
**The Judge Institute of Management Studies
University of Cambridge**

***The Role of Communication Strategies in
Change Management Process:
A Case Study of Consignia Brand and
Business Status Introduction***

Somboon Kulvisaechana

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Supervisor: Dr. Philip Stiles

Declaration of Originality

In accordance with Regulation 8 of the General Regulations for the M.Phil. Degree (one-year course). I declare that this thesis is substantially my own work. Where reference is made to the works of others the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and duly acknowledged in the text and bibliography.

Somboon Kulvisaechana
Peterhouse, Cambridge
June 11, 2001

Abstract

A plethora of theory, research and practice in change management has evolved considerably over decades, and experienced a major transformation in form and function amid a rapidly changing environment. Oftentimes, many organizations with radical change transitions entangle themselves in the mess of chronic management impediments. In recent years, the role of communication strategies emerges to solve the puzzle of the change upheaval by providing a comprehensive mechanism to facilitate a change process. Based on a case study of Consignia plc – brand and business status introduction, this research has two aims. First, a conceptualized framework of the integrated role of communication strategies formulation in conjunction with change management process is mapped out. Also, it intends to investigate some depth of understanding of how the executives at different management levels perceive the internal communication process surrounding the change in Consignia. Second, such a framework has been theoretically explored and empirically demonstrated to examine the process of strategic formulation of corporate communications in accordance with diverse phases of changes to Consignia. Semi-structured and online interviews with relevant senior managers as well as internal change consultants, are duly conducted. The research study is attributable to a double-edged management contribution. It can reflect a new construct of academic theories and suggest a gap which the firm may leave unaddressed in the first place. Due to time and space constraints, a number of relevant issues are selected for succinct discussion on a basis of theoretical and practical perspectives. Last but not least, implications, limitations, and further research are discussed.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one that is most adaptable to change.

- Charles Darwin (1808-1892)

In a highly competitive environment, the dynamism for changes in any large organizations becomes indispensable for greater success and excellence. Most business leaders and top executives in various industries have been vigilant toward the modification of business strategies along with “effective and continuous” changes up to reach their potential. In addition, nowadays, pressures for change are not merely stemmed from the organizational elements but also the international forces galvanized by the notion of globalization, technology, and competition. Therefore, revolutionary changes have been prioritized as one of the most important agendas needed for discussion in a parallel relationship with other management issues.

Organizational scholars have long acknowledged the importance of communication processes in explanations of organizational change (Lewis and Seibold, 1996; Rogers, 1995; Fairhurst and Wendt, 1993). Nonetheless, Lewis (2000a) argues that the systematic research about the effectiveness of communication strategies about change is sparse. Connected to that, though the various research on change management has been produced in reflection of diverse organizational angles, the communication strategy, which serves as a critical instrument in facilitating changes, falls short of academics’ attention. Additionally, the extant literature has insufficiently provided a wide range of case examples, which may broaden horizons of change on real business circumstances. If changes are expected to occur over a long period and are likely to involve high ambiguity at some points, then this should be clearly communicated in advance in order to avoid potential loss of momentum, disappointment, and cynicism in certain groups of employees (Heracleous and Langham, 1996).

From the aforementioned aspects, it triggers the author’s interest to conduct research on how the communication strategies help effectively facilitate change management processes, especially in a large organization. Since this integrative study of the subjects is under researched, an exploratory case approach is considered an appropriate tool to be employed on

the basis of empirical research methodologies. In terms of the case selection, Consignia, formerly known as The Post Office, proves to be an intriguing case of an organization in transition where both change management and communication strategy theories play major roles in bringing out successful change. Of the voluminous issues of changes within Consignia, the new brand and business status introduction has received much attention from both internal employees and external stakeholders but not been yet well researched. Basically, it has undergone some extensive changes on the purpose of image improvement, particularly in the international market. Owing to some constraints, the research project in fact tends to focus on how the senior managers generally perceive the internal communication in light of changes within Consignia and, thereafter, how the communication strategies are formulated so as to enhance the change management process.

In relation to that, the first research question aims to investigate some depth of understanding of how senior managers at different management levels perceive the internal communication process surrounding the change in Consignia. From this initial question, a fundamental ground of the critical inquiry tends to be addressed in the first place, thereby leading to a further quest asserted in the following question. The nature of the second question is to examine the process of strategic formulation of corporate communications in accordance with diverse phases of changes to Consignia.

The underlying reasons of changing the brand and the business status are driven by the notion of international business expansion and commercial freedom. Traditionally, Consignia is the sole monopolized postal service provider in the United Kingdom. It is operated and wholly owned by the Government. The original brands of Consignia, which comprise Royal Mail, Parcel Force Worldwide, and Post Office (Counters) constitute different business entities with independent financial regimes. They have since become the core businesses of Consignia and called ‘the consumer brands.’ Apart from those brands operated domestically, Consignia’s global ambition has been reflected through the increasing number of joint ventures and acquisitions with companies abroad. The aim is to position itself in the international market by means of strategic alliances and acquisitions.

Currently, over 200,000 employees are working for the organization of Consignia, including the consumer brands units. Of those, there are approximately 4,000 employees working in 10 business units under the name of Consignia *per se* (see Appendix 5). Since the consumer

brands remain unchanged, it is apparent that those who work for the business units under the Consignia name tend to be directly affected by the brand change.

By referring to the existing finding, it provides the author a better understanding of how the Consignia communication situations have come about. Ellis (1998) found that, according to the organization's bi-annual employee attitude feedback survey, almost one-half of both managers and non-managers are dissatisfied with the communications within Royal Mail, a consumer brand of Consignia. The most common reasons for this dissatisfaction are:

- Insufficient information (adequacy of communication)
- Information received too late (timeliness of communication)
- Inconsistent information (consistency of communication)
- Information unclear/confusing (context of communication)

Above is a partial research result reflecting a condition of communication within the only consumer brand unit. With this respect, it cannot be pragmatically generalized to the whole organization. However, some significant characteristics of communication can be drawn out from this finding. For example, consistency and timeliness of communication are of the essential concepts, which can be explicitly applied to the case of the Consignia brand and business status change. Supported by the argument of Wilbur (1999) and Lauer (1994), frequent and on-going communications attempt to alleviate ambiguity of change efforts, which lead to a positive impact on the change scheme.

Numerous factors have to be considered in formulating and implementing the communication strategies surrounding the change issues of Consignia. Such factors can be viewed as internal and external issues. They are, for instance, forces for change, resistance to change, communication strategies, commitment from employees and senior managers, and change interventions.

The structure of the paper incorporates six chapters addressing both foundational grounds of theories and practices. This chapter is particularly devoted to an introduction of the study rationale on the change issues. Chapter Two features a review of literature on the fundamental concepts of communication strategies and change management processes. The detail in selected research methodologies is presented in Chapter Three. For Chapter Four, the Consignia case background, together with significant findings from the fieldwork, reveals

the underpinning reasons of which the brand and business status changes are expedited. The key findings are derived from an analysis of the secondary data but also semi-structured and online interviews. Moreover, the obtained findings attempt to answer the author's questions regarding the purpose of the research. A conceptualized framework of the study is thereafter developed. Chapter Five includes in-depth discussions about the findings pertaining to the literature. Last but not least, Chapter Six comprises concluding remarks, implications and limitations, and further research.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review: Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, voluminous streams of literature on change management and communication strategy are reviewed. Though both issues have been extensively researched and empirically demonstrated in the organizational level, many extant studies have left an integrative pattern of those constructs unheeded, particularly on how communication strategies are formulated to enhance the change efforts. Not only are some theoretical aspects of communication and change processes presented, but certain case examples also are illustrated to mirror their practicability.

The outline of the literature review is divided into two main sections: change management theories and communication strategy theories. In each section, a foundational ground of theories aims to provide the comprehensive evolution of the constructs to be studied in this research.

2.1 Change Management Theories

2.1.1 Definition of Changes

Prior to delving into the complexity of change management, it is imperative to highlight the fundamental definition of changes, including organizational change, to seek for a common standpoint. Burnes (2000) depicts that change is a multi-level, cross-organization process that unveils an iterative and messy fashion over a period of time and comprises a series of interlocking projects. Berger (1994: p. 7) defines change management as “the continuous process of aligning an organization with its marketplace and doing it more responsively and effectively than competitors.” Thus, organizational change management is a continuous process of experiment and adaptation aimed at matching an organization’s capabilities to the needs and dictates of a volatile environment (Burnes, 2000). By the same token, Lichtenstein (2000) views organizational change as a transformative change through a complex adaptive system model of change, which consists of three stages: increased organizing, tension and a threshold, and newly emerging configuration.

Nonetheless, in the article, *Managing Rapid Change: From Theory to Practice*, written by McDonald (2000), theoretical and practical perspectives on organizational change are distinguished. He notes that some academics have applied Darwin's "survival of the fittest" theory to the organizational change theory (Vaill, 1989). Meaning that any organizations, which fail to make changes, are likely to be eliminated from the competition. In practice, several organizations have put an emphasis on measurable 'results driven change' because it serves as one of the most powerful approaches to change management. Such evaluation results primarily purports to spell out the level of corporate performance improvement. Scrutinized from those perspectives, both academics and practitioners have contributed to the notion of changes that aims to help the firm outperform competitors.

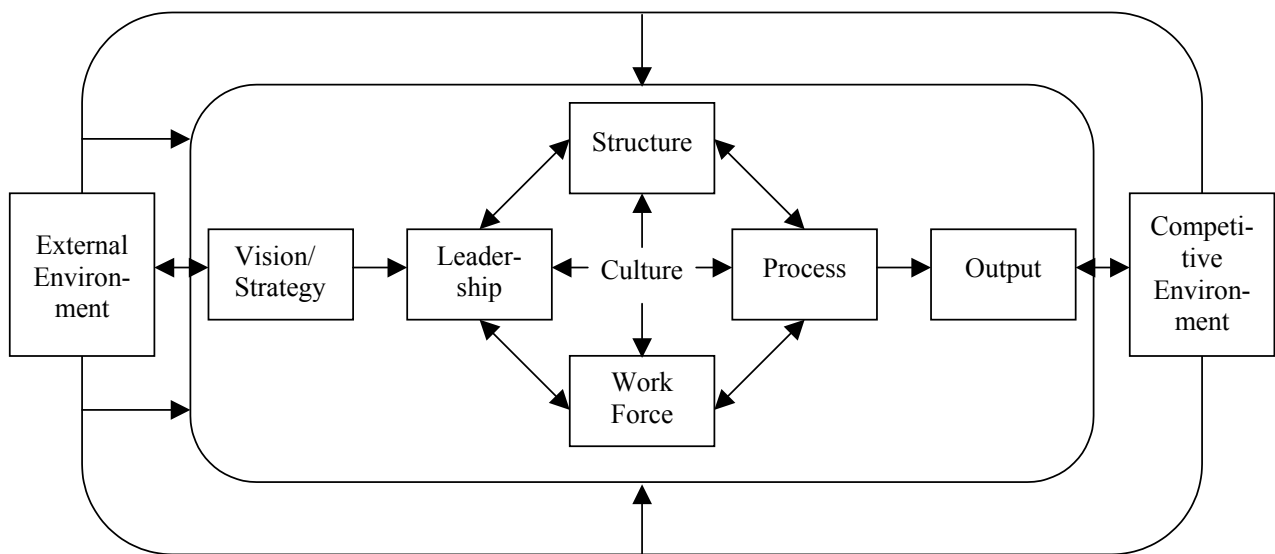
Burke and Litwin (1992) argue that, despite the complexity of change issues, the notion of transformational and transactional dynamics inherent in successful change efforts can be identified (see Appendix 1). *Transformational* factors deal with areas that require new employee behaviors as a consequence of external and internal environmental pressures, such as leadership, culture, and mission. On the contrary, *transactional* factors deal with psychological and organizational variables that predict and control the motivational and performance consequences of a work group's climate. These variables include management practices, structure, systems (policies and procedures), and task requirements.

2.1.2 The Significance of Change Management

The concept of change in organizations has captured both academics' and practitioners' attention for decades. Kennerfalk and Klefsjo (1995) suggest that the fundamental changes in organizations can be categorized into two main dimensions: changes in culture (Silvester et al., 1999; Brown, 1998) and changes in structure (Daft, 2001; Bloodgood and Morrow, 2000). As for the structural change in organization, Fenton and Pettigrew (2000) study about the evolution of the theoretical perspectives of organization design, ranging from bureaucratic organization (Weber, 1947) to network organization (Uzzi, 1997) during the past 50 years. In their work, empirical evidence on change management constructs is emphasized. On the other hand, Chandler (1994) comments that the importance of change management in 1990s can be better comprehended if it is viewed in the context of corporate expansion, contraction, and restructuring.

In a general perspective of a change management model, major organizational characteristics, underlying systems, and business strategies are rigorously investigated and essential to accommodating transformation (Laud, 1994). The Andersen Consulting¹'s Organizational Change Model in Figure 1 draws on a classic outcome of research and experience from the fields of management and organizational behavior, whereby corporate culture is placed at the heart of the change management process. It is theoretically derived from an input-process-output model.

Figure 1: Andersen Consulting's Organizational Change Model



Source: Adapted from Laud, R. L. (1994). "The Tortoise and the Hare: Cultural Change and Corporate Strategy." In *The Change Management Handbook: A Road Map to Corporate Transformation*. Edited by Berger, Sikora, and Berger. McGraw-Hill.

If strategic change is to be succeeded, the important changes should take place in the cultural beliefs and assumptions of the organization (Heracleous and Langham, 1996) leading to the cultivation of employee commitment (Unzicker et al., 2000). Ellis (1998) conducts research on a new role for the Post Office and reveals three underpinning dimensions for the strategic change: organizational culture, change management and technology-enabled change.

Oftentimes, change agents, or persons who trigger and mobilize the change schemes, raise an issue of how the change effort can be assessed (Reichheld, 1994). Practically, the magnitude of change is difficult to be measured due to unprecedented situations and organizational environments involved (Burnes, 2000; Brown 1998; Peters, 1998; Kanter et al., 1997; Brown

1995). In the existing literature, Burnes (2000) asserts that there are three current models addressing the characteristics of change magnitudes; the incremental model of change (Miller and Friesen, 1984), the punctuated equilibrium model of organizational transformation (Romanelli and Tushman, 1994), and the continuous transformation model of change (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997). In the work of Pettigrew and Fenton (2000), change initiatives such as layering, decentralizing, networking and information technology investment will not succeed if done piecemeal. To reap the benefits of organizational change, particularly galvanized by innovation, firms must think and act holistically and make changes on several fronts in careful alignment.

Furthermore, ample evidence shows that managers have a good reason to be anxious about organizational change (Stickland, 1998; Sastry, 1997; Stace and Dunphy, 1994). If managers and change agents utilize a well-orchestrated, integrated design that responds to needs for learning, realignment, negotiation, and grieving, they might find themselves in the fast lane toward success and improvement (Bolman and Deal, 1999). For example, John Sunderland of Cadbury Schweppes, successfully communicates his change message across a multinational corporation in various countries where working cultures and environments are enormously disparate (McCune, 1999).

The road to change is never paved with roses, no matter how good the intentions or far-reaching the support will be. As the successes and failures of companies have been enumerated, it is clear that any organization that needs to succeed in the 1990s and beyond must have a systematic and well-lubricated change management process in place. Given the frequency and potency of change, the system is no frill but a radical life-support network (Berger, 1994).

2.1.3 Forces for Change

An amalgam of industrial and organizational challenges has much contributed to a new pace of change with multidimensional facets. Essentially, the forces impacting change are powerful and pervasive (Sikora, 1994). It is imperative to conduct an organizational analysis of external conditions and internal forces that affect the need for change and the development of change strategies (Kanter et al., 1992). As such, the interrelationships among internal forces for change, external forces for change, and organizational characteristics can be cooperating initiators of a change process (Witherspoon and Wohlert 1996; Levy and Merry,

1986). External forces for change include market forces, legislation, tax structures, new technologies, and political reasons. Whereas internal forces for change are profitability, reorganization, conflicts between organizational components (departments), and changes in culture/social environment (Anonymous, 1999).

Harari (1999a) and McCune (1999) reiterate that various uncontrollable factors emerge to shake up the majority of the business organizations. Some of them are the explosion of technological advances, the crumbling of global barriers to entry, the swarm of new competitor, the antipathy of the most talented employees toward bureaucratic controls, and the insistence of customers on being treated as individuals, not as part of a mass market (Sikora, 1994).

In addition, Dervitsiotis (1998) embarks on the major forces for organizational change, which are attributed to the following characteristics:

- a sufficient dissatisfaction with the status quo as described by current performance levels and their trends;
- a strong attraction towards moving to a more desirable condition or improvement; and
- the appeal of a well-thought-out strategy for realizing the vision.

In the absence of any one of the three forces, there is no motivation to provoke management to act for bringing about organizational change.

