

MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

Internal Communications Explored:
Disseminating Information, Expressing Mission Statement Values

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Abstract

This research paper explores internal communication and focuses on understanding some tactics used to communicate mission statement values with employees. Internal communication is disseminated within organizations to create awareness, foster understanding and offer direction on how to attain corporate goals. Distributing internal communication also ensures a focused workforce. Drawing from communication theory and literature, this study analyzes internal communication practices within a Canadian communications firm. Specifically, email sent from a Director to employees related to mission statement values from March 1, 2011 to April 30, 2011 were analyzed drawing from research done by Cheney (1983b). Findings of this study suggest that within the sample, communication was one-way and controlled, using various styles and tactics to express mission statement values with employees. Future research is called for to investigate the impacts for such a communication model.

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Dedication

For my family and friends, who offered unconditional support, love, encouragement and humour throughout the course of my graduate studies and completion of this research paper.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	8
Literature review	9
Internal communication – vehicles and styles.....	9
Internal communication – uses and objectives	12
Organizational values	14
Tactics for internal communication	17
Research focus	19
Method	21
Research context	22
Data collection and analysis.....	23
Findings.....	25
The mission statement – key values.....	25
Internal communication	28
Modality and pronoun use explored	30
Communication tactics.....	32
Discussion.....	41
Communication topic.....	41
Communication vehicle and frequency	41
Communication style	42
Communication tactics.....	44
Conclusion	46
Appendix 1	47
References	49
Glossary	56

List of Tables

Table 1: Five different uses of the pronoun we	12
Table 2: Identification framework - tactics	18
Table 3: Five corporate values.....	25
Table 4: Total occurrences of Employee/People	26
Table 5: Total occurrences of Customer Service	27
Table 6: Total occurrences of Competitiveness.....	28
Table 7: Distribution date, sender, value.....	29
Table 8: Modality and pronoun use – Employee/People.....	30
Table 9: Modality and pronoun use – Customer Service.....	31
Table 10: Modality and pronoun use – Competitiveness	32
Table 11: Identification tactics observed – Espousal of shared values	33
Table 12: Identification tactics observed – Expression of concern for the individual.....	34
Table 13: Identification tactics observed – Urge employees to unite	35
Table 14: Identification tactics observed – Stress necessary collaboration.....	36
Table 15: Espousal of shared values – instances by value.....	37
Table 16: Expression of concern for the individual – instances by value.....	38
Table 17: Urge employees to unite – instances by value.....	39
Table 18: Stress necessary collaboration – instances by value	40

Internal communication is not just about distributing information – it is about helping employees become aware of and understand organizational priorities. And this can only come through clarity, precision and by using the right channels. (Iacono, 2010).

INTRODUCTION:

As internal communication is practiced within organizations, it is interesting to examine how information is designed and disseminated. Either written or verbal, internal communication is disseminated by a sender to a receiver and can be practiced using a variety of styles and approaches. Receivers of internal communication are the employees within an organization and the sender, most typically management, shares information for the purpose of creating awareness and is used to help achieve organizational goals. Internal communicators must disseminate clear messaging using the most appropriate vehicles available.

For the purposes of this paper, internal communication is explored with a focus on the communication of mission statement values. The interest in this topic stems from the observation of internal communication to share corporate information with employees and examines specifically the content sent to employees during a two-month period. Drawing from Cheney's (1983b) identification framework, this paper explores the use of internal communication tactics and uses discourse analysis to analyze an email sample collected from the research participant.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Internal communication is a corporate function used by management to communicate with employees in order to strengthen understandings about organizational objectives. As defined by Welch and Jackson (2007), internal communication can be defined as:

“Communication between an organization’s strategic managers and its internal stakeholders, designed to promote commitment to the organization, a sense of belonging to it, awareness of its changing environment and understanding of its evolving aims.” (p. 186).

It is the process by which organizations manage relationships with employees, ensure employee commitment, promote employee awareness of corporate priorities and develop understanding of organizational goals (Welch & Jackson, 2007). In addition, internal communication provides a shared sense of purpose and reinforces a shared vision. Dolphin (2005) proposes that internal communication can motivate employees while engendering a sense of pride in the organization.

Internal communication – vehicles and styles:

Internal communication is disseminated using a variety of vehicles and styles. Vehicles for distribution can include internal newsletters, corporate websites, face-to-face communication or emails. Effective internal communication should not be limited to one activity over another (Hewitt, 2006) but instead, should engage the right tool for the right purpose. Email is of particular interest in this literature review because, in this study, information was shared with employees using email. Hewitt (2006) found email to be a convenient and timely way to create awareness with large audiences. Email enables quick and easy distribution of information that can be printed, forwarded or archived. Yell (2003) describes email as ambiguous as it does not always enable a message to get across to employees. The use of email as an internal communication activity can alienate employees from each other, and their organization, even if

information is being shared (Hallowell, 1999; Hewitt, 2006). As Gummeson (2000) points out, alienation is a result of the wrong type of communication and not a lack of communication.

Internal communication must be designed according to specific strategic requirements and a communicator must carefully assess the impact of their chosen vehicles. Choosing the wrong vehicle may create obstacles to achieving communication objectives. In this case, email is a convenient tool; however, it has both positive and negative associations.

A key issue is the possibility that internal communication is a one-way process, as opposed to a two-way process, with no opportunity for employee feedback (Welch & Jackson, 2007).

Depending on the purpose and context for communicating, internal communication can, at any time, fluctuate between a one-way approach and a two-way approach. One-way communication is appropriate in circumstances where message consistency is important or directions are required (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Alternatively, two-way communication is ideal and important to successful internal communication as it ensures dialogue between management and employees to enable the opportunity for message negotiation (Grunig et al. 2002). Van Riel (2008) concluded that organizations must engage in a tactical approach and be able to prompt feedback. For internal communication to be successful, employees must have the opportunity to speak out, get involved, be listened to, and, participate actively in the communication process (Smidts et al. 2001).

Caldwell (1995) found four internal communication styles, each one used as required by a communicator to express their messages. The first style, the *closed style*, is characterized by a high degree of centralized, downward communication. It is used to command and control employees by using written rules, formal language and clearly marked instructions.

