



Maximising Strategic Impact

A Route Map to the Top Table

***A research report for
The Communication Directors'
Forum***

echo

Echo Background

Echo Research is the leading independent, specialist provider of brand and reputation analysis, established in 1989 with offices in Europe and the USA, and research partners in Asia and Latin America. With 145 research managers and analysts, the group supports over a quarter of the Fortune and FTSE 100 companies, with clients also in the public sector (such as The Ministry of Defence, Home Office, European Commission), media groups (Dow Jones, Financial Times, BBC, ITV), professional services (PwC, Freshfields), trade associations (American Chemistry Council), regulatory bodies (Financial Services Authority) and non governmental organizations (UNICEF, WWF).

Providing objective and thorough stakeholder studies and media analysis, Echo Research is on the Register of Expert Witnesses. Its media content reports have been used by the Press Complaints Commission, its stakeholder / focus group research have been tabled to government to help drive regulatory change, its senior management facilitation programs and internal surveys have supported change management and brand development programs. Echo's award-winning sentiment reports are also presented to Boards of global corporations to support strategic decision-making and communication researching.

Echo's clients have won record 46 industry AMEC (Association of Measurement and Evaluation Companies) awards in the last four years for measurement and integrated research, including the top Platinum Award and new Innovations Award.

ISO-accredited and a full participant in the United Nations Global Compact, Echo has increasingly focused on the challenges of corporate social responsibility and corporate governance, with a particular emphasis on helping its client base to understand the views and impact of key stakeholder groups.

Echo's specific practice sectors span financial and professional services, higher education, healthcare, consumer, telecommunications, media and technology, utilities, energy, public sector and NGOs. Echo provides communications intelligence to help its clients to measure and improve communications effectiveness, track emerging issues and risks to reputation.

Echo staff and analysts are all trained, quality controlled and bound by confidentiality agreements.

Further details on the methodology and data tables behind our studies are available from Echo Research.



Foreword

Should communication directors sit on main or executive boards? Did those who do, get there due to a set of personal skills that they inherited, or were they learnt? And what distinguishes them from other communication directors, who may aspire to it, but has yet to achieve it? What is best practice within leading organisations? Where does research and evaluation fit in?

These topics have cropped up in countless conversations that I have had with the corporate communications community over the years. The increasing interest in reputation and risk management has also meant a greater than-ever focus at Board level on how strategic communications should be addressed. So when Richmond Events, organisers of the highly successful annual Communication Directors' Forum event, asked us to carry out some research into this area, we jumped at the chance.

Here was a unique opportunity to determine where exactly communications sits in the UK's major companies; what it takes for communication directors to secure a seat on the board or the executive; how leading practitioners address the issues surrounding their positions and ensure their 'licence to operate'; how they draw out some conclusions and to put forward some highly pragmatic recommendations for others.

My special thanks to Isabel Hutchings at Richmond Events with whom we worked closely on this project and who encouraged us to write this report!

I hope that you enjoy reading this report.

Best wishes



S Macleod
CEO, Echo Research Ltd

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1. Introduction

Background

Communication directors are often frustrated by their failure to realise a strategic role within their organisation, frequently defined as a seat on the board or the executive team.

This report summarises the findings of research among communication professionals conducted by Echo Research in conjunction with The Communication Directors' Forum 2005. It looks at why some senior executives have been successful at achieving strategic level communication positions, and what lessons can be learnt from that success.

Objectives

The principal objectives of the research were:

- To identify the percentage of companies both in the FTSE 100 and 250, as well as other companies featuring in Management Today's 2004 'Most Admired' list, who included their senior communicators at either main board or executive team level
- To identify the benefits to organisations of having communications represented at a strategic level
- To establish the organisational and individual characteristics that allow communication to function alongside the heads of other business disciplines
- To identify what individuals and the industry can do to increase the impact of communications at a strategic level
- To provide a route map to the top for those planning their career in communications








Methodology

The research was conducted in March and April 2005 combining three methodologies.

1. Desk and telephone research identified the communication directors (or equivalent) of the FTSE 100, FTSE 250 and Most Admired Companies;
2. A total of 15 in-depth telephone and face-to-face interviews, conducted by Echo Research, with some of the most senior corporate communication professionals in the UK. This survey was used to identify factors and characteristics leading to strategic level success, and to frame the on-line survey;
3. An on-line survey designed by Echo Research was sent to 1200 communications professionals from The Communication Directors' Forum database - 93 replies were received. Just over half of respondents were on the board or executive team of their organisation (56%).

The respondents to the in-depth interviews are shown in the following table. Further information about the profile of the respondents to the on-line survey is given in the appendix of this report.

Table 1. In-Depth Interviewees

	Richard Peel, Managing Director for Communications & Public Reporting Audit Commission
	Sally Osman, Head of Communications BBC
	
	Aisling Burnand, Chief Executive BioIndustry Association
	Philip Dewhurst, Director of Public Affairs BNFL
	
	Mark Ware, Group Vice President Communications & External Affairs BP
	Peter Morgan, Group Director of Communications BT
	
	Howell James, Permanent Secretary, Government Communications Cabinet Office

Ian Wright, Corporate Relations Director
Diageo



Liz Sayce, Director of Policy & Communications
Disability Rights Commission

Adrian Bevington, Director of Communications
The Football Association



Alex Pagett, Director of Corporate Affairs
Hilton Group

Simon Walker, Director of Corporate Communications
Reuters



Dominic Fry, Group Director Corporate Communications
Scottish Power

Louise Brooker-Carey, Director of Communications
Tube Lines



Steven Day, Director of Corporate Affairs
Virgin Mobile

Executive Summary

- Just 3% of FTSE 100 companies have a main board position filled by a communication director (or equivalent). Another 23% incorporate communications on the executive team.
- Of the FTSE 250 companies, a similar percentage (24%) have their communication director on either the main board or the executive team.
- Utilities companies are the least likely to have communications represented, telecoms companies the most likely.
- Forty % of the communication directors on either board or executive team are female, and 60% male.
- In general, communication professionals are happy with the level of strategic input their function has at the top level of their organisation, although many feel they personally could have a more strategic role.
- Organisations benefit from having communications represented at the top tier of management in terms of:
 - Protection of the brand
 - Increased awareness of stakeholder positions
 - Ensuring a match between communication and business strategy
- If organisations do not have communications represented at a senior strategic level, they have greater exposure to damaging reputational risks. Additionally communications suffers from less 'joined-up' thinking and a weaker link between communication strategy and organisational strategy.
- The support of senior management, and specifically the CEO, is a critical factor in allowing communication professionals to function at a strategic level. It is nearly impossible to make an impact in a

hostile, unsupportive environment. In order to succeed, however, the individual must also have a robust character to stand up to and earn the respect of the sometimes formidable personalities leading their organisation.

