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PUTTING CO-WORKERS IN THE LIMELIGHT:
NEW CHALLENGES FOR COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONALS

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New conditions, new challenges

"[I]f cars had improved at the same rate as internal communication, we'd still be walking in front of them with a red flag!" (Quirke, 2008, p. 4) Too many communication professionals still work in a tolerable traditional way when it comes to internal communication; they are captured in the old production trap focusing primarily on message design and media choice. These communicators tend to reproduce their master's voice and transmit general information in a vertical direction flowing from the top to the bottom. Hence, the focus of many communication professionals is still too narrow and tactical, and quite loosely coupled to the actual work processes in the organization. According to Kennan and Hazleton (2006) "the perception that communication professionals are not relevant to basic organizational activities continues to persist at the start of the 21st century" (p. 312).

In recent years we have seen a trend towards a managerial focus in communication professionals taking the role as coaches supporting managers in their communication roles. This is a clear step towards a more strategic role, closer to the basic work processes in the

organization. Furthermore, for some time the principal goal of many communication managers has been to become a member of the board of directors, and thereby increase the status of communicators vis-à-vis other professionals in the organization (cf. J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 2006). In Sweden communication managers have been quite successful in their intentions, and in 2009 almost 80 percent had representatives at the board (The Swedish Public Relations Association, 2009). The same pattern can also be found in other European countries. The increasing interest for leadership communication and being part of the board of directors, are clearly important, and probably necessary, steps to fulfil a more strategic role. Communication professionals, are however, still captured in a vertical, top-down thinking, which is not consistent with fundamental changes within contemporary organizations. In order to add more value and further develop the communication, it is necessary to focus much more on both vertical and lateral communication flows, and to support not only managers but also co-workers in their role as communicators.

There has traditionally been a general mythologization of leadership and a strong tendency to perceive leaders as "Supermen" that can rule more-or-less willing followers (cf. Tourish, 2008). Once co-workers are paid attention to, they are often treated as *passive objects* that are to be led, motivated, calmed down, informed and so forth. In this article, we will instead argue for a view of co-workers as *active subjects* who formulate messages, make critical interpretations, influence colleagues, managers and customers. During the last decade the status of management and managers has decreased due to a derogation rooted in the nature of the work and the connection to bureaucracy and inflexibility (Brocklehurst, Grey, & Sturdy, 2010). At the same time, the status of co-workers has increased which among other things is related to the expansion of as post-bureaucratic and knowledge-intensive organizations (see Alvesson, 2004).

These organizations – and very often their communication policies – are imbued with concepts such as teams, dialogue, workplace democracy, and employee engagement. These and other related concepts presuppose a power shift with new communication processes, and concurrently, also ascribe an active, not to say, crucial role to co-workers.

The PR-guru James Grunig (2006) believes that public relations must be institutionalized as a strategic management function, and he also pinpoints that a major role of communication professional's work is to empower those with less power. Thus, communication professionals have to leave their safe ivory tower and work actively in the organization as internal consultants supporting both managers and co-workers. The idea that communication professionals shall contribute to organizational effectiveness and not only disseminate information is not new. Already in the 1970s Broom (1979) launched a typology of communicator roles, i.e. expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator and communication technician, where several imply that communicators should be deeply involved in organizational processes. This is also a main idea in Grunig and his colleague's grand Excellence project (Dozier, Grunig, & Grunig, 1995; J. E. Grunig, 1992; L. A. Grunig, Grunig, & Dozier, 2002), but co-workers are more or less neglected in this research. In this article we maintain that co-workers ought to be put in the limelight by communication professionals, because there have been substantial changes in organizational life and research focusing on the importance of co-workers and co-workership. These new conditions create new challenges for communication professionals. It is also a chance for communication professionals to leave their marginalized position within the field of internal communication (Keenan & Hazleton, 2006) and add more value to the organization.

The aim of this article is firstly to discuss and illuminate how co-workership – with particular focus on communicative aspects – can be described and understood, and secondly to discuss the new challenges for communication professionals that co-workership bring about.

The article is organized in the following manner. First we discuss the concept of co-workership and put it into an organizational framework. The rest of the paper is then based on Andersson and Tengblad's (2009) definition of co-workership as those practices and attitudes that co-workers develop in relation to their *manager*, their *colleagues* and their *employer* at large (i.e. to the organization as a whole). We will discuss what co-workership mean linked to these three relationships and also give examples of some communication implications. The last part includes a discussion of what a new focus on co-workers' communication role mean for the role of communication professionals.