Communication is underpinned with rules and procedures where orders are issued and

employees are expected to follow. The second style, the *informing style*, is characterized by top-down, one-way flow of information from employer to employee (Caldwell, 1995, p. 43). It is used to disseminate information, sell decisions and raise awareness. Using this style, information is shared; however, it is pushed onto employees by management. The third style, the *listening style*, enables two-way communication where ideas are invited from employees and “their views on certain issues are sought.” (Caldwell, 1995, p. 43). It is used to validate predetermined decisions and test audience reactions. However open the *listening style* appears to be, Caldwell (1995) discovered it is by no means an open-dialogue, but rather, it is structured and controlled in predetermined ways. For example, ideas and perspectives may be sought by suggesting schemes for discussion; however, the suggestions are chosen by management. As Caldwell (1995) notes:

“Managers must be listening and taking note, but they may not have truly entered into the obligations of a genuine dialogue which requires them to provide feedback and to mutually agree actions. Ultimately the listening manager can revert to a closed style – ‘Yes I hear what you are saying, but my decision is final.’” (p. 44).

The fourth style, the *open style*, is based on direct, face-to-face communication where employees are sincerely encouraged to be active participants in the exchange of information. This style is used to build commitment, autonomy, respect and pride. The *open style* is the direct opposite of the *closed style* and does not create formal, written communications but instead encourages more informal and personalized communications.

Once a style has been selected, management can use stylistic elements in the form of pronouns to express their messages. The use of pronouns is dependent on the context of communication and the sender’s intentions. Most typical to internal communication is the use of the pronouns *you*, *we*, *ours*, and *us* (Inigo-Mora, 2004), creating interesting dichotomies within organizations. *Ours*

and *us* are an extension of *we* and each suggest feelings of commonality (Pennycook, 1994).

Using the *you* pronoun can individualize communication and it is also used to establish solidarity with other organizational members (Inigo-Mora, 2004). The use of the pronoun *we* may also refer to the corporation or to the individual employee (Inigo-Mora, 2004).

Quirk et al. (1985) observed five different uses of *we* specific to the context of organizations (Table 1). The *we* pronoun is multifaceted and can be used to foster a community of involvement or a community of authority between a sender and a receiver.

Table 1: Five different uses of the pronoun we.	
Use:	Description:
Generic	Enlarged inclusive we which includes all individuals.
Inclusive authorial	Used in written communication and seeks to involve the reader in a joint activity.
Rhetorical	Used in the collective sense of the organization and may be viewed also as the Generic use.
Third person	Used in reference to a specific third person or individual to emphasize a point.
Non-standard	Used to refer directly to the communicator.

Adapted from Quirk et al. (1985, p. 130-135)

Internal communication – uses and objectives:

Thought of as information transactions between individuals and groups, internal communication is reflective of organizational culture (Dolphin, 2005). The language and vehicles used must appeal to the needs of employees to ensure that messages resonate. Wright (1995) states that internal communication serves a multitude of purposes; however, Welch and Jackson (2007) explain the growing importance for organizations to ensure employee alignment with

organizational goals. Internal communication is used to instil shared understandings in the minds of employees to enhance organizational behaviours, and also, to ensure alignment with the organization (Vallaster & de Chernatony, 2005). As Van Riel (2008) explains, alignment is considered the process by which employees share a common sense of purpose and is achieved by clear communication that provides insight and explanations:

“The key success factor to achieving an aligned organization is ensuring that core beliefs reside with its employees rather than locked with a static piece of paper in a strategic plan. This process is enabled through internal messaging.” (p. 352).

To align with an organization, employees must receive sufficient information about the organization. As organizations work to achieve informed workforces they have been placing an emphasis on how to communicate with employees. To help establish positive employee attitudes, internal communication must start early, must be frequent and must stay consistent in messaging. Van Riel (2008) also affirms internal communication is successful when messages are disseminated directly from top executives as employees have been found to believe in messages when they are received from their management staff.

Van Riel’s (2008) study reveals the results of communication activities by a top executive at TNT, a mail and express company. The leader engaged in a series of communication activities that consisted of very clear and concise messages. Emails, employee meetings and online chat sessions were the most frequently used vehicles, enabling the top executive to commit time and effort to communicating with employees. The results revealed that employees became informed and were motivated to act in the interests of the organization since the top executive took time to speak with them using commonly used vehicles.

Grunig and Hunt (1983) maintain that there are two media types by which internal communication can be disseminated: controlled media and uncontrolled media. Controlled media

such as websites, internal newsletters or emails allow management to control message content, format and channel. Disseminated messages are precise and the sender ensures messages are read as intended. Corporations seek to “control or at least influence the cognitive domains of their employees” (Dhir, 2006, p. 252) through distributed communications. Implications of control can lead to dehumanized environments, where employees distrust management and resist or ignore communication (Dhir, 2006). Uncontrolled media, for example town halls or face-to-face communication, are filtered and limit the amount of control a sender has on a message. In this capacity, uncontrolled media can be considered two-way. The intention behind a message can change at any time should a receiver interject with a question and throw the sender off course; however, the potential for feedback to clarify understanding exists.

Through the vehicles used and the content created, internal communication has the potential to unite employees with a shared vision providing a common perspective on organizational goals (Dolphin, 2005). Asif and Sargeant (2000) note internal communication is important for creating awareness with employees while Cheney (1983b) proposed that promoting missions with employees can be achieved through internal communication. Using email as a communication vehicle, organizations can communicate organizational objectives and goals to help employees understand how to contribute to the attainment of organizational objectives (Hewitt, 2006). Suitably, internal communication is intentional, practiced to ensure a strategic outcome and one example is to ensure that employees better perform their roles (Chong, 2007).

Organizational values:

Organizational values, defined as the beliefs, visions and goals of a corporation, reflect what organizational leaders deem important (Dalton, 2006). Values are the attributes of an

organization and are protected and revered by all (Dalton, 2006). A value system is an “enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end states among a continuum of relative importance” (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). Values serve as a guide for organizations and internal communication is practiced to facilitate employee awareness (Hitt, 1988).

