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ACADEMIC COURSE WINTER SEMESTER 2023/2024 MASTER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT, MODULE 06-005-537

Global Corporate Communications (S)

Prof. Dr. Christof E. Ehrhart

Friday, 10:15–17.45hrs, Nikolaistr. 27–19, Room 1.01, on the following dates:
17.11.2023, 15.12.2023, 09.02.2024, 23.02.2024
Examination: Portfolio; written part due on 29.03.2024

Topic

The seminar addresses current challenges and solutions for strategic communication in global companies. Practical knowledge on the success factors of international corporate communications will be conveyed and tested along case studies. The focus will be on long-term communication strategies, tactical communication planning, organizing the communication function and departments, and leadership culture in communication management. Specifically, the following topics will be addressed based on current debates and literature introduced in the parallel course “International Research in Communication Management” in this module:

- *Digitalization*: Building reputation, trust and relationships in a digital world characterized by virtualized and automated communication environments,
- *Responsibility*: Meeting stakeholder expectations and activism while facing global sustainability challenges including environmental, social and governance goals,
- *Societal and political change*: Managing public affairs in times of antagonistic international relations, confrontational trends in politics, and tribalization of society.

Learning objectives

Upon completion of the module, students will be able to understand challenges of communication management in international contexts and to design solutions. In addition, they will be able to bridge the gap between debates in academia and society on the one hand and practical demands for communication leaders and practitioners on the other. Students will be able to classify the significance of current debates for companies and their communications, and they will be able to develop strategic concepts for addressing such debates by means of corporate communications. The aim is to recognize not only the professional requirements for excellent corporate communications, but also the unfolding changes in the global environment for communications.

Method

The seminar is based on interactive discussions and group work. Essential insights into the practice of global corporate communications and dimensions of the fundamental change in corporate communications will be conveyed by the lecturer in the first session. In a second step, students are asked to develop their own ideas and perspectives for specific challenges (listed below) within the three topical areas of digitalization, responsibility and societal and political change. The international research literature discussed in the parallel

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course in this module can serve as a starting point, but additional sources need to be identified. 10 teams with three students each will be formed to develop strategic solutions for specific communications challenges and to defend them against critical questions from fellow students. Specific observer teams will be created to exercise giving and receiving feedback. Each group will consider the feedback and prepare a final paper that presents their solution in writing. Starting with the second session the teams will be additionally asked to engage in short disputes (“PR battles”) to defend – after short time for preparation – positions regarding fundamental questions related to topical areas of digitalization, responsibility and societal and political change. Also for the feedback on these disputes specific observer teams will be created.

Module overview and examination

This course is part of the module “International Communication”. Students enrolled have to attend both classes. Examination: Portfolio, composed of a) case study solution with presentation (in the seminar), b) presentation, moderation or protocol (in the lecture). Grading is based on a). Presentations, moderations and notes have to be assessed as “passed”. Regular attendance during this course is required, as study regulations require 30 hours of presence time for acquiring credit points in this course. Please inform the lecturer in any case of illness etc. via e-mail. The written study solution has to be submitted until 29.03.2024 digitally (PDF via e-mail to Prof. Ehrhart and Prof. Zerfass) and in print (via post or personally to Ms Böhland).

Digital platforms

This course will be taught in presence, and we will switch to hybrid or digital teaching only if necessary. Please make sure that you can use zoom.us (<https://zoom.us/>) to its full extent in case we need it.

Topics

10 groups with 3 (or 2) students each will be formed to address one of the challenges below. These are preliminary outlines that might be modified or detailed during the seminar. Topics fall into two categories:

- The *advising topics* ask students to research the challenge at hand and identify potential implications for global companies and their communications at large. Imagine that the trend at hand pops up in the public discourse or during a top management meeting, and the CEO asks your team what this means for the company and its communication strategy, and you ask yourself what this means for the set-up, leadership and culture of the communication function. Your task is to give a concise overview, outline potential areas of action, and suggest how priorities can be identified and internal projects designed to address the challenge.
- The *conceptual topics* ask students to research the challenge at hand and its implications for corporate communication strategies of a specific industry. Imagine that you are in charge of global communications in such an industry, or that you are a strategic consultant working for clients in the industry. You ask yourself how you can address the challenge through communication strategies and tactics. Your task is to develop a communication concept for a self-selected company from this industry.