With the aforementioned factors to change, their ramifications tend to be of constructive benefits to the organization at the expense of the hurdle of employees' response to change in the first place (Lewis, 2000a; Markus, 1983). Though some studies reveal that, due to a strong desire to remain the status quo, employees attempt not to change from what they are currently doing, the hindsight of change resistance is still under-researched.

2.1.4 Resistance to Change

Of the many studies on change efforts, the issue of change resistance has always been included as part of notorious impediments throughout the change stages. In fact, it is argued that employees do not resist all change, only change that they do not understand or that they see as psychologically or economically threatening (Hayes, 1996; Baird et al., 1990). As such, they usually respond to contradictory messages with displeasure, frustration, confusion

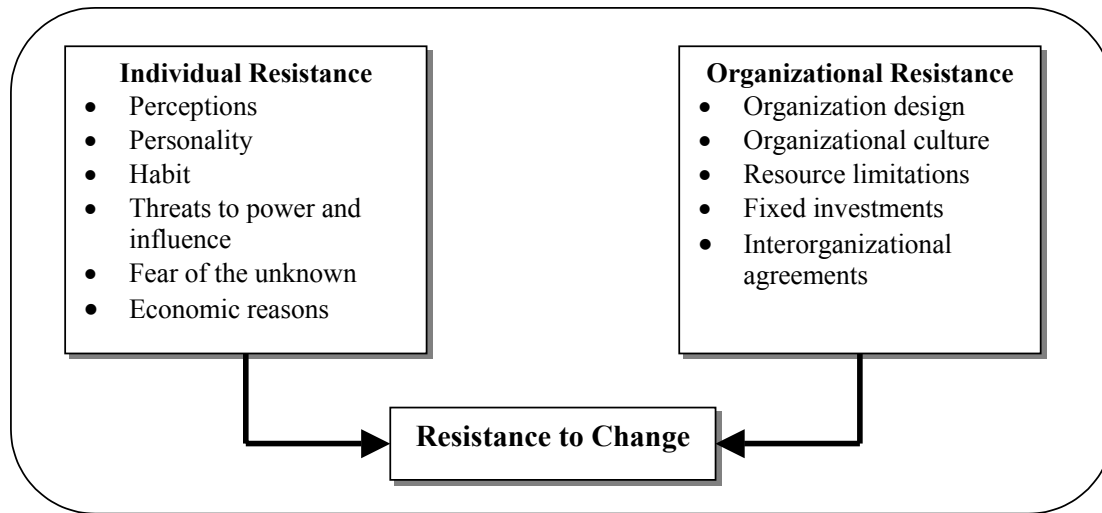
and anxiety (Stohl, 1995). Connected to that, the change resistance, which may occur during change efforts – reduction of productivity, work slowdowns, hostility and pessimism regarding goal attainment, can be attributed to several political, cultural, normative, and individual causes (Miller et al., 1994). As for understanding the notion of resistance to change, Hayes (1996) asserts that one needs to identify the factors underpinning such resistance. They are self-interest, fear, group pressures, and inertia.

In the review of empirical research, Piderit (2000) posits that there are three different emphases in conceptualizations of resistance: as a cognitive state, as an emotional state, and as a behavior. These constructs might be well understood through the sources of change resistance, which are individual and organization levels (Hellriegel et al., 2001; Dent et al., 1998; Strebel, 1996; Brown, 1995) as shown in Figure 2.

In the work of Stoltz (1997), three categories of peoples' reactions to change are: quitters who disagree with change; campers, who simply sit things out, and climbers, who actively seek change. From his study, it shows that the majority of the employees fall into the 'campers' category, whereby the desire to remain status quo is initially prevalent.

Interestingly, in the article, *Why Do Leaders Avoid Change?*, written by Harari (1999a), some managers try to keep themselves away from any kinds of change. Not only does their fear of failure become the primary issue, but also loads of work, additional to what they currently have, appear to be an unpleasant consequence.

As for optimizing the change resistance, managers are required to observe employee readiness for change. Normally, their readiness emerges when the employees perceive little personal risk from change and feel highly dissatisfied with the status quo (Hellriegel et al., 2001). With this respect, resistance to change seems to be submerged. In addition, successful organizational adaptation is increasingly reliant on generating employee support and enthusiasm for proposed changes, rather than merely overcoming resistance (Pederit, 2000).

Figure 2: Sources of Change Resistance

Source: Hellriegel, D., Slocum, J. W. & Woodman, R. W. (2001). "Organizational Behavior." Ninth Edition. South-Western College Publishing.

Hayes (1996) proposes that resistance to change can be optimized by utilizing the following strategies:

- Participation and involvement (Daft, 1995; Smith, 1995);
- Facilitation and support (Daft, 1995; Kirkpatrick, 1985);
- Negotiation (Daft, 1995; Ivancevich et al., 1994);
- Coercion (Humphreys, 1996).

Because some employees will already have formed an ambivalence or an attitude toward the current point, they may be able to infer their attitude toward the proposed shift for change in accordance with the extant ambivalence. In other words, most employees' responses to a proposed change will involve some ambivalence. Thus, Piderit (2000) comments that their resistance to change does not always spell out the antagonistic attitude against change, rather than expressing their responses along emotional, cognitive, and intentional dimensions. For this reason, the phrase "resistance to change" should be retired and a new wave of research on "employees' responses to change" is to be emphasized. Hellriegel et al. (2000) supports the idea of replacing the above phrase with "pressure to change."

2.1.5 Change Formulation and Implementation

After examining the thrust for change and potential resistance to change within the organization, the formulation of change strategies serves as a subsequent pivotal step to be

undertaken. Fundamentally, there are diverse ways to formulate change strategies, depending upon the extent of potential change, the time and the information available and the power distribution in the organization (Heracleous and Langham, 1996). According to the literature, a change management team with high credibility and intellectual ability should be identified in the first place (Heracleous and Langham, 1996). Such a team normally comprises change agents, or top managers, and other key persons to trigger and mobilize the change engines throughout the organization. Not only do the top managers play this critical role, but middle-level managers can also bring about profound change since they are the ones who directly involve in day-to-day business operations (Harari, 1999b).

Although a debate between general managers and change specialists in taking charge of the change drives is substantial, there is usually one individual, regardless of those titles, who takes charge of ensuring the change effort takes place and is well carried out (Burnes, 2000). With this respect, Hartley et al. (1997) and Beer (1994) argue that there has been relatively little empirical research on the clear-cut roles played by change agents. However, Buchanan and Boddy (1992), cited by Burnes (2000: p. 298), analyze the skills and competency essential to be a successful change agent by depicting that “a picture of the change agent is a highly skilled and well-trained political operator who has not only an in-depth knowledge of change processes and tools, but also the personal qualities and experiences to use them both in the open, and especially, behind the scenes.”

In order to formulate change strategies, a series of change stages needs to be closely scrutinized. Traditionally, Lewin (1947), cited by Burnes (2000), provides a classic framework of change levels: unfreezing, moving and refreezing. Each phase is consistent with certain social behaviors and a particular cognitive state (Brown, 1995). A better understanding of change has been supported by empirical evidence from various authors, namely Weiss (2001), Bloodgood and Morrow (2000), Bolman and Deal (1999), and Day (1999). In the recent work of Armenakis and Bedeian (1999), employee behaviors in the change process have been extensively studied. Furthermore, Isabella (1990) and Jaffe et al. (1994) propose a relatively similar model of change stages as to the employee’s reaction as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Stages of Change

Isabella (1990)	Jaffe et al. (1994)
<i>Anticipation</i> Assemble the rumors about changes	<i>Denial</i> Refuse to accept changes as solutions
<i>Confirmation</i> Confirm the rumors with reality	<i>Resistance</i> Postpone participation & implementation
<i>Culmination</i> Compare pre-and post-change events	<i>Exploration</i> Test new behaviors with promised results
<i>Aftermath</i> Evaluate the consequence of changes	<i>Commitment</i> Accept the proposed changes

Source: Adapted from Armenakis, A. A. & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). "Organizational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990s." *Journal of Management*, vol. 25, iss. 3, p. 300.

Throughout the aforementioned stages of changes, the change messages have to be conveyed to employees in a strategic manner. As such, the accuracy and clarity of the contents are regarded as significant components of the strategic change messages. In relation to that, Armenakis et al. (1999) propose two models of change management. The first model considers creating a message for change readiness so that resistance is minimized. The other model is about facilitating the adoption and institutionalization of desired change. Both models are associated with the notion of change messages as depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Five Components of the Change Messages

Components	Descriptive Meaning
1. Discrepancy	We need to change
2. Self-efficacy	We have the capability to successfully change
3. Personal valence	It is in our best interest to change
4. Principal support	Those affected are behind the change
5. Appropriateness	The desired change is right for the focal organization

Source: Adapted from Armenakis, A. A. & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). "Organizational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990s." *Journal of Management*, vol. 25, iss. 3, p. 300.

No matter how well change strategies are formulated, the implementation of change still accounts for success. The substantial volume of evidence indicating change implementation failure has confirmed an underlying reason why people are anxious about organizational change (Stickland, 1998; Cummings and Worley, 1997). Perhaps, this seems to be consistent with the work of management consultant Rick Maurer, President of Maurer & Associates. He addresses that only about one-third of major reengineering efforts and 29 percent of mergers and acquisitions are successes in the United States (McCune, 1999).

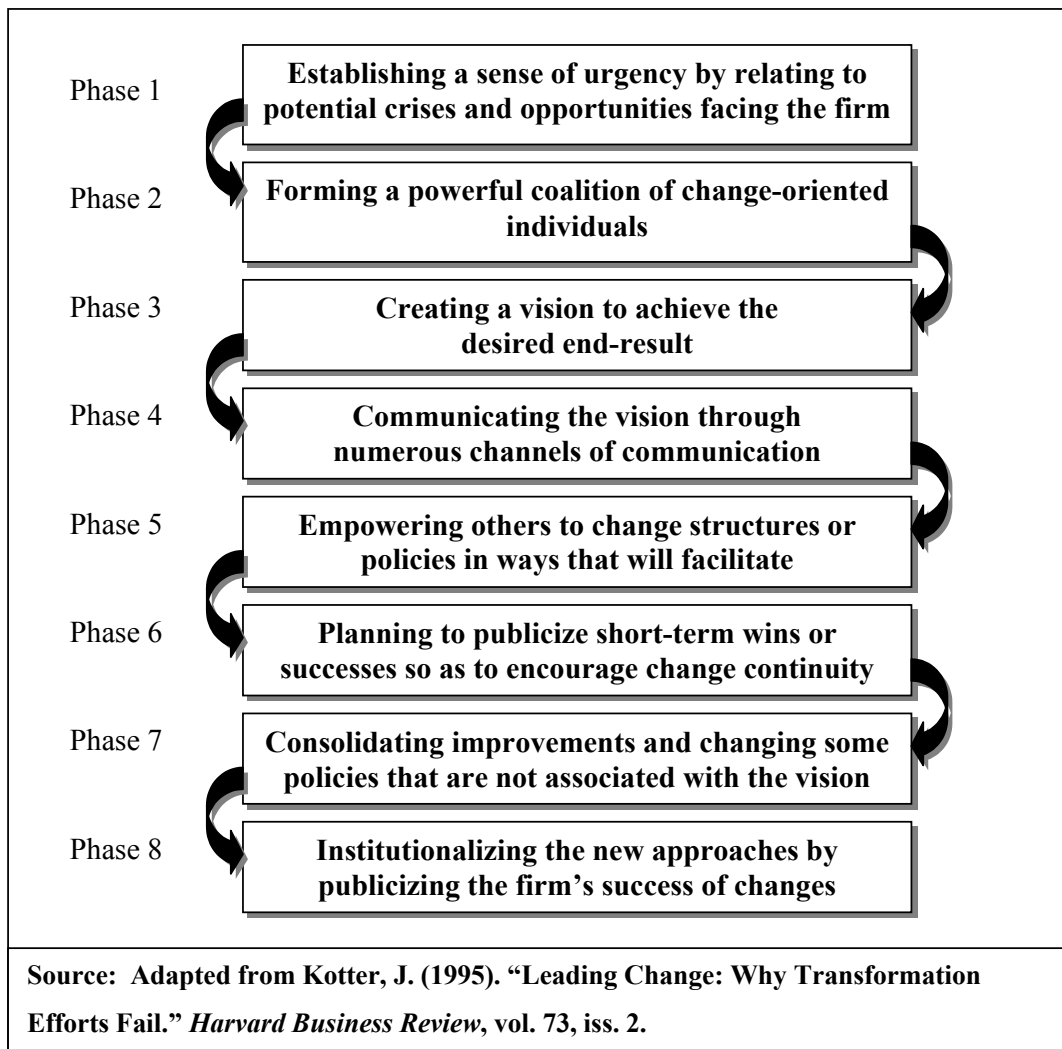
In another aspect, Lewis (2000a) denotes that some change implementers struggle with how to publicize what they perceived as positive results of their programs. The implementers learn over time that the success of the program depends, in large part, on the perception among employees that it is accomplished.

Spencer and Mountford (1997) point out that the gain from a well-managed change effort brings out growth and prosperity to organizations and stakeholders. Among the outcomes that can be expected are:

1. Employees deliver or exceed target levels of performance on time and on budget.
2. Stakeholders remain loyal and new stakeholders are attracted.
3. Risks associated with change are eliminated or minimized.
4. The organization is left better able to change rapidly and effectively in the future.

As is evident from many of the studies reviewed, Armenakis and Bedeian (1999) posit that the implementation models of Galpin (1996) and Judson (1991) are similar in concept and parallel to the model of Kotter (1995), which is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Eight Steps of Change Implementation for Change Agents



To recapitulate the importance of change formulation and implementation, words and actions are indispensable to create images and meanings that will focus attention on the need for change, to establish an environment receptive to change efforts, to communicate change messages and to encourage participation in the strategies designed to achieve it (Witherspoon and Wohlert, 1996). The formulation and implementation of change strategies could be perceived as a united entity and an ongoing process. Framing the change targets with comprehensive schemes or meanings of change is of radical challenges to overcoming the obstacle of organizational changes (Gilsdorf, 1998). On the ground of these facts, a communication tends to be considered as a bloodstream that helps transmit the change messages throughout both change formulation and implementation stages.

2.2 Communication Strategy Theories

2.2.1 *The Fundamental of Communications*

Undoubtedly, communication proves to be of the most significant tools in social life and business management. It also plays a pivotal role in collaborating all human activities that link people together and create relationships (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). Moreover, in the organizational level, Barker and Camarata (1998) assert that communication is embedded in every aspect of becoming an effective organization and of continuing to be a learning organization. As such, organizational communication is essentially viewed as the collective interactive process of generating and interpreting messages between people within the organization through either directional (one-way) or bidirectional (two-way) manner of communication (Stohl, 1995). For instance, the nature of hierarchical relationships with communication patterns is examined in the research of Stohl (1995). It is found that a high bureaucratic organization tends to shape its communication practices in a vertical formal way, such as a top-down chain of command through written forms of communication, while personal interactions may not be well exposed.

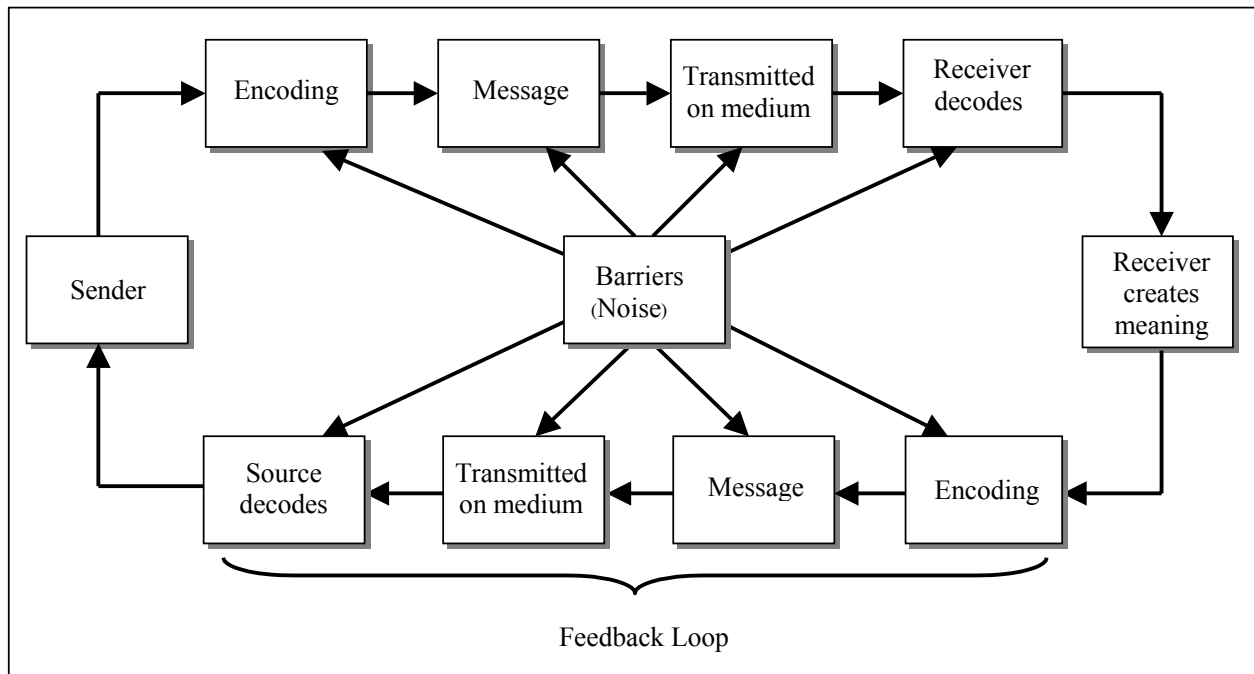
Originally, Kreitner and Kinicki (1995: p. 368), quoted from Bowditch and Buono (1994), define communication as “the exchange of information between a sender and a receiver, and the inference (perception) of meaning between the individuals involved” so as to reach a common understanding (George and Jones, 1998).