Organizational values can be found within a mission statement, a text created to articulate and set the vision and goals of an organization. Engaging in internal communication activities creates awareness of mission statement values with employees; moreover, the individuals responsible for realizing organizational successes. Stressing values, behaviour and guiding principles, mission statements are created by management for the purpose of describing a corporate identity (Fairhurst, 1997). Creating a mission statement includes careful decisions on language and descriptions since clarity and coherency legitimize organizational representations with stakeholders (Brabet & Klemm, 1994).

In an analysis of mission statements, Strong (1997) found that mission statements typically articulate service offerings, employee commitment and future directions. Overall, Strong (1997) concluded that mission statement values are promoted with employees through internal communication and must be communicated clearly and concisely (Desmidt & Heene 2006).

Unclear messaging can create implications for employees as they may not be able to understand what is being presented to them (Fairhurst, 1997; Morpew, 2006; Suh et al. 2011; Williams, 2008.). If employees are unaware of organizational values, or fail to incorporate them into everyday practices, then the values in principle may not resonate with employees (Desmidts & Heene, 2006). In too many organizations, however, “values are rhetoric that grace the company’s website or the halls of corporate headquarters, but do not form a solid foundation to guide employee behaviour” (Dalton, 2006, p. 345). Internal communication creates awareness of

mission statement values and helps promote and reinforce values with employees. Ackerman (2000) argues that employees need to be aware of corporate belief systems and internal communication enables the expression of values. However, the process of internalizing mission statement values must first begin with understanding them and internal communication is an enabler. Communicating with employees is required to better achieve strong emotional attachment towards mission statement values (Desmidt & Heene, 2006; Swales & Rogers, 1995). Once aligned with the core values, employees “have a better appreciation of their roles and higher commitment to delivering the brand promise, resulting in higher brand performance” (Chong, 2007, p.202). Consequently, the more employees are aware of mission statement values the more they will think and act in ways that align with such values (Ashforth & Mael, 1996). Communicating about values must be a two-way process as successful communication is characterized by participative approaches where management provides the opportunity to engage staff in the discussion about values (De Chernatony, 2002). It is simply insufficient for an organization to communicate its values and hope that employees will live them. Rather, organizations must foster discussions with their employees if values are to be internalized (Chong, 2007). When internalized, core values ensure employee commitment and pride, understanding and clarity towards achieving organizational goals (Chong, 2007).

In a study of internal communication at Singapore Airlines, Chong (2007) found communication methods that favoured two-way communication such as face-to-face meetings. Employees were found to engage management directly and communication was tailored to meet the needs of different groups of employees. Chong (2007) found that the communication efforts at Singapore Airlines focused on numerous communication activities to reinforce corporate values, most notably through open communication, where specific issues were addressed and views

expressed. The tone and language used was found to be encouraging, fostering a shared sense of joint responsibility and was free of authoritative claims. Newsletters, emails, presentations and websites were also created and shared with employees using a tone that was both natural and pleasant. Robson and Tourish (2005) state that internal communication must be free of negativity and instead should incorporate encouraging, positive language. Moorcroft (2006) concluded that successful internal communication extends itself far beyond simply informing employees; moreover, internal communication must establish a relationship by linking employees to visualize their place in the organization and make them understand the importance of their contributions. Overall, it was found that when espousing values, internal communication should be multi-faceted and open. As a result, employees will feel connected with their organization through the use of simple language that is motivational rather than commanding (Chong, 2007).

Tactics for internal communication:

To explore how organizational values are communicated within organizations, Cheney (1983b) examined the content of corporate newsletters. Internal newsletters, otherwise referred to as “house organs”, were chosen for analysis as they were recognized as carriers of corporate values (Cheney, 1983b, p.149). Moreover, house organs are communication texts that serve the intentions of management: to distribute a top-down corporate message to employees to provide directions and insight on business related information. Cheney found that management played a crucial role in using internal communication to influence and persuade employees to be aware and understand corporate values. The results of Cheney’s study revealed the use of 10 tactics to strategically communicate with employees (Table 2).

Table 2: Identification framework – tactics.

Tactic:	Description:
1) <i>Expression of concern for the individual</i>	Emphasis is placed on employees being made to feel good and supported.
2) <i>Recognition of individual contributions</i>	Employee contributions are highlighted and employees are made to feel proud of each other and themselves.
3) <i>Espousal of shared values</i>	Shared interests are explicitly stated and employees are directly linked to the organization.
4) <i>Advocacy of benefits and activities</i>	Membership with the organization is presented and encouraged by explicitly stating the benefits of working for the organization.
5) <i>Praise by outsiders</i>	The view of others, outside the organization, is represented to encourage employees to identify with the organization. Implicit is the idea that employees should hold the same view of their employer as others outside the organization do.
6) <i>Testimonials by employees</i>	Employees own words are published and disseminated to personalize the organization, establishing the opportunity for everyone to know each other.
7) <i>Urge employees to unite together</i>	Employees are explicitly encouraged to unite together to realize a common goal or objective. Implicit associations with values are made.
8) <i>One clear message or topic at a time</i>	Internal communication focuses on one clear message to maintain a focus and to avoid overwhelming the audience.
9) <i>Stress necessary collaboration</i>	Employees are directed to work together to ensure the attainment of specific goals.
10) <i>Use of pronoun we</i>	Stresses the idea of unity, togetherness and sharing. Powerful tactic as it allows an organization to present similarity and commonality among members.

Adapted from Cheney's identification framework (1983b, p.150-156).

Cheney describes each tactic as an intentional attempt to promote values and help employees achieve an understanding of them. Each tactic offers the opportunity for the organization to communicate a value in a specific way and Cheney found internal communication to fluctuate in

language and tone when stressing different topics. Tactics are also used to ensure “congruence of individual and organizational values” (Cheney, 1983b, p.156) and are intentionally integrated into communication to relate individuals to their organizations. The results of Cheney’s analysis demonstrate that internal communication is intentional and subject to the needs of an organization.

Using Cheney’s framework, Di Sanza and Bullis (1999) studied internal communication practices to increase employee awareness on mission statement values. Di Sanza and Bullis confirmed the use of Cheney’s tactics to create and maintain awareness of values with employees. The most commonly found tactic was *recognition of individual contributions* which was used to encourage employees to work in accordance with corporate values. By conducting interviews with corporate members, it was uncovered that internal communication fostered employee understanding through the use of two-way communications with positive language and ample opportunities for sharing their opinions (Di Sanza & Bullis, 1999, p. 390).

