

Godkendt HBW d. 15.8.2022

Danish School of Media and Journalism

Corporate Communication

Course description

Spring semester 2022

Communicating sustainability in times of change or crisis

5. semester

Number of ECTS Credits: 10 ECTS

Aims:

The course focuses on crisis- and change communication in relation to sustainability and CSR. When an organization engages in sustainability communication, it is vulnerable to criticism as e.g. greenwashing, diversity washing and charity-washing. The course explores how organizations can tackle these issues and handle potential crisis situations. Furthermore, the course explores how sustainability communication could be treated as internal change processes, and how organizational communication can develop into CSR issues. Employees are an important, if not the most important stakeholder for an organization, and when they are part of the sustainability journey, the organization becomes more trustworthy. Students will be introduced to selected communication theories, methods, and models which organizations can use to understand and handle challenges in a changing, critical, and global world. In order to be able to strengthen, build and rebuild stakeholder confidence and trust in organizations and industries, the students will gain insight, skills and competences in change communication, issue management and crisis communication.

Pedagogical and didactic approaches:

The course is a mixture of lectures with presentations, case work, exercises and reflections, readings as preparation for classes as well as tasks, assignments, and projects that the students work with in study groups. The intention with the teaching is that the students get a good grasp of the theories within the field, so that they can use them to critically reflect on possible options and choices when working with concrete cases. Furthermore, the students should learn to analyse a situation and come up with concrete communication products that translate theories into practice. The students will also develop skills in teamwork, in providing and receiving feedback, as well as skills in critical reflection on products and processes. The intention is to develop the students' ability to acquire new knowledge and work independently is also a focus in this course.

The course finishes with an assignment solved in study groups addressing crisis- and change communication in a sustainability and CSR context where the students can demonstrate that they can use the knowledge and skills they have acquired during the course.

Learning outcomes:

The students will obtain the following during the course:

Knowledge and understanding of:

- How different approaches and paradigms within strategic communication (ranging from functionalistic to constitutive and co-creative/collaborative) influence sustainability and CSR communication processes.
- How relationships between organization and stakeholders are built and developed.
- Theories and models of change, crisis and issues management
- The significance of working with and communicating about (strategic) sustainability and CSR in modern business life
- Different approaches to involving employees in CSR initiatives and change situations

Skills:

Students completing the course are expected to:

- Understand the complexity of handling and planning change and crisis communication in relation to sustainability and CSR
- Develop analytical, reflective, strategic and critical skills in relation to change communication, issues management and crisis communication
- Identify and apply different CSR strategies within crisis- and change communication
- Navigate and operate within a variety of disciplines of strategic communication

Competences:

Students are expected to be able to

- Reflect critically on different approaches to and paradigms within strategic CSR communication
- Reflect critically on theories, models and methods used in change communication, issue management and crisis communication in relation to CSR in different organizational contexts and settings
- Produce communication products that execute ideas developed in an analysis of a situation

Literature (to be purchased before the course begins):

Wolff Lundholt & Uldall (2019): Leadership Communication in Theory and Praxis. Samfundslitteratur.

Literature (available on ItsLearning):

Abitbol & Lee (2017): Messages on CSR-dedicated Facebook pages: What works and what doesn't. *Public Relations Review*, 43: 796-808.

Andersson, R. (2019): Employee communication responsibility: Its Antecedents and implications for strategic communication management. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 13(1), 60-75.

Blowfield & Murray(2019). Chapter 6, pp. 125-153: *How corporate social responsibility is managed in Corporate Social Responsibility*, 4th edition.

Chandler (2020). Chapter 10, pp. 240-257: Strategic CSR in Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility. Sustainable Value Creation. 5th edition.

Coombs, W.T. (2012). Chapter 8: Crisis Response, In *Ongoing Crisis Communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 139-168.

Coombs, W. T. (2017). Revising situational crisis communication theory: The influences of social media on crisis communication theory and practice. In *Social media and crisis communication* (pp. 21-37). Routledge.

