Barriers to communication management in the executive suite

Betteke van Ruler a,*, Rob de Lange b

a Faculty of Social Cultural Sciences, Free University of Amsterdam, De Boelelaan 1081, 1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands
b Faculty of Communication and Journalism, Hogeschool van Utrecht, P.O. Box 8611, 3503 RP Utrecht, The Netherlands

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Abstract

For many years now, courses in public relations, advertising, and communication management, at universities throughout Europe have been attracting more students than ever. In many cases, the numbers of these students exceed those in economics, marketing, and law programs. This coincides with an explosion in practical and theoretical literature describing a new field that focuses on coordination and steering of parts of all organizational communications at a strategic level. A survey among 25% of all Dutch organizations with more than 50 staff shows that in the majority of these organizations, communications activities are indeed coordinated in a single department that generally has a high position in the organization’s hierarchical structure. In few organizations, however, is it such a specific task that it can justifiably be called “Communication Management” and regarded as a specialization at the managerial and strategic levels. The literature suggests there are two factors behind this: glass ceiling and encroachment. Although the profession is increasingly becoming dominated by women, even in The Netherlands, we found no evidence of a glass ceiling. We did, however, find evidence of encroachment, which does not seem to be caused by a glass ceiling.

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1. Introduction

No organization can develop or even exist without communication. But organizations in Europe have only recently perceived communications as an area that, in addition to being...
applied, also needs to be managed. Experts in public relations throughout Europe refer to communications in the context of an organization as a "specialized management field." Anglo-American authors have long argued that this is a field that should not merely be seen as a tactical and artistic-creative function, but should rather be considered managerial and strategic. Scholars in this field refer to "strategic planning of communication," "integrated communication," "management of the communication of the organization," or to "an instrument of management for harmonizing communication’s main forms."

In his concept of "corporate communication," van Riel suggests that the different forms of organizational communication—traditionally separated into marketing communications (MC), external communications/public relations (EC), and internal communications (IC)—should be centralized under the heading of corporate communications to optimize the organization’s strategic interests. For many authors, it is clear that responsibility for this should lie with a single coordinating department at the strategic level. Some scholars stress that at the very least the public relations/strategic communications activities should be centralized. Most leading authors agree that centralization of coordination at the very top level of an organization is essential.

It has also been asserted that strategies should be chosen to provide answers to the problems at hand. This not only requires coordination but also knowledge of content, and thus specialization in the field of communication and information processes. Moreover, many authors also assert that while management of an organization’s statements is important, so, too, is management of comments relevant to the organization from outside. In short, these authors stress the importance of a reciprocal communication system and say that this requires a specialized management function at a high level. "Inclusion of communication management in the dominant coalition seems vital," wrote Larissa Grunig.

For some time, the scientific and professional literature has suggested that private as well as public organizations need a specific function, on a policy making level, aimed at initiating, directing, and coaching communications within the contexts of the organization itself, its policy framework, and its functioning within the commercial, political, technical, and social environments. It concerns all activities that are intentionally implemented to direct communication and information processes to help achieve an organization’s goals. This makes communication management a strategic management activity that assists in securing the long-term functioning of the organization in society, as opposed to an operational activity that does no more than effectuate top management decisions. It also argues for hiring specialists at a managerial level, e.g., communication managers rather than communication technicians. This can be seen as a shift from regarding such functions as requiring artistic or creative talents to perceiving them as needing to be fulfilled by specialists on a management level.

Nevertheless, several US studies show that practice lags behind theory. Two factors are mentioned as important in this respect: the so-called glass ceiling and encroachment. The glass ceiling is used to describe the more or less invisible mechanisms that prevent women from climbing to the top of the organizational ladder. While women in the US public relations practice are the majority, the glass ceiling is seen as a major factor preventing public relations to attain top positions. Encroachment refers to the assignment of top positions in communication management departments or units to individuals without training or experience in the field. Lauzen and Dozier found that encroachment is also a major factor in communication
management practice. Grunig et al. agree with Dozier, and suggest that encroachment is influenced by the fact that there are so many women in this field. In this paper, we explore both encroachment and the glass ceiling as factors that may affect the relatively low level of communication management as a specialization in organizations, and we will also explore the influence of the glass ceiling on encroachment.