Research focus:

Internal communication is used by organizations to communicate with employees and while it has been found that one-way and two-way approaches exist, it is useful to explore how mission statement values are communicated with employees. The style and approach to communicating should reflect the organization’s objectives, and information must resonate with employees.

Having explored the literature it is evident that various approaches to communicating with employees can be used; however, it is interesting to explore how mission statement values are communicated since organizations invest resources, both time and money, to deliver communication to achieve organizational objectives. Using Cheney’s identification framework,

this research will explore internal communication practices when communicating mission statement values through email with employees. Questions that drive this paper are:

- 1) How is internal communication used when promoting mission statement values with employees?
- 2) Is one-way or two-way communication used to communicate mission statement values with employees?
- 3) Are there specific ways in which mission statement values are emphasized through communication?
- 4) Which of Cheney's tactics, if any, are evident when communicating mission statement values with employees?

METHOD:

This study explored how internal communication was used to communicate mission statement values to employees. Cheney's (1983b) identification framework was referenced to analyze a series of corporate emails sent to employees over a two-month period on the topic of mission statement values. Discourse analysis was selected as the methodology for the analysis reported in this research paper. Specifically, discourse analysis offered a qualitative opportunity to examine how mission statement values were communicated with employees and is concerned with understanding how communication is structured and disseminated. Discourse analysis does not have a single methodology or guiding principles due to its subjectivity; however, it does, as a research method, offer opportunities to explore communication patterns. Stemming from Fairclough's methodology (Appendix 1), this research applied discourse analysis tools to analyze email structure, participant control, modality and use of the pronouns *we* and *you*. When analyzing a text, "it is generally necessary to take account of what other choices might have been made" (Fairclough, 2001 p. 92) suggesting that intentions influence the construction of a text.

Discourse analysis assumes language brings into being situations, objects of knowledge and identities of and relations between people and groups of people (Fairclough, 1995). As Hardy (2001) explains:

"Organizational discourse analysis focuses on the constructive effects of discourse, how discourses bring reality into being by making social relations and material objects meaningful through the study of texts. Discourse Analysis can reveal conditions that shape what may be said, who can speak within socially organized settings, the way in which reality claims are made and the social practices that are invoked" (p. 29).

If corporations create mission statements with clearly articulated values with the expectation that the values guide employee behaviour, then internal communication must embody language that

resonates with employees and be disseminated through vehicles that employees use. Moreover, communicating mission statement values is reliant on the use of language and appropriate vehicles to promote and create awareness.

Research context:

The participating organization is a successful Canadian business, offering sales and customer service support to the Canadian communications industry. Products and services range from technology products including internet, telephone solutions, website development and professional business consulting. Internal communication is frequently disseminated to keep employees aware of corporate information, including competitive information, sales and marketing best practices and customer service training. The organization is managed by a seasoned leader who disseminates employee communication in English, the official language used in the workplace. The organization employs 300 individuals, 280 front-line employees and 20 management staff. All employees are expected to work eight hours a day and to meet their daily work objectives. While time is allotted each day for employee training and education, it is imperative that internal communication is succinct and easy to read as employee productivity is a major business priority.

The organization is governed by corporate policies, along with a mission statement, that details corporate values. The mission statement, and the values found within, explains the roles and responsibilities the organization must account for daily; moreover, the mission statement depicts the values and beliefs that employees are required to be aware of in order to perform their roles to achieve organizational goals. The mission statement was created in 2008 by the Director of the organization and is available on the organization's internal and external website, office walls, training manuals and is reinforced with employees through email. The emails are written

exclusively by the Director and are disseminated at his discretion. In addition, each employee receives a copy of the mission statement at the start of their employment and managers are expected to frequently refer to the mission statement when communicating with employees.

Data collection and analysis:

Upon receiving ethics approval from the Ryerson Ethics Board, a data sample was collected from the research participant. To protect the anonymity of the research participant, the identity of the organization and the mission statement is not provided in this analysis. Internal communication excerpts, including the mission statement, are not preceded by or followed with the Director's name and are simply presented in italic font. The data collected for this research paper consists of all organizational emails (12 in total) used to communicate corporate values to employees between March 1, 2011 and April 30, 2011. The mission statement was first analyzed to identify the corporate values embedded within the emails.

Next, the emails were then analyzed looking for the most commonly communicated values. In addition, the emails were coded looking for discourse examples as indicated in Fairclough's discourse analysis framework. Instances of structure, participant control, modality, and pronoun use were the most reoccurring elements observed. Instances of structure refer specifically to how a text is constructed. Participant control analyzes the degree to which a sender and receiver of communication engage in a discussion. Modality relates to the authority a sender or receiver exerts through communication. Pronoun use personalizes texts and implies a relationship between a communication sender and receiver.

Next, the emails were analyzed looking for the use of Cheney's tactics (Table 2). Data tables were created to ensure proper categorization and organization of each instance discovered. Lastly, communication examples were organized according to each tactic category to analyze which tactic was used when communicating about mission statement values.

FINDINGS:

The analysis of the data sample is explained in this section. The data sample includes the values found in the mission statement. The mission statement was first analyzed to understand the organization's core values and provides context for communicating during the two-month timeframe.

The mission statement - key values:

The mission statement was found to be one page in length and written in a clear, concise manner. Table 3 describes the values observed in the mission statement. There were a total of five values found in the mission statement. The values expressed the direction for the organization and offered insight into how employees can work to achieve corporate goals.

Table 3: Five corporate values.	
Observed value:	Summary:
<i>Employee/People</i>	We take pride in valuing our employees and it is our utmost priority.
<i>Community</i>	We are committed to serving the community in which we work, live and play. We work together to improve social and economic communities.
<i>Customer Service</i>	Our number one priority is our customers and we must deliver the best service to customers.
<i>Innovation</i>	We are responsible for driving innovation – we are innovative and our services are cutting-edge and unique.
<i>Competitiveness</i>	Our products and services are competitive and we rule against our competition and in the market.