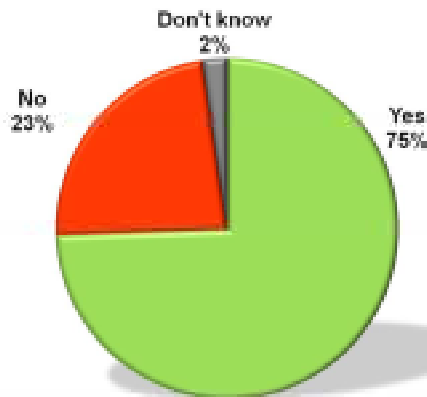
- Having a good understanding of the business environment in which the organisation is operating, and being able to demonstrate how communication contributes to business success are the two most important characteristics to be possessed by individuals hoping to make it to the top. Additionally, communication and team-building skills combined with broad experience are strongly advantageous. Those coming from a journalistic background see this as a plus.
- While communication professionals feel that they are strong at communicating and using communication tools, an area which could be strengthened is building contacts both within and outside of their organisations.
- Boards and executive teams are generally thought to understand the business case for communication 'well', but not 'very well'.
- Measuring the business impact of communications is important, although there is some disagreement as to the extent to which it can be achieved. Better focusing of messages is seen as the key benefit of measurement.
- The long term, gradual benefits of communications and the difficulty of separating out and attributing effect to the different elements of the marketing mix are the main barriers to measuring strategic impact. However, there are calls for the industry not to shy away from the issue by dismissing it as 'too difficult'.
- Industry associations could do more to increase the strategic role of communications by developing standardised measurement tools, providing better training and setting up industry fora.

Main Findings

Level of Strategic Communications Representation

The survey demonstrated that communications professionals are, on the whole, happy with the level of strategic input their function has at the top levels of their organisation but many feel they personally could have a more strategic role.

Chart 1. Do you believe that communications is adequately represented at a senior strategic level within your organisation?

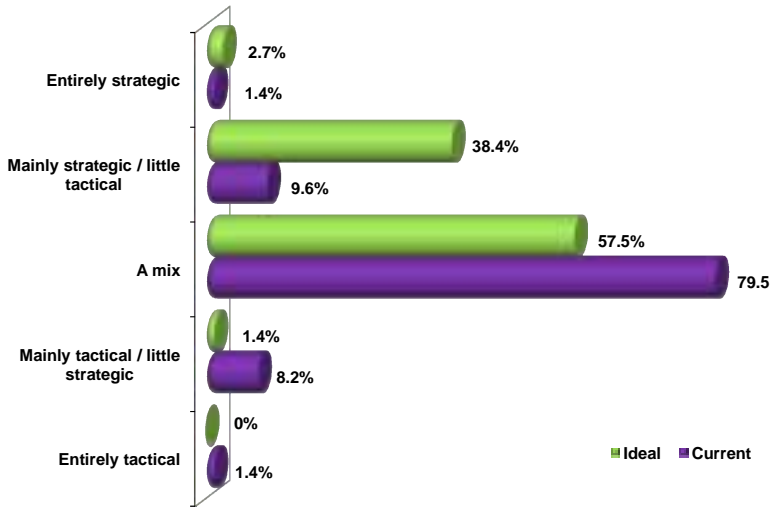


Base: All answering question in on-line survey (86)

Three-quarters of on-line respondents said that they believed that 'communications is adequately represented at a senior strategic level' (75%).

While only 11% said that their current job was either entirely strategic or mainly strategic and a little tactical, 41% thought that this would be the ideal balance.

Chart 2. Strategic / tactical balance in current vs ideal role



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (73)

2. Benefits of Strategic Level Communication Representation

Communications professionals are clear that organisations benefit from having communications represented at the top tier of its management. The main benefits are:

- Protection of the brand
- Increased awareness of stakeholder positions
- Ensuring a match between communication and business strategy

Among on-line respondents, ensuring a link between communications and business strategy was the most emphasised benefit, followed by highlighting potential media issues and ensuring brand consistency.

Table 2. Benefits of Communications Being Represented at a Strategic / Executive team Level

Communication reflects business strategy / not just an add on	36%
Early warning of potential media problems and opportunities	17%
Consistent message	13%
Role of communication is better understood	10%
More effective communication / added value	6%
Focus on media outcomes and brand reputation	6%
Clear point of contact for managers	4%
Wider / deeper support for communication strategy	4%
Better / faster communication with media	4%

Base: All respondents who believe that communications is adequately represented at a senior strategic level within organisation and answering question in on-line survey (45)

Respondents to the in-depth interviews saw themselves much more strongly as being 'guardians' of the brand, ensuring consistency of message and output.

"You can think about how strategy is going to effect the external reputation and image of the organisation"

Richard Peel, Audit Commission

"I think that I am the guardian of BT's reputation, and so I am the gatekeeper for what is said externally about BT"

Peter Morgan, BT

"I'm there to act as a guardian of the brand's reputation, a task I share with the marketing people"

Alex Pagett, Hilton Group

"I am one of the keepers of the brand"

Simon Walker, Reuters

The second, strongly related part of their role was to identify and highlight decisions which would have a negative impact on specific stakeholder groups in order that preventative action could be taken before the brand / corporate reputation was damaged.

"I think it is your responsibility to spot any particularly contentious and political issues that might resonate with the media or with politicians"

Richard Peel, Audit Commission

"My job is to create an environment in which the company can execute its strategy knowing that we understand the views of our stakeholders and have taken those into account"

Dominic Fry, Scottish Power

"The task is not to sit back and wait while some decision is taken which is clearly going to have an adverse effect on the best interests of Hilton and Ladbrokes"

Alex Pagett, Hilton Group

"To a certain extent, I can also bring a different perspective to discussions, almost a corporate conscience, a reminder not just to think about delivering against our contracts, but to bear in mind the people who use the Tube"

Louise Brooker-Carey, Tube Lines Ltd

"Our business decisions aren't made purely because of what the press might think but they're made in a way in which we are conscious of what the press or what analysts or what other commentators may think"

Steven Day, Virgin Mobile

"I can actually challenge a lot and say, 'you may see it that way, but the Editor of the Sun or the Chairman of Greenpeace might see it in a different way, try and work through a stakeholder matrix and look at it through their eyes'"

Philip Dewhurst, BNFL

3. Disadvantages of Non-Representation of Communications at Strategic Level

If communications is not adequately represented at a senior strategic level there is a greater exposure to damaging reputational risks. There is also a concern that companies and organisations will not present a consistent and unified front, and that they will fail to consider the communications implications of business strategy. This lack of 'joined up thinking' about communications increases the chances of making mistakes when handling major announcements or of failing to exploit opportunities.

Of the 20 respondents who did not feel communications was adequately represented at a senior strategic level within their organisation, 14 commented as to the disadvantages they felt this brought. Some example comments are given below.

"We make fundamental mistakes in the handling of major announcements in particular"

"Unable to consider the comms implication of strategic decisions"

"Increased exposure to unnecessary risk / crisis situation. Challenges in bringing the brand to life and to sufficient prominence"

"Lack of understanding by the Chief Executive's team"

"Not getting involved early enough in the planning / development of business opportunities"

Some of the respondents to the in-depth interviews simply could not understand the logic of not having communications represented at a senior level.