2. Method

The data we use in this paper have been extracted from a larger data set that was compiled to provide a representative picture of the professional communication management and consultancy fields, as well as the organization of communications in organizations. For this, we developed a quantitative longitudinal survey measurement instrument. The survey was run for the first time in 1999. Table 1 shows the categories, numbers of organizations/companies, and percentages involved. Although the larger study also included the communication consultancies, this paper focuses on administrations, semi-government, non-profit and profit organizations.

We confined our study to organizations with 50 or more employees, to be certain that there was a substantial communications workload. The addresses of these organizations were randomly selected from the national address file of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. This file contains 9,468 addresses of organizations in the profit, the non-profit, and the semi-government sectors having 50 or more employees. Since we hoped for a response rate of about 30%, a sample of about 2,500 organizations seemed manageable. The Chamber of Commerce uses an automatic randomization procedure, which resulted in a sample of 1 out of every 4, or 2,367 in all. The national address file did not include organizations in the administrative sector. These were taken from a list published by the Society of Dutch Municipalities. The Society states that a municipality must contain at least 10,000 inhabitants in order to have 50 or more employees.

Applying this criterion and the same sample factor as for the other organizations yielded a list of 103 municipalities. In addition, we also selected a number of Ministries and Provincial Councils. Altogether, this added up to a sample of 2,496 addresses/organizations. A questionnaire was mailed to these organizations, accompanied by a letter addressed to “the person responsible for the communications activities.” A second letter was also sent to our sample as a reminder. This led to a total response of 24%. Funding constraints made it impossible to evaluate those who did not respond.

Two issues that are part of the main research question are treated in this paper: (1) the position of the specialist management function of communication management within organizations,
and (2) the two factors that seem to influence the growth of this position: encroachment and the glass ceiling.

3. The position of communication management within an organization

We see the position of communication management within an organization as having three dimensions: the tasks of the departments of communication management, their budgetary autonomy, and the visibility of these departments within their organizations.

3.1. The tasks of the responsible departments

We found three indicators for the tasks of the departments of communications management in the literature: centralization by coordination of different communication forms within one single department, position in the organizational hierarchy, and the relationship between organization and communication.

Over 60% of the responding organizations indicated that they had “one single department from which all communication activities were coordinated.” Thus, the centralization stressed by van Riel has become the norm. It was obvious, however, that this did not mean that they really coordinated all communications activities. Almost all respondents claimed that they themselves were responsible for this coordination. But when we asked for which communications activities they were actually responsible, a different picture emerged: only 39% of the respondents were responsible for MC as well as EC and IC. The others who claimed they headed a coordinating department said they were only responsible for IC and EC, or EC and MC, or IC, MC, or EC alone.

Although centralization exists, in only a minority of the cases (22%) are all three functions coordinated in a single department. If there is one (more or less) single coordinating department, the person responsible for it is high in the organizational hierarchy: 24% formed part of the management team itself, 30% supported top management, and another 24% supported the management team. Positions in middle management or at the operational level are found much less frequently: 15 and 6%, respectively. It may be concluded that in 6 of 10 participating organizations, a separate department centralizes the coordination of communications activities, and these departments operate at the strategic level as described in the literature.

The answers to the question about the relationship between communications and organization provide another indication of the tasks of communications management. Various points of view are put forward in the literature. For example, van Riel sees communications policy as derived from organizational policy. Others, such as Grunig and Caywood, argue for a more reciprocal relationship between organization and communications.