Adapted from the organization's mission statement.

The analysis of 12 internal communication examples in this organization revealed that only three out of five values were expressed when communicating to employees. The three values are *Employee/People*, *Customer Service* and *Competitiveness* (Table 4, 5, 6).

Table 4: Total occurrences of Employee/People.		
Value:	Total frequency:	Examples:
<i>Employee/People</i>	28%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We pride ourselves in recruiting the right talent. Our people are our biggest strengths.”</i> • <i>“I know that you program your mind for success.”</i> • <i>“We work every day to create and sustain a unique work environment where employees are treated fairly and equitably.”</i> • <i>“Go for your best every day.”</i> • <i>“Be confident because I am of you – be proud because I am of you.”</i> • <i>“We know what it takes to be the best – each other!”</i>

Table 5: Total occurrences of Customer Service.

Value:	Total frequency:	Examples:
<i>Customer Service</i>	38%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We are here because we believe in the best customer service ever.”</i> • <i>“We must influence customer service.”</i> • <i>“You must work together to change and rearrange priorities to match up with customer objectives.”</i> • <i>“We can meet customer demands by working together.”</i> • <i>“We are here to serve our customers.”</i> • <i>“We need to continue doing the right thing – putting customers first.”</i> • <i>“It is our responsibility to work together to treat customers right.”</i> • <i>“Our job is to make customers happy.”</i> • <i>“You must know your customer to better serve them.”</i> • <i>“Our job is to guarantee dynamic and innovative solutions and we must guarantee consistent and exceptional customer service.”</i> • <i>“We need to continue doing the right thing – putting customers first.”</i> • <i>“We’ve done a great job with customers but we need to focus and do better in the future.”</i>

Table 6: Total occurrences of Competitiveness.		
Value:	Total frequency:	Examples:
Competitiveness	34%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We must always offer the best solutions.”</i> • <i>“We built this organization together and we must work together to continue our competitive success.”</i> • <i>“Our attitude makes our organization strong.”</i> • <i>“It is a blend of our best efforts and thinking of every single member of our team is how we will ultimately attain our future.”</i> • <i>“We must unite against the competition for what we offer to customers is superior.”</i> • <i>“Help customers buy from our business because we are the most competitive – we are the best!”</i> • <i>“Great businesses and world-class services are not created in a day. It’s more about evolution than revolution; through partnerships and collaboration.”</i> • <i>“Our technology is better than the competition and we must continue to commit ourselves to making our technology even better.”</i>

Internal communication:

Email was the only vehicle used by the Director to communicate values with employees during the two-month timeframe. The Director did not refer to any complementary communication activities nor were any references made to previous communication efforts outside the two-month timeframe. What the Director does in one occurrence only, however, is refer to the emails should employees require clarification.

The Director sent the emails directly to employees and all examples were distributed to all team members, regardless of their management level. The Director took the time to address the time of day (for example, *“Good morning beautiful people!”*, *“Good afternoon, team”*, or *“How was*

the day?") to personalize the message. The emails were never longer than one or two paragraphs, making the emails quick to read. Each email focused on one topic only and did not follow a sequential flow. More specifically, the Director moved from one topic to the other, revisiting topics already communicated. Table 7 summarizes the distribution date, sender and mission statement value.

Table 7: Distribution date, sender and value.			
Sample:	Distribution date:	Sender:	Value:
1	Monday March 1, 2011	Director	<i>Employee/People</i>
2	Tuesday March 8, 2011	Director	<i>Customer Service</i>
3	Friday March 18, 2011	Director	<i>Competitiveness</i>
4	Monday March 21, 2011	Director	<i>Employee/People</i>
5	Monday March 21, 2011	Director	<i>Customer Service</i>
6	Friday April 1, 2011	Director	<i>Competitiveness</i>
7	Friday April 8, 2011	Director	<i>Employee/People</i>
8	Monday April 11, 2011	Director	<i>Competitiveness</i>
9	Friday April 15, 2011	Director	<i>Customer Service</i>
10	Monday April 18, 2011	Director	<i>Customer Service</i>
11	Friday April 22, 2011	Director	<i>Competitiveness</i>
12	Tuesday April 26, 2011	Director	<i>Customer Service</i>

Additionally, the analysis revealed a high degree of one-way communication. The emails did not invite feedback and formulation was evident. Formulation is a device where “rewording of what has been said or is a wording of what may be assumed to follow” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 113). Formulation appeared in 100% of all emails (12 emails) and was used to stress agreement and

understanding on what was communicated. Examples of formulation include: “*Hope I am clear*”, “*Do you understand*”.

Modality and pronoun use explored:

Modal expressions and pronoun use were observed in the communication samples. Modal expressions are detailed in bold font and pronoun use examples are underlined (Table 8, 9, 10). The *Employee/People* value showed no examples of directive or authoritative references but instead was expressed only through the use of pronouns *we*, *you* and *I*. The *Customer Service* value revealed the most frequent use of modal expressions, with a total of 12 examples. Pronoun use was also evident, with a combination of *we*, *you* and *our* found. The *Competitiveness* value also displayed examples of both modal expressions and pronouns; however, fewer modal examples were found in comparison to the *Customer Service* value.

Table 8: Modality and pronoun use examples – Employee/People.	
Value:	Examples:
<i>Employee/People</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<u>We</u> pride ourselves in recruiting the right talent.” • “<u>Our</u> people are <u>our</u> biggest strengths.” • “<u>I</u> know that <u>you</u> program <u>your</u> mind for success.” • “<u>We</u> work every day to create and sustain a unique work environment where employees are treated fairly and equitably.” • “Go for <u>your</u> best every day.” • “Be confident because <u>I</u> am of <u>you</u> – be proud because <u>I</u> am of <u>you</u>.” • “<u>We</u> know what it takes to be the best – each other!”

Table 9: Modality and pronoun use examples – Customer Service.

