



**ACADEMIC COURSE WINTER SEMESTER 2024
MASTER COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT, MODULE 06-005-542**

**Strategic Communication:
Value Creation and Business Models for Communications (V)**

Prof. Dr. Ansgar Zerfaß

Monday, 15:15–16.45hrs, Nikolaistr. 27–29, Room 1.01,
on the following dates: 25.11., 09.12., 16.12.2024; 06.01., 13.01., 20.01., 27.01.,
03.02.2025. Please note the different time slot on 16.12.2024.
Written exam for the module on Tuesday 11 February 2025, 09:15–11:15hrs.

Topic

This course explores the contribution of communication to value creation for corporations and other organizations. Every inhouse communicator and every consultant should be able to explain organizational leaders or (internal) clients why, when and how it makes sense to use scarce resources for communication activities.

Commonplaces like the positive impact of reputation or relationships for success, positive effects in the media or stakeholder reactions are not sufficient. What is needed internally is a business model for communications – a model that describes the rationale of how a communication department creates, delivers, and captures value for an organization. This will be different for any organization depending on its strategy and stakeholders, and it might change over time. In a similar way, communication agencies and consultancies need profitable business models that deliver value-creating services for their clients.

The course introduces core concepts like shareholder and stakeholder value, value creation, business model design, and the use of strategic thinking for communications. It will discuss the challenges of aligning communication activities to organizational goals; setting-up structures, processes and digital infrastructures for communications; utilizing techniques to position communication departments and communicators at the top and throughout the organization; creating valuable products and services in competitive environments; and measuring the success of communications.

Learning objectives

After finishing the course, students will be able to a) understand the principles of strategic thinking for corporate and organizational communications, and how this helps to guide practical decisions in today's turbulent world; b) analyze existing business models for communications in organizations and for consultancies; c) explain methods for aligning communication to organizational goals; d) know how to position communication departments, agencies and communicators; e) enhance their personal profiles and competencies as communicators; and f) utilize the power of communications for organizational value creation both effectively and efficiently.

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Method

The course is organized as a lecture with integrated discussions. Students should read the relevant literature *prior* to each session. Current research and developments in the professional field will be included in the debate. As such, participants are encouraged to browse recent issues of academic journals (Academy of Management Review; Corporate Communications – An International Journal, Communication Management, Harvard Business Review; International Journal of Strategic Communication, Public Relations Review; Long Range Planning; Strategic Management Journal; etc.) and follow the discussion in industry magazines, esp. those focusing on managing communication departments and agencies.

Module overview and course assessment

This course is part of the module “Strategic Communication” 06-005-542 in the graduate program M.A. Communication Management. The module is open to students enrolled in this program, in the M.Sc. Journalism Program (elective) and for exchange students at the Institute of Communication and Media Studies (see below). Students enrolled have to attend both courses in the module and take an exam. Assessment: Written exam (Klausur, 120 min.) in English, dealing with the content of both courses and the accompanying literature. Regular attendance during this course is required, as study regulations require 15 hours of presence time for acquiring credit points in this course. Please inform the instructor in any case of illness etc. via e-mail.

Exchange students / Guest students

The course and module are offered in English; they expand the offerings at the Institute for Communication and Media Studies for international students. Please note that this is a graduate level (master) course and knowledge about strategic communication, organizational communication, public relations, etc., is required. Students should enroll for the overall module between September 30 and October 7 via TOOL or by contacting the lecturers. Exchange students may receive a certificate of attendance (3 ECTS), which requires full attendance during every session, and a short evaluation meeting with the instructor. Alternatively, they might take the written exam to receive a grade and 10 ECTS (if passed). Please approach the module leader, Professor Hoffmann, via e-Mail until January 24 latest to arrange evaluation meetings or exams.

Moodle course

The literature and presentation slides are available for download on the digital learning platform Moodle at <https://moodle2.uni-leipzig.de/course/view.php?id=33763>. The password will be sent to enrolled students.

Schedule

Conceptual foundations: Strategic communication from an organizational perspective	
25.11.2024	Business acumen, value creation and strategic thinking <i>Literature:</i> <i>Gulbrandsen & Just, 2020 (Chapter 1); Gulbrandsen & Just, 2020 (Chapter 2, 3); Ragas & Culp, 2021a; Zerfass et al., 2018; Zerfass & Link, 2022</i>
02.12.2024	Dies academicus / No lecture
09.12.2024	Aligning communication and organizational goals <i>Literature:</i> <i>Zerfass et al., 2023; Zerfass & Viertmann, 2017</i> <i>Additional reading:</i> <i>Volk & Zerfass, 2018</i>
16.12.2024 <u>09:15–10:45h</u>	Performance measurement and evaluation <i>Literature:</i> <i>Buhmann & Volk, 2022; Zerfass, 2018</i> <i>Additional reading:</i> <i>Buhmann et al., 2019</i>
Functional perspective: Creating valuable communication services and products	
06.01.2025	Stakeholder communications & Advising and coaching internal clients <i>Literature:</i> <i>Borner & Zerfass, 2018; Holtzhausen et al., 2021</i> <i>Additional readings:</i> <i>Macnamara, 2020; Zerfass & Franke, 2013</i>