"I think the idea of not having a communications expert on the management team is ridiculous if you've got shareholders' money in your hands"

Steven Day, Virgin Mobile

Success Factors

Support of senior management, and specifically the CEO, is seen as a critical factor in allowing communication professionals to function at a senior strategic level within an organisation, suggesting it is still very difficult for an individual to make an impact in a hostile environment.

According to 44% of respondents to the on-line survey, the most important factor that allows the head of the communications function to act at a senior strategic level was the 'support of the CEO and senior management'. Closely connected to this was the importance of 'a culture well disposed to communications', mentioned by 25%. Hence nearly 70% of the respondents consider that a corporate culture, led by senior management, which values communications is a necessary – and probably sufficient - condition for ensuring that communications is represented at a senior strategic level.

The idea that the influence of communications is down to organisation rather than the individual is further supported by the fact that only 18% of the on line survey sample overall felt that *'the influence / attributes of the individual head of the function'* was the most important factor. However, the qualities of the individual were more likely to be considered significant by executive team members (24%) than non-Board members (14%). Non-Board members (14%) were more likely to cite the quality of the overall team as the most important factor than executive team members (5%).

Chart 3. What do you think is the MOST important factor that allows the head of the communications function to act at a senior strategic level?



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (72)

Respondents to the in-depth interviews also believe the support of the CEO and other senior management is essential.

"For a company to be good at communications, the strategy has to be led by the CEO and the senior people have to play a part in it. If you look at successful companies like British Airways or BP, a constant factor there is that their CEOs are heavily engaged in communication"

Philip Dewhurst, BNFL

"You ideally want to get and win over not just the CEO but the Chairman and a number of the key players and influencers, both executives and non-executives"

Alex Pagett, Hilton Group

"If there's not a rapport between the CEO and the Communications Director, there's clearly something wrong"

Simon Walker, Reuters

Indeed, some believe that the success of the communications professional is closely intertwined with the success of the CEO.

"It is clear that the relationship between the Director of Communications and the CEO is a close one, and it is frequently the case that the two change together"

Peter Morgan, BT

"All communications directors are vulnerable to regime change so if the Chief Executive leaves then I think the Communication Director will also go"

Dominic Fry, Scottish Power

However, this is not to say that Communication Directors are 'puppets' of the CEO, indeed a robust personality to stand up to senior management is both required and respected.

"When in full sail, Chief Executives are amongst the most terrifying people in the world. They wouldn't have got to where they are without the ability to make ruthless decisions completely calmly and sleep at night. The consequence of that is that they are very, very forceful but impressive and quite scary people and our job is to stand up to them"

Ian Wright, Diageo

Personal Skills and Attributes

Required Skills

An understanding of the business environment in which the organisation is operating, and being able to demonstrate how communications contributes to business success are seen as key skills for communications professionals operating at the top level. In-depth respondents also talked about team leading skills, and having a broad background across different areas.

The on-line survey identifies two principal attributes necessary for communication professionals to make it to senior strategic levels:

- the *'ability to demonstrate the business value of communications'*
- and the *'ability to link communication objectives to organisational objectives'*.

Both of these attributes are identified by approximately a quarter of respondents as being the MOST important skill / attribute.

This emphasis on demonstrating the business value was more prevalent among executive team members, 35% of which rated this as the most important personal skill compared to only 16% of non-Board members.

An ability to communicate is widely seen as important, but interestingly not as the MOST important attribute. As in general success factors, being in an organisation that understands the importance of communications is also key.

Chart 4. What do you think are the personal skills / attributes which allow a particular individual to progress to a senior strategic communication position?



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (68)

Respondents to the in-depth interviews also felt that an understanding of how communications is linked to the core business was an important success factor.

"I am then able to bring, I think, a good understanding of the business and the business agenda to help make the whole greater than the sum of the parts"

Mark Ware, BP

"If you are not commercial, if you are not grounded in the business you won't continue to have influence. You have to understand the nature of the commercial decisions that underpin the communications decisions you are asking your colleagues to make"

Ian Wright, Diageo

"Many communications professionals still stick to their professional brief, and maybe do not contribute to the overall development of the business"

Sally Osman, BBC

"I hope I can take a broad view of the business, and what's in its interests"

Simon Walker, Reuters

Qualities related to being able to recruit and maintain a strong team were also seen as important.

"Teamwork. In terms of building my own team and attracting and retaining the best people. Also team building at board level"

Dominic Fry, Scottish Power

"I think that the challenge for me is to apply what I've learnt about running teams to internal communications, to public affairs and to analyst relations"

Peter Morgan, BT

"Leadership skills are also important, being able to take not only your team with you, but to take other players within the organisation with you"

Richard Peel, Audit Commission

"I've always been a firm believer in teams helping to deliver clear, simple objectives. If you can set clear objectives and strategies for teams to work to, it is much better than a culture of divide and rule"

Sally Osman, BBC

"Having a really good team around you, or working with good people, is vital"

Aisling Burnand, BioIndustry Association

"I would say extensive experience in the field of public and corporate affairs is number one [advantage]"

Richard Peel, Audit Commission

"They need to get as wide a breadth of experience as possible. The critical thing is you need public experience, private experience and where possible either financial, political or both. Experience is critical"

Alex Pagett, Hilton Group

"I think I have been fortunate in that I have gained a breadth of experience from my previous roles which has been useful in some way in the work I do today"

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Aisling Burnand, BioIndustry Association

"Many [Senior Communication Professionals] have this mixed background of having been in consultancy and having had some exposure to the political world as well"

Ian Wright, Diageo

Several respondents also stressed the need for a wide range of experience to give a **breadth of experience** to understand and deal with issues.

A number of respondents with a background in journalism saw this as advantageous.

"Without any question at all, spending almost all my life in journalism is what has qualified me as a communications executive"

Peter Morgan, BT

"I was a journalist basically, I think that's what counts"

Simon Walker, Reuters

"Being a journalist makes you inquisitive, it makes you opinionated and it makes you able to assimilate a lot of information very quickly"

Steven Day, Virgin Mobile

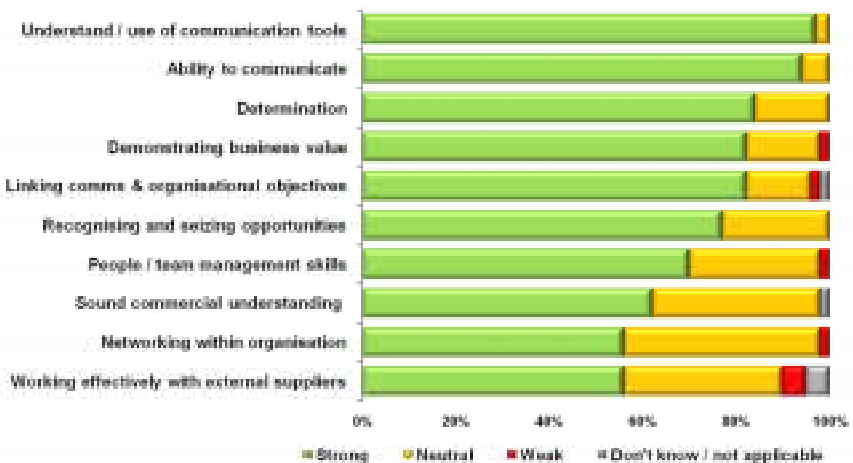
Existing Skills

Not surprisingly, the area where respondents to the on-line survey most commonly considered themselves to be strong was in communication skills, namely the 'understanding of and ability to use a wide range of communication skills' and the 'ability to communicate'.