#	Type	Topic
		<i>Digitalization: Building reputation, trust and relationships in a digital world characterized by virtualized and automated communication environments</i>
1	Advise	Reputation management and building trust in a digital world: Strategic opportunities and risks of AI-based communications
2	Concept	Building reputation in a digital world: AI-based communication strategies for multiple stakeholders. A concept for a self-selected company example from e.g. the IT industry, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry)
3	Concept	Disrupting internal communications? New ways to inform, connect and engage employees when working from home or in hybrid models. A concept for a self-selected example from e.g. the IT industry, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry)
		<i>Sustainability: Meeting stakeholder expectations and activism while facing global sustainability challenges including environmental, social and governance goals</i>
4	Advise	Beyond environmental protection – the responsibility agenda of the 21st century and its communicative challenges and opportunities for business
5	Concept	Dealing with activism: Facing critical stakeholder campaigns on controversial issues with credible communication. A concept for a self-selected company example from e.g. the IT industry, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry
6	Concept	Stakeholder engagement: Using CommTech for connecting with activists and opinion-makers. A concept for a self-selected company example from e.g. the IT industry, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry
		<i>Societal and political change: Managing public affairs in times of antagonistic international relations, confrontational trends in politics, and tribalization of society.</i>
7	Advise	Beyond lobbying: Public affairs strategies between business objectives, public interest, and legitimacy in times of fundamental change

8	Concept	Keeping the license to operate: The case for purpose-driven public affairs. A concept for a self-selected company example from e.g. the IT industry, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry
9	Concept	Campaigning for legitimacy? – Matching risks and opportunities of corporate political advocacy. A concept for a self-selected company example from e.g. the IT industry, the automotive industry, the pharmaceutical industry

Contact

Please contact Professor Ehrhart via e-Mail christof.ehrhart@uni-leipzig.de or during the seminar sessions.

Course material

There is no Moodle course for this seminar. Basic research literature for the topics in this seminar will be discussed in the parallel course “International Research in Communication Management” and provided there via Moodle. The following overview texts in German language are also available there:

- Ehrhart, C. (2016). Kommunikationssteuerung in der Postmoderne. In L. Rolke & J. Sass (Hrsg.), *Kommunikationssteuerung. Wie Unternehmenskommunikation in der digitalen Gesellschaft ihre Ziele erreicht* (S. 81–91). DeGruyter Oldenbourg.
- Ehrhart, C., Hardt, C., & Maloney, P. (2017). Die Rolle der Unternehmenskommunikation In E. Deekeling & D. Barghop (Hrsg.), *Kommunikation in der digitalen Transformation* (S. 33–67). Springer Gabler.
- Ehrhart, C. (2022). Internationale Unternehmenskommunikation. In: A. Zerfaß, M. Piwinger & U. Röttger (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Unternehmenskommunikation* (3. Aufl., S. 189–204). Springer Gabler.
- Ehrhart, C., & Zerfaß, A. (2021). Strategien von Public Affairs in Unternehmen: Herausforderungen und Chancen in Zeiten des wirtschaftlichen und gesellschaftlichen Wandels. In U. Röttger, P. Donges & A. Zerfaß (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Public Affairs. Politische Kommunikation für Unternehmen und Organisationen* (S. 333–346). Springer Gabler.

Furthermore, students are also invited to read:

- Ehrhart, C. (2018–2023). *Future-Proofing PR*. Blog available at <https://www.futureproofingpr.de/en/>
- Ehrhart, C. (2019). *Erfolgsfaktor PR. Impulse für die Unternehmenskommunikation*. Frankfurter Allgemeine Buch.