In the present study, respondents were asked whether they thought, “from a professional point of view, communications should influence the organization’s policy.” More than three-quarters of the respondents (77%) said that communications should indeed influence organizational policy. This suggests that they see communication management and company policy as reciprocal. Moreover, 72% also indicated that they actually have such an influence. Thus, the communication management departments do indeed seem to be managerial departments at high levels, having the power to influence organizational decision-making.
3.2. Budgetary autonomy and visibility of the departments

Long-term policy and strategic management require a budget. Communication management departments at high levels, therefore, require budgets to operate. It was striking that almost half the respondents indicated that they either had no structural budget for communications (40%) or did not know what this budget was (9%). Remarkably, however, the presence or absence of a structural budget did not always coincide with the presence or absence of a reported coordinating department. Having a single coordinating department apparently does not automatically imply also having specific budgets for this coordination. Even more striking was the fact that the position of the department in the hierarchy did not influence the existence of a separate budget. Communication management is apparently accorded a high level of responsibility, and more often than not those responsible for this function shape it as reciprocal to the organization’s policy, but this fact is not always reflected in the existence of a structural communications budget.

To be recognized as a professional specialty, it is important that the department be visible as such in the organizational hierarchy. Visibility is operationalized here by whether or not the function of the person reportedly responsible for the coordination of communications activities is designated as “communication” or related specialties. This is not common practice, however. Although communications responsibilities are placed at a high level, communication management is not necessarily a visible function as such in the hierarchy of the organization. The outcomes are presented in Table 2.

Of those responsible for communications activities, less than half (42%) reported they had a job title related to communications in one way or another. About 20% have a job title that related to marketing or sales, while another 20% of the respondents had a job title that refers to general management/CEO, personnel, or office management. The category “other title” covers a wide variety of terms varying from “bookkeeper” or “controller” to “advertising consultant,” but respondents who were simply “manager” or “staff member” also fall into this category. It will come as no surprise that in the cases where respondents had a communications-related job title a coordinating department often existed, but this correspondence is far from complete.

Of the more than 60% of organizations that reported having a special department to coordinate communications activities, only 55% were headed by a person with some explicit reference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing/sales</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General management</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary/office manager</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other title</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This includes such titles as Advertising Manager, Public Relations Officer, Internal or External Relations Manager, etc.*
to communications (or advertising, public relations, etc.) in his or her job title. So, whereas many respondents indicated that there was one special department to coordinate communications activities, these departments were not always led by a “real” communication manager, that is, a department head with such a title.

3.3. Preliminary conclusion of the position of communication management

In a majority of the responding organizations, communication management is located at a high level in the hierarchy and is treated in a more or less centralized way. In The Netherlands, however, communication management cannot be regarded as an “emancipated” specialty at the top, since only 32% of the organizations in this study had a communication department that was visible in the hierarchy as such, with its own structural budget. Moreover, only two-thirds of these departments are positioned at a high level. Indeed, there was a significant amount of what Grunig et al.21 call “sublimation,” which is similar to “imperialism”: in many cases other domains in the organization are responsible for communication management and the management of the communications specialists. We will explore this phenomenon in the following section.

4. Encroachment and the glass ceiling

We wondered why, despite the fact that communication management is considered a high level responsibility in the hierarchy and recognized as having a steering function to coordinate communications, budgets are not always allocated, and it is often subordinated to other departments such as general affairs, marketing or office management. We were able to identify in the literature two forces that influenced the subordination of communications management to other functions. These forces are the glass ceiling and encroachment—both mentioned as unfavorably influencing the managerial role of communication management.

Encroachment is the practice of assigning the top positions in communication management departments or units to individuals without training or experience in that field.22 The glass ceiling includes the more or less invisible mechanisms that prevent women from climbing to the top of the organizational ladder.23 While the barriers may be invisible, they are as hard and impenetrable as glass. Moreover, Grunig et al.24 agree with Dozier’s suggestion that encroachment is influenced by the predominance of women in this field, and, accordingly, by the glass ceiling.

We analyzed our data to see whether encroachment by non-communication managers influenced the results of our study on the emergence of a high level specialist communication management function and whether this is influenced by the glass ceiling.

