

Extending polyphonic strategic communication to stakeholder engagement: Exploring deliberate-emergent and radical-emergent approaches

Abstract

The importance of stakeholder engagement for organisational survival is widely recognised and supported. The interactive, polyphonic organisational context has however placed added emphasis on stakeholder engagement. Strategic communication professionals are increasingly becoming responsible for creating connection among diverse voices which necessitates their involvement in the stakeholder engagement process. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the strategic communication professional in the stakeholder engagement process against contemporary, polyphonic strategic communication principles. This was done by determining the pragmatic relevance of two approaches to stakeholder engagement, deliberate emergent and radical emergent. A quantitative research design was employed using a web-based survey, which was distributed to communication professionals in academia and practice. An exploratory factor analysis highlighted two approaches to stakeholder engagement that recognises the importance of stakeholder conversations and inputs, while honouring conventional planning as a key activity for successful stakeholder engagement. The results of this article provide guidance for organisational management on two possible approaches to stakeholder engagement that are relevant for the current polyphonic organisational context. It also affirms the indispensable role of the communication professional in the stakeholder engagement process ranging from stakeholder guidance towards stakeholder enablement and empowerment.

Keywords

Stakeholder engagement; strategic communication; polyphony; polyphonic communication; radical emergent; deliberate emergent

Full text of the article: <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/ejc-mandyn-v30-n2-a1>