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| **Date 6/4/2004**

Have you completed the following?

Hardcopy

- Copy of this assessment sheet with the assessment portion completed
- Printed essay.

Electronic copy

- This entire assessment sheet (completed) and copied into the top of your assignment.
- Assignment, file saved as *TCT550Assign2Yourinitials.doc*, uploaded to WebCT

This formative assignment intended to enable you to critically review literature that would help enable you to:

1. Critically evaluate the role and impact of technologies on the relationships between organisations and their stakeholders.
2. Identify the opportunities that technologies offer to enhance professional communication.

It should reveal your understanding of how theory and practice have shaped the interdisciplinary flow of knowledge found primarily in public relations, communication science and media related sources.

You were asked to demonstrate your analytical ability and knowledge to your own professional context and to write a 1,500-word essay that:

1. reviews a range of appropriate literature to support your conclusions; and
2. provides evidence for the statements and recommendations.

Self Assessment

Please review the marking criteria below and then circle the mark that you think best describes the quality of your effort.

Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Average	Good	Very good	Superior
<40 45 50	51 53 55	56 58 60	61 65 69	70 72 74	75 80 85<

Briefly say what you think are the *strengths* of your contribution.

A Socio political analysis of the introduction of ICT in organization, and the effects of it towards organisational communication and change.

Which aspects do you think need *more* attention?

The professional context.

The relation with the external stakeholders, rather than the internal ones.

English.

Logical Structure.

Harvard Reference.

Tutor's Assessment

François Nel has read your assignment and awarded you a mark of _____ out of 100 or ____/30.

This assignment contributes 30% towards the final mark for this module.

This follows because I believe that your report achieved:

- all the major and minor objectives of the question
- all the major objectives of the question, but some of the minor ones were not
- all the major objectives of the question, but many of the minor ones were not
- most of the major objectives of the question, but most of the minor ones were not

- some of the major objectives of the question, but none of the minor ones were
- only a few of the major or minor objectives of the question
- none of the major or minor objectives of the question

This result has come from my assessment of your paper in terms of a number of categories of achievement. The ticks below indicate where you stand with regard to each set of statements

- at a **superior** (excellent/outstanding) level of quality (75 – 100)
- at a predominantly **very good** level of quality (70 – 74)
- at a predominantly **good** level of quality (61 – 69)
- at a **average** level of quality (56 – 60)
- at a **satisfactory** level of quality (51-55)
- at an **unsatisfactory** (bare pass/fail) level of quality – fail (<50)

INDICATORS							
Scope: awareness of the broad range of choices available in choosing indicators	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Little understanding of principle revealed and/or few sources consulted
Logic: a well argued choice of indicator made in relation to specific outcomes	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Little understanding of principle revealed and/or few sources consulted
Theory: Evidence of critical analysis of limitations and strengths of particular perspectives adopted	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Little understanding of principle revealed and/or few sources consulted
Practice: clear and logical analysis that links strategy development process to appropriate indicators and reflects on it	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Weak links, or links absent entirely -ie: descriptive material placed alongside theory but no effort made to conjoin the two.
Range of sources: Clear use of a broad range of relevant sources explored (at least 7 sources used, of which 3 are journal articles)	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	source material very limited and/or inappropriate
Use of sources: Consideration across the subject area indicating a lack of bias towards a particular viewpoint	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Bias in type and quantity of source material used and incorporated into arguments
Creativity: ability to select, adapt or create soundly-argued procedures for monitoring impact	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Lack of clarity in points overall
Clarity: strategic objectives clearly articulated and communications outcomes linked to them	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Superficial understanding of communication processes revealed, or no firm link to strategy
Evaluation: consideration of a range of evaluation choices, and selection of appropriate indicators	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Inability to evaluate
Use of appropriate academic essay style							
Appropriate introduction	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	In appropriate-lacking paragraph development
Appropriate content	Superior	Very	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-	Lack of paragraph

development i.e. paragraph development and adherence to guidelines outlined in assignment instructions		Good				sat	usage resulting in weak argument development and lack of adherence to assignment instructions for essay construction
Appropriate conclusion, summarised main points, no new material added, no quoted material	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Lack of summarised main points, new material and/or quoted material included, no paragraph development
<u>Bibliography/Referencing:</u> Correct bibliography format- no more than 4 errors (Harvard style) Correct in-text referencing (Harvard style)	Superior	Very Good	Good	Ave	Sat	Un-sat	Five or more errors noted Five or more errors noted
<u>Additional comments:</u>							

Socio-Political analysis of ICT implementation, in the communicative structure of organisations.

Introduction

Organisational communication is conceived like the relation that guaranties the social link, necessary to realise the common goals. It is structured through social, economic, politic and technique logics. Organisational communication carries a combination of logical arguments towards one or several addressees, feeding the chains of interactions leading to change. Time has to be taken into consideration, giving a more dynamic approach of the organisation mutations, revealing at the same time the logical level and the interlocking aspects of the communication actions. In companies, a socio-political analysis can reveal the convergence of the different logics towards new ways of participating together in achieving a common goal. The introduction of information communication technologies (ICT) can convey to numerous mutations, in response to the confrontation, in the communicational arena, of the social, economic, politic, and technique arguments. A socio-political analysis can link up the various communication actions leading up to change, or from structural elements, to infer how human relations have been at the origin of these mutations.