Very sizeable majorities also saw themselves as being 'strong' in the key attributes they had defined as being important for success in communications management at a senior level, namely being able to 'being able to demonstrate the business value of communications' and the 'ability to link communication objectives to organisational objectives'.

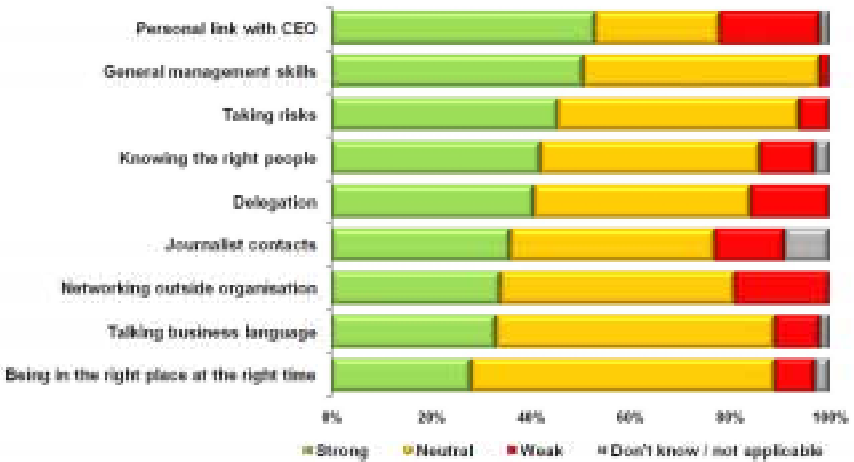
Several of the areas where a high proportion of respondents admitted to being weak were related to networking and contacts.

Chart 5a. Could you please indicate whether you consider yourself strong, neutral or weak in each of the following areas? STRENGTHS



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (65)

Chart 5b. Could you please indicate whether you consider yourself strong, neutral or weak in each of the following areas? **WEAKER AREAS**



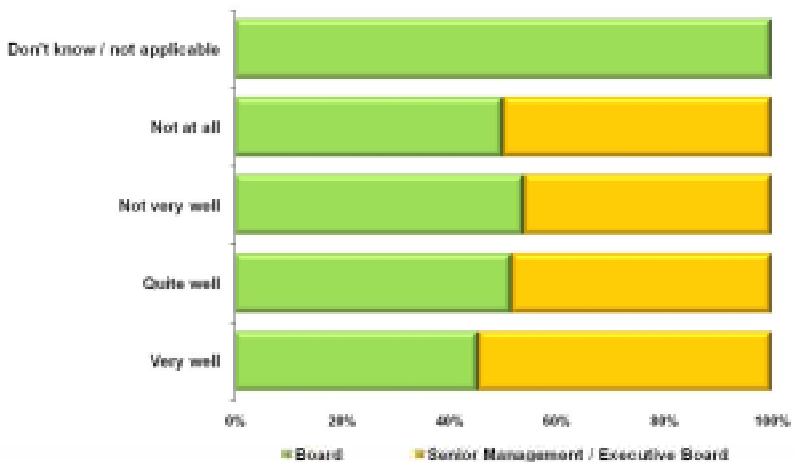
Base: All answering question in on-line survey (65)

8. Understanding the Business Case for Communications

The large majority of the on-line sample believes that the business case for communications is well understood by main and executive teams. Some 83% consider that main boards understand the business case either very or quite well, with a slightly higher proportion (87%) believing that executive teams understand the case.

However, it should be noted that only one-third (35%) consider that the board understands the business case 'very well' although this rises to 42% for the executive teams. On this evidence there is a considerable way to go before a significant majority of boards fully accepts the business case for communications.

Chart 6. How well do you believe that the business case for communications is understood by the board & executive board in your current organisation?



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (65)

Respondents to the in-depth interviews, all on executive teams themselves, felt that their boards (main and executive) did understand the business case for communications, and also that it was something to which companies in general would pay increased attention in the future.

"A CEO who disregarded its importance in the current environment, I think, would be pretty foolish and would not prosper"

Ian Wright, Diageo

"I think the more that companies begin to understand what communications can do for them and how it can help them strategically, the more we'll see the head of communications become a board level position. But I think it will take a while"

Aisling Burnand, The BioIndustry Association

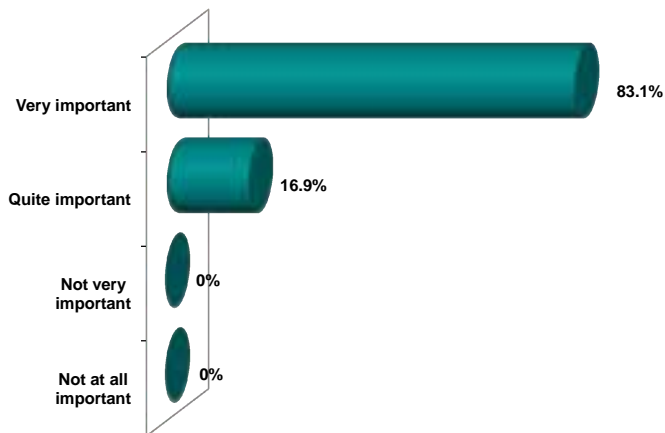
9. Demonstrating the Business Impact of Communications

Importance

Measuring the business impact of communications is unanimously considered to be important.

When asked to rate how important it was that the business impact of communications can be demonstrated in order for communications to be represented at a senior strategic level, 83% of on-line respondents rated it as 'very important', with the remainder rating it as 'quite important'.

Chart 7. In order for communications to be represented at a senior strategic level, how important do you think it is that the business impact of communication can be demonstrated?



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (65)

Respondents to the in-depth interviews generally saw demonstrating the business impact through some sort of measurement as important and useful, although there was some disagreement as to the extent to which it could actually be achieved.