Recently, a description of communication theories has expanded to cover more of psychological and cognitive aspects. In the literature of Weiss (2001) and Kreitner and Kinicki (1995), a perceptual model of communication is basically elaborated from a traditional communication process model (Schermerhorn, 1998; Baguley, 1994). In the perceptual model, the cognitive interpretation of messages is focused by which the miscommunication becomes better understood (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995).

According to the work of Kreitner and Kinicki (1995) in Figure 6, a perceptual model of communication begins with a sender cognitively encodes an idea or thought by using verbal and non-verbal cues, including attitudes. The output of encoding is a message transmitted on medium selected by the sender. Then the receiver cognitively decodes that idea or thought based on his/her understanding and perception toward the message. A message for feedback

is created and transmitted on medium of the new sender (receiver)'s choice. The process of communication tends to be completed after the original sender interprets the message received and acts upon. Barriers of communication, such as loud noise, poor handwriting, and inaccurate statistics in a memo, can distort the quality of the perceptual communication process at any stages.

Figure 6: A Perceptual Model of Communication



Source: Kreitner, R. & Kinicki, A. (1995). "Organizational Behavior." Third Edition. Irwin.

2.2.2 The Elements of Effective Communication Strategy

Effective communication is important for both managerial and organizational success (Dawson, 1996; Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995). It can be witnessed from the viewpoint where employees collaborate, interact, and engage with others in ways which help them understand the importance and meaning of the engagement and achieve certain goals (Barker and Camarata, 1998; Pace and Faules, 1989). According to the literature, the notion of effectiveness communication is not merely confined with an interactive collaboration between employees, but it also has an impact on organizational issues. For instance, Clampitt and Downs (1993) demonstrate a close link between effective communication and productivity. Whereas Pettit et al. (1997) examine how effective organizational communication relates to job performance and job satisfaction. Moreover, an empirical study

shows that employees' commitment to the organization correlates positively with organizational clarity and is maintained even when changes are occurring in the organization (Guzley, 1992). As such, the communication strategy can be perceived as a mechanism to clarify the facts to various stakeholders of what is going to change, why, and what benefits they can expect to derive from the change (See Appendix 2).

Partially drawn from the marketing communication literature, the underlying philosophy of effective communication strategy is held true and proves to be literally practical to other contexts. With this regard, Mohr and Nevin (1990) define a communication strategy as the use of a combination of communication facets, which include frequency and formality of communication (Maltz and Kohli, 1996; Mohr and Nevin, 1990), and content of communication (Mohr and Nevin, 1990; Jablin et al., 1987), and channel of communication (Carlson and Davis, 1998). For example, one communication strategy might be frequent communication through informal modes, with indirect content. In the following section, each facet of communication strategy will be elaborated as part of the key constructs for this study.

2.2.2.1 *Frequency of Communication*

Normally, dissemination frequency is measured as the number of dissemination events or the amount of communication between a sender and a receiver during a given period of time or duration of contact (Maltz, 2000; Maltz and Kohli, 1996; Mohr and Nevin, 1990). In assessing the frequency of communication, one should examine the amount of contact necessary to achieve a particular activity, not simply including the amount of contact *per se*. Because most empirical research has used frequency as the indicator of the amount of communication, the author tends to adopt the frequency of communication rather than the duration of contact.

2.2.2.2 *Formality of Communication*

Maltz and Kohli (1996: p. 48) comment that the dissemination formality has not been empirically explored in the communication literature, though a number of researchers have noted that organizational “intelligence may be disseminated through formal or informal channels.” Moreover, some scholars might not explicitly define what is meant by formal and informal channels. Johnson et al. (1994) address the issue of distinctive clarification between them. Formal communication basically refers to communication that flows through written channels, though “formal” meetings or training sessions also may be considered a formal

mode. Whereas informal communication refers to communication that occurs in a non-structured manner, such as normal conversation and social discussion.

The aforementioned definitions have been reiterated in the findings of the research work conducted by Johnson et al. (1994). Such a project is studied in a large midwestern state governmental agency to compare formal and informal organizational communication structures, specially focusing on salience, channel factors, and channel usage.

2.2.2.3 *Content of Communication*

The content of communication refers to “the message that is transmitted – or what is said” (Mohr and Nevin, 1990: p. 39). It can be either verbal or non-verbal, intentional or unintentional. Shelby (1998) points out that the content in the message is considered the central part of the communication. Furthermore, the complexity of the language appeared in the message can determine the success or failure of the communication effort (Anonymous, 2000). As such, simple words and clear structures of the context can essentially overcome the complex issues.

In relation to that, Mohr and Nevin (1990) and Frazier and Summers (1984) attempt to distinguish between direct and indirect influence strategies embedded in the exchanged information. Direct communication strategies are designed to change behaviors of the target by implying or requesting the specific action that the source wants the target to take. For instance, recommendations, requests and appeals to legal obligations fall into this type of influence strategy. Whereas indirect communication strategies are designed to change the target’s beliefs and attitudes about the desirability of the intended behavior; no specific action is requested directly. An example of indirect communication content is information exchange, whereby the source uses discussions on general business issues and operates procedures to alter the target’s attitude about desirable behaviors.

Sengupta et al. (2000) address that the communication quality, which refers to the content of the communication received and understood by the other party in the relationship, marks a desirable outcome of communication. It also associates with the context of developing and maintaining personal relationships. However, Shelby (1998) comments that “appropriate choices of channel communication” are those most likely to result in communication

effectiveness and efficiency – for both message senders and receivers; they are those that provide perceived quality to communication processes.

2.2.2.4 Channel of Communication

Channels of communication are regarded as the vessels of the message delivery (Anonymous, 2000). According to the literature, they have been broadly discussed in the notion of the flow of information (Johnson et al., 1994) and information richness (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995). Editorial tone and communication potentials are of important characteristics determining the flow of information (Johnson et al., 1994). Basically, editorial tone mirrors an individual's perception of the credibility and trustworthiness of the source, which has an impact on the upward flow of information in the organizations (Glaser, 1984). Whereas communication potential refers to "an individual's perception of the manner in which information is presented." (Johnson et al., 1994: p. 114) This is relating to issues of styles and comprehension of the documents, such as newsletters.

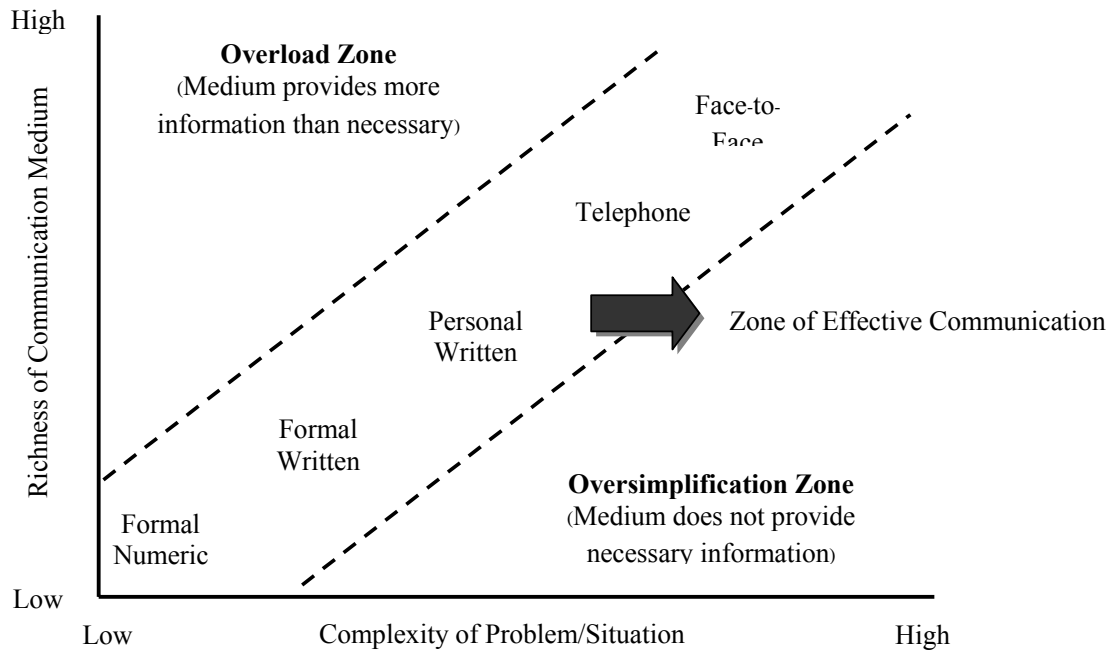
Information richness is the amount of information carried out between senders to receivers to reach a common understanding (Carlson and Davis, 1998). Media that are high in information richness are capable of transmitting more information and are more likely to generate a common understanding than are media that are low in richness (George and Jones, 1998). For example, if a wink provides substantial new understanding, it would be considered rich (Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995; Daft, 1984). Thus, selecting the proper medium significantly impacts the receiver's perception and acceptance of the message (Weiss, 2001). Kreitner and Kinicki (1995) propose the contingency model for selecting media, which is graphically depicted in Figure 7, can help the sender to balance between the choice of communication medium and the complexity of situations. The model also illustrates other communication problems where the messages transmitted through an inappropriate medium of communication may result in information overload or information inadequacy (Shelby, 1998). Notably, effective communication occurs when the richness of the medium is properly matched with the intricateness of the problem or situation.

As for the above constructs, some empirical evidence on communication strategies, especially associated with the issue of change, are discussed. In the work of Lewis (1999), it is suggested that general informational meetings and small informal discussions are the most common channels for disseminating information regarding change; line supervisors are rarely

used. In the extant literature, line supervisors play a significant role in affecting the attitudes of employees toward change initiatives (Larkin and Larkin, 1994; Baronas and Louis, 1988). However, some key components of implementation efforts, such as disseminating information, reinforcing goal and vision information, gaining and giving feedback, and maintaining high levels of commitment to the programs might not be well carried out by line supervisors.

Moreover, Lewis (2000a) notes that until the importance of mission statements, vision statements, goal statements, plans for implementation, and channels used to disseminate them are understood, it will be difficult to assess the usefulness of formal communication about planned change programs. Practitioners will continue to be in need of advice about what to communicate, when, to whom and through what channels. Sufficient evidence to date can suggest that receivers of formal communication in change formulate their own ideas about what a change means and what its purposes might be. And it is at the manager’s discretion to choose an appropriate channel of communication to convey a message for its best effectiveness (Anonymous, 2000).

Figure 7: A Contingency Model for Selecting Communication Media



Source: Kreitner, R. & Kinicki, A. (1995). “Organizational Behavior.” Third Edition. Irwin.

2.2.3 Issues of Communication for Change

Organizational scholars have long acknowledged the importance of communication processes in explanations of organizational change processes (Lewis and Seibold, 1996; Rogers, 1995; Fairhurst and Wendt, 1993). Nonetheless, Lewis (2000a) argues that the systematic research about the effectiveness of communication strategies about change is scant. Carmichael (1996) supports Lewis's argument by depicting that academics and practitioners have tried to search for a complete, well-grounded definition of communication for change, but their efforts primarily have focused on the invention, design, adoption, and responses to planned organizational change, as well as outcomes of change efforts. In addition, central communication processes involved in the implementation of planned changes within organizations have received far less attention by communication scholars (Lewis, 2000a).

2.2.3.1 Impediments of Communication for Change

Communication problems are commonplace when changes are not clearly identified (Lewis, 2000b). Not only do they cause a drain on profitability, but also the effectiveness of management declines (Gilsdorf, 1998). In the work of Dawson (1996: p. 192), many underlying reasons why communication often falls short of the ideals, which are "accuracy, reliability, validity, adequacy, and effectiveness," are addressed with some general issues within the relationship between information and communication in organizations.²

According to Lewis (2000b)'s research findings, the most frequently noted categories of problem encountered by the company in transition are "communicating vision" and "negative attitudes." If an organization's management does not consider which communication behaviors it wishes to foster for its success, the signals it sends to employees may be inconsistent or counterproductive. Thus, managers should consider conveying clear communication-behavior expectations as a fundamental element of strategy. In doing so, firms might pursue communication audits which involve ethnographic analysis, including observation and interviewing, to learn exactly what organizational policies are operating (Gilsdorf, 1998). Moreover, Gilsdorf moves on to argue that analysis of organizational culture should be conducted in order to help determine the communication strategy used to solve the problem.

2.2.3.2 Formulation and Implementation of Communication for Change

At the outset of the business competition for the 21st century, there is a trend of increasingly rapid change in organizations. Viable communication counts for an increase in not only individual receptiveness but also organizational change preparedness (Sinetar, 1988). It is axiomatic that good communication has become an essential component in successful change (McGill, 1996). Because any change schemes require ample communication to reduce confusion and to realign structural patterns to support the new direction (Bolman and Deal, 1999), both formulation and implementation plans of communication in change plays a crucial role in helping navigate change to the planned direction (Axley, 2000).

The formulation of communication change plans seems to be relatively scarce in academic research journals. Since there is no clear distinction between the formulation and implementation planning in principle, the formulation part is included into the notion of the implementation plan of communication change. Tornatzky and Johnson (1982), quoted by Lewis (2000a: p. 193), define implementation as “the translation of any tool or technique, process, or method of doing, from knowledge to practice. It encompasses that range of activities which take place between “adoption” of a tool or technique (defined as a decision to use the technology) and its stable incorporation into on-going organizational practice.”

The importance of communication for change is not only informing, motivating and coordinating but also managing employee expectations (Heracleous and Langham, 1996). Covin and Kilmann (1990) suggest that it is critical to communicating information (e.g., mission statements and goal achievement status) during change. They find that “failure to share information or to inform people adequately of what changes are necessary and why they are necessary viewed as having a highly negative impact.” (p. 239) Feedback gathering from employees, which is pertinent to implementation issues, serves a significant evaluative function for organizational leaders. Additionally, it may be radical for managers to provide channels and opportunities for employees to gather feedback about their own participation in change programs (Lewis, 2000a). In relation to that, face-to-face communication in seeking employees’ views and concerns is highly recommended (Heracleous and Langham, 1996). By the same token, Sinetar (1988) suggests the informal communication program, which refers to a mechanism to help various corporate stakeholders become comfortable with change and with the organization’s long-term goals, to be extensively conducted so as to create mutual understandings among change agents and employees.

In conclusion, there is no magic formula for successful change (Wilbur, 1999). The consistent development of the change process schemes has reflected the degree to which the dynamism of forces for change becomes provisional to organizational success. The literature review on change management theories and communication strategy theories aims to provide a fundamental ground essential to understand their evolution of change. Nonetheless, oftentimes employees view any change as a wheel of adverse revolution, not a progressive evolution (McCune, 1999). Thus, a series of comprehensive communication plans for change serves as one of the most important tools enabling adaptiveness in people and organizations (Axley, 2000). An ultimate goal of communication in change is to convey meaningful change messages in a strategic manner across the organization to achieve employees' corporate acculturation and employees' commitment (Unzicker et al., 2000).

In principle, various steps of change management pursuit are literally agreed upon to shaping a general approach of the change process. First, an analytical diagnosis of internal and external organizational forces attempts to examine the need for change. Such a diagnosis can be triggered and/or carried out by top managers or middle-level managers. Also, readiness for change and potential resistance to change are to be closely investigated in both individual and organizational levels to estimate the possibility of change success. Next, as for change formulation and implementation, a team of change agents with credibility and intellectual ability will be identified. Those change agents are responsible for coordinating with top managers to gain strategic supports and to help lay out the formulation and implementation plans of change, including communication issues. Both plans are correlated in terms of principal concepts and factors to be considered. In practice, it is difficult to demarcate between the two. However, communications serve as vehicles to convey messages about the change effort across the organization (Wilbur, 1999). The informal communication forum proves to be an effective channel to deliver change messages to employees successfully (Sinetar, 1988). Lastly, the evaluative feedback that marks on a change progress needs to be constantly publicized so as to create a positive image about changes and, simultaneously, to obtain their consistent support for future change schemes.

