"One Voice" Message as a
Super-Destroyer of Cultural Borders

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Abstract

What are steps toward a preparing of "one voice" and consistent message, which may cross cultural borders? Is it so important to start with new technologies or maybe instead of this it would be better firstly to try to be ahead of them and rethink the capacity to change culture, communication management style and implement integrated communication approach? Addressing such questions leads to the main goal of this article: to search and investigate ways of cultural borders crossing having the evident importance of integration ideas incorporation in the field of organisational communication as a reference point. In sum, the derived conclusion is related to the suggestion to think about the new kind of marginalization and two not so strictly bounded cultural types: integrated organisations and their position of winners and not integrated organisations surrounded by isolation at the same time.

Keywords: crossing cultural borders, "one voice" message, integrated communication.

Introduction

A lot of time has been spent looking for the best ways and strategies of cross cultural communication for business and other spheres of our life. It may be, that the mostly effective or even some kind of super-destroyer of cultural borders has been originated during the process of communication rethinking, when in the 90s of the XXth century a set of ideas has emerged around the phenomenon of integrated communication.

In general, it would be not so confusional to agree, that "an organisation is a culture" (Sriramesh; Grunig; Buffington, 1992, 577) and after that interactions of organisations, their relationships may be analysed as a communication across cultures. It would be possible to think about "one voice" and consistent messages as arrows connecting separated and very dynamic islands – cultural models - of fuzzy

shapes. This premise may be supported and strengthened by the understanding of integrated communication as an increasingly important, defined as a management philosophy (Stewart, 1996) and a challenge to implement not only across messages, services, products, media, divisions, but also across countries (Gould, Lerman, and Grein, 1999).

Thus, so called "one voice" message has been originated as the result of a new thinking and understanding of the importance to unify different communication elements and redesign of them (Schultz, et al., 1994) and also defined as a unifying brand theme that will tie all the disparate communication elements and various communication disciplines into an integrated whole (Schultz, 1997). This set of ideas has emerged in the domain of marketing. *The problem is*, that organisation is able to speak with *one voice*, but a lot of preparative activities in the field of integration and harmonisation of various activities should be a priori.

Outline

Firstly, the desire to overcome marginalization is introduced as an initial engine. Secondly, the process of creative searching and decision making as for continuous learning and communication programmes launching is proposed here in this article. The final third part covers essential finding about the appearance of cultural models

of integrated character. The conclusive part is substantiated on literature sources and results of investigations, which were made by various scholars in the new field of integrated marketing communications and integrated communication mostly during the last decade of the previous century. Various findings are chosen for review as a background for analysis of possible links between different approaches and also communication and culture theories closer unification. The analysis is mostly based on logical heuristics supported by secondary data and empiricism.

The Desire to Overcome Marginalization

It may be, that the desire to overcome marginalization and every kind of separation lines appears together with the understanding of the worst characteristics of human beings, who have put themselves into the boxes of different kind or, as says Behar, "we take our borders with us" (1993, 320). Thus, Brenda Dervin and David Schaefer (1999) claim, that there is something universal about the human condition that can be addressed in *communication* procedure. James Lull (2000) agrees, that, according to Watson (1997), the dynamic elements over which we exercise considerable control are the volitional aspects of culture – a set of ideas, reactions, and expectations that is constantly changing as people and groups themselves change. The means by which such changes take place – the meaningful symbolic exchanges that constitute social interaction and it is nothing else, but Human Communication (Lull, 2000, 132). According to this, it is reasonable to think about culture as communicative activity.

The increasing complexity of society is related to the culture as a relative term. We may speak about culture's identity, which is defined by a corporate interest group and, besides, different groups tend to have different cultural forms (Cohen, 1974). It means increased level of separate lines, more borders, but on the other hand, new methods of crossing borders and more skilled distracters of them are involved. The term "*corporate culture*" came into wide use in the 1980s and emerged with the reference to the shared ways of perceiving, thinking, and acting exhibited in large corporations. Spreading of culture across traditional borders and the reduction of differences between counterparts is possible as a result of *horizontal cultures*, which are driven by the power of advertising. For example, interactions are less cross-cultural when traditional culture is connected with "consumer culture". Another example is worldwide "military culture", which crosses national boundaries (McOmie, 1990). William

McOmie (1990) argues, that intercultural communication would become more truly intercultural in a *vertical direction:* upward from the social sciences into the physical sciences and downward into the humanities – literature, art, music, drama, dance, religion, etc.