The origins of co-workership

As mentioned above, we depart from Andersson and Tengblad's (2009) definition of co-workership as those practices and attitudes that co-workers develop in relation to their *employer* at large (i.e. to the organization as a whole), to their *manager* and to their *colleagues*. This is a descriptive definition, which refers to all kinds of co-workership irrespective of how well it works. A normative perspective of co-workership includes elements such as commitment, responsibility, loyalty, initiative and cooperation (cf. Hällstén & Tengblad, 2006; Möller, 1994). Other forms of "ship" such as leadership, citizenship and entrepreneurship evoke the same associations. In this article we would like to combine Andersson and Tengblad's (2009) three relational dimensions with a certain degree of activity, commitment and responsibility. This

means that the traditional relation between managers who think and plan, and subordinates as a submissive, manual labour resource does not fit into to the idea co-workership.

Co-workership is a rather new concept and has, so far, only been used in Scandinavia. Scandinavian management style is often described as goal-oriented focused on delegation, participation and coaching. The idea of co-workership is also said to have strong links to Swedish labour law such as the codetermination act (Hällstén & Tengblad, 2006). Having said that co-workership is a Scandinavian concept with no direct correspondence in English literature does not mean, however, that co-workership is mainly a Scandinavian phenomenon. On the contrary, a global attitude survey within the Volvo companies has shown that there are higher levels of engagement and cooperation among employees in Turkey, India and Brazil than in Sweden, i.e. countries where industrial developments are taking place for the time being (Irfaeya, Liu and Tengblad, 2006).

Within international research, *followership* is probably the existing term most closely related to co-workership. There is an emerging focus on leadership as a mutual influence process among leadership scholars. The idea of the leader as a lonely hero tend to be abandoned in favour of the idea that leadership and followership are one coin with two sides; without followers there can be no leaders (and vice versa) (Baker, 2007; Collinson, 2006; Fairhurst, 2008; Taulbert, 2008). However, we prefer the term co-workership since 'follower' and 'followership' indicate a dependent, passive and submissive role. We would also like to stress that followership is a more narrow concept than co-workership. Followership is seen in relation to the manager, whereas co-workership as defined above, also include the relation to the organization at large and to the colleagues.

The rise of the concept of co-workership is related to changes in working life in Sweden and many other countries during the last three decades. These changes constitute a shift away from the Tayloristic and bureaucratic organization ideals. We will not go into detail about the discussion and the characteristics of these "new" organizations, alternatively called post-bureaucratic (Fairtlough, 2008; Styhre & Lind, 2010; Thompson & McHugh, 2002), post-fordistic (Vallas, 1999) and postmodern organizations (Bergquist, 1993). However, in brief terms, "post-organizations" are connected to work in loosely structured networks, delegation, management by goals and visions (rather than detailed rules), self-directed teamwork and an emphasis on horizontal communication. In this kind of organization, the manager is given a new role as a partner and facilitator to increasingly self-dependent employees.

These changes raise new requirements for employees; it is no longer enough to solely conduct your job, you should also be socially competent, highly engaged prepared to walk an extra mile, service-minded, change-oriented, ready to adopt new values in line with your employer's core values and able to manage stress and heavy work-load (von Otter, 2006; Tengblad, 2006a). At the same time, employees' expectations on their work and employer have also changed. A decent salary is no longer enough, employees also expect a professional manager who can support and inspire them, they also want to have possibilities to influence their work and develop their competence (Tengblad, 2006b).

The ideas of the post-bureaucratic organization imply that the communication between managers and co-workers will take a different turn. In the traditional, bureaucratic organization communication between managers and subordinates was mainly characterized by one-way communication with task-oriented content, i.e. the manager told his or her subordinates what to do in what way and at what time. In the post-bureaucratic organization, this kind of more or less

pure information dissemination is replaced by dialogue and the communication between managers and co-workers is no longer focused on simple directives but rather on visions, values and strategies. The communication process is thus getting more complex as concerns both form and content (Author B, 2002). However, it is not only co-workers' communication in relation to their manager that is getting more complex. In relation to colleagues and the processes of learning and innovation, it is also increasingly important to be able to engage in dialogue, to give and take feedback and to share information in a meaningful way. In relation to the organization at large and the growing importance of branding, each employee is an important messenger. All employees need a thorough understanding of their employer's strategies and values, how their own work fits into the bigger picture and they also need to be able to communicate accordingly.