Having examined the literature, the author has built up a theoretical ground of the essential constructs for research. As such, in order to yield the reliable findings, the research methodology needs to be discussed in detail.

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

3.1 Qualitative Research Methodology

In the previous chapter, a series of the theoretical frameworks in communication strategies and change management processes has been discussed extensively in the literature, and their optimal integration is considered critical to achieving successful change. Given that there is a scant literature on the formulation of communication strategies in conjunction with change management processes, this study hence tends to be exploratory. Not sufficient is known about the conceptual framework of communication strategy formulation and change processes to be able to decide, prior to investigation, which theory, if any, best suits to the situation. This thesis aims to utilize the inductive approach (Cooper and Schindler, 1998; Hamel et al., 1993) to generate a theoretical framework in reflection of the contemporary phenomenon.

According to the nature of the data to be investigated, the descriptive interpretation of the context is mostly involved in the study. Essentially, the quality of the characteristics, such as perception and commitment, are suitable to be analyzed, more or less, in words rather than in mathematical equations. In addition, these features cannot be easily quantified in number due to its complexity and rich context, though quantitative researchers have normally treated uniqueness of cases as error outside the system of explained science (Cooper and Schindler, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1998).

Prior to determining a particular research methodology to be employed, the nature of the research questions should be primarily discussed as shown below.

Q1: How do the senior managers involved in internal communications view the Consignia change?

Q2: How do the senior managers in a communication team formulate the communication strategies in the context of change management to bring out the successful change?

The research question (Q1) basically aims to investigate some depth of understanding of how the executives at different management levels perceive the internal communication process surrounding the change in Consignia. From this initial question, a fundamental ground of the critical inquiry tends to be addressed in the first place, thereby leading to a further quest asserted in the following question. The nature of the second question (Q2) is to examine the process of strategic formulation of corporate communications in accordance with diverse phases of changes to Consignia.

3.2 Case Study Approach

Since the in-depth issue of communication strategies and change processes is under-researched, an exploratory research design is appropriate. According to the aforementioned research questions, “how” questions are asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 1994). That leads to the use of a case study as the research strategy to unfold this qualitative subject which receives relatively less explicit attention in the extant literature.

The single case study is a proper design for this research project under two rationales (Yin, 1994). First of all, the case is relatively unique in context and contributing to theory-building through a number of unit cases within the firm. The single case is analogous to a single experiment in which various units of analysis may come into play. The research focus has been given to inducing a framework of how key persons of the management and of the internal communication team perceive and formulate communication strategies in light of change management processes. Provided that different executives from different work positions involved serve as major players of the case. Secondly, further insights of the phenomenon to be explored are revelatory. Evidence from the literature review shows that managers realize what to change but, unfortunately, have no appropriate means to make a change happen at the right time. The greater insights of the study are therefore needed.

3.3 Case Selection

At the outset of the research plan, a few firms were approached. Upon the author's scrutiny, case selection is made under the general typology as follows:

- (a) the type of business (either manufacturing or service);
- (b) the size of the firm determined by a number of employees (embarking on significant changes);
- (c) the degree of changes indicated by external and internal forces for change (Anonymous, 1999).

As a result, Consignia was selected as a unique case of a large company in transition, and there are good opportunities to explore different perspectives of organizational changes. Prior to March 26, 2001, Consignia was the sole monopolized postal service provider under Government regulations. Although it has extensively diversified its business across industries, such as retail banking networks, for greater corporate growth and shareholder's satisfaction, its rigid bureaucracy seems to drift it off from the notion of competitiveness. Expectedly, the ramification of business expansion is to be facilitated by several change management schemes to remain itself in a competitive position. The case study method allows the author to gain some insights for developing a thorough understanding of the communication strategy formulation in the context of the organizational change process within a company (Yin, 1994; Pettigrew, 1990; Bryman, 1989).

Of the aforementioned criteria, the author's brief research agenda was sent to prospective key persons to request an interview in which the appointment was thereafter arranged accordingly. Personal connections were employed to secure potential accessibility to the company and necessary information.

3.4 Data Collection

Referred to the case study method, the dynamism of changes reflects a real-life phenomenon, which is rich of contexts, with contemporary events. As such, a longitudinal study to observe the executives' behaviors and reactions toward change strategy formulation and implementation over time should have been initially included in the data collection plan

(Cooper & Schindler, 1998). However, because of time constraints, an observation seemed not to be technically plausible.

Regarding the data collection methods, multiple sources and modes of data or ‘triangulation’ are utilized to ensure internal validity as well as to minimize the biases, which may steal into the process of drawing conclusions (Yin, 1994). A general prescription has been to pick triangulation sources that have different biases, different strengths, so they can complement one another. In the first place, the author collected and studied pertinent archival data, such as company profiles, annual reports, internal publications, press releases and employee feedback reports, so as to better understand the transition of change and how extant communication strategies go about. Also, a review of these materials facilitated the creation of interview questions.

In addition, the semi-structured interviews served as an essential source of case study evidence to gain insights in support of the archival information. This provided the interviewees greater freedom in expressing the issues that they felt were most relevant from their own points of view, potentially unraveling issues not envisaged at the interview design stage. In this study, twelve interviews were conducted. Of those, one top executive, three senior managers, one internal senior consultant and one services assistant, who were involved in the communication strategy of the Consignia brand and business status changes, were interviewed on a face-to-face basis. And the other six interviewees, who were mostly internal business consultants, contributed a wide range of information through on-line interviews.

The semi-structured interview schedule used for face-to-face interviews included twelve to nineteen questions, and each interview took approximately thirty-five to forty-five minutes. Due to the interviewee’s frantic schedules, the on-line interview, or the electronic mail interview, was regarded as an only appropriate option to obtain information. Not only could a fewer number of open interview questions be inquired, but also the semi-structured format became more of structured or non-interactive. Written responses received were very useful and, to some certain extent, straight to the point. The interviewees were made aware that the interviews would be a part of a larger effort to assess the success and failure of communication strategies facing the change schemes. Each interviewee was also promised confidentiality.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed inductively. Once the data were collected, two types of analysis were performed. First, the interviews were taped-recorded and transcribed as case descriptions to which the findings were referred and, subsequently, examined where appropriate. Second, the transcript data was categorized in accordance with a classified theme based on a common ground in typology. The extensive use of transcript, together with the qualitative research analysis, was undertaken to draw out important themes from each interview. Below are the themes essentially grouped up to defining potential constructs for further analysis.

1. Forces for change
2. Leadership attributes
3. Top management and employee commitment
4. Resistance to change
5. Communication strategies
6. Evaluation of communication strategies
7. Continuous change interventions
8. Organizational culture and change commitment
9. Successful business
10. Sustainable change management

Additionally, the author did cross-check such constructs with the colleague so as to strengthen the validity of the constructs. In doing so, a cross-tabulation of the findings with the literature was pursued to ensure a full reflection of the research framework.

CHAPTER IV

Case Findings: Consignia plc

We all have a role in securing our success future of the business, whether you work for Royal Mail, Parcel Force Worldwide, and Post Office. We are all part of Consignia. So, let's work together to make Consignia a first-class company and a major player at the global stage.

- John Roberts, CEO of Consignia

4.1 Brief Case Backgrounds

A long historical record of Consignia, formerly known as The Post Office, has proven its substantial success in the postal service industry (see Appendix 3). Back in 1969, when the name of General Post Office (GPO) was changed to be The Post Office (TPO), as the organization became a nationalized industry, the evolution of the brand and business status began to change since then. Traditionally, it is the sole monopolized postal service provider in the United Kingdom. It is wholly owned and operated by the Government. The Department of Trade and Industry acts as a regulator to monitor and approve a wide range of the business activities of The Post Office, such as stamp pricing strategies, joint ventures, and acquisitions. Moreover, a large amount of the annual profits is required by legislation to be paid as a dividend to the Government. As such, The Post Office's business expansion and commercial freedom seem to be stifled with not only strict regulation but also rigid bureaucracy, leading to the inability to build up a vigorous competitive advantage.

The original brands of The Post Office, which comprise Royal Mail, Parcel Force Worldwide, and Post Office (Counters) constitute different business entities with independent financial management. They have since become the core businesses of The Post Office and called 'the consumer brands.' Apart from those brands, the increasing number of joint ventures and acquisitions with companies abroad has emphasized The Post Office's global ambition to position itself in the international market. And that the new overseas ventures are clustered as a corporate branch of the business structure (See Appendix 4). In practice, The Post Office aims to maintain the local brand of the acquired firm in a particular country so as to secure accessibility to local markets. According to this strategic move, The Post Office provides state-of-the-art postal technology and sophisticated logistics to improve the existing postal network, thereby achieving a reputation for excellent service.

Figure 8: Consumer Brands Services

Consumer Brands	Examples of Services Offered
Royal Mail	Postal service, mail communication, direct marketing, small business, and business mailing abroad
Parcel Force Worldwide	Package express, parcel delivery, logistics and contract distribution
Post Office (Counters)	Nationwide post office network, cash handling and distribution, and network banking

Sources: www.royalmail.co.uk (access date: May 7, 2001)
 www.parcelforce.co.uk (access date: May 7, 2001)
 www.postoffice.co.uk (access date: May 7, 2001)

Owing to the steady growth of the UK postal service industry, The Post Office initially attempts to break down its diversified businesses into several product group divisions in accordance with the service brands offered. Such a division structure poses both advantages and disadvantages. Flexibility and independence in management seems to be of constructive aspects. Whereas the entire corporate identity may be dismantled due to an over-emphasis on particular product groups (Daft, 1998). However, the upheaval of change can be anticipated accordingly. Of the numerous factors underlining the rapidly changing world of business, The Post Office has undoubtedly been affected by the notion of globalization, competition, and regulation. These external forces have played remarkable roles in mobilizing The Post Office to a new stage of competitiveness.

4.1.1 Change Issues: From Expansion to Transition

Since the original business structure has not properly corresponded to the expansion of The Post Office's international activity, the need for change essentially comes into play on the verge of transition periods. Embarked on changes within the organization, the issues of Consignia brand and new business status introduction are highlighted. Moreover, the underlying reasons of those changes stem from the similar ground of phenomena – international business expansion and commercial freedom.

As to the Consignia brand change, on March 26, 2001, The Post Office became Consignia. The new name launched means so much more than the name *per se*. The name basically

reflects its current businesses, not simply traditional mail and parcel services. These include logistics, supply chain management, warehousing, e-commerce, and tailored solutions for large business customers, both at home and abroad. The Consignia brand will be used internationally to underpin its mergers, acquisitions, and joint ventures. It hence proves that Consignia's business is growing substantially and underlines its ambitions to be successful in the international market. The new change may not guarantee the global success notwithstanding. Actually, a focus on the UK postal market has been considered a critical part of the business plan over the next few years. On the practical level, the name has not changed many other implications. Changing a business status means that the company has a legal obligation to display the official company name to which it becomes recognizable and less confusing with the word "Post Office."³ The relationship between Consignia and the existing consumer brands is that Consignia serves as the umbrella, but the actual service is delivered through each brand as normal.⁴

Regarding the business status introduction, Consignia, which acts as a holding company, has become a public limited company (plc), wholly owned by the Government, with a more commercial freedom and financial independence. It no longer operates with a statutory monopoly but under a licensed regime with the regulator. Having entered into a new world of commercial freedom, Consignia can borrow to invest for the future without referring back to the government, perform a joint venture with a suitable partner in the UK and abroad, and acquire other businesses in various geographical regions as it expands internationally.

For these reasons, Consignia is undertaking a critical internal reorganization "Shaping for Competitive Success" (SCS) which tends to enable itself to face the challenges of working in a regulated environment and the new commercial freedom. SCS results in the creation of new market-facing service delivery units and an opportunity to organize their business units for these new challenges. In addition, Consignia is not entitled as the UK postal administrator, but a postal operator licensed and regulated by the Postal Services Commission (PostComm), and subject to the rules of regulated industry. It is monitored by the press and the customer body, PostWatch. And it needs to meet not only the Government's expectation but also the customer satisfaction by showing a tangible improvement of services. Otherwise, the loss of all parts of the business can be a negative consequence.⁵

4.1.2 Communications in Consignia

With the large number of over 200,000 employees working for Consignia around the UK, the issue of corporate communications becomes crucial for concern, of which any kinds of changes are to be facilitated and succeeded. In order to ensure the clear messages being conveyed to all employees through an effective means of communication, the internal communication functions are essentially set up to handle this mission. Throughout Consignia, the network of internal communicators is divided into seven groups: mail services, customer and banking services, distribution services, strategy and business development, business services, services group, and corporate affairs.

In another aspect, Consignia extends its relationships to several groups of stakeholders, such as public press and the Government, so as to create connections and gain support for future benefits. Thus, the external communication tasks are put in place. Both internal and external communication arms are operated under the Group Corporate Affairs within the Group Service Unit (see Appendix 6). Their role is to formulate and implement the communication plans that aim to have an impact on the entire organization across the boundary of the consumer brands.

Regarding the Group Corporate Affairs, the internal communication team is established to specifically deal with communication strategies for internal issues, encompassing the Consignia brand and business status introduction. Within the team, there are four main communication issues affecting the whole organization: regulation, internal communication strategy, intranet function and internal publication (see Appendix 7). The intranet function and the internal publication, namely *Courier*, serve as significant channels of communication that incorporate the functions of sending messages to and receiving feedback from all employees.

According to the Business Units – Brand Chart of Consignia in Appendix 5, each business unit sets up its own internal communication team, which is in charge of disseminating information within a particular unit. The Group Center Unit normally provides a general framework of internal communication plans and strategies in which other business units are likely to tailor them to their practical needs. Also, the Unit attempts to measure the overall result of the communication plans by employing various methods, such as random e-questionnaires, feedback forms, and informal talks.

4.2 Key Findings

By looking through the lens of the various top executives and senior managers of Consignia, the findings of the study reveal ten overarching themes in relation to the rebranding and the business status change to a public limited company (plc) status. Such findings also investigate some depth of understanding of how the executives perceive the internal communication process surrounding the change in Consignia. Moreover, these constructs, which are analyzed through the sound research methodologies as discussed in Chapter Three, feature the development of a comprehensive framework of the communication strategy in change management.

Prior to discussing the ten themes of the findings, it is imperative to understand the relationship between communication strategy and change management in Consignia. Diagnosis of the current status of the organization is given priority at the outset of change management phases, or as phrased “understanding where we are at present.” In this phase, forces for change, leadership attributes, top management & employee commitment, and resistance to change are the main themes to be considered. After that, the destination of the change journey has to be clearly identified to highlight the long-term objective, as phrased “understanding where we head for in the future.” The ultimate objectives of this issue encompass organizational culture and change commitment, successful business and sustainable change management. They are essentially driven by continuous change interventions. Upon these analyses, a question “how to get there and how to achieve it” emerges to puzzle the top management and change agents of Consignia. They hence need to duly seek for an appropriate mechanism to bridge the gap between the present and the future statuses so as to strive for sustainable competitiveness in the market. As regards to the transition of the brand and business changes with the corporate staff concerned, communication strategies and evaluation of communication serve as the glue that effectively connects the two statuses while change progresses. These major phases of change formulation are well-supported by the below statement.

“The right place to start is to understand what the changes are and what is going on in the postal distribution market. Also, we need to understand what we would like to achieve in a particular context. Then we try to fill the gap with a comprehensive tool and technique to help drive toward the objective. A large number of case evidence in

other organizations have proven that these core constructs of change management are essential to any change formulation issues.”

- Board Executive A

4.2.1 Forces for Change

In order to understand what the company situation is at the present time and what the company needs to modify, the organizational diagnosis is regarded as the right tool to examine those issues. Instigated by both internal and external factors of change, The Post Office (TPO) encounters a whole series of pressures in building up the competitive edge. They have been triggered by a collaboration of two authorized bodies: the board of directors (top management) & internal change management consultants and the British Government. The main factors of change are elaborated below.

External Factors

First, the fundamental force for change in the brand name and business status is globalization. Any company, which aims to grow internationally, has been affected by the wind of globalization. The Post Office, which intends to position itself as a global player, is no exception. Besides, many of its corporate clients are acting their operations in a global basis. And they are looking for global solutions. Therefore, The Post Office needs to examine what the business strategy should be formulated and how the objective of being a global player can be achieved through comprehensive change schemes.

“The role of domestic postal service providers is disappearing. If we want to exist in the future, we need to think more globally in a consolidating way and have much more supply chain activities put in place, not just simply think of delivering mails and parcels as previously done. Thus, we need to be a complete distribution company, which we are trying our best to be at the moment.”