Returning to horizontal cultures, it should be pointed out connections with consumer values and crossing borders with messages, which are originated and based on people's desire for convenience, comfort, and stylish life, but it is becoming more complex then traditional advertising because of new tendencies: overcoming the borders is more effective process and presents unlimited possibilities of interactive and also integrative activities that have been started during this crossing of centuries. Not satisfaction has surrounded traditional advertising and transformations in the domains of marketing and also public relations, which has developed new theoretical approaches, have been supportive processes for further attempts to develop individualised strategies for more direct communication with targeted consumers. The goal of higher performance has supported studies and debates of new emerging discipline that has had a lot of theoretical diversity and firstly has been based on traditional practices re-thinking. The first obstacles have emerged in the area of ability to change institution's structure as well as way of thinking and to make cultural arrangements.

Creative ideas related to integrated approach are especially potential in the field of borders crossing and strong support of this are research results of a multi-country comparison (Kitchen, 1999). Without any doubt, culture is related to mediated and dynamic elements. Simply speaking, corporate culture is meshed with issues of organisation's communication and human resources management. Organisation often crosses borders between other social units, thus forming multinational, multicultural social units. O*rganisation* in this context may be defined as a special type of group, which has a formalised, more or less hierarchical structure of communication and an explicitly defined goal, as well as a system of standardised procedures for recruitment an exclusion, for decision-making, for communication with the surroundings of the organisations, etc. (Rosengren, 2000, 105-106).

So many Ways to think about Culture and Possibilities to cross Borders

Horace Newcomb (2000, 21), introducing a process of seeking a new compass for the communication field, concludes that we have no detailed maps of the folded

landscapes of our cultures. "Folds" are peripheral spaces within the larger global culture and, with a turn to Alberto Moreiras (1998), "folds" are not outside it exactly, but folded into it as valleys or as alleyways into urban grids. It is helpful to think about and study relations among cultures using discovered metaphorical "folds", which are within globality and emerging as an exterior to totality, as the site of possible, concrete freedom (p. 94). In order to support this metaphoric point of view, the focus is on culture's concept as not clearly bounded or narrowly framed. At the same time, it seems to be important in some related cases not to reject and use creatively the definition of boundary in a broader sense as "an area where the settlement densities and traffic densities decline quite sharply" (Deutsch, 1968, 49). Here it is useful to note that words "boundary" and "border" are used synonymously in this article, where further some connecting thoughts in fields of culture, communication and also organisational learning are followed up.

Bradd Shore (1998) stresses the importance of thinking about models, which are a big help in thinking about cultural differences. He suggests notion of culture being not really a bounded entity with clear borders and fixed shape, besides "there are advantages, however, in thinking of a culture as a community which shares a significant stock of instituted models and the mental models derived from them" (1998, 30). Cultural models change, they are transformed in the process, cultural units are dynamic, fuzzy, because "cultures are not water-tight changeless units" (Shore, 1998, 30).

The best communicators understand very well, how it is important to prepare some nuances of the same message during crossing borders of different and more or less fuzzy structured units. Differences between "we" and "they" are always some kind of obstacle, so poorly interpreted cultural models are the base for misunderstandings or even cross-cultural conflicts. Speaking about dilemmas and conflicts, Shore introduces *models in action*, which are full of fuzzy edges, emotionally changed, and subject to negotiation, conflict and transformation. Not fixed shape and not really bounded entity are also features of nowadays organisation and the set of ideas about intercultural communication may be closely connected to suggestion to think about *culture as a dynamic unit*, because culture changes are the problem No.1 for those, who are carefully looking forward to the chance to compete and even be alive in increasingly turbulent market of a new century.

In general, mediated elements of culture support the way of thinking about culture as a dynamic activity, which may be named as a medium that connects individual person and small groups to larger communities through shared values, experience, and modes of expression (Lull, 2000, 132). Moving further, it is possible to come to the conclusion about different organisations with different cultures and the character of their connections and interactions: organisations act as dynamic units and medium for relations is firstly based on corporate culture. The third part of this study contains more detailed scrutiny of this approach.