Coombs & Holladay (2012): *Communicate the CSR Initiative*. In *Managing Corporate Social Responsibility: A Communication Approach*. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., pp. 109-135.

Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S. (2015), "CSR as crisis risk: expanding how we conceptualize the relationship", *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*. Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 144-162.

Cornelissen (2020). Chapter 10: Issues Management. In *Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*. 6th Ed. London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 193-213.

Costas & Kärreman (2013): Conscience as control – managing employees through CSR. *Organization*, 20(3): 394-415.

Dahlman, S. and Heide, M. (2021). Introduction. The value of internal communication. In *Strategic internal communication. A practitioners' guide to implementing cutting-edge methods for improved workplace culture*. New York: Routledge, p. 1-10.

de Freitas Netto, S. V., Sobral, M. F. F., Ribeiro, A. R. B., & da Luz Soares, G. R. (2020). *Concepts and forms of greenwashing: A systematic review*. Environmental Sciences Europe, 32(1), pp. 1-12.

Etter (2014): Broadcasting, reacting, engaging - three strategies for CSR communication in Twitter. *Journal of Communication Management*, 18(4):322-342.

Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2010). Crisis communication, complexity, and the cartoon affair: A case study. In Coombs, W.T & Holladay, S.J (Eds.) *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell. 425-448.

Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2011): The study of internal crisis communication: towards an integrative framework. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, Vol. 16(4), 347-361.

Frandsen, F. & Johansen, W. (2017). Chapter 8 –excerpt, The Rhetorical Arena. In Organizational crisis communication: A multivocal approach. London: Sage, p 148-158.

Harrison (2015): Chap 6. Communicating change. In Ruck, M. K. (Ed.). (2015). *Exploring internal communication: towards informed employee voice*. Gower Publishing, Ltd, pp. 57-64

He & Brown (2013): Organizational identity and organizational identification: A review of the literature and suggestions for future research. *Group & Organization Management*, 38(1), 3-35.

Ind (2021). Consumers expect brands to take a stance on key issues. *Kunnskap Kristiania, the Innovative Issue*. Available at : <https://www.kristiania.no/kunnskap-kristiania/2021/08/consumers-expect-brands-to-take-a-stance-on-key-issues/>

Jones, B. L., & Chase, W. H. (1979). Managing public policy issues. *Public Relations Review*, 5(2), 3-23

Klein, S. M. (1996): A management communication strategy for change, *Journal of organizational change management*, 32-44

Kotter, J. P. (1995): Leading Change - Why transformation efforts fail, *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 59-67.

Lewis, L. (2011): Chap 1 Defining Organizational Change In Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication, pp. 21-51.

Lewis, L. (2019): Chap 2 Processes of communication during change. In Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication, pp. 53-88.

Lis (2012): The Relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility for a Sustainable Human Resource Management: An Analysis of Organizational Attractiveness as a Determinant in Employees' Selection of a (Potential) Employer. *Management Review* 23(3): 279-295.

Men & Bowen (2017): Chap 1. The Evolving Practices of Internal Communication. In Men, R. L. and Bowen, S. A. (2017) *Excellence in Internal Communication*, pp. 1-12.

Men & Bowen (2017): Chap 10. The future of internal communication, In Men and Bowen (2017) *Excellence in Internal Communication Management*, Business Expert Pres, pp. 165-183.

Montgomery (2019): *Perspectives on Purpose – Leading Voices on Building Brands and Businesses for the Twenty-First Century*, Oxon: Routledge, pp. 9-17.

Pedersen (2015): *The Anatomy of CSR* in Pedersen (ed) (2015) *Corporate Social Responsibility*. London: Sage. Chapter 1, pp. 3-28.

Nyilasy, G., Gangadharbatla, H. & Paladino, A. (2014). Perceived Greenwashing: The Interactive Effects of Green Advertising and Corporate Environmental Performance on Consumer Reactions. *Journal of Business Ethics*. No. 125.