The table below gives a brief summary of the shift from bureaucratic to post-bureaucratic organizations.

TABEL 1 ABOUT HERE

The table above indicates that organizations are either bureaucratic *or* post-bureaucratic. However, it is an analytical device and "in real life" there is of course a gradual development taking various hybrid forms (cf. Styhre & Lind, 2010). It should also be noted that it has been argued that this shift is more about rhetoric than practice (e.g. Author B; Thompson & McHugh, 2002;Tourish & Hargie, 2004). As we see it, one of the primary reasons for this gap, is that the role of employees and their communication have been neglected all too much.

As the above table indicates, employees have got a much more active and broader communication role, covering various aspects of the organization's internal and external

communication. This development has clear consequences for the role of professional communication practitioners. For instance, in the bureaucratic organization, marketing and external communication was to a much greater extent something that communication professionals more or less solely took responsibility for. Employees were not considered to have any important or crucial role in the marketing process. Of course, communication practitioners still have an important role, but their role today is not delimited to the communication activities of the department for corporate communication, but all employees' communication. Hence, communication practitioners will have to take a role much more as an internal consultant, coach and trainer.

Co-workers' relation to managers

Leadership research has traditionally been heavily leader-oriented: the main focus has been on what people in a management position (i.e. formal leaders) think, say and do. In line with the heroic view of leaders and Great Man theory, much of the leadership research has concentrated on finding the characteristics and behaviours of excellent leaders (Baker, 2007; Collinson, 2006; Crevani, Lindgren & Packendorff, 2010). Collinson (2006) argues that "studies have typically concentrated on leaders as if they were entirely separate from those they lead while followers have tended to be treated as an undifferentiated mass or collective" (p. 179). It is therefore no surprise that the body of literature on leadership is abundant whereas there is still not much written about followership or the relation between the two concepts (Baker, 2007; Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2009; Lundin & Lancaster, 1990; Tourish, 2008). This gives us a clear signal that leaders are those who are most important for the organization and its success. In a way, this is quite paradoxical since there actually are many more followers than leaders. More important

though, is that today's organizational context with more team working, knowledge-intensive work, networks, delegation etc. requires doing away with the view of timid, passive followers.

Though for some time there seems to be an increasing number of scholars who challenge the myths of powerful and heroic leaders suggesting a rethinking of leadership as a relational, co-constructed and discursive process (see e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa & Weber, 2009; Collinson, 2006; Tourish, 2008). Grint (2010, p. 89) even speaks of a post-heoric era where we are now enthralled by its opposite – distributed leadership. Parry and Bryman (2006, p. 455) describe distributed leadership as an alternative perspective that emphasizes the need to view leadership as "a widely dispersed activity which is not necessarily lodged in formally designated leaders". Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) have conducted a case-study in an international knowledge-intensive company that suggests that what leaders do is not that remarkable or different from what other people in the organization do. The managers interviewed stressed rather mundane activities such as listening, chatting and being cheerful as important in their role. This goes hand in hand with the post-heroic era mentioned above, and is thus in stark contrast to traditional leadership literature which typically portray leaders as "doing much of the talking and little of the listening, getting others to listen" (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003, p. 1437).

The notion of leadership as a relational construct is based on a social constructionist perspective; reality is seen as socially constructed and it is not only leaders, but also followers, who manage meaning and contribute to the reality construction that informs the decisions and activities of the group (Fairhurst, 2008; Hosking & Morley, 1991; Sveningsson, Alvesson & Kärreman, 2009). Smircich and Morgan (1982, p. 258) have formulated it as "leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeed in attempting to frame and define the reality of others". In keeping with this, Andersson and Tengblad (2009) criticize the

traditional sharp lines between managers and co-workers and argue that leadership and co-workership are constituted in relation to each other, irrespective if co-workers are active or passive in this relation. They further argue that co-workers can be so involved in decision-making and developing the organization that it is just as adequate to call them *co-leaders* as co-workers.