- Board Executive A

Second, the competition of the international postal service market becomes intensified. A number of direct competitors in Germany and the Netherlands have become global organizations and have been very active in the international market by providing a wide range of products and services across many countries. They have attempted to be major players in the industry and to gain recognition throughout Europe, America, and Asia. With this aspect,

The Post Office has expanded its service ranges and penetrated the overseas market with an approach of strategic alliances and takeovers, such as joint ventures and mergers and acquisitions. And this notion is consistent with the below explanation.

“We are getting into logistics, call center operations, and supply chain management services. Moreover, we broaden our present business to a global stage through mergers and acquisitions so as to build up the connection networks in Europe, North America and Asia.”

- Senior Manager A

Third, through a collaboration of the two authorized bodies, The Post Office attempts to unlock itself from the rigidity of the bureaucratic governance and is entitled to a new business status, so-called a public limited company (plc), for more commercial freedom. It is operated under a licensed regime and monitored by a regulator for the postal service industry in the UK. Meaning that, the Government can terminate its license if it actually fails to meet the standard level of customer satisfaction.

Finally, technological substitutes, such as e-mails and mobile text services, have a great impact on the traditional postal business. Thus, a new array of products and services with technological exploitation, such as electronic logistics and warehousing, tends to be a strategic solution to the problem. With a substantial expansion of businesses, some internal issues for change have been brought up for discussion.

Internal Factors

There has been much confusion between the name of the company “The Post Office” and its consumer brand name “Post Office” used for the postal shops. As such, there is a gap in terms of branding, which has been realized for a certain period of time.

“Some of our customers cannot really differentiate The Post Office from Post Office (Counters). For example, if I say that I work for The Post Office, other people may think that I work as a postal officer behind the counter at the post office. There is no clarity at all. And that is one of the big internal issues in association with external pressures behind rebranding.”

- Senior Manager A

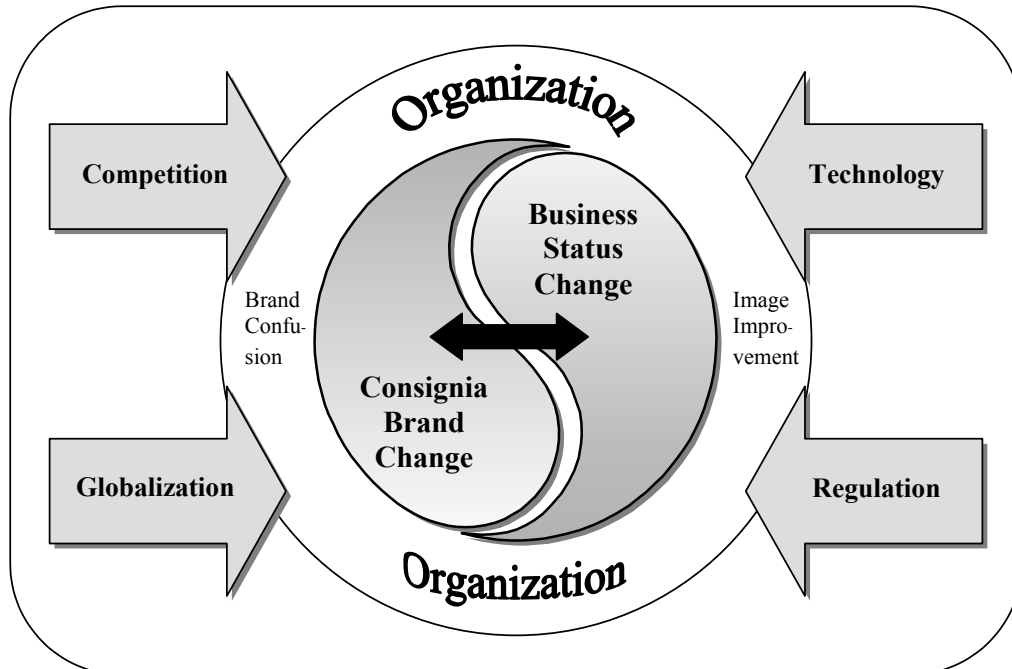
Moreover, the words ‘The Post Office’ do not fully describe what the current business has been offering to the customers. Apart from ordinary mail and parcel services, its business portfolio covers logistics, customer relationship management, and supply chain services. None of the existing consumer brands really reflects such portfolios.

Another internal factor for brand and business status change is image improvement. The company moves into an international market where the name “The Post Office” may not distinguish from the local postal company in that particular country, as depicted below.

“By calling ourselves “The Post Office” in countries abroad, it may not be recognized and differentiated from the local post offices. Moreover, the brand name “Royal Mail” cannot be officially registered in the countries where the monarchy does not exist. And that is why we need a new name that truly represents what we are doing and where we are striving for.”

- Board Executive A

Figure 9: Forces for Change: The Consignia Case



In summary, with all aforementioned forces for change, it is a good time to redefine the role of the company and eliminate confusion on branding when used for the overseas operations.

As such, the new name “Consignia” has replaced the old name since March 26, 2001. Actually, the change in name *per se* has not made much difference in terms of day-to-day operations. The effects of becoming a plc and of the business changing in scope and nature are the more significant issues, thereby attracting more attention from both internal employees and external clients.

4.2.2 Leadership Attributes

Although the subject of leadership has not been specifically focused in this research, the findings reveal that certain leaders’ attitudes, behaviors, and skills have a practical influence on employee commitment to change and successful change. In terms of communication strategies, according to the statement of Board Executive A, senior managers should possess a leadership style that reflects a willingness to listen to employees and attune to what the workforce has been thinking about and behaving in mirror of his pressures. Fundamentally, the leadership attribute needed for change is the ability to paint the picture for people, make them understand the issue, and get them to follow. These findings are strengthened by the following statement.

“The leadership attributes for senior managers comprise strong interpersonal skills, excellent influencing skills, a willingness to listen to others’ concerns, and enthusiasm to change commitment. The leader’s participation and involvement to achieve the employee commitment seems to be the key to change success.”

- Internal Consultant A

In addition, Weiss (2001) addresses that charismatic leadership can produce significant organizational change and results because it transforms employees to pursue organizational goals in lieu of self-interests. However, charismatic leaders need not be heroes. They should possess value-added competencies and characteristics to drive their organization and follows to renewal. A further reason can be stated below.

“Charisma is not enormously necessary and effective for the change leadership. But it helps grasp people’s attention. People tend to follow the charisma of the persons rather the messages themselves. The leaders should be professional in communicating with employees in the first place.”

- Board Executive A

4.2.3 Top Management and Employee Commitment

Theoretically, change starts from the top of the organization and descends to the operational level. Along the chain of command or authority, a question “to which degree would the top management and employee commit to change?” has arisen. Understanding change and commitment to change seems to convey the psychological mentality at different levels.

Interestingly, the findings mark on diverse arguments regarding the commitment to change in the management level. The Board Executive A appraises his full potential in support of a strong commitment to change. Basically, his commitment refers an arrangement of manpower and financial budgets to mobilize the change schemes. Whereas Senior Manager B makes an adverse comment on the top management’s failure to act as a role model for change. The statement below depicts a standpoint of view in terms of commitment to change.

“Some of the top management executives of Consignia are also stigmatized to the notion of reluctance to change. So far there has been no commitment from top management in contributing to the organizational change at all. The change scheme would have been much more effective and efficient if the top management has put more efforts on the core portion of change.”

- Senior Manager B

4.2.4 Resistance to Change

In the first place, the top management and change agents embrace the subject of potential change resistance as one of the chief issues that might slacken off the change efforts. According to Senior Manager C’s argument, it is nevertheless found that employees’ resistance to change is varied from one to another, depending upon many factors, such as a number of service years, job descriptions, incentives, business units for which they work, etc. For example, employees in the business units under the roof of the Consignia brand may feel uncertain of their jobs and benefits after changing the business status. Whereas the employees in other consumer brands units seem to have less effect from these changes, as depicted below.

“For me, it takes a little while to get used to the name of Consignia. And, overall, I have no objection for the brand and business status change, though I have been

working here for 17 years. In my perspective, I think the majority of the Consignia employees understand that we cannot sit back and relax any more because we cannot afford to lose our business to the competitors.”

- Service Assistant A

The issue of the terminology, ‘resistance,’ which seems to intrinsically convey an undesirable connotation to the message receivers, is raised during the course of interviews. Though a terminological generality of “resistance” is denoted and widely used, some employees, who may or may not be mentally resistant to change, feel fairly defensive against it. A certain number of interviewees suggest to choose a more appropriate word, which at least carries literally less defensive connotation, when used to communicate with staff. It could be the word ‘response’ or ‘reaction.’ In fact, changing the word itself may not provide a striking solution to the resistance to change problem, rather than alleviating the potential psychological effect.

“We need to take a close look at what it means by “resistance” and find the way to cope with it. Actually, the real problem of change resistance is insufficient effort, time and imagination given to getting employees to change. Understanding the change can bring down a negative response to change, eventually.”

- Board Executive A

Another interesting view toward the terminology of ‘resistance to change’ is shown below.

“The word ‘resistance’ may make people feel defensive. However, I don’t think we should change the word, but we need to change the way we give the message. The message should be about creating the need for people to move forward and influencing them to acknowledge the significance of change.”

- Senior Manager B

4.2.5 Communication Strategies

A communication strategy is the key fundamental part of the change management strategy. It facilitates the change process by allowing change messages to cascade down from the top of organization to the operational level. Also, a series of effective channel communications is

identified to ensure the accurate message delivered to the target group at the right time. This fact is reflected upon the following statement.

“The communication strategy is referred to how a meaningful message is to be delivered to the target audiences through rich channels of communication at a timely manner. The components of communication strategy should comprise the notion of in-depth understanding on the ‘what, when, why, which and how’ questions. In addition, we have to understand the potential impediments that might obstruct the mechanism of change.”

- Senior Manager A

From the findings, the effective communication strategies in Consignia encompass several factors. Primarily, upon the realization of the need for change, the internal communication team needs to define the destination of change efforts. As such, the team can decide the tones of the messages to be delivered in pursuit of the identified groups of audiences. The content or message is accordingly tailored and transmitted through proper communications. With regard to rich channels of communication, the internal team briefings in each business unit are undertaken to increase interactive communications between managers and employees or among employees themselves. In general, evidence shows that a face-to-face communication is one of the powerful tools to help optimize the change resistance.

“Due to the blockage of the large organization like Consignia, it is absolutely impossible for the top management to engage in individual dialogs with every single employee. Therefore, a strategy of channel communications we use is to deliver the message from the top management to 4,000 senior managers and internal communication consultants through some interactive workshops. We urge them to pass the clear messages received onto their subordinates in a particular unit for which they work either through internal team briefings or else where appropriate.”

- Senior Manager B

In addition, one of the communication strategies that has been implemented is to deliver ‘a formal message in an informal way.’ On March 26, 2001, a public announcement of the new name Consignia, those employees who work in the ten business units under the Consignia brand (see Appendix 5) receive the launch packs⁶, incorporating a set of binding cards addressing the concepts and illustrations of the brand and business status changes. Not only

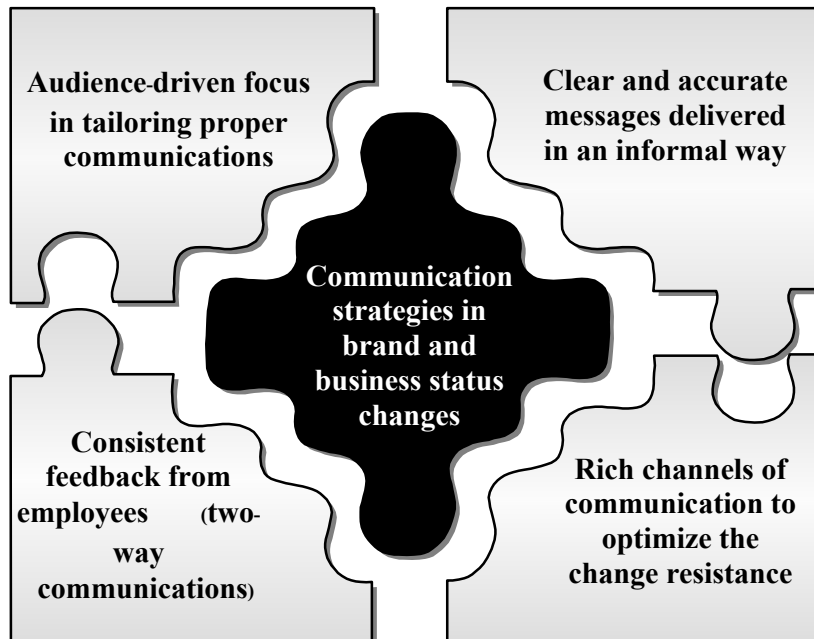
do they effectively convey a complex message to a massive group of employees but also they provide the employees a channel for feedback. On the last page of the launch packs, there is a short feedback form aimed to measure how well the employees understand about the communication schemes for the brand change.

“We try to open as many feedback channels as possible to all employees, who may have further inquiries. They include e-questionnaires, e-mails, feedback forms, and help lines.”

- Senior Manager C

To cluster the common ground of the themes, there are four major components of the Consignia communication strategy in the brand and business status changes, which can be diagrammatically shown below.

Figure 10: Communication Strategies for Brand and Business Status Changes



4.2.6 Evaluation of Communication Strategies

The purpose of the communication strategy evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of communication schemes utilized to align the senior managers’ understanding with the new issue of the brand and business status changes. A full range of the evaluation plans has not been yet conducted throughout the organization since the change issue has actually emerged

for only two months. The evaluating progress aims to assess the change of the staff's attitudes and behaviors in correspondence with the change messages, as depicted below.

“We try to measure how well they perceive the change message or, basically, what they think, what they know, and how they act upon.”

- Senior Manager A

However, the short-term effect of communication strategies can be observed from this research finding. Most employees in the study reveal that they have been aware of changes and understood the written contents as being delivered. A general level of cynicism is still abundant when they begin to inquire some in-depth details. It seems to be one dimensional. And no session of interactive communications with managers has been seriously put in place. For this reason, the notion of employee confusion in change may become a barrier to the essence of employee commitment to change.

“By testing people in general, most of communications are in form of written words and electronic transmission rather than face-to-face communication from the leaders. Such communications help people to understand the issue only, but the commitment to change, more importantly, is not intrinsic to the messages conveyed.”

- Internal Consultant A

Not only is the internal communication team able to revise the current strategies, but also a series of strategy components contributing to desirable change interventions can be assessed. And those interventions strive for achieving the long-term change management targets to be explained in the following section. In essence, this is one of the mechanisms that helps bridge the gap between the presence and the future change statuses.

4.2.7 Continuous Change Interventions

During the major periods of change, the change intervention tends to be task-focused and designed to encourage and challenge the leaders with several change issues. The most difficult task for change agents is to convince senior managers of the change benefits through concrete quantifiable evidence. It's a long-term effect and needs time to prove. Since the interventions involve costs and time scales, most managers seem to avoid any change issues.

Though there has recently been growing recognition on change imperatives among managers, it may not lead to the fact that they understand it and act upon accordingly.

“It depends on the leaders. If they are employee-focused, the change interventions are likely to be effective, and vice versa. The key to effective change intervention schemes is to have a leader with a strong commitment to employees in driving changes dynamically.”

- Internal Consultant A

4.2.8 Organizational Culture and Change Commitment

The ‘one-size-does-not-fit-all’ principle apparently applies to the Consignia organizational culture. Though each business unit has established its own culture(s), the corporate value of Consignia, such as the best quality of services delivered with minimum costs, is consistently carried out. Since the plc status has brought Consignia into a more competitive environment, the new organizational culture needs to be reshaped in response to it. The key is to bring employees through participation and involvement.

“The organizational culture in Consignia is very stressful. It is much like civil service, bureaucratic, over-engineering, which do not serve any challenges of competition. People generally fail to believe that we are in the situation for change since some of them have been with the company for years. And there is no platform of change and commitment to change put in place. That is why we need to acculturate them with new cultures.”

- Senior Manager B

4.2.9 Successful Business

A general goal of change is to achieve a position of a successful business. To describe the term more precisely, Senior Manager B defines “the successful business of Consignia” as a long-term sustainability which covers profitability, a close relationship with customers, and a consistent involvement with the supply chain activities of the customers. Also, it is able to better compete in the changing marketplace very effectively. Alongside those reasons, a relentless contribution of the Consignia staff serves as a main ingredient for corporate success.

“The success of Consignia stems from operating at optimum profits with low turnover rates. To be successful in any businesses, we need to satisfy the shareholders through an increase in profitability and, simultaneously, to satisfy the employees through a better work condition and fair incentive schemes.”

- Internal Consultant A

4.2.10 Sustainable Change Management

In the notion of change management, the successful business tends to incorporate the embeddedness of change to be institutionalized throughout the organization. Meaning that continuous changes will be undertaken at a dynamic pace since changes are never perfect in themselves. And that is how sustainable business excellence becomes accrued.