Individual perspective: Developing practitioners' competencies and mindset	
13.01.2025	<p>Roles, functions, competencies, and leadership characteristics of communicators</p> <p><i>Literature:</i> <u>Nothhaft, 2010; Zerfass & Volk, 2017</u></p> <p><i>Additional readings:</i> <u>Falkheimer et al., 2016; Zerfass et al., 2020; Zerfass et al., 2021</u></p>
Organizational perspective: Designing excellent communication departments	
20.01.2025	<p>Business models for communications in organizations</p> <p><i>Literature:</i> <u>Zerfass & Link, 2024; Zerfass & Link, 2022</u></p> <p><i>Additional reading:</i> <u>Ragas & Culp, 2021c</u></p>
27.01.2025	<p>Positioning communication departments and future-proofing communications</p> <p><i>Literature:</i> <u>Brockhaus & Zerfass, 2022; Stieglitz et al., 2024; Tench & Waddington, 2021, Zerfass et al., 2024</u></p>
Market perspective: Developing successful strategies in the communications industry	
03.02.2025	<p>Guest lecture: "Consultancies and agencies for strategic communication: The market, business models, and drivers of success"</p> <p>Prof. Dr. Alexander Güttler, Chief Operating Officer, Team Farner, Zürich & Founder, komm.passion, Düsseldorf</p> <p>Alexander Güttler represents Team Farner, an owner-led European alliance of leading consultancies that combine all areas of integrated communication from strategy and creativity to behavioural science and technology. He founded the agency group komm.passion (part of Team Farner) in mid-2000 after serving as managing director at Kohtes & Klewes (now Ketchum) from 1997 to 2000. Earlier on, he worked for worked as a journalist from 1983 to 1989 and for the VEBA Group (now E.ON) since 1989, initially as a press spokesman and member of the Executive Board office, before taking over as Head of Corporate Communications and Group Marketing in 1993. He holds a professional degree in marketing, studied journalism, film design and psychology at the University of Dortmund, and has been a lecturer at various universities, including the Westfälische Hochschule Gelsenkirchen, where he has been an honorary professor of journalism and public relations since 2011. Alexander Güttler is a Past President of the German Association of Public Relations Agencies / Gesellschaft Public Relations Agenturen (GPRA) and an active member of the German Public Relations Council / Deutscher Rat für Public Relations (DRPR).</p> <p>Additional readings:</p> <p>Business models for communication agencies, consultants, and service providers</p> <p><i>Literature:</i> <u>Man et al., 2016; Güttler & Bruse, 2022; Hoffjann et al., 2021; Ragas & Culp, 2021b</u></p>
Assessment	
11.02.2025	Details will be announced in the course.

Contact

Professor Zerfass offers regular consultation hours; please visit <https://bit.ly/StratKomm> to see details.

Literature (available on Moodle; sources underlined in the plan above are most relevant for the exam)