The management ideal of empowerment, widespread in the 1990s, can at first sight be seen closely related to co-workership. The main idea of empowerment was to empower employees through giving them some of the responsibility that previously had been attached to managers. The consequences were often fewer managers with responsibility for more employees, which in turn, meant less contacts and more formal communication between managers and employees (Andersson & Tengblad, 2009). Co-workership puts instead co-production and co-generation in the centre, and hence, it is important to understand and strengthen the communicative processes *between* leaders and co-workers, not just the communication from managers to employees. Without a close, dialogic relation there can be no co-leaders. In the following sections, we would like to discuss *communication training* and *social media* as two examples of ways to strengthen the communication between managers and co-workers.

The increased communication complexity (cf. above) requires not only managers but also co-workers being skilled communicators. As Lippitt (1982) argues there is as much need for developing and training co-workers as for leadership development. It is particularly important to train co-workers to influence upward, to become more active in communicating with their manager. Tourish and Robson (2006) argue that subordinates tend to suppress critical upward communication and that managers often act in a way that discourage critical upward communication, and once they receive some they tend to disregard it. The result is that

managers often develop a false picture of the communication climate and other organizational phenomena. Training managers to listen and be more reflective about their own behaviour might remedy this problem (cf. above about listening and small talk as an important part of leadership). But also co-workers need to be more aware of their own role and responsibility (cf. Tourish & Robson, 2006). Training in rhetorics and argumentation might make them feel safer to give critical upward communication.

Heretofore however, it is basically just leaders in formal positions that have been trained in their roles as leaders and communicators (Baker, 2007; Lippitt, 1982; Lundin & Lancaster, 1990). One common argument is that it would be too expensive to train all employees, but there also seems to be an overly optimistic assumption that co-workers will be "contaminated" or at least inspired by a communication competent manager. But just as tango, meaningful communication requires two active and skilled parties.

Lippitt (1982, p. 402) even argues that leadership training might be "dysfunctional in that it puts emphasis on strengthening the role of leadership without also focusing on strengthening the skills and competencies of members". Moreover, most leadership development programs nourish the heroic view of leaders and leaders' self-preoccupations through an emphasis on self-awareness and self-improvement (Collinson, 2006). Hence, the one-sided focus on training leaders might reinforce the traditional identities of being superior and subordinate.

Social and new ICT-media provide another potential to change and reinforce co-workers' communication role in relation to the manager (also in relation to colleagues, see below). The information and communication technology that has been put into use during the last two decades has implied a process of democratization of information (Brown, 2003; Kellerman, 2008). Brown (2003) formulates it in the following way:

> […] leaders are no longer the exclusive source of vital information about their companies or fields; therefore they can no longer expect to be followed blindly by their now well-informed, more sceptical ranks (p. 68).

The ICT development thus means that leaders have to work harder to earn respect and induce people to follow. It will be even more important for leaders to listen and learn what people think, what they want and what is happening in the organization (Brown, 2003). Various forms of social media, e.g. blogs and discussion groups, provide a means for listening to the members of the organization and finding out what is important for employees and keep track of emerging issues (cf. Jackson, Yates & Orlikowski, 2007). From a co-worker-perspective, it also important to note that new ICT and social media give employees a chance to make their voice heard. Thus social media offer a new arena for the communication between managers and co-workers, which might affect power and communication patterns in a way that goes hand in hand with the relational view of leadership. Semple (2009) argues that the potential of social media within internal communication is enormous, but unseen so far. He also stresses that there are still significant cultural barriers to be overcome if the great potential of social media is to be realized. A a recent study of internal blogs within Ericsson showed that co-workers seldom gave any comments to leaders' blog posts. The difference from an ordinary newsletter was the personal tone, but the blogs did not change the communication pattern into more interaction. Leaders' blog posts were left "unchallenged", and hence, increased the top-down flow and the interpretative prerogative of managers (Lindgren & Pålsén, 2009). The study reminds us that the technique itself is not enough to change communication patterns and the authors argue that the culture of the organization is a barrier to a more interactive use of blogs.

Relation to colleagues

To some extent co-workership encompasses responsibility and an ability to work independently. Tengblad (2003, p. 15) maintains that fully developed co-workership implies that co-workers are keen to cooperate with their colleagues and contribute to a good social atmosphere and comradeship. Thus, co-workership is a question of interaction, independence and shared responsibility (cf. Andersson & Tengblad, 2009). This presupposes an open communication climate that accepts both positive and negative feedback. A majority of all communication, interpretation and sensemaking in an organization takes place informally among colleagues (cf. J. M. Jackson, 1964). Despite this, informal relations between co-workers tend to be neglected which we believe can be related to the traditional metaphor of organization as a phenomenon.