"Everything that we do gets measured and my bonus and remuneration are tied to my scorecard, to my performance. It is tremendously important that we bring everything

down to the bottom line. I don't think you can justify your seat at the top table unless you are accountable, unless you can demonstrate that you are contributing to the business"

Dominic Fry, Scottish Power

"Do you look at return on investment of communications? If you mean do I look at my own investment in what I'm doing and check its value, yes but do I actively say this much money bought us this much coverage and this much favourability, no, I don't and I don't believe in it"

Ian Wright, Diageo

"There is not an equation that links reputation to value, but we increasingly believe that link will get closer and closer and therefore you have to manage all aspects of reputation in a very business like way. But we don't over-fuss, to be honest, with a direct correlation between the amount we spend and the benefit in terms of return"

Mark Ware, BP

"I don't think you should resist the notion that communications is a deliverable and that there should be a constant quest to measure it and evaluate it in similar terms to which other parts of the organisation are also subject"

Howell James, Cabinet Office

However, some pointed out that it was actually less necessary in an organisation where the benefits of communications were widely accepted than in an organisation where the point still needed to be proved.

"I would think it is probably important where you have got an emerging communications function in companies that haven't traditionally given communications that sort of upstream role or influence"

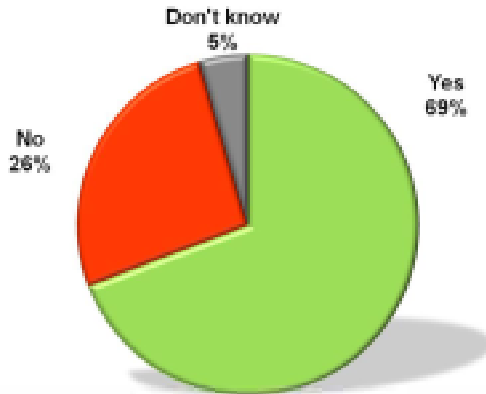
Sally Osman, BBC

Strategic Benefits of Measuring Impact

Measurement activity is commonplace, with the key benefits being refinement of activity.

Two-thirds of respondents to the on-line survey (69%) claimed to have measured the impact of communication activity in their present role.

Chart 8. Have you measured the impact of communication activity while in your current role?



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (65)

The principal strategic benefit from measuring the impact of communications was identified as the ability to refine the communication strategy and target messages more effectively.

An additional important benefit was that measurement helped the process of understanding the communications function and therefore increased support within the organisation.

Table 3. Key Strategic Benefits From Measuring Impact of Communications

More focused strategy / prioritise / target messages	40
Helps understanding of / support for communication function	23
Measures value of communication input	17
Helps to justify / retain communication budget	9
Assists in training / development of communication managers	9
Provides benchmarks to measure progress / identifies areas for action	2

Base: All measuring impact of communications and answering question in on-line survey (39)

While respondents to the in-depth interviews supported evaluation as a useful tool, they stressed the importance of using it well.

"We have increasingly put a premium on evaluation, certainly development and testing of messages but also evaluating impact and trying to learn and not to make assumptions"

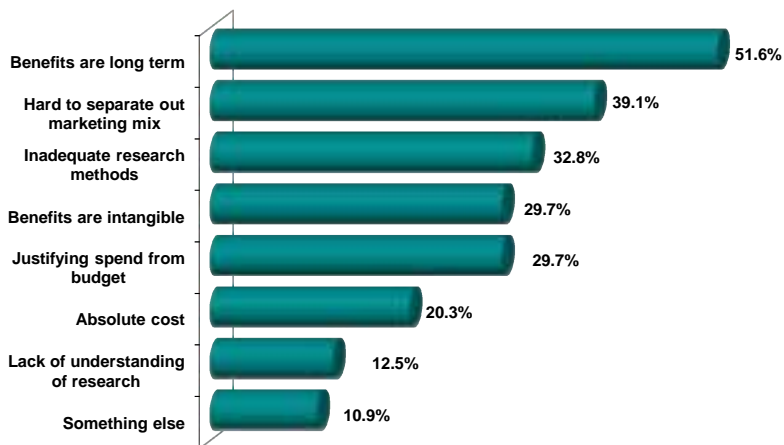
Liz Sayce, Disability Rights Commission

"I think with a lot of research, particularly the press coverage we get, the more detailed it becomes, the less useful it becomes"

Peter Morgan, BT

Key Barriers to Measurement

Chart 9. What do you think are the key barriers to measuring the business impact of communications?



Base: All answering question in on-line survey (64)

The principal barrier to measuring the business impact of communications is the perception that it is very difficult to isolate its specific impact from the wide range of other activities or events that could influence business performance. 52% considered that the benefits were long term and thus it was difficult to isolate the impact of any one campaign. 39% felt that it was hard to separate out the different elements in the marketing mix and 30% felt that the business benefits of communications were 'intangible'.

Thus measurement is considered difficult because of the perceived problem of attributing the results of communications to communication investment in any scientific way. Associated with this is the belief, expressed by 33% of the sample, that existing research methods for measuring business impact are 'inadequate'. Cost considerations were also mentioned.

However, one in-depth respondent warned against being too easily deterred by potential problems in measuring communications.

"If communications shies away from effective measurement then I think it runs the risk of falling outside the other disciplines in large companies. It is complicated. But the barrier is not being prepared to engage in the search for an effective means of measurement, we should be flexible and seek alternatives and test different ways of doing things"

Howell James, Cabinet Office

10. Role of Industry Associations

Respondents could identify quite a wide range of initiatives that could / should be undertaken by industry associations to help communication managers take on a more strategic role.

Principally, they could see a role for better, and standardised, measurement tools but there was also a plea for better training and for setting up industry forums.

Table 4. Ways in which Industry Associations Could Help Practitioners Take On Strategic Role

Joint research and better measuring tools / industry standards of measurement	27%
Better training / mentoring schemes	14%
Create internal communications fora / networking fora	14%
Promote the role in serious media / senior professionals speak out	9%
Lobby business groups e.g. CBI and IoD	9%
Demonstrate value / showcase good case studies	9%
Encourage wider business experience / training among communication professionals	18%
More research	6%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (40)

11. Personal Role

Respondents to the on-line survey saw 'working harder' and 'being more pro-active' as the principal way of increasing their own strategic impact, together with more networking.

Table 5. Actions to increase personal strategic role

Work harder / raise communications profile / be more pro-active	37
Increase opportunities to network with business heads	18
Increased delegation / focus on strategy	13
Demonstrate effectiveness of communications	13
More resources / better training / more commercial experience	13
More research	6

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (39)

12. Advice to Peers

When, in the in-depth interviews, executive team level communication professionals were asked to offer advice as to how their peers could improve their strategic impact, they placed a much greater emphasis on the need to think strategically, to understand the business and to closely link communications to business objectives.

“Think strategically and act strategically and be seen to be doing that. So rather than talk about the finer points of a campaign, demonstrate that you understand the organisation’s strategy and issues and that this is reflected in your own strategy and plans”

Louise Brooker-Carey, Director of Communications, Tube Lines Ltd

“Make sure you understand the business as completely as anyone else, more completely than anyone else at your level, so that the advice you are going to offer, the professional counsel you are going to offer is grounded in reality for the managers to whom you are offering it”

Ian Wright, Diageo

“Constantly make the links between the communications objectives and the core objectives of the other leaders in the organisation”

Liz Sayce, Disability Rights Commission

The in-depth interviews also revealed that operating at a strategic level was not for the faint hearted. It was important to be determined, to seize the initiative and to not shrink from sending difficult messages.