Thus, it is possible to understand the importance of bridging business cultures, according to suggestions of Linda Beamur (1998) and having results of integrated communications campaigns' aiming to motivate big business to establish links with small, largely black – owned enterprises research, which was originated by Cornelius B. Pratt and Evan Bloom (1997) in Southern Africa. Besides, Stephen J. Gould, et al. (1999), introduced supportive evidence of the potentiality of integrated marketing communications as an extremely dynamic global concept as well as a process and the set of ideas in the field of cultural obstacles crossing.

Being more exact, the importance of borrowing cultural symbols and adaptation to each other is evident in the light of Abner Cohen's (1974) fundamental question: How are the different groups related to one another so that society can function to some extant as an on-going system? (p.87). If we are trying to move more far, we discover one more important hindrance to desired harmony in the domain of communicative activities of different levels and kinds. This obstacle is named as domination, and it is mostly related with separation lines, which are dividing stronger and weaker participants who are using different cultural symbols and communication codes (Anderson and Davis, 1988).

The great impact of technologies can not been ignored. Unlimited capabilities of various boundaries crossing and elimination of traditional separation lines between disciplines are presented together with new requirements for management style. Technology makes the great impact and the time for reframing inside and outside communication comes together with the requirement to manage a technology axis, and interactive character of marketing communications presents more possibilities in the field of co-ordination and management. It is possible to originate more perfect communication for business and other sectors and the process of integration in the field of communica-

tion gives return and chances to win in a very turbulent market. The question is: How should organisation's communications be managed in such conditions? Is it possible to have some guidelines, when sending of messages of not consistent character is very costly and risky way of acting?

According to Diane Gayeski (2000), the main thing is related to creating a new communication and learning system and what is very important – relations based on trust, cooperation and understanding should be developed. The suggestion is to manage this new system holistically. Besides, continuous learning plans should be launched.

In sum, we have shortly discussed relations between culture, communication, learning, and here may be introduced one more connection, which is of the greatest importance. Looking for some universal rules of crossing cultural borders, we should take into consideration the understanding of communication that makes the mind and, on the other hand, the *vice versa* process (Wiredu, 1995).

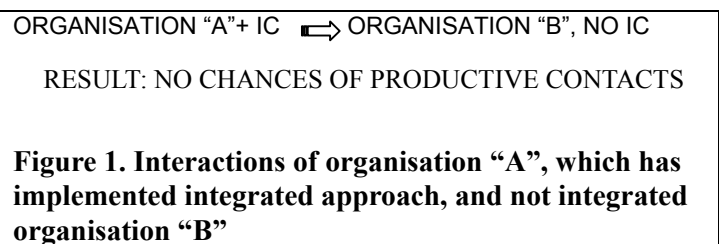## How to prepare Ourselves for the "Win-Win" Game in the Cross-Cultural Arena?

Yes, it is exactly the "win-win" game that is in line with the game theory (Owen, 1982) or a set of creative ideas, how to originate the "one-voice" and consistent message, which may be a super-destroyer of every kind of borders and especially cultural marginalizations. The problem is that this kind of model, which may be named as the model of integrated communication, emerges together with a lot of grey areas in the field of theory foundation. Anyway, it is possible to close various gaps and also gaps in the field of cultural differences.

Diane Gayeski (2000) introduces a variety of integrated approaches as a possible solution and speaks about blurring the lines between internal and external communication of organisation. Such kind of approaches may be indicated as being in-line with the notion of culture as not clearly bounded entity. Supplementary, the words of Karl E. Weick written in 1969 are still so universal: "…what happens inside affects what happens outside, and vice versa" (p.25).

To return to Gayeski: technology affected the profession of managing informational, motivational and instructional communication. A broader function related to capturing mindshare appeared as an essential resource for organisa-

tional performance. So, capacities to change as well as ability to learn and leverage knowledge are indicated as a return on investment. Integrated communication means that members of such organisation, which has implemented this approach, have adapted to values and beliefs of a new kind, the shift has been tremendous and related to different thinking. For example, Noel M. Tichy (1982) argues, that one of the social tools, by which organisations are held together, in part, by a normative glue – that is, by the sharing of certain important beliefs by its members, and organisations develop cultures that reflect their members' dominant norms and values (p.63). We may ask: How integration ideas should be incorporated in case of new values and beliefs becoming the base of everyday activity? The answer is related to educational activities of organisation members (Wightman, 1999). Another sensible motion about global teams working in global and cross-cultural communication arena have been derived by Stephen J. Gould, Dawn Lerman and Andreas F. Grein (1999).