Value:	Examples:
Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“<u>We</u> are here because <u>we</u> believe in the best customer service ever.”</i> • <i>“<u>We</u> must influence customer service.”</i> • <i>“<u>You</u> must work together to change and rearrange priorities to match up with customer objectives.”</i> • <i>“<u>We</u> can meet customer demands by working together.”</i> • <i>“<u>We</u> are here to serve our customers.”</i> • <i>“<u>We</u> need to continue doing the right thing – putting customers first.”</i> • <i>“It is <u>our</u> responsibility to work together to treat customers right.”</i> • <i>“<u>Our</u> job is to make customers happy.”</i> • <i>“<u>You</u> must know <u>your</u> customer to better serve them.”</i> • <i>“<u>Our</u> job is to guarantee dynamic and innovative solutions and <u>we</u> must guarantee consistent and exceptional customer service.”</i> • <i>“<u>We</u> need to continue doing the right thing – putting customers first.”</i> • <i>“<u>We</u>’ve done a great job with customers but <u>we</u> need to focus and do better in the future.”</i>

Table 10: Modality and pronoun use examples – Competitiveness.

Value:	Examples:
Competitiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<u>We</u> must always offer the best solutions.” • “<u>We</u> built this organization together and <u>we</u> must work together to continue <u>our</u> competitive success.” • “<u>Our</u> attitude makes <u>our</u> organization strong.” • “It is a blend of <u>our</u> best efforts and thinking of every single member of <u>our</u> team that will help <u>us</u> attain our future.” • “<u>We</u> must unite against the competition for what <u>we</u> offer to customers is superior.” • “Help customers buy from <u>our</u> business because <u>we</u> are the most competitive – <u>we</u> are the best!” • “Great businesses and world-class services are not created in a day. It’s more about evolution than revolution; through partnerships and collaboration.” • “<u>Our</u> technology is better than the competition and <u>we</u> must continue to commit ourselves to making <u>our</u> technology even better.”

Communication tactics:

Cheney’s identification framework (Table 2) was used in the analysis to explore how messages found within the emails were expressed with employees. Only four out of the 10 tactics were found to be in use in the emails analyzed in this study. The four tactics found were the *espousal of shared values*, *expression of concern for the individual*, *urge employees to unite* and *stress necessary collaboration*.

Each tactic was observed throughout the data frame; however, it was observed that *espousal of concern for the individual* was the most widely observed tactic (10 instances) and the *stress necessary collaboration* was the least observed tactic (6 instances). *Expression of concern for the*

individual and *urge employees to unite* were observed with the same frequency (9 instances).

Tables 11, 12, 13 and 14 provide examples of each tactic with a total for each occurring instance with the sampled emails.

Table 11: Identification tactics observed – Espousal of shared values.	
Tactic:	Findings:
<i>Espousal of shared values</i> (10 instances)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We are here to serve our customers.” • “We are the reason why customers choose us.” • “We need to continue doing the right thing – putting customers first.” • “Our job is to make customers happy.” • “We all share the same passions –we believe in the best customer service ever.” • “We work every day to create and sustain a unique work environment where employees are treated fairly and equitably.” • “We must go back and ensure values are a part of our day to day habits. Weaving values into our fabric is key to achieving interests of our clients.” • “We must always offer the best solutions.” • “Our people are our biggest strengths.” • “We pride ourselves in recruiting the right talent.”

Table 12: Identification tactics observed – Expression of concern for the individual.

Tactic:	Findings:
<p><i>Expression of concern for the individual</i></p> <p>(9 instances)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“You are a star on stage when you are at work – go for your best every day.”</i> • <i>“We built this organization because of people like you.”</i> • <i>“We work every day to create and sustain a unique work environment where employees are treated fairly and equitably.”</i> • <i>“Go for your best every day.”</i> • <i>“You have an impact on the customer experience and remember to try your hardest.”</i> • <i>“Challenge yourself to stretch beyond your comfort zone to achieve your goals and goals of our business.”</i> • <i>“Be confident because I am of you – be proud because I am of you.”</i> • <i>“Focus on how you can evolve your game – how can you better contribute.”</i> • <i>“Your past success has gotten you where you are and you are here because you are the best. To get to where you want to go requires learning and new skills and we support you.”</i>

Table 13: Identification tactics observed – Urge employees to unite.

Tactic:	Findings:
<p><i>Urge employees to unite</i></p> <p>(9 instances)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We are all in this fight together.”</i> • <i>“We must unite against the competition for what we offer to customers is superior.”</i> • <i>“Help customers buy from us because we are the most competitive – we are the best!”</i> • <i>“We’ve done a great job with customers but need to keep focus and do better in the future.”</i> • <i>“It is our joint responsibility to drive business results and to achieve them.”</i> • <i>“We must set our professional goals high and we have confidence that we have the ability to achieve and exceed them.”</i> • <i>“Our job is to guarantee dynamic and innovative solutions and we must guarantee consistent and exceptional customer service.”</i> • <i>“We’ve built this organization together and we must work together to continue our competitive success!”</i> • <i>“We know and have what it takes to be the best – each other!”</i>

Table 14: Identification tactics observed – Stress necessary collaboration.	
Tactic:	Findings:
<i>Stress necessary collaboration</i> (6 instances)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Working with stakeholders and with each other is fundamental to our success.” • “We can meet customer demands by working together.” • “Great businesses and world-class services are not created in a day. It’s more about evolution than revolution; through partnership. • “You must work together to change and rearrange priorities to match up with customer objectives.” • “It is our responsibility to work together to treat customers right.” • “It is a blend of the best efforts and thinking of every single member of our team is how we will ultimately attain our future.”

The analysis also revealed that each tactic referred specifically to one of the three values. Tables 15, 16, 17 and 18 provide examples of this finding. While the *espousal of shared values* tactic was observed most when communicating the *Customer Service* value (5 instances), the *expression of concern for the individual* tactic was observed only when communicating the *Employee/People* value (9 instances). The *urge employees to unite* tactic was observed most when communicating the *Competitiveness* value (6 instances) and the *stress necessary collaboration* tactic was observed when communicating the *Customer Service* value.

Table 15: Espousal of shared values – instances by value.