4.1. Responsibility for communication management and encroachment

Dozier stressed that women are not only excluded from management roles in communication management, but also that the “feminization” of a profession is often linked to a lack of influence on decision-making in professional occupations because decisions are made by people with a non-communications/public relations background. This is included in the term Dozier uses,
“encroachment,” which he called “one of the major threats to the profession.” Encroachment in public relations and communication management literature is described as “the assignment of top positions in public relations departments or units to individuals without training or experience in public relations.” To discover whether this is true in Dutch communication management, we explored the profile of those responsible for these roles. If encroachment is important in this respect, then the profiles of a substantial number of those responsible for communication management must show a non-communications background. This background may be reflected in two variables: formal education and previous vocation. Given the fact that specialized education in communications on a tertiary level does not exist in the Netherlands for a long time yet, it is reasonable to say that extensive experience in the field could be equated with formal training.

4.2. Profile of communication managers

Professional knowledge requirements increase with the development of a profession. Grunig identified one of the characteristics for regarding communications management as a full-fledged profession is when professionals have acquired a body of knowledge that allows a theoretical approach to the vocation. This implies that practitioners must have graduated from a specialized form of higher education to be considered “a communications professional.” Among our respondents, 76% had a college or university degree, but only a few (15%) of these had a degree in communications (speech, communications science, social psychology). Another 16% had a commercial degree. The rest had very diverse educational backgrounds: from law to chemistry, from history and French literature to theology.

In practice, an acquired body of knowledge does not seem to be necessary. Nor is extensive experience in communications practice required. More than half of the respondents have had their present functions for three years or less. For most of them, this was their first job in the communications field (Table 3).

4.3. Encroachment

Table 3 shows that 14% of the respondents landed in communication management from functions in public relations and public information, while 22% were previously in marketing,
sales, or advertising. This corresponds with the reported lack of professional education. It is clear that the profile of those responsible for communication management is to a large extent a non-communications profile. That the job titles do not include any reference to communications is not an accident or based on organizational history, but is linked to the non-communications backgrounds of people chosen to fill this function. It is obviously not felt that managing communications requires expertise in the field of communications, which makes it impossible to speak of a well-defined, strategic function for the management of communications within an organization, let alone expect professionalization of the field. Clearly, encroachment is a common phenomenon in communication management in The Netherlands. Is this influenced by the feminization of the field, as Grunig et al. suggest?

4.4. Female majority and the glass ceiling

In the United States, women constitute a majority in the communications field. The Anglo-American Velvet Ghetto study showed that discrimination keeps women from having a managerial role. Gersh confirms the findings of the Velvet Ghetto study by adding that women are assumed to be ineffective managers. Dozier stated that having a technical role may even form a “ghetto” for some women in communication management. Hon et al. agreed some years later with him that, although a technical role may be relatively transitory for many male practitioners, it seems to be relatively permanent for many females. The glass ceiling is expressed in a lack of organizational power. If this phenomenon does exist, it implies that female communication managers are excluded from organizational power.

Our data show a certain predominance of women in the field, even at levels of high responsibility. The ratio of the men to women who claim to be responsible for communication management is 60:40. However, among those responsible for communication management who also have a communications job title (i.e., “real” communication managers), women form a slight majority (54% females vs. 46% males). Of all the responsible men, 32% have a title that includes communications, while 55% of the responsible women have such a title (significance \( p = .01 \)). This suggests that in situations in which communication management is more “visible” relatively more women are employed as communication managers.

Moreover, there is also an age difference: 80% of all women responsible for communication management are under 40. Despite the fact that the average age for communication managers in general is 43, and there are more males than females, the average “real” communication manager is a 34-year-old woman. We may well be witnessing the decline of the older male communication manager and the rise of younger females in this role.