“Be determined. I think if you have the determination and the right mix of skills then you can convince people of the importance of having a senior strategic communications function”

Aisling Burnand, The BioIndustry Association

“Take your courage in both hands and always offer the advice you think you should offer and not the advice you think they want to hear”

Ian Wright, Diageo

“Take as much responsibility as possible, look to seize responsibility whenever it comes your way, or look for opportunities that may provide you with responsibility, to show that you can take that onto the next stage”

Adrian Bevington, Director of Communications, The Football Association

13. Recommendations About Research

Based on these findings, we believe that communicators should do the following to ensure their 'licence to operate' at the top table:

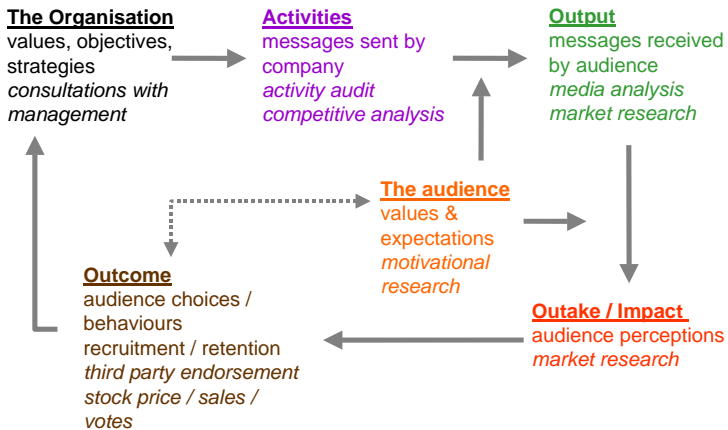
- Look for opportunities to work across PR in the widest sense; journalism, local and national government, agency and in-house to help equip you with the skillset needed
- Know the business of your business, not just the communication function
- Speak the language of management and be prepared to match your board colleagues when reporting their contribution to the business
- Start with setting clear, measurable PR objectives (the fewer, the better) clearly linked to the organisation's goals
- Really make it your job to understand your various stakeholders, their issues, expectations, priorities and conflicts
- Be proactive - develop regular scorecards based on key performance indicators and warning systems for management to help educate them on the value of reputation and the contribution of strategic communications
- Ensure your focus extends beyond the CEO - he / she may not be there for long, and the organisation will lose much if your professional knowledge and understanding move on at the same time
- Build a multi-disciplinary team of people from different backgrounds who not only have the right skills but can also bring knowledge and expertise gained from past experiences
- Stand up for what you believe in, you may be the only voice that provides a much needed perspective - so no wallflowers please !

14. A Research Check List

Good communication research is an investment that more than pays for itself in better decision making, planning and targeting, and overall improved use of resources - human, time and financial. Bad research (or researching the wrong things) is more than wasteful, it can lead to misjudgement and, hence, poor planning. So before embarking on research, here's a quick checklist of best practice:

- Educate & involve all the senior management in the communication process
- Use measurement and evaluation in your plans to counter the you-can't-manage-it-if-you-can't-measure-it brigade
- Measures must be reliable and realistic (PR delivers more than most people know, but NOT everything)
- Be aware that what you measure (and perhaps even base bonuses upon) will affect what you do
- Good research starts with a good brief against objectives (linked to delivering organisational goals)
- Research can be divided into outputs (media, internal publications / external journals, events, etc), out-takes (improved awareness, brand image, share of mind) and outcomes (improving market share, driving customer traffic, attracting & retaining key employees)

The Communication Cycle



- Tailor your research methods to your research needs - one size cannot fit all, and research techniques should not be dictating your focus
- Keep a wide perspective and avoid getting bogged down in data minutia
- Focus on overall effectiveness and results
- Consider undertaking a 'Reputation Research Audit' across all the different types of research that the organisation may already be doing to see what data is relevant for your stakeholder views of your reputation (for a small bit of work, you can make what already exists in different 'silos' and departments work 'across the board')
- Develop spider diagrams from what you find and work at analysing the gaps, and where PR should be targeting its efforts, keeping the big picture in mind
- Look & listen to find meaning in weak signals within the organisation and from its environment
- Take the learnings and make them work for you and your team - good research will highlight what does and doesn't work, and why, so learn from it, celebrate successes and adapt it to what you need to be even more effective and efficient next time around

15. *How Echo Research can help*

Perhaps we can help? We list below the many communications research services that we provide, and how these might be 'mapped' on to your requirements

1. Communication effectiveness research can be both external (media, journalists) and internal (employees). The key to successful measurement is the alignment of messages with business strategy, and ensuring they are correctly articulated for each audience.
2. As communications is a two-way function, it is crucial to understand what all your audiences want from you in terms of 'threshold' and 'higher-level' expectations.
3. Your role as the 'eyes and ears' of the organisation, as well as the challenge of being the guardian of its reputation, mean that a process must be put in place to capture information that might be a threat.
4. When you have the tools and processes in place, you may need help to ensure they are both used and effectively communicated within the organisation, vertically and across 'silos'.

16. At a Glance : Tools and Techniques

1. Communication Effectiveness

(external and internal)

- Media evaluation
- Message testing
- Media mapping
- Impact on Journalist
- Impact on internal audiences

Techniques

- On and off line content analysis
- Ad hoc surveys

2. Opinion Research

(Reputation, Brand, Image)

- 360 degree view of stakeholder perceptions
- Stakeholder relationships
- Reputation management
- Brand perception

Techniques

- In-depth interviews
- Focus groups
- Ad hoc surveys (on-line, CATI)

3. Issue-based Research

- Emerging issues
- Issue development
- Stakeholder engagement
- Modelling

Techniques

- On and off line content analysis
- In-depth interviews
- Tracking surveys (on-line, CATI)

4. Consultancy

- Research audit
- Knowledge management
- Stakeholder engagement
- Employee engagement programmes

Techniques

- Workshops
- In-depth interviews
- Tracking surveys (on-line, CATI)

How to apply learning and set measurement objectives

New and legacy research	<p>Before taking fresh soundings, integrate existing research and dig under the surface / re-interpret.</p> <p>Commission new research to complete rather than re-create the picture.</p>
<i>League tables</i>	<p>Classify and weight your stakeholders – those you want to work on becoming the Premier League.</p> <p>Quantify and prioritise criteria that really matter to stakeholders.</p>
<i>Position-mapping</i>	<p>Map positions visually on important issues – decide which needles to move on which dials.</p> <p>Select best communications tools for each task, switching track if need be.</p>
Track, track, track	<p>Constantly measure improvements in performance, quality, messages, reach and frequency.</p>
Watch the limits	<p>Set performance parameters: celebrate performance breaking through parameter ceilings and move to rectify performance dropping beneath parameter minima.</p>

17. *When to Apply What*

There are many different research techniques – each with its own benefits.

The divide into **three** main types:

Qualitative – designed to explore issues in-depth.