Espousal of shared values:		
Employee/People	Customer Service	Competitiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We are the reason why customers choose us.”</i> • <i>“We work every day to create and sustain a unique work environment where employees are treated fairly and equitably.”</i> • <i>“Our people are our biggest strengths.”</i> • <i>“We pride ourselves in recruiting the right talent.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We are here to serve our customers.”</i> • <i>“We need to continue doing the right thing, putting customers first.”</i> • <i>“Our job is to make customers happy.”</i> • <i>“We all share the same passion – we believe in the best customer service ever.”</i> • <i>“We must go back and ensure values are a part of our day to day habits. Weaving values into our fabric is key to achieving interests of our clients.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We must always offer the best solutions.”</i>

Table 16: Expression of concern for the individual – instances by value.

Expression of concern for the individual:		
Employee/People	Customer Service	Competitiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“You are a star on stage when you are at work – go for your best every day.”</i> • <i>“We built this organization because of people like you.”</i> • <i>“We work every day to create and sustain a unique work environment where employees are treated fairly and equitably.”</i> • <i>“Go for your best every day.”</i> • <i>“You have an impact on the customer experience and remember to try your hardest.”</i> • <i>“Challenge yourself to stretch beyond your comfort zone to achieve your goals and goals of our business.”</i> • <i>“Be confident because I am of you – be proud because I am of you.”</i> • <i>“Focus on how you can evolve your game – how can you better contribute.”</i> • <i>“Your past success has gotten you where you are and you are here because you are the best. To get to where you want to go requires learning and new skills and we support you.”</i> 	<i>No examples were found.</i>	<i>No examples were found.</i>

Table 17: Urge employees to unite – instances by value.

Urge employees to unite:		
Employee/People	Customer Service	Competitiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We must set our professional goals high and we have confidences that we have the ability to achieve and exceed them.”</i> • <i>“We know and have what it takes to be the best – each other.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We’ve done a great job with customers but we need to focus and do better in the future.”</i> • <i>“Our job is to guarantee dynamic and innovative solutions and we must guarantee consistent and exceptional customer service.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We’ve built this organization together and we must work together to continue our competitive success.”</i> • <i>“We are all in this fight together!”</i> • <i>“We must unite against the competition for what we offer to customers is superior.”</i> • <i>“It is our joint responsibility to drive and achieve business results.”</i> • <i>“Help customers buy from us because we are the most competitive – we are the best!”</i>

Table 18: Stress necessary collaboration – instances by value.

Stress necessary collaboration:		
Employee/People	Customer Service	Competitiveness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“It is a blend of the best efforts and thinking of everyone single member of our team is how we will ultimately attain our future.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“We can meet customer demands by working together.”</i> • <i>“You must work together to change and rearrange priorities to match up with customer objectives.”</i> • <i>“It is our responsibility to work together to treat customers right.”</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Working with stakeholders and each other is fundamental to our success.”</i> • <i>“Great business and world-class services are not created in a day. It’s more about evolution than revolution; through partnership and collaboration.”</i>

DISCUSSION:

The results of this analysis revealed that internal communication focused on expressing mission statement values with employees. Communication topic, distribution vehicle and frequency, style and observed communication tactics are discussed in this section.

Communication topic:

Despite the observation of five mission statement values, the Director focused on using email to communicate the *Employee/People* value, the *Customer Service* value and *Competitiveness* value without referencing the *Community* and *Innovation* values (Table 3). While additional research can explore the decisions for choosing to communicate about three values during the timeframe, perhaps the other two values were communicated with employees before March 1, 2011 and after April 30, 2011.

Communication vehicle and frequency:

Only 12 emails were distributed during the timeframe under investigation. As email is a time-efficient vehicle that allows for quick and easy distribution, the organization appears to have chosen an appropriate vehicle to communicate with employees given the size of the organization. While it is unknown if the organization manages complementary communication activities to reinforce mission statement values (Van Riel, 2008), the analysis did not suggest additional communication activities, in the form of face-to-face meetings or online chats, are being used. Email is a strong tool for creating awareness; however, face-to-face communication is required to fortify employee awareness and understanding (Hewitt, 2006). As Hewitt (2006) found, limiting the distribution of emails will impact the outcome of internal communication if not

strengthened with interpersonal activities to keep messaging at the forefront of employees' minds. With only 12 communication examples for the entire two-month period, there is a risk that too little communication activity can create consequences for message retention (Chong, 2007). Simply because the organization distributed 12 emails during the investigation period does not suggest that employees are aware or understand the corresponding messages. Consequently, and as Chong (1997) found, the simple act of sending a message does not mean it is received or remembered as intended and this could pose implications on achieving corporate goals.

While email was the vehicle for communication in this study, it was distributed exclusively by the Director and at varying periods during the two-month timeframe. Topics did not flow from one to the next; however, the emails returned to previously communicated values to re-emphasize points already discussed. Communication was not distributed to the front-line managers with a request to forward, but instead, was sent directly to all employees. This disables the opportunity for a manager to incorporate comments or viewpoints, suggesting that email is an example of controlled media, used to manage communication as intended by the Director. Similar to Chong's (2007) findings where senior executives communicated directly with employees, only one individual was communicating during the timeframe and this offers only one viewpoint on the topic of mission statement values.

Communication style:

The style used to communicate mission statement values with employees was most reflective of the *closed* and *informing style* (Caldwell, 1995), giving clear commands and directions while at the same time creating awareness. Internal communication was top-down in all instances, with

no opportunity for employee feedback or participation. The reoccurring findings of formulation suggest an attempt to express non-negotiable meaning with each of the values in a controlled way. Internal communication was disseminated using a controlled medium, enabling management to establish the expectation that values are to be understood as intended with no room for discussion. One specific example “*Am I making myself clear*” might suggest a controlling and demanding approach to communicating. The results of Cheney’s (1983b) study revealed that employees participated in internal communication by sharing their perspectives. This technique both personalized communication and increased awareness through the viewpoint and attitude of another individual (Cheney, 1983b). While email, as a communication tool, has the potential to provide two-way communication with the reply function, the closing remarks of the Director did not invite a reply.

Additionally, pronoun use and modal expressions contributed to the *closed style* when communicating values with employees. Nickerson and Bargiela-Chiappini (1996) found the use of specific pronouns as intentional ways to emphasize messages. The most frequently used pronoun was *we*, which was used both in a rhetorical and non-standard way (Quirk et al. 1985); *we* may be used to both establish a collective, inclusive feeling but also to refer to the organization itself (i.e., “*We are proud of you*”, “*We believe*”, “*We built*”). The use of *you* was most used when employees were being directed to follow an instruction that directs behaviour. Greater frequency of modality to communicate *Customer Service* indicates it is the most important value. Authoritative claims help organizations manage the degree to which employees comply with messages (Caldwell, 1995), and in this study, authoritative claims suggest a tightly controlled communication environment.

