in the famous cartoon crisis when people in the Middle East started boycotting Arla products because of its Danish roots and they associated those products with the cartoons of the prophet Mohammed published in Denmark.²⁶

²⁵ Molleda and Quinn (2004).

²⁶ Holmström, Falkheimer and Nielsen (2009).

Box 4 Supraterritoriality

1. Transworld simultaneity
Communication can extend anywhere across the planet at the same time, for example, nearly all of us use the same Apple or Android mobile devices that enable us to simultaneously share experiences, we share social media.
2. Transworld instantaneity
Communication can move anywhere on the planet in no time, for example, the Internet is instantaneously moving nearly anything across our shared devices and media.

To become and remain excellent in communication in this brave new world of transplanetary and supraterritoriality is a challenge organisations face in the twenty-first century. What does this mean for excellent communication management? Excellent communication today is globalised communication. This means that there is a deep understanding of the economy and society as globalised. A globalised world makes it necessary to have a global communicative perspective on the organisation and its activities and at the same time acknowledging the local circumstances that the organisation has to deal with. That is a typical hypermodern paradox. The interplay of the five aspects of globalisation (internationalisation, liberalisation, universalisation, Westernisation and globality) and how to handle those communicatively is one of the main practical issues for the profession in the future. Like it or not, strategic communication is (and has always been) undeniably one of the driving forces behind globalisation. The hypermodern paradox of the global and the local is a paradox that has many forms and calls for tailor made communicative solutions in every situation. Keeping the principles of Grunig's public relations theory and its extension of global and specific applications as a base gives the profession a good and workable starting point to help organisations grow in today's globalised world.

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