Quantitative – designed to provide hard facts and figures.

Other – e.g. web-based and media analysis.

The Table opposite is a guide to how different techniques can be used to answer different questions. The 'best' choice will depend on the exact project.

1. How do my key stakeholders feel and why?
2. What are the best ways to communicate with journalists so they will write favourable stories about my company and products?
3. What makes people advocates for my products?
4. Why do customers buy my / or competitors products?
5. Who are my key opinion formers and what are possible risks?
6. How can I improve my marketing to generate more sales?
7. What would make people feel differently or change their minds about the company?
8. How do I need to change my strategy and marketing to make it work abroad?
9. What is the impact of our recent advertising / PR / direct mail campaign?
10. What could I have done differently?
11. Which specific messages were most effective and why?
12. What are my competitors up to?

Type of Research

■ Ideal ☒ Good Alternative

Question	QUALITATIVE		QUANTITATIVE			OTHERS	
	Focus Groups	In-Depth Interviews	Face-to-Face	Telephone	Postal	Media Analysis	Web / Online
1	■		☒	☒			☒
2		■		☒			
3	☒		■				☒
4	■				☒	☒	☒
5		■		☒		☒	☒
6		■			☒	☒	☒
7	■						☒
8		■				☒	☒
9				■	☒		
10			■				
11	■		☒			☒	☒
12			☒			■	

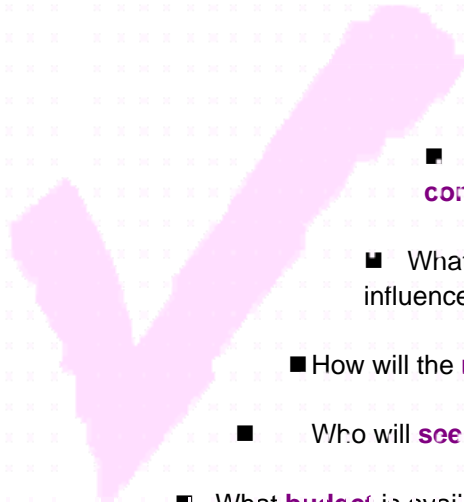
This table outlines some of the different market research tools and techniques.

Products / Services	When to use it?	What it does for clients?
Focus Groups	Pre-testing of campaign messages and themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides objective responses. ■ Clients can test which messages work well and which do not.
Journalist Audits	Understanding how to communicate more effectively with journalists to influence what they write. Link findings to media analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Obtain a better idea of how to communicate with journalists. ■ What makes them advocates? ■ What influences journalists to say what they do?
General Public / Consumer Surveys	Understanding the impact of communication on target audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Results will show target areas for future campaigns. ■ Which people think what about your product / company and why. ■ It will enable the client to change their strategy and communication to target a specific group or area / age group etc. ■ How did people gain their impressions? ■ What would make them feel differently or change their mind about the company?
Pan-European / International	As per specific target audience work above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Do the same communication strategies work abroad? ■ Do they have the same perceptions as the general public? ■ What works well here may not work well there.
Presentation / Results workshops with senior communication teams	Developing recommendations and solutions with clients.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enables a better understanding of the results. ■ Questions can be answered. ■ Ways forward can be discussed.
In-depth interviews	Exploring issues in depth with specialist audience. Logo / message testing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A good area to expand clients who are not communicating via mass media. ■ Can explore products and issues in-depth. ■ Can find ways forward. ■ What influences your product / message / logo. ■ How could it be changed to reach the right people? ■ Brings out new ideas and help with future and current issues.
Large-scale continuous surveys	As with general public / consumer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Shows different communications strategy changes perceptions over a period of time. ■ Will show trends and audience, target areas. ■ Did the right messages get through? ■ Which messages changed their views?
Employee Surveys	Communication with employees. To find out how corporate messages are used within the company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To have an understanding of how corporate messages are being used. ■ How to change employees perceptions where they are not in use.

18. Getting Started

Prepare the Brief

Use the following checklist to help you prepare the brief:



- What is the **problem / need** to be addressed by the research?
- What is the **background / context** to the problem/need?
- What types of **decision** are likely to be influenced by the results?
- How will the **results** be used?
- Who will **see** the results?
- What **budget** is available?
- What is the **scope** of the research (who, where etc)?
- What is the **schedule / deadlines**?

An agency is likely to ask you the following questions:

- **Business objectives** – what problem / need is the research addressing? What are the reasons for the research? What might change as a consequence of the findings? What types of decisions might be influenced by the results? Who will be affected by the results?
- **Research objectives** – who is to be researched? What is the geographical scope? Is it to be qualitative or quantitative (or a mixture of both)? What are the key issues to be covered?
- **Methodology** – what data is already available? What methods are currently used? What are your preferred methods? What will the agency recommend?

- **Timings** – when does the research need to be completed? Are there any intermediate deadlines? When do the findings need to be prepared? Are there any lead times for taking action?
- **Deliverables** – what is expected: Raw data? Tables? Questionnaires? A report? Presentation? Consultancy? Ongoing assistance?
- **Budgets** – what is the anticipated budget?
- **Contractual requirements** – are there any formal terms of business? Codes of conduct?

One of the most important elements of working with a market research agency will be developing a good working rapport. Establishing and agreeing a clear brief at the outset will get the relationship off to a good start.

Appendix

The profile of respondents in the on-line survey is shown in the following tables.

Table 6. Job Title of Respondents

Communication Director	18%
Head of Communication	17%
Communication Manager	11%
Internal Communication Director	6%
Corporate Affairs Director	6%
Other	42%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (88)

Table 7. Membership of Main / executive team

Main Board	7%
Senior Management / Executive Team	49%
Neither	41%
Both	3%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (90)

Table 8. Highest Level of Academic Qualification

A-Levels	3%
Diploma / Certificate of Further Education	12%
Degree	57%
Further degree	23%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (69)

Table 9. Professional Qualifications in Communications or Areas Related to Job Role

Have professional qualifications	55%
Do not have professional qualifications	43%
Don't know	3%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (73)

Table 10. Size of Organisation

Less than 500 employees	8%
More than 500 employees	92%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (64)

Table 11. Status of Organisation

Public sector	14%
A plc	61%
Privately owned	14%
Something else	11%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (64)

Table 12. Sector

Finance & Insurance	20%
Manufacturing	14%
Transport, storage & distribution	6%
Government services	6%
Utilities	6%
General services to business	5%
Education, health & social services	3%
Hotels, restaurants & leisure	2%
Something else	38%

Base: All answering question in on-line survey (64)