An organization is traditionally treated as an object independent of organizational members and their relational processes and with a clear border to the surrounding environment. A traditional, entitative view presupposes that organization, environment and communication are separated and stable phenomena. However, already in the late 1960s the American organizational psychologist Karl E. Weick (1969) declared that organizations are not object phenomenon, but rather a social construction. Weick (2001, p. 5) represents a process view of organizations and regards "organizations as collections of people trying to make sense of what is happening around them." In this view an organization is compounded of multiple relations between co-workers, i.e. formal and informal relations that are produced and reproduced through communication (cf. Hosking & Morley, 1991). Communication among co-workers is for this reason essential to an organization, since no organization can exist without communication (Taylor & Van Every, 2000). Hence, this alternative view of organizations presupposes a more profound attention on the important role of co-workers as interpreters, sensemakers and producers of an organization.

Organizational researchers have – at least during the last decade – pinpointed the fundamental role of stable and well-functioning relations among colleagues. Much of previous research has focused solely on formal relations and networks, and excluded the role of informal relations. We are, however, convinced that both practitioners and scholars ought to put informal relations between co-workers and colleagues in centre of their interest in order to produce more and better knowledge of organizational life.

The informal processes become rather obvious with the increasing use of social media, often in the form of internal and external corporate blogs. Social media has challenged many of our assumptions of how organizations functions (Semple, 2009), since the media offer better prerequisite for co-workers to make their voice heard and express their opinion, collectively produce new knowledge and cooperation between different organizational units. Without social and new ICT-media co-workers tend to communicate with those geographically closest to them, since spatial distance itself can impede the communication (cf. J. M. Jackson, 1964). Other scholars argue that social media, for example internal blogs, can be an effective way to increase lateral dialogues in an organization (Cox, et al., 2009). Additional advantages of social media are opportunities to produce social networks and facilitate cooperation and learning (A. Jackson, Yates, & Orlikowski, 2007; Lai & Turban, 2008). The use of internal blogs creates multiple weak ties between co-workers. Granovetter (1973) learned us that co-workers with many weak ties have access to plenty information from remote parts of an organization and consequently have access to many ideas and opinions. Jackson et al. (2007) found that blogs can connect co-workers that normally not have any contact and create weak as well as strong ties. Blogs make it possible for co-workers to learn the "company pulse" and scan different perspectives on a matter. Jackson and her colleague's research indicate that weak ties among co-workers developed from

contacts on blogs occasionally transfers into stronger personal relationships. One important advantage of strong ties is that they motivate co-workers in a greater extent to assist other people. In sum, informal relations, strong as well as weak ties, makes the foundation of an organization and "widens opportunities for effective communication." Selznick (1948, p. 29) To sum up, the explosion of lateral communication in organizations is made possible by information and communication technologies and new organizational work forms such as teams, and has also diminished the earlier clear distinction between formal and informal organizational structure (cf. Monge & Contractor, 2003).

A field that has attracted a lot of attention from both practitioners and scholars is knowledge management. This concept is although seldom defined, but is often connected to control and management of knowledge within an organisation in order to better achieve its goals (Vera & Crossan, 2003). Contemporary researchers have abandoned the static view of knowledge and focus on organizational learning as a process deeply related to co-workers' practices. People learn when they are facing problems in order to maintain their professional identity and pride (Chia & Holt, 2008). Management researcher Ann Cunliffe (2008) emphasizes that if we accept that people jointly make sense in everyday life, develop understanding and produce the social reality, we understand that knowledge exists within actions and actions exist within knowledge. Organizational learning is thus a result of co-workers' communication and interaction. Learning is a natural process that cannot be avoided, but the challenge when it comes to knowledge management is to transmit and reuse knowledge within different communities. Communities of interest are often formed around shared interests, i.e. environmental issues, and attributes such as status, gender, geographic locality or occupation are irrelevant for membership and interaction (von Krogh, 2003). These communities are produced and re-produced through

communication. Social media offers a new transparency within an organization and co-workers at different department can take part of discussions within communities. Furthermore, since this communication platform is regarded as rather informal, an individual co-worker who wrestles with a problem might ask colleagues in the organization for help. We are convinced that social media is an excellent communication platform to foster and facilitate co-workership in relation with colleagues.