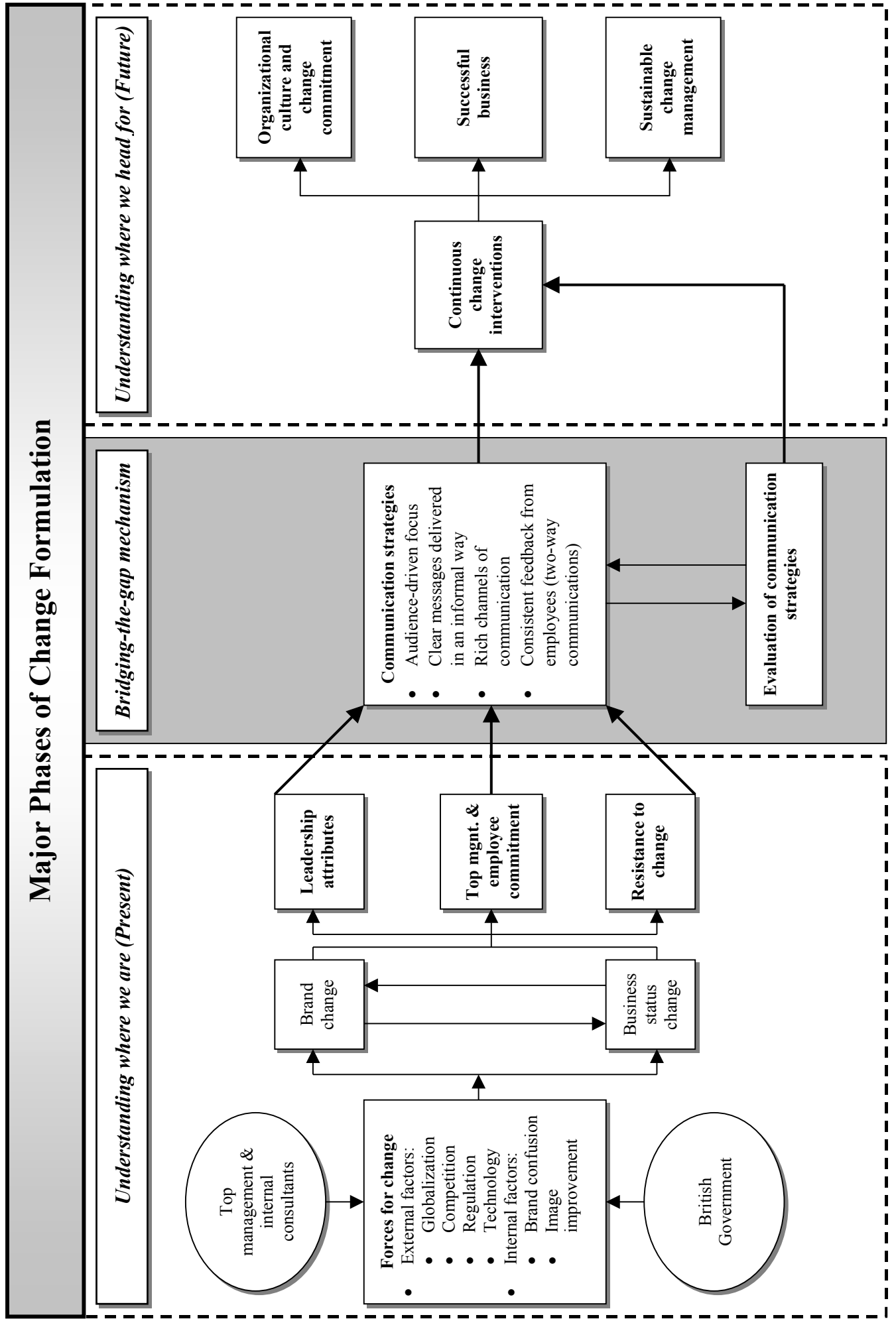
“The ultimate goals of change management are to sustain change in a continuous fashion or to embed the notion of change into the employees’ understanding.”

- Senior Manager A

“For me, sustainable change management is sustaining the benefits through people. The benefits, in this sense, refer to a new way of working that contributes to the overall business and profitability.”

- Internal Consultant A

Figure 11: A Framework of Communication Strategies in Change Management Process: Consignia



CHAPTER V

Discussions

Much of the findings in Chapter Four are attributed to the applications of the business phenomenon, reflecting a pragmatic dimension to which the company appeals. In spite of the significant progress that has been made with respect to both the literature reviews of theories and the case findings of Consignia, a disparity between these two aspects remains for discussion. This chapter aims to demonstrate a broader context of how the change management process tends to be practically viewed in relation to the integrative communication strategies.

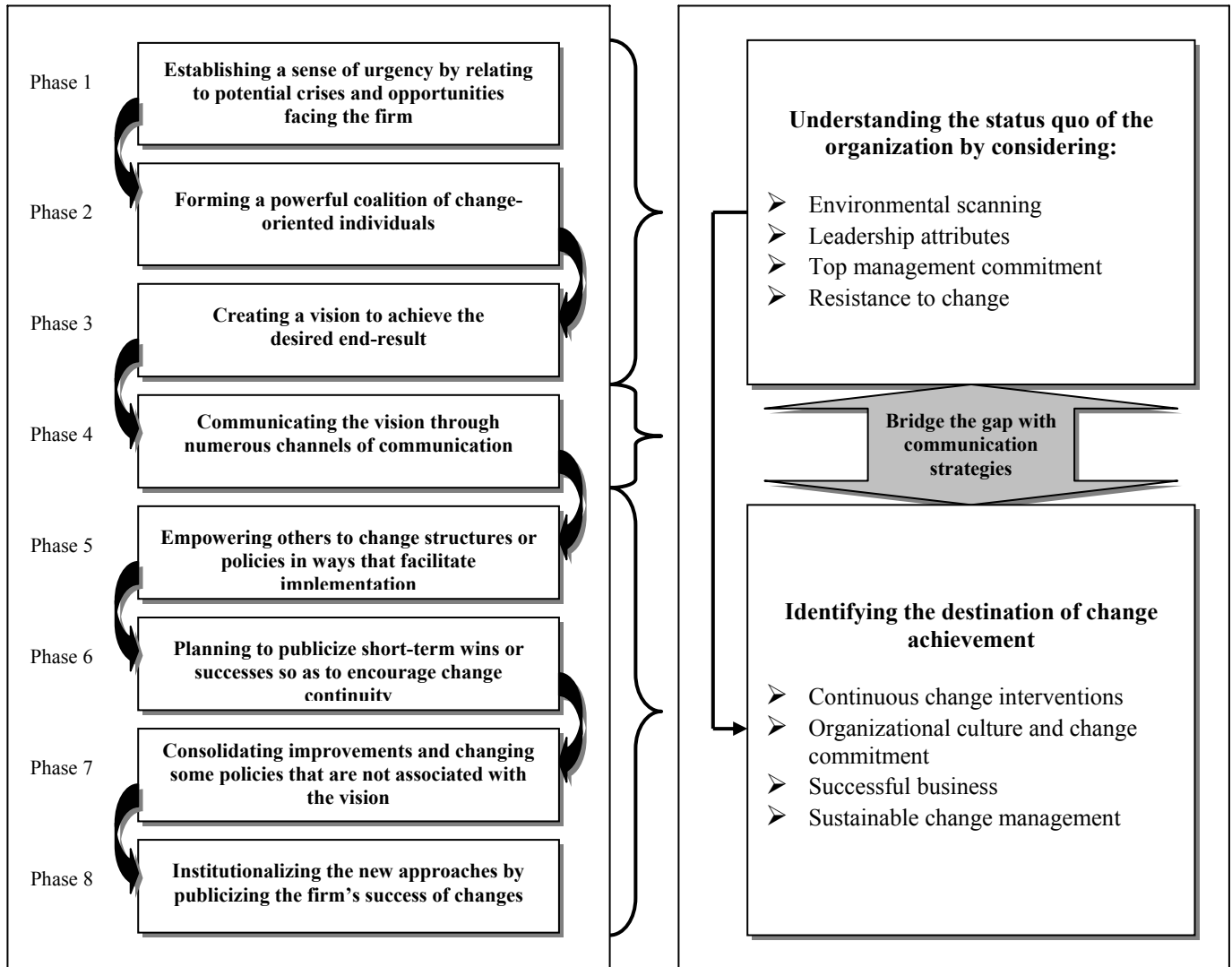
5.1 Practical Views of Change Management

5.1.1 The Nature of Change Patterns

In general, numerous change mode literature suggested in past studies stem from more or less similar grounds of change patterns, which refer to phases or steps in developing the change configuration. From the findings, the major phases of change formulation appear to be consistent with Andersen Consulting's Organizational Change Model or AC Change Model (Figure 1) in principle. The diagnosis of the external environments, together with internal factors, is of the preliminary maneuver to be undertaken. According to the literature, the effects of globalization, regulation, technology, and competition become intensified to which most of the international organizations need to pay very close attention (McCune, 1999). Likewise, the internal factors, such as corporate identity, brand improvement, etc. also significantly contribute to the instigation of organizational change. With these regards, the Consignia management team and change agents are required to understand the current status of the organization in order to determine the need for change, leading to brand and business status introduction. The following thought in change formulation is to understand the objectives of the change or to identify the destination of change achievement – competitive advantage, successful business or sustainable change commitment. The aforementioned steps are explicitly applied to the Consignia case. In the process of the AC Change Model, some components essentially touch upon main issues, such as leadership and workforce, in which the Consignia brand and business status changes have readjusted where appropriate. In sum,

both the AC Change Model and the Consignia change phrases have shared a common rationale of a systematic framework for change.

Figure 12: Kotter’s Change Implementation Stages VS Change Formulation Stages for Consignia



It is argued that there is no clear distinction between the formulation and implementation plans of change in principle. This argument has been empirically proven in the case of Consignia against Kotter’s ideas, as diagrammatically shown above. Each phase of the implementation stages closely associates with the formulation process of the Consignia change scheme despite different factors concerned. A strengthening argument can be made upon the fact that the change mechanism should be perceived as an amalgamated, ongoing process where an entire series of action plans is logically outlined and developed at once at the beginning of the process.

5.1.2 Reconsidering Change Resistance

Extensive research reveals that employees may resist change unless they understand the context of psychological or economical threats (Hayes, 1996; Baird et al., 1990). It seems to be unfair for employees to assert that their change resistance constantly impedes the change efforts. The underpinning reasons need to be researched from several cases with different organizational settings since the existing concepts of change resistance may not be applicable to other circumstances. From the study, the majority of the interviewees have not completely denied the change. Rather, a great deal of in-depth information about changes is required to optimize the level of change repercussion. They are basically aware and understand why the company needs to change. In connection with that, the degree of reactions can be determined by the degree of the receiver's understanding of the content.

Moreover, the terminology used in public could have been reconsidered. As Piderit (2000) proposes the phrase "resistance to change" be replaced with "employee's responses to change," this has been supported by one of the top executives of Consignia. The reason is that it seems to be psychologically acceptable and practically applicable to the phenomenon. The employees should be viewed as friends, not foes for change.

5.1.3 Rethinking Top Management Commitment: A Strategic Spearhead of Change

Generally, top executives are considered "knowledgeable captains" behind the steering wheel of change in the organizations. Corporate strategic directions mainly reflect upon their determination and courage to lead changes. However, evidence shows that they are anxious about organizational change due to costs and time scales involved (Stickland, 1998; Sastry, 1997; Stace and Dunphy, 1994). The aforementioned statements seem to be paradoxical in a pragmatic sense. On the one hand, they intend to navigate changes successfully, but on the other hand they live in fear of change failure. Oftentimes, change success is determined by the degree of risks on which the managers attempt to take. The Consignia case reveals that the top management team's actions fall into such a paradox. According to a Senior Manager of Consignia, the top executives initiate the general principle of the brand and business status changes but fail to carry on an efficient engagement of change schemes. They are supposed to demonstrate role models to show a strong "proactive" commitment to change, such as challenging managers who refuse to change, reorganizing the structure of the Board of Directors and dismissing unproductive executives from the Board.

5.1.4 Final Destination: Organizational Culture and Sustainable Change Management

Creating an effective change management scheme involves creating an environment in which all organizational members can excel (Weiss, 2001). The notion of corporate culture comes into play reshaping the organizational climate during and after the change missions are undertaken. As implicitly scribed in the case findings, changes in organizational culture are highly anticipated upon completion of the change schemes. A new attitude and behavior toward an increasing degree of competitiveness tends to facilitate a long-term effect of organizational change in terms of business operations. That is to reform the extant culture to be much more people-profited, customer-focused, and decision-decentralized.

In spite of being extensively used in various academic contexts, the term “sustainability” suggests much more than it simply connotes – lasting for a long time. It also conveys the essence of embeddedness to the change applications for which Consignia is striving. Successful business and incremental profitability are no longer to secure sustainable change management since employees might not have developed their commitment to change yet. Therefore, the ultimate aims of the Consignia changes are to bring a new organizational culture and a sense of sustainable change management to bear upon the organizational members, thereby achieving the long-term competitive advantage over other competitors.

5.2 Communication Strategies Reinvigorated

5.2.1 Formulating the Integrative Communication Strategies

By applying the idea of the change initiative development (Pettigrew and Fenton, 2000) to communication strategies, the management team must think and act holistically and communicate as such to several fronts in careful alignment. In essence, communication strategies will not succeed if done piecemeal. They should be done in form of an integrating framework, incorporating non-communication factors, which can yield an enlightening strategy to implement the plan in a broad perspective. And that term “integrative communication strategy” is specifically given in the Consignia case.

Originally, Mohr and Nevin (1990) define a communication strategy as the use of a combination of communication facets, which include frequency and formality of communication, content of communication and channel of communication. From the findings, this definition is proven true in practice. Nevertheless, in order to become

systematically integrated, an emphasis on the evaluation concept of the communication strategies needs to be incorporated, so that the feedback system of the communication becomes established thereafter. Supported by empirical evidence in the literature, a two-way communication enables change agents to assess the effectiveness of change strategies and, simultaneously, rectify unfavorable strategies to promote smooth change efforts.

In general, the communication strategies in Consignia are consistent with past research studies. Most of significant elements of communication have been closely scrutinized prior to formulating the strategy accordingly. The findings of the case reveal that the audience-driven focus along with an appropriate tone of the message have to be identified in the first place. Based upon the notion of “what the employees need to know,” the content or message is tailored and transmitted through several rich channels of communication, such as team briefings, executive presentations, launch packs, electronic mail, and internal publications. One of the communication strategies that has been implemented is to deliver “*a formal message in an informal way.*” It proves to be successful in creating awareness and understanding on the issues, but not commitment as such. Overall, the integrative communication strategy seems to be well thought out and effectively facilitate these changes. However, further discussions can be made upon the adverse aspects of such strategies after the implementation takes place.

5.2.2 Unexpected Pitfalls of the Integrative Communication Strategies

Practically, there are numerous factors that might involve in the ineffectiveness of the communication strategies. According to the literature, psychological filtering, subcultures, and personal perceptions are of the most common barriers to effective communications (Schermerhorn, 1998). In this case study, the pitfalls of communication have not only derived from the individual level but also the organizational level. Information overload in each business unit becomes a chronic impediment for employees because the unit attempts to create its own identity. At the same time, the problem of information insufficiency on the holistic picture of Consignia remains slackening in some business units. One of the Consignia top executives views that the internal communication is good in parts or “patchy.” The management team ends up telling rather than listening to what employees voice back. Primarily, the strategy focuses on two-way communication. It turns out to be one dimensional or one-way communication. A large number of written materials, such as newsletters, memos, etc., are sent to employees but there is no guarantee whether they are

going to read them or understand the issues clearly. In this respect, Sinetar (1988) suggests that an organization undergoing change transitions should pursue the informal discussion group as a powerful agent for change. Its underlying philosophy is to communicate the change issues with parties concerned in an interactive atmosphere. Essentially, face-to-face communication aims to be reinforced and mobilized by the open discussion in regard to the change issues. The work of Johnson et al. (1994) posits that the team briefings in each business unit are characterized as a formal mode of communication, leading to a non-substantial group interaction.

5.3 Integrative Communication Strategies in Change Process

Change management and communication has been literally considered Siamese twins – sharing interdependent properties and resources. Communication is not only spread throughout all change activities, it is at the heart of many organizational transformation aspects. A new verge to facilitating change management is to infuse the right medicine of communications into the vessel of change problems. Axiomatically, the degree of impact on the organizational level tends to hinge upon the degree of a change magnitude with which the top management or change agents reckon.