“Information technology opens up a wide variety of communication options for organisational members; in choosing among them, they should consider information richness, fit with the organisation’s culture, and symbolic value of the medium” (Conrad & Poole, 1998:150)

In order to clarify and to go in depth in this logic, we will choose to comment and analyse: How communication actions are dealt in an organisation ? A socio-political analysis of ICT, and the confrontation of the different logics (social, economic, politic and technique), will guide us, towards an understanding of the use of such tool in the organisational communication structure.

In the communicational arena, where the human relations are tied or not (where networks are formed and evolved), the logics are opposed, allied, complemented, ending up to the final pattern of communication action. The choice of the addressee, the sender, of a code, a canal, of a message content and to a lesser extent, the spatiotemporal context of communication, is the result of the this compromise between the requirements of technique and the economic issues, the political willingness, and the individual or collective pending (Missika

1998). This logic must be understood in this analysis like a language prescribing facts or phenomena's in the case of a process, but more like a cohesion of exerted ideas. In this perspective, man is considered like free of choice, this liberty has for limit the capacity for researcher to identify the constraints of an individual, in a complex universe. We link this taught to the conception of social logic define by (B.Miège, 1989,) around which "[...] is articulated, at middle term, strategies of actors, developing sometimes in opposite ways"

The economic logic is based on the pursuit of a maximum profit at less costs; the political logic aims to stability, present and future, of human communities, that is the application of the "Social Contract" (J.J.Rousseau, 1762). The technical logic gives the limits of what is technically feasible; finally, social arguments allows to subjectivity (emotions, personal experience), to culture and to the social link to take form. The communication action seems to be a succession of combinations of the different logic arguments: the choice of a content of a message can be essentially politic, the choice of a sender can be essentially economic, and the choice of the message code can be essentially social (Missika 1998).

The observer can discern the tendencies, and analyse it, by considering the communication action as a unity. He can then interrogate himself, for example, on the degree of compatibility of these different choices, according to the results of the communication action: is a "political" message correctly transmitted by an "economic" sender? Do the technologies used, allow culture to be expressed?

The socio-political analysis of communication is not compatible with the hypothesis putting forward a determinism rather than conjunction of influences, because the strict dissociation of what is revealed from each logic is artificial, the reality is by definition more complex.

The socio-political analysis can found in organisational communication a vast range of applications. We will analyse the mutations generated to companies due to the introduction of ICT.

In companies, the traditional schemes of work organisation are being modified by the penetration of ICT. Work in network and distant work, also called "teleworking" (however this word is always associated to the notion of working at home), disrupts the traditional structures, based on a unity of place and time. The gain in flexibility is followed by a diminution of the hierarchy level: the middle management find it difficult to have a place in a structure that is more and more horizontal, where the control becomes a contract. An organisational culture based on proximity of each other is progressively replaced by, with crisis, by a culture where each one has more responsibility, because more isolated (Lipnack,Stamps. 2002).

And yet this autonomy is followed by a difficulty of gaining reconnaissance from hierarchy and colleagues, who cannot see the work that is being done. These mutations confirmed by our own observations, shows that communication is at the same time an instrument and the consequence of organisational change. For the purpose of flexibility and profit, ICT didn't not only generated the work in network: they have also imposed to the company a communication more and

more formal and asynchronous, with the supposed consequences in terms of organisation and social link. E-mails could symbolise this new order. Its appropriation is today a strategic stake for companies, because it can optimise most of the forms of distant cooperative work (Meyrowitz 1999). But its substitution to other means of communication, richer because synchronous and vocal, like the face to face or the telephone, translates a feeling of non-reconnaissance and of isolation more frequent or pronounced. Electronic communication is a vector of organisational change (facilitating distant work), leading to a mutation of human relations (more formal, less rich) and to the social link. The crisis of middle management gives us an example of this phenomenon. ICT gives a direct access to information and to the superior hierarchy echelons, giving to the staff to bypass the middle hierarchy, by taking the bases of its controlling power, of decision and information.

