

## Multidisciplinary in internal communication and the challenges ahead

**Article classification:** Literature Review

### Abstract

**Purpose** Considering the impact internal communication has on the performance of organizations, studies about internal communication are revisited in order to generate a deeper understanding about the disciplines that shape the topic and the main trends influencing both the academic and professional fields. **Approach** Departing from a communicational background, we integrate dispersed contributions from disciplines such as organizational communication, public relations, corporate communication and marketing communications, to the literature on internal communication. **Findings** The significant role played by internal communication is supported by scholars with different theoretical backgrounds. Despite the clear differences between disciplines, the defense of a strategized internal communication and a focus on the employee is widely accepted. **Practical and social implications** Both scholars and practitioners will need to keep adapting to a reality where: internal communication practices are not only managerial but dependent on the inputs of the employees, the ability to listen and collect feedback is sacred, and internal communication plans are expected to be strategically implemented and measured. **Originality/Value** By showing the plurality of disciplines that influence internal communication, a strategized multidisciplinary focus on the topic is encouraged.

**Keywords:** internal communication, employee communication, strategic communication, strategy, multidisciplinary

### Introduction

Scholars and practitioners from different fields have been claiming themselves accountable for managing communication in the internal arena for years, placing internal communication as part of the theoretical backgrounds each of them follow, be it human resources (Luthans and Youssef, 2004), public relations (Waymer and Ni, 2009), organizational communication (Karanges et al., 2014) or marketing (Lings and Greenley, 2005), to name but a few. Ćorić and Vokić (2009), for one, establish co-relations between internal marketing, internal communication and human resources, whereas Dortok (2006), having corporate communication as the background discipline, associates corporate reputation to internal communication. The result of this has been a fragmented aspiring discipline, that still needs to affirm itself both academically and inside companies, in order to avoid working contexts threaten by silo and encroachment (Neill and Jiang, 2017).

Certain that a great number of disciplines contribute to the generation of knowledge on internal communication, but placing our focus on the communication field, we defend the relevance of gathering these contributions in order to understand what are the main similarities and differences between each contributive discipline. What is fairly consensual in recent days is the advocacy of an internal communication that is strategically managed (Dolphin, 2005; Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2015). However, strategy here is depicted in different ways: some authors see it as a holistic umbrella to achieve