Echo's Services

- **Communications Audits** to measure the effect of internal and external communications methods, tools and techniques.
- **Reputation Analysis (R2V2™)** to identify and track what your main stakeholders believe and expect of you, so as to bridge any gaps.
- **Internet Evaluation** to measure sentiment towards your organisation in newsgroups and on the websites of competitors, critics and other third parties.
- **Issue Management Intelligence (Echo Sonar)** to pinpoint 'faint signals of change' on the horizon, whether opportunities or risks.
- **Journalist Audits** to enable you to communicate better with journalists and loop the findings back into media analysis.
- **Newshook Research** to identify information about people's attitudes as the basis for media coverage.
- **CR surveys (Echo Voyager)** to design Corporate Responsibility programmes and measure their impact for Triple Bottom Line reporting.
- **Evaluation of Websites** to measure their user-friendliness and fitness for purpose, in the view of your target audiences.
- **Monitor of Competitor Communications** to draw out key points of targeting, appeal and brand messaging in the advertising / PR / communications of organisations comparable with your own.
- **Employee surveys** to find out how corporate messages are understood and 'lived' by staff, an organisation's most important ambassadors.
- **Crisis Impact Research** to track day-by-day the effect of a crisis on media, public and specialist opinion.
- **Media Analysis** to assess messages and reputation drivers, with favourability ratings and opportunities-to-see, for sources, publications and journalists, plus actionable recommendations.
- **Scorecards and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** to support communications measurement and deliver a 'joined-up' overview of communications.
- **Public Affairs Reports** to provide favourability analyses of political debate proceedings of Select Committee hearings and other legislative forums.
- **Training and workshops** to help in-house teams interpret research and act on the implications.
- **Fastpoll** makes highly effective polling research affordable. Provides rapid turnaround (polling to reporting in 48 hours) using SMS, on-line and email research. UK & International panels.

Echo's Client List

ABB

Abbey National
AC Nielsen
Action 2000
AEA Technology
Airbus
Airtours
Agere
Alcan
Alcatel
Allied Domecq
Allied Dunbar
Alta Vista
AMS
American Express
Analog Devices
Anglian Water
Applied Biosystems
ASDA
AstraZeneca
Automobile Association
AWE
AT&T Unisource
AXA
BAE Systems
Bank 24
Barclaycard
Barclays Bank
Barclay Stratton
Bass
Batelco
Baxter Healthcare
Bayer
BBC
Beachcroft Wansbroughs
Bell's Whisky
BG Group
BHP Billiton
Biwater
BOC
Body Shop International
Bombardier Transport
boo.com
Britannia Building Society
Britannic Asset Management
British Airways
British Gas
British Nuclear Fuels
British Telecom
Burton Group
Busch Entertainment Corp

C & A

Cadbury Schweppes
Cable & Wireless
CableTel
Cellnet
Centrica
Centre for Public Affairs
Cephalon
Charles Schwab
CIBA Specialty Chemicals
Cisco
Clearstream
Coca-Cola
Commerzbank Securities
Compaq
Coors Brewers
Corporation of London
CPP
Credit Suisse Asset Man.
Cutty Sark Whisky
DaimlerChrysler
De Beers
Deloitte Consulting
Design Council
Deutsche Shell
DHL
Digital
Direct Energy
Dow Chemicals
Dow Jones
EADS
EDS
Electrabel
Emirates
Energis
English Heritage
Enterprise Oil
Equant
Equitable Life
Ericsson
Ernst & Young
ExxonMobil
Financial Times
Fish 4
Freshfields Bruckhams
Deringer
Fujitsu Siemens Computers
Gateway 2000
GE Capital Services
GE Plastics
Glaxo Wellcome
Groupama

gsk

Halfords
Heineken
Hewitt
Hewlett-Packard
Hill & Knowlton
Hoffman-LaRoche
Homebase
Hyder
IAEA
IBM
ICO Global Comms.
ICI Polyurethanes
Infonet
Intel
International Factors
Investcorp
Invesco Perpetual
Iomega
ITV
JP Morgan Chase
Kellogg's
Kingfisher
KPMG
KP Nuts
Lego
Lehman Brothers
Littlewoods
Lloyds Bank Insurance
Services
LM UK
London Electricity
London Underground
L'Oreal
Loyalty Management
UK Ltd
Lucent Technologies
MAC Cosmetics
Madge Networks
Manchester Airport
Mastercard
Manpower
MCA
McDonald's
Mars
MCI Worldcom
Merck Sharpe & Dohme
Mercury Communications
Microsoft
MSN
Nasdaq
National Grid Transco

NatWest Markets
Nestlé
Nintendo
Nokia
Norwich Union
Novartis
Novo Nordisk
Old Mutual
Onyx Environmental Group
Openwave
Opodo.com
Oracle
Orient-Express
Parke Davis
PCCW
Pfizer
Philips Semiconductors
Philip Morris
PowerGen
PricewaterhouseCoopers
P&O Stena Line
Procter & Gamble
PPP
Prudential
PR Week
PR Week USA
Qinetiq
Reuters
Rhône-Poulenc
Richmond Events
RMC
Rolls-Royce Motor Cars
Royal & SunAlliance
Royal Shakespeare Co.
Saatchi & Saatchi
Sainsbury's
Sainsbury's Bank
Sandoz
SAS Institute
Schroders
Severn Trent Water
Sharelink
Shaws Supermarkets
Shell International
Siemens
Smiths Industries
Société Générale
Sony Ericsson
Sony Consumer
SAB Miller
Sprint Corporation
Standard Life Investments
SWIFT

Swiss Re
Taylor Woodrow
Thames Water
TXU Energy
UDV
Unilever
Unisys
University of Warwick
UPS
Vanish
Varity Perkins
Virgin NET
Volvo
Wessex Water
Western Union
Whitbread
Yorkshire Electricity
Zeneca Agrochemicals
Zurich Financial Services

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS & AGENCIES

Advertising Standards Auth.
Benefit Fraud Inspectorate
Central Office of Info.
Corporation of London
Dept for Education &
Employment
Department of Culture,
Media & Sport
Dept of Environment,
Transport & the Regions
Dept of Trade & Industry
Disability Rights Comm.
Environment Agency
European Commission
Equal Opportunities Comm.
Financial Services Authority
Health Education Authority
Health Education Board for
Scotland
Health & Safety Executive
Heart of England Tourism
Home Office
Industrial Development
Board for Northern Ireland
Inland Revenue
London Fire Brigade
Ministry of Defence
National Audit Office
New Opportunities Fund
Qualifications & Curriculum

Authority
Retained Organs Comm.
Sri Lankan Government
Surrey Police
UKAEA
UK Online
Welsh Development
Agency

NATIONAL & TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

American Chemistry
Council
American Plastics Council
British Paper Industry
Federation
BioIndustry Association
British Nuclear Industry Forum
CEATS
CEFIC
Comité Régional du
Tourisme de Franche
Comté
Confederation of European Paper
Industries
Eurochlor
IAEA
International Wool
Secretariat
Law Society
Lawn Tennis Association
Offshore Decommissioning
Communications Project
Pharmaceutical Partners
PPIC
PRCA
Trades Union Congress

CHARITIES

British Heart Foundation
British Red Cross
ChildLine
Comité national français de liaison
pour la réadaptation
des handicapés
Imperial Cancer Research
Fund
UNAIDS
UN FAO
UNICEF
World Vision
WWF

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