Relation to organization

Co-workers have a new and important role as ambassadors of brands. In a world with an ever-increasing global competition branding has become a vital part of organizations' survival. In this international milieu it exists many companies that offer similar products and services, which intensifies the competition and make it even harder for organizations to survive. The competition is also intensified by refined advanced technology, which has made it much more easy to copy successful products and services. As a result it has become harder to differentiate products and services from different organizations, and quality and brand have turned out to be vital tools in the competition. An excellent product and service per se is nowadays not enough to win the battle of consumers. According to Kotler, Armstrong, Wong and Saunders (2008, p. 521): "[b]rands are viewed as the major enduring asset of a company, outlasting the company's specific products and facilities." The rational behind branding is that a strong brand captures consumer preference and loyalty, and it is expected that people in a choice situation will choose a strong brand. A brand is a product of people's perceptions and feelings about an organization, a product or service. There exist obviously always multiple meanings and perceptions of a brand depending on people's experience of an organization, its personnel, i.e. the ambassadors,

products or services. In addition, people's perceptions are also to some extent based on marketing communications such as promotion and public relations. A recently published Swedish doctor's thesis (Cassinger, 2010) shows that consumers' meaning making is based on storytelling, in this particular case stories of Ikea's retail shops.

In 1983 the Swedish researcher in business administration Richard Normann coined the concept "the moments of truth" – a metaphor borrowed from bull fighting. Normann (1983) underlines that the same strategy valid for the matador meeting the bull, is also valid for the front personnel, i.e. the co-workers, meeting customers. The service delivery process is composed of the personnel's skills and techniques and the customers' expectations (thus, the other interpretation is not valid – the customer being killed by the sword or the personnel killed by the customer). The former CEO of SAS Jan Carlzon (1989) has with his book *Moments of truths* and the idiom "the customer in centre" meant much for the popularity and diffusion of this "philosophy", which emphasizes the importance of co-workers. Hence, the perception of a brand is to a great extent produced in interactions between personnel and customers. As we mentioned above, co-workers are the most important ambassadors of their organization and its products. Co-workers are accordingly essential in the production, reinforcement and reproduction of an organizational brand through their actions and communications. Organizational members are significant messengers and acts in professional as well as in private life as ambassadors of their organization. The importance of "living the brand", i.e. that the members act in line with the values of the organization, is a fundamental understanding that many organization seems to ignore (Karmark, 2005). A consequence of this reasoning is that there must be a clear connection between strategic visions and work and communication (Author A & Xx, 2007). Organizations in general need to communicate more with their members on values, strategies, goals and brands,

in order to make them meaningful and not only reduced to rhetoric. We maintain that communication professionals here have an important task to initiate a communication programme on values, strategies and brands. Even if this work is demanding, the real challenge is to help co-workers to understand how values can be transformed into actions in practice (Mitchell, 2004). If co-workers do not understand the vision, the mission and values of the organization, they will have severe problems "living the brand".

The 5C's – challenges for communication professionals

We have previously discussed co-workership as a concept and its implications in relation to leaders, colleagues and organization. In the concluding part we draw the attention to some challenges for communication professionals that co-workership brings about.

As we asserted in the introduction, communication professionals all too often work with tactical aspects of communication, such as message production and media choice, and solely from a management perspective. As a result, many organization authorities are disappointed since communication failure to deliver and the situation tends to become a vicious circle (Quirke, 2008). Further, it becomes aggravated since communication professionals often have deficient expertise to meet the expectations of the dominant coalition (L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002). It is in other words not sufficiently for communication managers to be members of the board, the communication professionals must also contribute with strategic communication knowledge that make the organization more effective, which require a solid education and knowledge in strategic communication (cf. L. A. Grunig, et al., 2002). This also presuppose comprehensive knowledge of the organization, including the work processes, products or services, management structure and so forth (Durutta, 2006). In other words, many communication professionals are too distant

from the daily organizational life and have knowledge deficit regarding the work processes and the daily formal and informal communication processes among co-workers.