In addition, many answers are possible to find in the area of more perfect forms of communication management and understanding of the importance to move toward dialogical communication and elimination of manipulative actions (Pearson, 1989). Besides, integrated approaches have already circled the planet and affected ways of thinking within very short time period (Kitchen, 1999) and it maybe possible that the question of the best ways of cultural borders crossing will be related to the issue of communication between organisations of two kinds, - integrated and not integrated communicators, - and marginalization of different kind will appear.

ORGANISATION "A"+ IC ⟹ ORGANISATION "B", NO IC

RESULT: NO CHANCES OF PRODUCTIVE CONTACTS

Figure 1. Interactions of organisation "A", which has implemented integrated approach, and not integrated organisation "B"

Two different organisations with different corporate cultures have no chances of productive contacts (See Figure 1), the same communication codes are not originated, and crossing of borders is very problematic and one-sided. Organisation "A" is able to eliminate borders, reach every audience and also organisation "B", so, it should interpret all messages from the organisation "A", but this organisation "A", according to main ideas of integrated communication, has interest in creating some "one voice" messages and break codes of the neighbouring organisation

"One Voice"

The Model A   The Model B

ORGANISATION A IN THE POSITION OF DECISION MAKING

STAGE of decision making

STAGE 1. POSSIBILITY TO CHANGE COMMUNICATION ACCORDING TO IC APPROACH

STAGE 2. VALIDATION

STAGE 3. NEW SITUATION AND VALUES

STAGE 4. CONFIRMATION

THE RESULT: ALTERNATIVE MORE POTENTIAL STAGE

ORGANISATION B IN THE POSITION OF DECISION MAKING

STAGE of decision making

STAGE 1. POSSIBILITY TO CHANGE COMMUNICATION ACCORDING TO IC APPROACH

STAGE 2. REJECTION

STAGE 3. THE SAME SITUATION AND VALUES

STAGE 4. CONFIRMATION
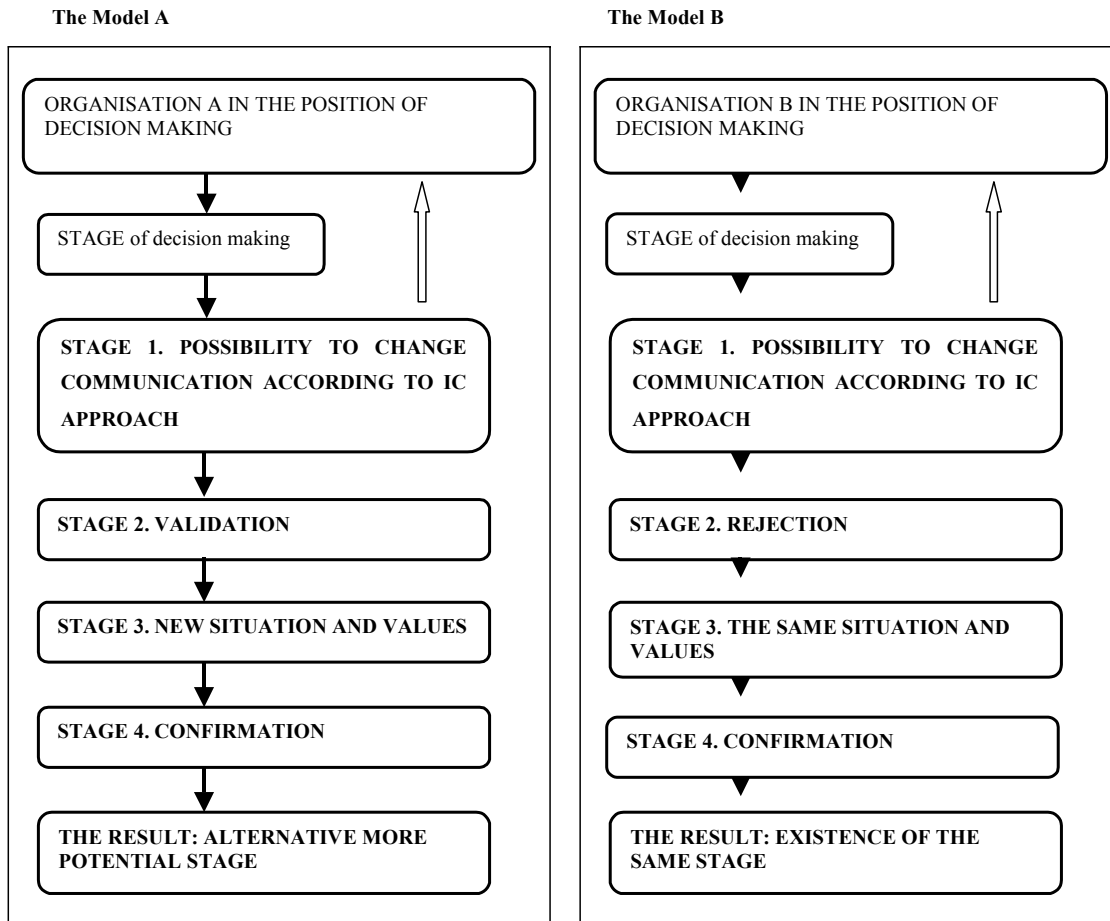
THE RESULT: EXISTENCE OF THE SAME STAGE

Figure 2: Two Models of the Reaction to the Chance to implement IC.
Note: IC – integrated communication.

as well as it should simply use the traditional communication methods. Anyway, the leading positions has organisation with integrated communication, because it may use more complex and doubled "arsenal" according to requirements of more competitive environment and strategically conditions.

We may analyse some details or some kind of two models (See Figure 2), which illustrate movement toward integration of communication and opposite activities of stagnation and movement toward isolation. One of the most important stages is the stage of decision making with two main possible choices: rejection or validation as a further action in the stage 2.

It is possible to understand the importance of decision to try to adapt new approaches of integration in a due time and spatial position. Movement toward "win-win" game conditions and more effective interactions would be between organisations with implemented integrated approach. Without any doubt, the "transitional" type of organisation that has started some changes and has made