Pfeffer J. Zorbach T. & Carley K. M. (2014) *Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks*. *Journal of Marketing Communications* pp. 117-128.

Porter & Kramer (2011): "Creating Shared Value. *Harvard Business Review*: 62-77.

Schmeltz (2012B): *Conflicting Values in Discourses of Social Responsibility. Essays on Consumer-Oriented CSR Communication*. PhD Dissertation, Aarhus University. Excerpts: *Defining CSR*, pages 13-22. + *Defining CSR Communication*, pp. 25-31.

Sellnow & Seeger (2013). *Theorizing crisis communication*. UK: Wiley & Sons, Inc., p. 1-30.

Taylor, M. (2010). Organizational use of new communication technology in product recall crises. *The handbook of crisis communication*, 410-421

Tourish, Paulsen, Hobman & Bordia (2004): The downsides of downsizing: Communication processes information needs in the aftermath of a workforce reduction strategy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17(4): 485-516.

Ulmer, Sellnow & Seeger (2015). Chapter 3: Lessons on Effective Crisis Communication. In *Effective Crisis Communication: Moving From Crisis to Opportunity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications., 37-59

Yaxley, H. and Ruck, K. (2015) Chap 1: Tracking the Rise and Rise of Internal Communication. In Ruck, M. K. (Ed.). (2015). *Exploring internal communication: towards informed employee voice*. Gower Publishing, Ltd, p. 3-14.

Attendance:

To pass, students are expected to be active and fulfil DMJX's requirements of attendance and participation both in class, in group work and projects and assignments.

Exam/Grading:

Graded: 7-point Scale (A-F)

The students end and complete the course by solving an assignment in groups of 3-5 students. Based on this assignment, all students will be graded individually by the Danish grading system, which is transferred to the national grading system of the individual student (A-F).

Study Activity Model:

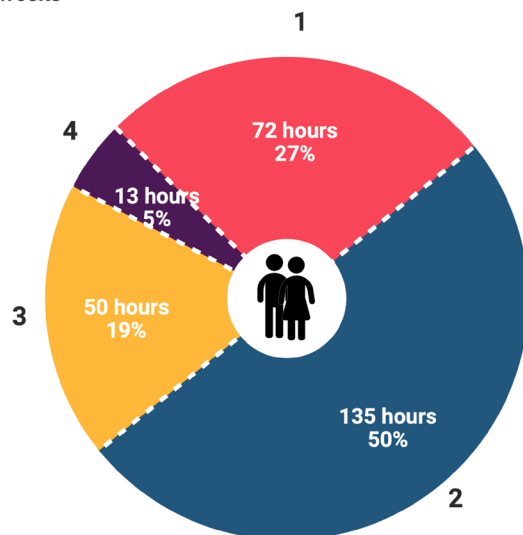
The Study Activity Model

Sustainability and change and crisis

270 hours in total

10 ECTS points

6 weeks



Category 1

The lecturer has primary responsibility for the study activities, and the students have co-responsibility through their preparation and participation. Participation by students and one or more lecturers.

- Teacher presentations
- Reflections
- Exercises
- Discussions
- Feedback on assignments
- Reading lists
- Final assignment

Category 2

The lecturer has primary responsibility for defining the learning activities, and the students have primary responsibility for taking an active part in the planned study activities. Participation by students only.

- Preparation for class
- Reading the literature
- Solving cases in study group
- Prepare presentations for class

Category 3

Students have primary responsibility for the study activities, and the lecturer has co-responsibility for ensuring appropriate settings for the activities. Participation by students only.

- Research
- Collect supplementary material
- Find suitable cases
- Find supplementary literature
- Peer feedback

Category 4

Students have primary responsibility for the learning activities, and the lecturer has co-responsibility for ensuring appropriate settings for the activities. Participation by students and one or more lecturers.

- Students take charge of the teaching
- Students find and invite a case company
- Students organize events for the class