A similar situation can be seen among communications staff in general. Men with communications tasks form a slim majority (54%). For those positions where communications tasks are performed exclusively, however, with no other tasks involved, women form the majority. We distinguished four groups: men performing exclusively communications work (25%), women performing exclusively communications work (30%), men combining communications work with other tasks (29%), and women combining communications work with other tasks (16%). Women performing exclusively communications work form the largest group, in absolute numbers, among the respondents in this research. This effect is even stronger relatively, since the
number of men exceeds that of women in the response group as a whole. The male majority is comprised of the large group of men who combine communications work with other tasks; there are many fewer women who combine communications work with other tasks.

It seems that when communications is perceived to be specialized work, more women than men are employed to do it. Similar comparisons for the public sector only reveal these tendencies to be even stronger. There the feminization of the communications field is a fact.

What are the implications of this female over-representation for the problem discussed here? Is there indeed a glass ceiling? It is clear that the positions of men and women in the organizational hierarchy differ. Table 4 shows their relative positions.

If the person responsible for communications is a man, he is more likely to be a member of the management team or to have a higher staff function. If it is a woman, her department is more likely to be lower in the organization. The differences are no longer as great as they were in our 1995 Trend Study of Public Relations, where not a single woman in the response group operated at the management level, and almost no men worked at the operational level. While this may suggest that the position of women responsible for communications activities is improving, our present research shows that these positions are still not in balance. The assumption is that women have fewer opportunities to lead a communications department at a managerial level than their male colleagues, which is largely because of the glass ceiling. If this is true, this imbalance will not vanish over time without certain external interventions (Table 5).

Table 5 shows that age and gender correlate significantly with position. But it also shows that gender correlates with age, and the women in charge are relatively young. Table 6 shows that the correlation between gender and position is to a large extent explained by age.

Table 4
Position of men and women responsible for communication management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position in hierarchy</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management team (%)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (high; %)</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff (low; %)</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle management (%)</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational level (%)</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (%)</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5
Correlation between position in the hierarchy, age, education, and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>−0.19**</td>
<td>−0.24**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>−0.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at the 0.01 level.
The regression model in Table 6 does not show whether a glass ceiling actually exists. It may simply be a matter of time. Does this mean that as women get older they are more likely to enter these positions? Or do women leave before they reach that point? It is difficult to say because only a few of the women were in the “advanced in years” category.

A quite different picture emerges if we define (lack of) organizational power differently from “position in the hierarchy.” If organizational power is defined as the possibility of leading a “strategic department,” and operationalized with three variables: high position in the hierarchy, visibility of communications activities in a separate department, and budgetary autonomy, a different picture emerges. To analyze the data again, we identified those departments that have a higher position in the hierarchy, are visible as such, and have their own budgets, designating these as “strategic departments.” We tried to determine any differences between the departments of this type that were led by men and those led by women. Are these strategic departments indeed more often led by men, and are women excluded from leading such strategic departments (Table 7)?

Table 7 shows that there is little difference in the number of strategic departments led by men and those led by women. Of the men polled, only 18% led a strategic department, while 82% led a department that did not fit our criteria of organizational power. Among the women, these percentages were 16 and 84, respectively. The difference is not statistically significant.

Thus, while there are not many departments that meet our strategic department criteria, the heads of those departments that do are evenly divided between men and women. We must assume then that men and women are equal in their opportunities for a more strategic approach. Thus, the data do not support the existence of a glass ceiling in this regard.

Table 6
Predictors of hierarchical position (standardized regression coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>0.048</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7
Comparing male and female leadership of strategic communication departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic department</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row (%)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column (%)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strategic department</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Row (%)</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column (%)</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total %</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Conclusions and discussion

In a majority of the responding organizations, communication management is considered to have a sufficiently significant value to be positioned at a high level in the hierarchy. Communication management is treated in a fairly centralized way, and those responsible for communications shape their roles as reciprocal functions to the organization’s policy more often than not. Although communication management is no longer marginal in an organization, it is usually less visible at strategic levels and often without a specific budget. Given these facts, then, how strategic and managerial can this function be?