Communication tactics:

Within the controlled communication environment, four out of 10 tactics within Cheney's identification framework (1983b) were observed. Cheney's tactics were found to promote awareness and to reinforce the one-way controlled communication model as apparent in the organization. The tactics appeared to help the Director speak about a value in a top-down approach where direct requests were stated. The *espousal of shared values* tactic was used to create awareness about all three values; however, references to the *Customer Service* value were most frequent. The use of the pronoun *we*, as part of this tactic, links the employee with the organization by explicitly stating that the individual is an extension of the organization, sharing the same viewpoints and thoughts (Cheney, 1983b).

Expression of concern for the individual was the second tactic found to be used when communicating the *Employee/People* value. Cheney (1983b) found employee participation was invited by asking employees to share their perspectives on how they feel, are made to feel, by their organization. Employee input helped the organization reinforce corporate messaging through the viewpoints of their peers (Cheney, 1983b). Caldwell (1995) found that when internal communication is open to employee input, an organization has a stronger chance to guide behaviours and attitudes. However, attempts to communicate the value of *Employee/People* with one-way communication may create adverse affects on how employees become aware of this value (Caldwell, 1995). Nonetheless, employee input was not found during the investigation period suggesting perhaps that the organization is communicating with the intention of selling the idea that the organization supports its employees without actually inviting participation to comment (Caldwell, 1995). Although the tactic stressed the inclusionary *we* pronoun, the tactic

was used by the Director to communicate in a top-down manner, telling employees rather than engaging in a discussion with them.

Likewise, the *urge employees to unite* tactic was observed when the Director was communicating the *Competitiveness* value. Specifically, the communication tended to be commanding, with the use of frequent modal expressions. This tactic is especially important for ensuring employee collaboration and messages are typically communicated in a non-negotiable manner (Cheney, 1983b). Lastly, the *stress necessary collaboration* tactic was observed most frequently when communicating about the *Customer Service* and *Competitiveness* values. Emails using this tactic were found to suggest a closed communication style with authoritative claims and commands. Modality expressions are indicative of a clear attempt by management to issue orders where employees are expected to comply (Caldwell, 1995) and the use of *we* in this tactic was used to enforce a collective responsibility.

CONCLUSION

This research paper examined the use of internal communication, more specifically email, within a Canadian communications company during a two-month period, from March 1, 2011 to April 30, 2011. The analysis of all emails distributed during the timeframe suggests a one-way communication approach when communicating about mission statement values with employees. Communication was identified as having a commanding approach, with evidence of modal expressions. The analysis of both the vehicle and content used depicts a communication environment where information was disseminated by one sender only to provide a direction and focus to employees. The frequency with which communication was disseminated suggests that communicating about mission statement values is important. Although the Director communicated with employees, they were not invited to share their opinions during the investigation period during which the emails were sent. Specific tactics were found to help the Director speak about each value in a closed way.

This study provides useful findings about how internal communication is used to deliver information about mission statement values. Although the findings are dissimilar to the Singapore Airlines example with only one communication vehicle evident, the organization may be delivering effective communication with a tailored strategy that benefits the organization. Further research can explore the impact of a closed one-way communication approach and evaluate the effectiveness of communicating about mission statement values in a controlled way. Exploring employee effects and management's decision for communicating are two specific areas for further inquiry.

APPENDIX 1

Fairclough's Discourse analysis framework is laid out below in a series of questions to guide researcher to explore texts for each instance.

Appendix 1: Fairclough's 10 question analysis framework

1) What experiential values do words have?

- a. What classification schemes are drawn upon?
- b. Are there words which are ideologically contested?
- c. Is there rewording or over wording?
- d. What ideologically significant meaning relations are there between words?

2) What relational values do words have?

- a. Are there euphemistic expressions?
- b. Are there marked formal or informal words?

3) What expressive values do words have?

4) What metaphors are used?

5) What experiential values do grammatical features have?

- a. What types of process and participant predominate?
- b. Is agency unclear?
- c. Are processes what they seem?
- d. Are nominalizations used?
- e. Are sentences active or passive?
- f. Are sentences positive or negative?

6) What relational values do grammatical features have?

- a. What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?
- b. Are there important features of relational modality?
- c. Are the pronouns we and you used, and if so, how?

7) What expressive values do grammatical features have?

- a. Are there important features of expressive modality?

Appendix 1: Fairclough's 10 question analysis framework

8) How are (simple) sentences linked together?

- a. What logical connectors are used?
- b. Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?
- c. What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

9) What interactional conventions are used?

- a. Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?

10) What large-scale structures does the text have?

Adapted from Fairclough (2001, p. 92).

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GLOSSARY

Alignment: Individual goals are linked with corporate goals and this process is achieved through communications.

Discourse: Communication texts and processes that surround a specific topic or subject.

Discourse analysis: Process by which discourse texts are studied and analyzed to identify power relations, implications and effects of discourses.

Engagement: Individuals are enthusiastic and passionate about their place of work.

Formulation: A technique used to recap an expression and ensure clarity and meaning for communication receiver.

Identification: The resulting outcome where an individual defines themselves in accordance with the organization they belong to. Individuals share the same beliefs or values of their organization.

Identification tactic: Used intentionally by organizations when communicating with employees.

Identity: Characteristics to which one feels affiliated and connected with. It is the condition of being the same as something.

Internal communication: The process by which organizations disseminate information to their employees for the purpose of creating awareness about an issue or topic. It is used to ensure employee commitment, manage employee relationships, develop understanding of organizational values and create a supporting attitude with organizational goals.

Mission statement: Also referred to as an organizations credo, mission statements articulate an organization's purpose and goals and are made up of organizational values.

Organizational communication: Communication texts created for the purpose of information internal audiences, such as employees.

Values: Beliefs, visions, ideals and principles that organizations hold as important and acceptable.