the first steps toward communication redesign according to the new thinking should be also indicated and such type of organisation is also having more potential in the everyday performance and communication arena.

It seems that development of new organisational culture of integrated character makes impact in the sphere of outside and also inside organisational dynamics. How quickly it should be implemented or how it should be co-ordinated in practice depends on individual organisational conditions and, besides, the dynamics of all processes is like a domino lay out with a lot of dependency relations and tight requirements to have no movements toward not effective actions in increasingly complex environment. So, Shore's (1998) models in action mentioned in the second part of this article are helpful for more thorough understanding of new development trends in a broader sense.

Conclusion

Culture of integrated communication as more perspective and effective has already taken starting position and "one

voice" messages have been possible for even not ideally integrated organisations and they have had the greatest chance to overcome obstacles and win the contest in the world overloaded by information. On the other side, isolation has emerged as a damage for not integrated organisations at the same time. The basis for such claim may be the logical heuristics supported by the newest research, which was initiated with the aim to investigate relationships between integrated marketing communications (IMC) and higher performance, and results showed a causal relationship between IMC and share, sales, or profit (Low, 2000).

The strength of integrated communication, as a renewed concept of IMC, is even of higher level, because it has not been only a name change, it has come as a focus on the stakeholder as the true integrator of the communications process, and the prognosis is about reborn and new development stage of integrated communication (Wightman, 1999). Conclusion about two new kinds of organisational cultures – integrated and not integrated - is derived together with the corroboration of the statement that crossing a boundary often involves actors who are creating new boundaries as well as destroying old ones (Anderson and Davis, 1988).

The final conclusion and the answer to the initially stated problem of this study is an agreement with the argument of James C. Reilly, representative of IBM corporation: There is no point in speaking with "one voice" if the message makes no sense (Schultz, et al., 1994, X). However, it is extremely important to be able to prepare ourselves for common and consistent messages delivering and dissemination in a due time. So, in general further research trends should be driven by ideas of transdisciplinarity and very clear practical purposes. The main goal in the future communication and information – culture – organisational learning and behaviour – management - economy and statistics investigations seems as mostly related to the origination and implementation of possibly universal to some degree guidelines, which may be applicable in every kind of organisation.

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Biography

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