In fact, communication management in The Netherlands is clearly not regarded as an “emancipated” specialty at the highest organizational level, since only 32% of the organizations in this research had a communication department that was visible in the hierarchy as such and had its own structural budget. Even fewer (two-thirds of these) were also placed at the top floor level. Thus, in only a very few organizations the function is so specific that it can justifiably claim the title of “Communication Management” and be regarded as a specialty at a strategic level.

Feminist theory sees the reason for this in the fact that women dominate the field and that they do not possess sufficient organizational power because of a glass ceiling.

When defined as position in organizational hierarchy, they do have less organizational power than their male colleagues. Nevertheless, the glass ceiling, when defined as “lack of strategic power for women,” does not seem to be a factor. Although there is a negative correlation between being a woman and holding a higher position, age explains almost half of the variance. Moreover, in cases where departments have more strategic positions (strategic departments), women have as much opportunity to enter them as men. Very few departments, however, are in positions where they can develop a greater managerial and strategic approach. This may be an effect of the encroachment factor per se. The data show that communication management is more often managed by people who are not communication managers by education or experience.

The general belief seems to be that expertise in the field of communications is unnecessary for managing a communications group. Moreover, although the hierarchical position of such managers is fairly high, it is not normally visible as a “communication management” position per se, but is often subordinated to other departments. Thus, management of communications is not a well-defined function within the organization on a strategic level. It can be assumed that development of the communications functions in the non-responding organizations is even less well-defined because no one in those organizations was even motivated to complete the questionnaire. This suggests that further research on the non-responding organizations may be called for. We hope this will be possible in our next study into the organization of communications in organizations. It is clear that communication management in The Netherlands is often subordinated to such other functions as general management, marketing, office management, personnel, or even finance. Gender does not seem to be a determining factor, but encroachment does exist and may well be a determining factor on its own.

This research project was aimed at obtaining an insight into the practice of what is known as communication management. Although, this research project was focused on The Netherlands, many of its conclusions can possibly be extrapolated to other (European) countries as well. To
confirm this, it would be necessary to develop a comparative study that examines the situations in other countries.

The theoretical and professional literature in The Netherlands and in other European countries has only begun to focus on communication management as a specialized field since the mid-80s. Understandably, there are few practitioners functioning on a strategic level, and little strategic advice is available. Previously, it was believed that the necessary prerequisites for this field were non-specified higher education and tactical skills. Sadly, communication science has not yet provided significant assistance to the profession. Only recently has any consideration been given to the development of scientific tools for a more strategic approach, and in most European countries this still occurs on a very modest scale.36

Yet this research project shows that even in a country where public relations and communication management are often part of job specialization and constitute a significant professional branch, encroachment is common practice. What are the determinants of this encroachment, and what makes it a common practice? Why, in a country where higher education and degrees are highly valued, and where consensus-building is an important organizational norm,37 do organizations still hire communication managers who have no background in communications, public relations, or advertising? We can assume that encroachment is not solely caused by the profession itself, but is promoted or at least allowed by top management. Several recent studies show that general management in The Netherlands perceives the main role of communication management as “supplying information to target groups on the CEO’s timetable.”38 Does this show a total lack of understanding for the difficulties of communication processes and the extent of communication in the context of an organization? Or is it because top management is not inclined to leave other tasks than supplying information to the communication manager? Given these questions, there should be new research into the factors that make communication management valuable for general management.

**Betteke van Ruler**, Ph.D., is associate professor in communication science and communication management at the Free University of Amsterdam; she also holds a chair in communication management at the University of Twente, Department of Applied Communication Science.

**Rob de Lange**, M.S., is senior lecturer in sociology and methodology at the Hogeschool van Utrecht.

References


[7] This is the expression used by Cees van Riel, 1995.


[26] This concept is primarily used by M.M. Lauzen and M.M. Lauzen & D.M. Dozier, op. cit.

[31] D. Gersh, There are more women in public relations, but inequality still exists, *Editor and Publisher*, 19 (1986), p.78, cited in Hon et al., op. cit.
[34] L.A. Grunig, E.L. Toth, L.Ch. Hon, op. cit.