In the Consignia case of brand and business status changes, the integrative communication strategy plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the present and the future change states. The impression from the study attributes this to a systematic approach to measure the effectiveness of the communication – encouraging employees to give responses toward the strategies put forth. That is one of the main elements of the integrative communication strategies at Consignia. Within any change process, communication schemes aim not only to create awareness and understanding of the issues but also to influence continuous change interventions, including publicizing the change progress report to employees. Connected to that, the organizational culture change and employee commitment to change for Consignia gear toward reforming the extant culture to become much more competitive in an atmosphere of harmonized corporate identity.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion and Further Research

6.1 Concluding Remarks

Although change may seem ubiquitous, it is an unnatural provision in which most organizations deal. Normally, change produces a crisis when it significantly disrupts expectations about important issues or events. As such, the upheaval of change becomes inevitable to the extent that its magnitude has a far-reaching impact on internal employees and pertinent stakeholders. Most of academics and practitioners have been tempting to search for a best practice among a repertoire of potential change drivers developed elsewhere. It nevertheless appears that each organization is best at adapting and customizing its own distinctive blend. What works well for some may not be effective for others. For these reasons, a case study approach about change management tends to be asserted for this uniqueness.

In association with the above rationale, communication strategy, which serves as the key fundamental part of the change management strategy, challenges the traditional mechanisms in terms of facilitating a transitional hurdle of change. In essence, communication strategies will not succeed if done piecemeal. They should be done in the form of an integrated framework, thereby broadening horizons toward a holistic aspect of the entire organization. Empirical evidence in past research shows that the functions of organizational communications are analogous to those of human blood vessels. They act as nutritious substance transmitters or change message carriers throughout the body or the organization so as to maintain healthy conditions or to arrange the corporate realignment.

Consignia, formerly known as The Post Office (TPO), is selected as a case of a large company in transition – brand and business status introduction. Prior to March 26, 2001, a public announcement of that change issue, Consignia is the sole monopolized postal service provider under the Government regulations. Its diversified businesses include several product group divisions in accordance with the service brands offered, which are Royal Mail, Parcel Force Worldwide and Post Office (Counters). Basically, the Government's rigid bureaucracy has drifted the firm off the position of competitiveness. With far more services

now offered, the name change is in recognition of the fact that the company now does much more than the words “The Post Office” suggests. Also, the increasing number of joint ventures and acquisitions with companies abroad has emphasized Consignia’s global ambition to position itself in the international market. In addition, other external and internal forces for change, such as globalization, technology, brand confusion and image improvement, have provoked a greater extent of re-branding and business status change. It becomes a tremendous challenge for the firm on how to convey the change message across a 200,000-employee organization. Therefore, the role of communication strategies in change process becomes remarkable.

Through a sound research methodology as discussed in Chapter Three, the findings reveal the ten themes that need to be considered for these changes in Consignia. They reflect how senior managers perceive the current condition of internal communication, whereby communication strategies are formulated to cope with emerging change issues. There is no implementation-based plan to be deeply discussed. Diagnosis of the current status of the organization is given priority at the outset of change management phases. In this phase, forces for change, leadership attributes, top management & employee commitment, and resistance to change are the main themes to be considered. After that, the destination of the change journey has to be clearly defined to highlight the long-term objective. The ultimate objectives of this issue encompass organizational culture and change commitment, successful business and sustainable change management. They are essentially driven by continuous change interventions or implementations. Upon these analyses, the communication strategies emerge to be an appropriate mechanism “to bridge the gap between the present and the future change statuses” so as to strive for sustainable competitiveness in the market.

Communication strategies and evaluation of communication (or so-called “integrative communication strategies”) serve as the glue that effectively connects the two statuses while change progresses. A conceptualized framework of the findings is illustrated in Figure 11.

In regard to the case discussion, this research study is attributable to a double-edged management contribution. It can reflect a new construct of academic theories and suggest a gap which the firm may leave unaddressed. Due to time and space constraints, a number of relevant issues are selected for succinct discussion on the basis of theoretical and practical perspectives.

Issues	Theoretical Perspectives
The nature of change patterns	Strengthen the existing theory of the change models
Sustainable change management	Introduce a new idea of the change embeddedness to create employee commitment and corporate culture
Integrative communication strategy	Incorporate the evaluation scheme of the communication into the current communication strategy

In theoretical contributions, the Consignia case proves to invigorate the extant theory of the change models, such as the AC Change Model (Figure 1) and Kotter's change implementation stages (Figure 12). The Consignia change phrases share a common rationale of a systematic framework of those models – understanding the status quo of the organization, identifying the destination of change, and bridging the gap with communication strategies. Regarding the theoretical description of sustainable change, it is either emphasized or induced by the idea of embeddedness to accrue employee commitment to change and, thereafter, corporate culture. And the term “integrative communication strategy” is created to mirror a systemic approach to executing the communication plan in any radical change transitions.

Issues	Practical Perspectives (Consignia)
Change resistance	Need to focus more on face-to-face communications to optimize the repercussion of change
Top management commitment	Need to demonstrate a role model for change and engage more in bidirectional communications with managers
Pitfalls of communication strategy	Need to revitalize the practice of team briefings to be more of the informal discussion group

In practical contributions, it is suggested that face-to-face communications be utilized to optimize the negative change reactions, which normally stem from an insufficient amount of information received or the ineffective use of communication channels. Also, top management is expected to bear out a strong sense of “proactive” change commitment through an extensive two-way communication with senior managers. Risk aversion and politicking in management appeals to slacken off a desirable condition of change management schemes. Last but not least, a current “cascading-down” strategy, or team briefings, from senior managers to employees in each business unit needs to be revitalized through a greater provision of open discussion in the informal atmosphere.

6.2 Implications

Academic Implications

Although the literature on change management and communication theories has been prolific in the academic research, an integrative pattern of both constructs is under investigated. This volume of research aims to provide a theoretical framework of the integrated role of communication strategy formulation in conjunction with the change management process. Based on a case study of Consignia, such a framework has been theoretically explored and empirically demonstrated some important aspects of the academic stance. That is, the formulation of communication strategies must be harmonized with different change stages to ensure the change messages are effectively conveyed to the right target group of change. A derivative of the framework, the study partially adapts the work of Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999; Burnes, 2000; Hellriegel et al., 2001; Kreitner and Kinicki, 1995; Kotter, 1995; Maltz and Kohli, 1996; Sikora, 1994; and Sinetar, 1988 as foundational grounds of theories to apply for the investigation of the change processes as well as communication flows across the organization.

Practical Implications

In mirror of the Consignia case, the research study aims to explore how executives in various management levels perceive the internal communication process and formulate the appropriate strategies not only to optimize the repercussion of change but also to bring out greater success in the future. By the same token, it reflects upon which senior managers need to conceptually understand how different communication practices lead to the desirable organizational change. Additionally, it has shed some light on a pragmatic process of communicating the change efforts to the internal parties concerned.

The author believes that the practical applications can be extended to other organizations, regardless of size, and, possibly, across the industry. However, they should at least share a similar pattern of change issues -- either the brand or the business status change. In this regard, a certain benefit from this study tends to be reaped in general. Last but not least, an integrative framework, of which numerous factors of the communication strategy in the change context are composed, serves as a functional guidance for managers to navigate a plan of change.

6.3 Research Limitations

Provisional to this research conducted within a limited timeframe and space, the findings could not have been yielded at a greater extent as anticipated. The constraining boundary of the research hence is necessary to be revealed for the sake of future research improvement. Also, it helps the readers to determine the degree of credibility of the research results. The constraining factors are attributable to 1) inherent limitations of the case study approach and 2) certain features of the author's research methodology choices.

First are the inherent limitations of the case study approach. It has been long argued that the single case study is susceptible to the low level of validity of the findings, although the multiple-method triangulation employed has ensured that their internal validity is high (Yin, 1994). In this study, the research focus embarks on exploring the depth of the communication strategy formulation in change issues within a single organization rather than the breadth of the phenomenon in different organizational settings. As such, the generalizability to other organizations is relatively confined. The author believes that, with a comparatively similar change matter to the case of Consignia, the partial findings of the empirical framework can be practically applied to various circumstances, whereby communications play a major role in facilitating change efforts across the organization.

Second, a certain feature of the author's research methodology choices has somehow limited the amount of information obtained for data analysis. The interview arrangement with every senior manager or key person concerned is perhaps beyond the author's capability to control over a specified time period. Therefore, a mixture of interview formats, which are face-to-face interviews and electronic interviews, are of the best options to cope with this impediment. In regard to the electronic interviews or e-mail interviews, an interaction between interviewers and interviewees during the course of the interviews, which may lead to some further insights, does not seem to be technically plausible. Supported by a theory of qualitative research methods, the face-to-face interviews tend to bring more fruitful perspectives on the subjects, and that a greater amount of relevant information is likely to be incremental. In addition, the interpretations of data in this study are not meant to be superior or exclusive to other potential interpretations. Despite being undertaken by the author's best discretion, they are still subject to bias. Such a bias may be alleviated if the data are to be interpreted by several researchers, thereby achieving a balance of the viewpoints.

6.4 Further Research

From these research findings, there are several intriguing areas of research left unaddressed and worth investigating for empirical evidence and elucidating theories. First, this research aims to focus merely on the formulation part of the communication strategy in change contexts but less attention is paid to the implementation scheme of the communication strategy. As such, it would be useful to conduct further research on the implementation part of the communication strategy in a similar circumstance, where diverse sub-units are focused to strengthen the validity. A holistic and systematic case analysis tends to provide both academics and practitioners a better understanding of those issues in a broader context.

Second, as discussed in Chapter Three, the longitudinal approach is suggested to be part of the research methods for further research. Such a method would be very practical in observing the employee's reaction toward changes. Also, it helps the researchers to understand how behaviors and attitudes are developed and influenced (Pettigrew, 1990). Since the interviews enable the researchers to comprehend a phenomenon superficially, the method of observations serves as a powerful tool to delve into the underlying reasons of the observed reactions. As a result, more in-depth findings can be yielded. In connection with that, the study of how the brand and business status changes contribute to the organizational culture change should be empirically researched.

Finally, in order to challenge the framework of the findings, the use of contrasting observations from multiple cases seems to enhance the notion of replication. Additionally, the external validity of the initial investigation can be inspected and thereafter either verifies or falsifies the theory (Yin, 1994). A multiple case approach may be extended to include a comparative study between organizations, whereby similar research procedures are applied. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, to select the cases for a comparative study, the characteristics of the study issues in each organization, regardless of industry, need to be at least comparable in the sense of research contributions. For instance, a comparative study in the communication strategies for the brand change between Consignia and Accenture¹ would be an interesting topic to challenge the current findings and, potentially, attribute the similarities or differences of change practices.

Endnotes:

- 1 Among the leading global management and technology consulting firms, Andersen Consulting (or Accenture as of Jan. 1, 2001 marking its wholly independent status and reflecting the new approach to serving clients) has been regarded as one of the professional consulting firms in change management. Of the four competencies based on the Business Integration Client Service Model: Strategy, Change Management, Process and Technology, Accenture strives for consistently delivering state-of-the-art consulting solutions to numerous world-class corporations.

- 2 Information and communication in organizations: general issues (Dawson, 1996: p. 194).
 - 1) **Quantification:**
 - (a) Information varies in the extent to which it is quantifiable.
 - (b) Quantifiable information is often given precedence over non-quantifiable information in decision-making.
 - 2) **Verification:**

Information varies in the extent to which it can be subject to external verification.
 - 3) **Neutrality:**

Information is rarely used in a completely neutral way.
 - 4) **Scarcity:**

Information is a costly and scarce resource.
 - 5) **Formal and informal communication networks:**

Hierarchies often emerge even if they are not imposed on communication networks.
 - 6) **Gatekeepers:**

These control access and interpretation of information across physical, social and technical barriers.
 - 7) **Partiality:**

Information held and transmitted by people is often partial and reflects their interests and resources.

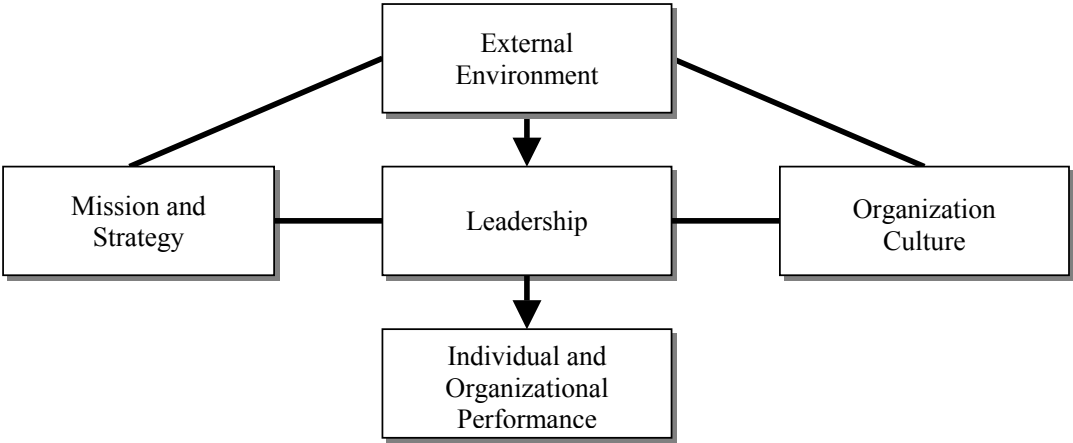
8) Suppression:

Some information may be consciously or subconsciously excluded from consideration if it questions or counters the dominant view.

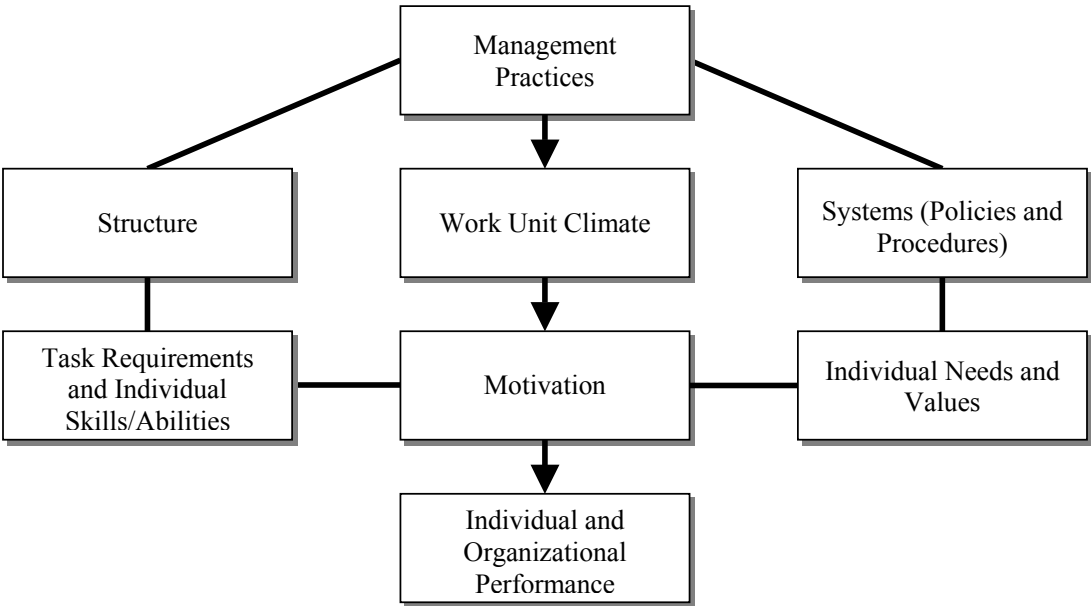
- 3 Consignia internal publication, *Courier*, April 2001.
- 4 Internal publication for the Sales & Customer Support Unit, *One Magazine*, Issue 15, April 2001.
- 5 The Post Office Annual Report 1999-2000.
- 6 A launch pack is a pocket-sized booklet, comprising a set of reader-friendly cards, contains necessary information about the new brand and the newly created public company of Consignia.

Appendix 1

The Transformational Factors



The Transactional Factors



Source: Burke, W. W. (1994). "Critical Elements of Organizational Culture Change." In The Change Management Handbook: A Road Map to Corporate Transformation. Edited by Berger, Sikora, and Berger. McGraw-Hill.

Appendix 2

Questions for Formulating and Implementing Communication Strategies for Change

Who	<p><i>Who</i> is to receive information – which constituencies are to be targeted and which ones are most essential to enlist in the change management effort.</p> <p><i>Who</i> should communicate with <i>whom</i> – the specific individuals at both ends</p> <p><i>who</i> will deliver and receive the messages, so the message has the biggest and most effective impact, so real people are talking to real people about real change.</p>
What	<p><i>What</i> they are to be told – specifically, what information do the targeted stakeholders need to help with efforts.</p> <p><i>What</i> the stakeholders can expect to derive from the change program – <i>what</i> benefits will be distributed among the so-called “public.”</p>
When	<p><i>When</i> the messages should go to the various constituencies – timing the release of the information to get the most effect (for example, conditioning a market or employees in advance for a change about to take place).</p>
Why	<p><i>Why</i> the communication effort is important to the stakeholders – what is in it for them or how they will be affected by it. <i>Why</i> the stakeholders prefer to be communicated through a particular media than another.</p>

Source: Davidow, R. (1994). “Structuring the Change Initiative.” In *The Change Management Handbook: A Road Map to Corporate Transformation*. Edited by Berger, Sikora, and Berger. McGraw-Hill.