As we see it, the next step to develop internal communication is to focus more on co-workers. We have identified five challenges for communication professionals – the 5C:s – that we believe can bring an organization closer to a more comprehensive internal communication. The 5C:s are: constitutive communication, communication developer, communication conditions, communication training and continuous measurements.

Constitutive communication

Quite recently, the notion "communication is constitutive of organizing" (CCO) has evolved within the field of organizational communication (Ashcraft, Kuhn & Cooren, 2009; Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). This understanding, that communication is the essence of organization, has a rather long history. Already in the beginning of the 1900-century John Dewey (1916/2004) pointed out that society and organization exists *in* communication. Consequently, Dewey understands communication as the essence of society and organization, not only as a function. The development of CCO is foremost related to the early work of the American organizational psychologist Karl E. Weick (1969) who rejects the idea of organizations as psychically existing objects or systems. Instead, Weick views organizations as processes of organizing, interpreting an enacted environment which leads to jointly actions. The core of his organization theory are sensemaking processes and Weick's recipe for sensemaking: "How can I know what I think until I see what I say?" (Weick, 1979, p. 133) Hence, an organization is a result of co-worker's sensemaking processes and communication. CCO confronts the traditional, reified view of organization as an objective thing that exists "out there" (cf. Putnam & Pacanowsky, 1983).

Further, CCO has changed the view of communication as a variable or as transmission of information, and in its place understands organizations as emanating from communication. It is important to underline that communication and organization as concepts are not equivalent, but reciprocally constitutive (Putnam, Nicotera, & McPhee, 2009). The point is that organizing occurs in communication (Putnam & Nicotera, 2010), and that organizations are materialized through co-workers conversations and their texts. Conversations are linked to "specific circumstances of time, place, occasion, identity of the participants, history and purpose" (Taylor, 1999, p. 25), while texts are inscriptions of locally produced conversations. Does this rather theoretical discussion have any practical implications for communication professionals, you might ask yourself? First of all, it changes the status of communication in organizations. Since communication is a prerequisite for organizations to exist and function, a main task for communication professionals is to secure *metacommunications*, i.e. the communications about communication (cf. Bateson, 1972). Such reflections on communication must take place on all organizational levels, from the board of directors to co-worker level, with the common aim to discuss how communication between co-workers can be improved. Another important task for communication professionals is to introduce a *communicative perspective* on the organizational processes. When the board of directors are about to make an important decision, the members will always discuss its economic consequences. Since communication is fundamental for an organization, the communication perspective should be as natural as the economic aspects when making decisions. And since communication professionals are an organization's communication experts, they must make clear that "you cannot not communicate" (cf. Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967).

Communication developer

The growing importance of branding, engagement, loyalty and other intangible assets have given both communication issues and communication professionals a more central position within organizations. The increasing number of communication representatives in the board of directors is one sign of this development. However, in order to live up to this new position the perspective of communication and the way of working has to be changed. We therefore want to launch the role as "communication developer", which encompasses a broader assignment for communication professionals. This role involves a holistic perspective – analyzing, supporting and developing all communication processes and actors of the organization, rather than focusing on specific or single communication activities and actors (cf. Hamrefors, 2009). It is thus no longer enough to simply fulfil the traditional roles of distributor and craftsmen (Quirke, 2008), but communication professionals must think much more in terms of being an analyzer and supporting other actors' communication. And as we have argued in this article, it is increasingly important to not just support managers but also co-workers. Supporting others' communication does not necessarily mean that communication professionals need to be directly involved in all communication processes, but rather being a director who stage and provide preconditions for fruitful communication. For instance, when it comes to social media, communication professionals might be those who initiate, encourage, provide guidelines for and analyze the use of this kind of media, but they are not operating it.

In arguing for the role of communication developer we do not mean that operative skills and roles are not relevant for the communication profession. But in similarity with other professions (cf. for instance the profession of economist and the various roles it includes), we

think that the communication profession must subsume several role categories, and it is now time to develop a more holistic and strategic communication role.

