

An introduction for communication practitioners

COMMUNICATION THEORY



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Communication Theory - An introduction for communication practitioners

Désirée Van Osch and Renée Van Zijl

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Introduction

Communication is a frequently heard term. It is used both properly and improperly. When something goes wrong in a situation, it is often, or you could say usually, due to 'the communication'. Communication is a broad concept that can be interpreted differently depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. For example, psychologists focus on individual humans as acting beings; sociologists and anthropologists examine the interaction between people or groups of people; linguists consider communication as verbal exchanges, and political scientists consider communication the mechanism through which power can be exercised. It is apparently a concept with content. However, the question is, what content is that? When it comes to communication, everyone seems to have their opinion about it. But what can be said about it from the perspective of the communication practitioner?

Much had been thought and written about communication. Many theories examine the concept from various directions and perspectives. This book focuses on a professional's perspective, as indicated by the term 'communication'. This term is quite confusing. The profession bears the same name as the instrument it uses. What do you study? Which field do you work in? What do you teach? What do you work with? All of these questions can be answered with the word 'communication'. What are you? Communication expert. Or communications officer. Or a communication lecturer.

Thus, a communication practitioner. What answer does the communication practitioner give when asked what communication is? That question is quickly asked but less easily answered. Perhaps the answer is 'I manage online image-making', or 'I contribute to an advertising campaign', or 'I write newsletters', or 'I teach it'. But that doesn't describe what communication is.

None of these answers really captures the essence of communication. The question of what communication actually is is a fascinating one for communication practitioners. The answer forms the foundation of the discipline. This book describes communication theory. It is about WHAT communication is for practitioners. It does not address HOW communication can be used or implemented. Other books provide such knowledge. But knowing the nature of communication provides a solid foundation for distinguishing right from wrong. The use of communication without a thorough theoretical background contributes to confusion about what communication really is. There is so much theory about communication that this book can only provide the main outlines. But it is logically organised.

The subtitle of the book is 'An Introduction for Communication Practitioners'. It is intended for the communication practitioner who wants to refresh his knowledge or occasionally questions his expertise. It serves as a handy reference guide for those wondering how things can be explained. Communication lecturers might consider incorporating it into the curriculum. The book presents the work of many communication and other scientists who laid the foundations for the unique field of communication. This book mentions many of them and their work, but certainly not all.

How the book is structured

Chapter 1 covers the basic concepts that are always present in some form during communication activities. These concepts, while not always fully apparent or consciously applied, serve as the building blocks of working with communication. They form the object of communication.

Chapter 2 discusses the subject of communication, namely, information. Whether consciously formulated or not, communication cannot exist without the transfer of information.

Chapter 3 addresses communication systems. People communicate primarily with themselves but also with others, in groups, or on social media. People are also part of mass communication in society.

Chapter 4 focuses on communication as human action, the foundation of the work of a communication practitioner. It describes views on communication, its characteristics, and the distinguishable models, processes, patterns, and ways of communicating. It also briefly discusses the properties of communication tools and the effects of communication.

Finally, **Chapter 5** discusses basic approaches to applying communication. Say just the essentials. These offer a solid foundation for working with communication, enabling the right choices to be made. So, a bit of the HOW after all.

Why is a zebra on the cover?

There is no greater contrast than between black and white, no greater visibility than through the combination of these two colours. The animal that displays these characteristics in all its glory is the stunning zebra. Yet, its colours serve as camouflage. In its surroundings, its black and white appearance makes it invisible. It is the same with communication. As a phenomenon, it is so striking and present in our world. But in the hustle and bustle of everyday life, the view of it suddenly disappears.

Read this book. See the zebra. Enjoy reading.