Appendix 3

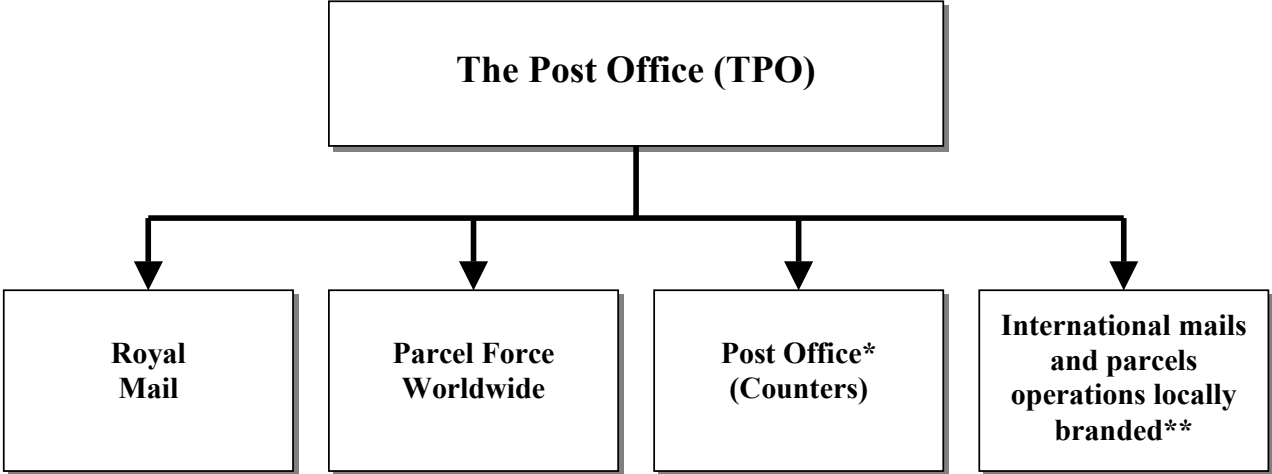
The Evolution of the Post Office Business and Identity– Key Dates

1635	First public postal service introduced by Charles I.
1784	First mail coach introduced, from Bristol to London.
1897	Every UK household got right to free postal deliveries.
1934	A simple logo GPO was published to use in all kinds of publicity.
1953	A new logo was designed to replace the original one initiated in 1934.
1968	A corporate identity scheme for The Post Office was created.
1969	General Post Office became The Post Office, as an organization, operated in a nationalized industry. A new logo was thereafter designed to reflect its new status.
1975	A new corporate identity was introduced. The logo used an alphabet of double line letters and color schemes of red and yellow. This was used on all publicity materials.
1986	The Post Office was split into 4 main business units to reflect its changing marketplace. Each business unit introduced its own separate design that helped show its specific business areas. Each was all used the double line lettering to show that it belonged to the same corporate body.
1999	The Post Office bought German Parcel, the first of more than 20 acquisitions and joint ventures.
2000	The Postal Services Act provided new commercial freedoms.
2001	On March 26 The Post Office changed its corporate name to Consignia in a move and underlining determination to be a major player in a global distribution market. The Post Office offers more services than the name suggests. The extensive research is carried out to find a name which is modern, meaningful and entirely appropriate. The name Consignia is chosen after public consultation and reflected the true image of the original ‘The Post Office’ brand in the 21 st century.

- Sources:**
- The Consignia internal publication magazine “Sort it!” Summer 2001.
 - Exhibition Boards of Heritage Services, Consignia.

Appendix 4

The Business Structure of The Post Office (TPO)



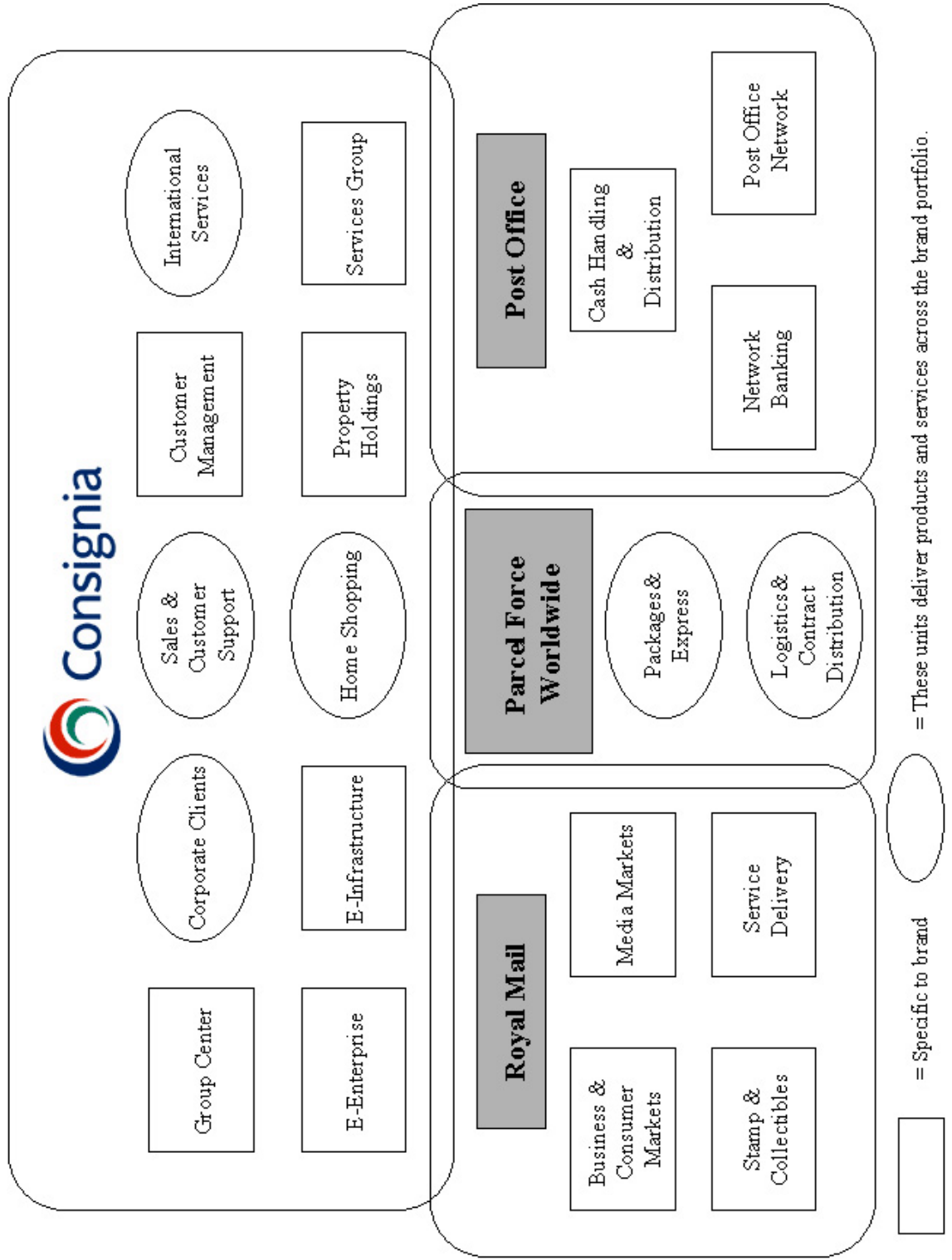
Source: Exhibition Boards of Heritage Services, Consignia.

Note: *Post Office (Counters) comprises retail network businesses, such as bank and post office networks.

**The Post Office acquires postal companies abroad so to take over the logistic operations and strategic management. The local brands of the acquired firms remain unchanged.

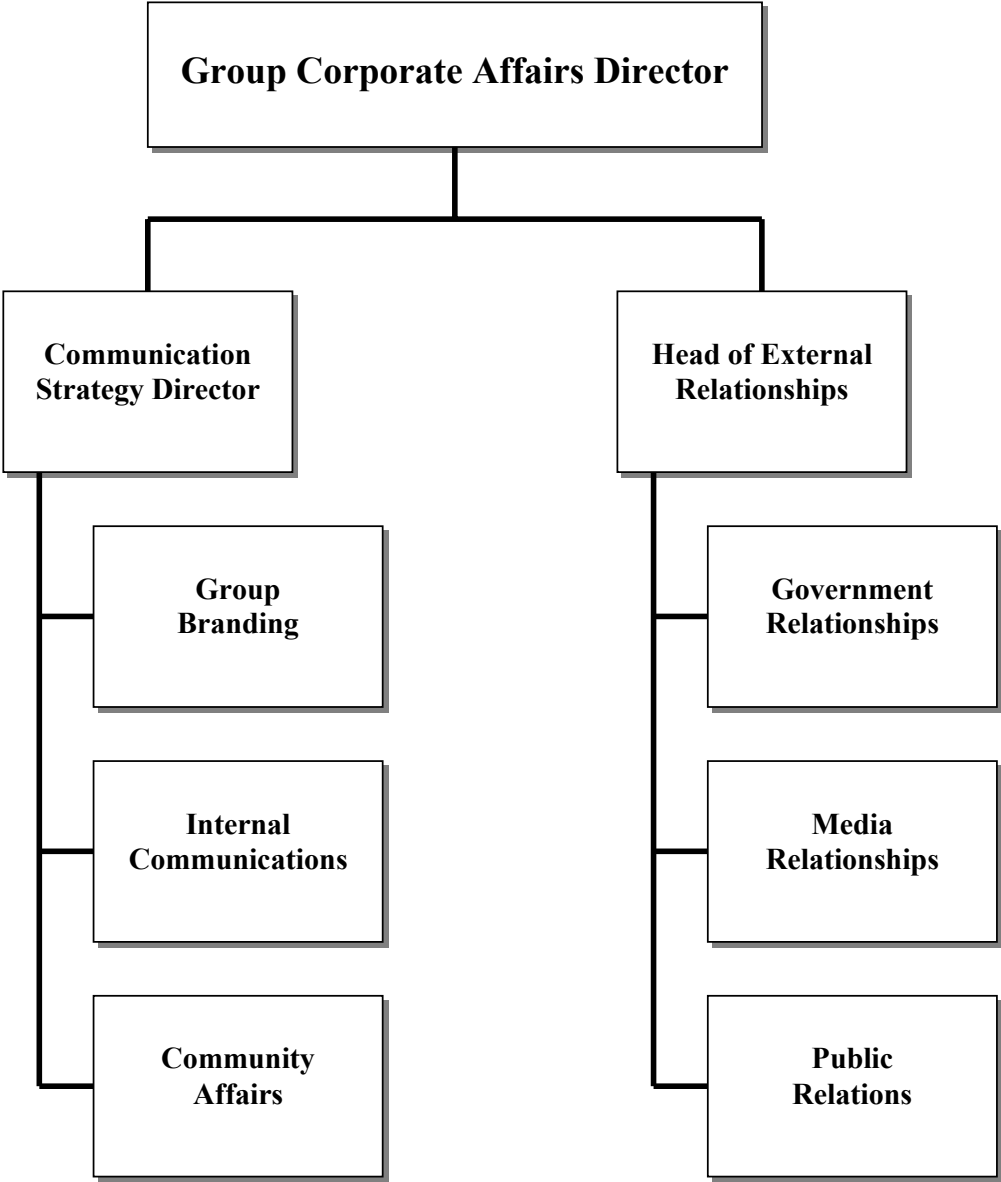
Appendix 5

Business Units – Brand Chart of Consignia (As of 26 March 2001)



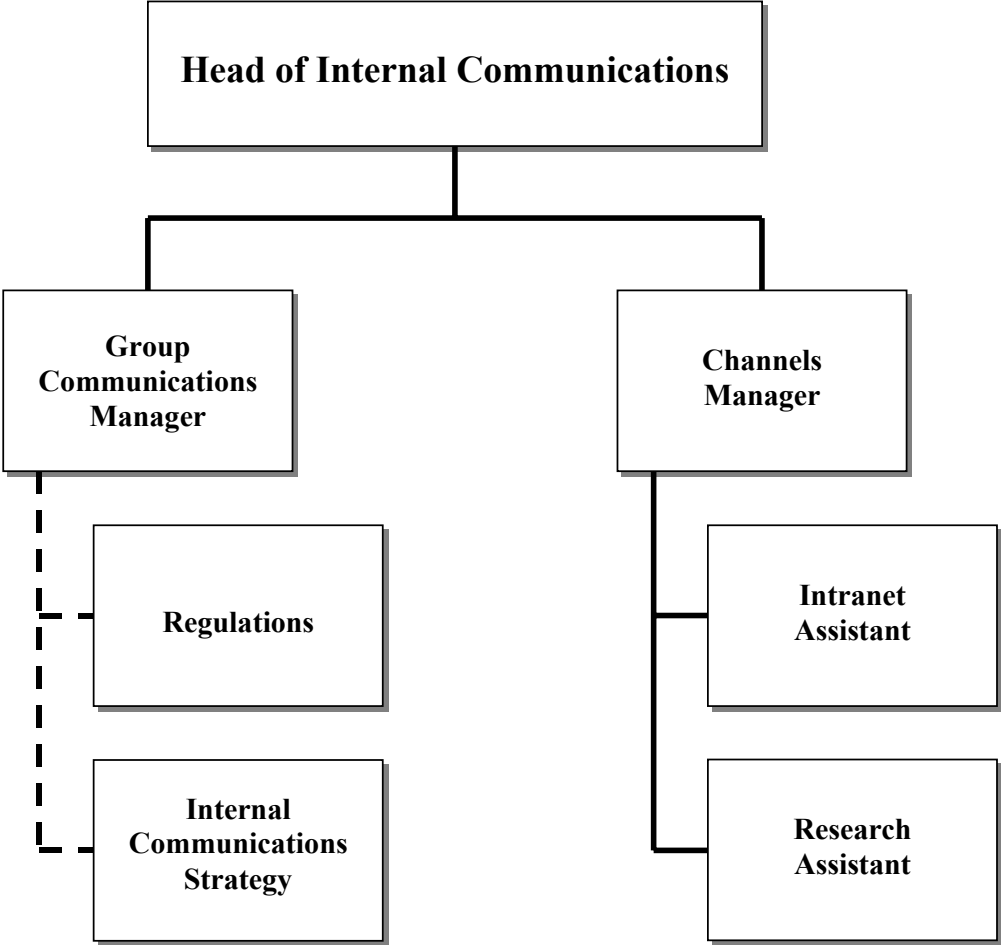
Appendix 6

**The Internal Communication Structure of Corporate Affairs
(Under Group Center Unit)**



Appendix 7

**The Internal Communication Structure of Communication Strategy Team
(Internal Communication Team)**



Note: ----- represents the main issues responsible by Group Communications Manager

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For Thesis Examiners

Below are the brief profiles of key persons interviewed during the course of research. These profiles are duly regarded as confidential information and may not be wholly or partially disseminated without their consent.

*Somboon Kulvisaechana
Author*

- 1. Mr. Jonathan Evans** (Board Executive A)
Work position: Company Secretary
Age: 49
Service years: 27 years (1974 - present)

- 2. Ms. Sarah Wagnall** (Senior Manager A)
Work position: Head of Internal Communication
Age: 37
Service years: 2.5 years (1998 - present)

- 3. Ms. Gill Clements** (Senior Manager B)
Work position: Head of Organization Design and Development
Age: 39
Service years: 16 years (1985 - present)

- 4. Ms. Fran Lyons** (Senior Manager C)
Work position: Internal Communication Consultant /
Former Project Manager of Consignia Brand
Age: 31
Service years: 5 years (1996 - present)

- 5. Ms. Fiona Anderson** (Internal Consultant A)
Work position: Senior Business Consultant (Internal)
Age: 42
Service years: 6 years (1995 - present)

6. Mr. Andrew Perry (Service Assistant A)

Work position: Heritage Services Assistant (Branch of Consignia)

Age: 33

Service years: 17 years (1984 - present)

7. Ms. Sue Statter

Work position: Senior Consultant (Internal)

Age: 37

Service years: 14 years (1987 - present)

8. Ms. Maria Hudson

Work position: Management Consultant (Internal)

Age: 35

Service years: 14 years (1987 - present)

9. Mr. Rod Pashley

Work position: Senior Management Consultant (Internal)

Age: 40

Service years: 6 years (1995 - present)

10. Ms. Pardeep Ahluwalia

Work position: Assistant Practice Manager - Post Office Consulting (POC)

Age: 43

Service years: 9 years (1992 - present)

11. Mr. Andy McClarnon

Work position: Professional Head in the Internal Consultancy

Age: 37

Service years: 15 years (1986 - present)

12. Mr. Jonathan Day

Work position: Change Manager

Age: 30

Service years: 9 years (1992 - present)