Communication conditions

Co-workership demands that co-workers in an organization take responsibility for building and maintaining good relations with other co-workers and that they see themselves as partners, not subordinates. A requirement for co-workership to be realized is a positive and open communication climate and the existence of a communication platform that makes it possible to develop relationship among co-workers. An open communication climate is also a prerequisite for a more intensive flow of critical upward communication (Tourish, 2005). The challenge for communication professionals is to encourage co-workers to build new relationships with colleagues in the organization both through face-to-face communication and on-line communication in social media. There are of course many arrangements that can contribute to such a climate. Since we have limited space, we have chosen to solely focus on on-line communication. These media offer new possibilities for co-workers to receive information and communicate, which challenge traditional communication structures and practices (e.g. Stephens & Malone, 2010). Social media can for example foster participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness (Phillips & Young, 2009; Semple, 2009). Managers' earlier exclusive access to important information has changed and thereby some of their power advantage. In sum, all these changes in contemporary organizations presuppose a power shift with new communication processes, and concurrently, also ascribe an active, not to say, crucial role to co-workers. An important task for communication professionals is to provide a rich media landscape in the organization and follow the development within social media. Communication

professionals have here an important role in commenting the posts in internal corporate blogs (cf. A. Jackson, et al., 2007), because these comments are often more appreciated than the actual posts and consequently have great potential to influence. In some organizations communication professionals must convince management that social media is a "serious" channel that have many advantages and can contribute to a more open communication climate. This persuasion is worthwhile, since "redundancy of communication channels leads to good internal communication" (White, Vanc, & Stafford, 2010, p. 79).

Communication training

Many leaders are supported with training, tools and coaching which help them to develop a strong identity as leaders and communicators. Co-workers are on the contrary seldom offered any formal training. This is in spite of the fact that leaders and co-workers often are described as quite equal in communication policies and similar documents. Though as argued above, if we are to create a dialogic relationship there must be two well equipped communication parties – not just one. Communication training of co-workers could include elements such as: constructive feedback, dialogue, analyzing target groups, rhetoric skills, cross-cultural meetings and reflection upon different communication roles within the organization. The last mentioned element – the need to discuss and clarify different communication roles – is perhaps one of the most important parts to include in the training of both leaders and co-workers (cf. Author B, 2002). In most manager–employee relations there is an invisible or tacit communication contract that often needs to be clarified or further developed. The contract should include expectations and guidelines related to the communication in everyday work. For instance, what does it mean that all employees have a responsibility to keep themselves posted about information affecting their

work? This is a statement found in many communication policies, but even so, it is quite unclear what it really means.

A common argument is that there are not enough time and resources to train or support all employees. And even if resources are reallocated, it will not be enough to support the lot of employees. As in all situations there is of course a need for prioritizing and initially it is important to consider if there are any key-groups of co-workers who, because of their position or lack of skills, are in greater need of training than other groups. As concerns training, it should also be noted that Human Resources is an important cooperation partner. Different kinds of training and coaching have traditionally been part of the terrain of the Human Resources, but when it comes to the communicative aspects of leadership and co-workership we think that communication professionals and human resources need to build a partnership in order to be successful. Quirke (2008) even argues that "ideally, communication should not exist as a single department – it should be a process for which a number of functions are responsible" (p. 296). As organizations and concurrently communication have become more complex, we also need to involve more competencies and resources in the communication work.

Continuous measurements

Another implication deals with measurements and reward systems in relation to co-workership. Most co-workers are probably measured on how well they perform and deliver products and services – not on how well they perform as co-workers in relation to colleagues for instance (even if there, of course, can be a relation between these two dimensions). Today, many organizations carry out regular attitude surveys among their employees. The main focus in these surveys is usually co-workers' attitudes of how well the management team and their nearest

managers perform (quite often with a rather strong focus on communication). The surveys can clearly be seen as a way of empowering employees. Here, they have their chance to anonymously evaluate their managers. However, the attitude surveys can also be regarded as a way of diminishing co-workers' and their role; they signal that it is first and foremost managers who count. We therefore think that an attitude survey with stronger focus on co-workers and their communication could be a way of strengthening co-workership (cf. Hällstén and Tengblad, 2006).

Conclusions

In this article we have argued that communication professionals ought to put co-workers in the limelight, since they have become even more important than ever for the success of an organization. This is related to substantial changes in the way of working in contemporary organization, where co-workers are apprehended as specialists within their field. There has also been an important change in leadership research, where the traditional focus on the leader as a person is downplayed in advantage of a larger focus on leadership as a relational process. There are even some researchers that talks about co-leadership. We mean that communication professionals also must encompass co-worker and facilitate their communication processes.

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