- Borner, M., & Zerfass, A. (2018). The power of listening in corporate communications: Theoretical foundations of corporate listening as a strategic mode of communication. In S. Bowman, A. Crookes, Ø. Ihlen & S. Romenti (Eds.), *Public relations and the power of creativity: strategic opportunities, innovation and critical challenges* (pp. 3–22). Emerald.
- Brockhaus, J., & Zerfass, A. (2022). Strengthening the role of communication departments: A framework for positioning communication departments at the top of and throughout organizations. *Corporate Communications – An International Journal*, 27(1), 53–70.
- Buhmann, A., & Volk, S. C. (2022). Measurement and evaluation: Framework, methods, and critique. In J. Falkheimer & M. Heide (Eds.), *Research handbook of strategic communication* (pp. 475–489). Edward Elgar.
- Buhmann, A., Macnamara, J., & Zerfass, A. (2019). Reviewing the ‘march to standards’ in public relations: A comparative analysis of four seminal measurement and evaluation initiatives. *Public Relations Review*, 45(4), 10825.
- Falkheimer, J., Heide, M., Simonsson, C., Zerfass, A., & Verhoeven, P. (2016). Doing the right things or doing things right? Paradoxes and Swedish communication professionals’ roles and challenges. *Corporate Communications – An International Journal*, 21(2), 142–159.
- Güttler, A., & Bruse, T. (2022). *Beyond agile. Ein neues System der Unternehmensorganisation in der Praxis* Springer Gabler. (esp. Chapters 6, 7)
- Gulbrandsen, I. T., & Just, S. (2020). *Strategizing communication: Theory and practice (2nd ed.)*. Samfundslitteratur. (Chapter 1: Strategizing communication; pp. 17–50; Chapter 2: Strategy as deliberate decision, pp. 65–97; Chapter 4: Strategy as emergent action, pp. 145–175)
- Hoffjann, O., Hoffstedde K., & Jaworek, F. (2021). Ready for the unexpected: theoretical framework and empirical findings on communication consulting. *Journal of Communication Management*, 25(1), 1–17.
- Holtzhausen, D., Fullerton, J. A., Lewis, B. K., & Shipka, D. (2021). *Principles of strategic communication*. Routledge. (Chapters 9: Message tactics, pp. 190–216; Chapter 10: Traditional media, pp. 217–245; Chapter 11: Evolving media, pp. 246–275).
- Macnamara, J. (2020). Corporate listening: unlocking insights from VOC, VOE and VOS for mutual benefits. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 25(3), 377–393.
- Man, A.-P. de, Man, M. de, & Stoppelenburg, A. (2016). *The characteristics of new business models in consulting: An analysis of practice*. Paper presented at the Academy of Management Conference, 8–10 August 2016, Anaheim, CA, USA.
- Nothhaft, H. (2010). Communication management as a second-order management function: Roles and functions of the communication executive – results from a shadowing study. *Journal of Communication Management*, 14(2), 127–140.
- Ragas, M. W., & Culp, R. (2021a). Business acumen for strategic communicators. Emerald. (Chapter 1: Strategic communication and business acumen, pp. 3–16)
- Ragas, M. W., & Culp, R. (2021b). Business acumen for strategic communicators. Emerald. (Chapter 11: Business models – Strategic communication agencies and consultancies; pp. 159–176).
- Ragas, M. W., & Culp, R. (2021c). Business acumen for strategic communicators. Emerald. (Chapter 12: Business models – In-house departments and teams; pp. 177–194).
- Stieglitz, S., Zerfass, A., Wloka, M., & Clausen, S. (2023). *Communications Trend Radar 2024. Information inflation, AI literacy, workforce shift, content integrity & decoding humans* (Communication Insights, Issue 20). Leipzig: Academic Society for Management & Communication.
- Tench, R., & Waddington, S. (2021). Future issues for PR and strategic communication. In R. Tench & S. Waddington (Eds.), *Exploring public relations and management communication* (5th ed., pp. 591–610). Pearson.
- Volk, S. C., & Zerfass, A. (2018). Alignment: Revisiting a key concept in strategic communication. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(4), 433–451.
- Zerfass, A. (2018). 战略传播的测量、评估和控制 [Measurement, evaluation and controlling of strategic communication]. In X. Chen (Ed.), *中国公共关系学 [Public relations theories for contemporary China]* (pp. 390–410). Communication University of China Press. (English translation)
- Zerfass, A., & Franke, N. (2013). Enabling, advising, supporting, executing: A theoretical framework for internal communication consulting within organizations. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 7(2), 118–135.
- Zerfass, A., & Link, J. (2022). Communication management: Structures, processes and business models for value creation through corporate communications. In J. Falkheimer & M. Heide (Eds.), *Research handbook of strategic communication* (pp. 237–258). Edward Elgar.
- Zerfass, A., & Link, J. (2024). Business models for communication departments: A comprehensive approach to analyzing, explaining and innovating communication management in organizations. *Journal of Communication Management*, 28(3), 384–403.

- Zerfass, A., & Viertmann, C. (2017). Creating business value through corporate communication: A theory-based framework and its practical application. *Journal of Communication Management*, 21(1), 86–91.
- Zerfass, A., & Volk, S. C. (2017). The boundary spanner. *Communication Director*, 12(4), 79-83.
- Zerfass, A., Verčič, D., Nothhaft, H., & Werder, K. P. (2018). Strategic communication: Defining the field and its contribution to research and practice. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 12(4), 487–505.
- Zerfass, A., Volk, S. C., Meng, J., & Chen, P. (2023). *Toolbox communication management: Thinking tools and methods for managing corporate communications* (Excerpts from the manuscript).
- Zerfass, A., Brockhaus, J., Ehrlinspiel, M., Gulich, S., Heinz, A., Kelm, K., Leißner, V., Müller, A., Rütth, A., Schick, J., Schröder, M., & Weiß, L. (2024). *Perceptions and positioning of communication departments. What C-level executives, middle managers and co-workers know and think about corporate communications and which strategies are used by communication leaders to strengthen their profile. Results of a multi-method study in listed and private companies*. Leipzig: Academic Society for Management & Communication.