The socio-political analysis of communication through ICT gives a better frame of comprehension in order to understand the dynamic of the mutation encountered in companies. The economic logic, cost effectiveness and competitiveness, is certainly very present, ICT have indeed a better response to the demand of the market, due to the gain of flexibility and reactivity. But the technique and social logic counteract in some ways these arguments. Actually, the communication technically possible, thanks to ICT, is however socially less rich and less satisfactory (lack of reconnaissance, confinement), preventing from its optimal use, at the economic side, of these new tools. The social logic, founded at the same time on individualistic aspirations and culture (international, national, regional, corporate, profession...) contributes to a perception of the use of ICT, no more like a competitive advantage, but like a factor of exclusion. To resume, this adjournment of these traditional cultural criteria's is translated by two main difficulties: the contradiction between the autonomy of work and the past working habits, and the difficulty to recognize competencies. The social logic infers then a resistance to change (crisis, rejects...), noticeable in the actions of communication. The choice of the addressee, the sender, the content of the message, of the code and the canal, prove to be eminently politic: each person communicates to the group what is waiting from the others and from the organisation, hoping, consciously or not, conciliate the best of their own aspirations and the collective interest (Windhal & Signitzer 1992). Each message leaves the addressee a glimpse of "a world vision" from the sender, which is the compromise between the different logics that have motivated action. The addressee completes in this way his own vision of the organisation, and interacts in consequence. A dominant economic logic, shown through the speech of the superior in hierarchy, can provoke, from the person on who he is speaking to, a phenomenon of reject can occur, if this one takes in more consideration towards the social logic. The introduction of teleworking in companies illustrates this dynamic: even when the will comes from the managing team (for economic reasons), even when teleworking is technically feasible. This mode of organisation encounters difficulties to be implemented (Windhal & Signitzer 1992). A large number of managers refuse to see their power fading (social

logic) and many potential teleworkers stay attached to the traditional organisational culture, in which they have recognition and social link. Communication gives the possibility of a confrontation between these different expectations, and the resulting interactions make the organisation evolve in a favourable or unfavourable way, for teleworking for instance, or for any other ICT means.

It is also possible to analyse in a first approach the structure of an organisation (or a fragment of this structure), in order to deduce how communication can participate at change. The example of intranets shows how a fragment (the tree) can enable to discover all of it (the forest the ecosystem).

In companies, traditional intranets, essentially aimed to inform, are progressively letting the place to environments combining access to data bases, virtual forums, training or online help. These environments answer to two imperative criteria's: first of all capitalising and transmitting the know-how, then creating new forms of social link, in a context of evolution of the relationships towards time, space and the others. These new environments complete traditional groupware software's, by offering to the users possibilities of communication less formal, more diversified, in an open network. They also create a junction between professional training and the exchange of know-how. We talk of knowledge management. (Buckman 1999)

Communication actions, of information and training of classical types, that do not use ICT, found an added echo on the Intranet, the sites present on the network can be used as relays (the term action is here used in the sense of project, of manifestation or offer, closer then to the public relation practice). This complementarity is manifest, notably, by the implementation of web sites uniquely made for the purpose of supporting actions more traditional, for example symposiums, exhibitions, special events, etc. The success of a web site or an intranet depends on several factors: actuality, the pertinence and rarity of the proposed information. The "Technical Culture" of the employees, the organisational culture, the quickness of the dialogues transiting from the site (on the forums), the quickness of the documents uploads, the promotion of the site on other supports, etc. The diversity of the web sites and intranets and other ICT contexts and the lack of feed back on these specific tools make it difficult to generalise the causes of success of failures (Lipnack, Stamps. 2002). We can notice however two tendencies: the virtual forums have difficulties to implement in companies and the reactivity of the site, which is quick responses to the user's demands, is essential.

Conclusion

The technical logic : informatics networks allows several persons to work in distinctive places and to access easily and rapidly to the same information's, numerised and stocked in data bases. From the same workstation (same

computer), it is possible to access to general information's, to get trained, or to communicate. The transition of a function to an other is done on "request", without any constrains neither of time nor of place. The communication allowed by these tools of mails and forums is generally made trough writing and is asynchronous.

The economic logic: the diminution of the constrains in order to access information enables the reactivity of companies. At the same time, the possibility to work in groups and distantly on common projects (teleworking) increase flexibility. The development of the Intranet generates also economy of scales, with structures that are lighter where information transit (human and material), and of an utilisation less important of paper supports.

The social logic: Users are waiting of an intranet or internet site, that it responds rapidly to they needs of communication, of information and training. Depending on the culture, individualistic or collectivistic (international, national, corporate, professional...) the resistance encountered are more or less important. The intranet changes a lot the "processing schemes" culture, in term of access of information and communication; however it leads to a difficulty of identifying factors of success and failure the more decisive.

The political logic: The use of ICT, in the case of intranets, is generally seen as ineluctable if the company wants to stay competitive and follow the market. This logic of global politic does not correspond, however, at the individualistic logic of those who are feeling excluded or backwards by technological change, each of them trying to conciliate there proper interest with those of the company.

The socio-political analysis of the ICT structure reveals a rationalisation of communication, source of organisational change. The economic, technique, social, and political logic converge more and more to a utilisation of ICT combining closely communication, information research, and training : All relations must, if possible, contribute at the same time to the collect of meaning full information and social integration of those who are communicating. This rationalisation of exchanges, originated from the confrontation of the different logics, is translated by a modification of the relationship to the other (the person becomes a resource), who leads to the evolution of structures. The configuration of networks, intranet and internet, today to this extent, is an observable process.

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