

Vying for seats in the C-suite: Marketing and PR's focus is too narrow, study finds

May 11 2015

Corporate communicators and marketing teams are often in direct competition to be in the "C-suite"—the coveted boardroom seats—according to a study by a Baylor University researcher.

"So few seats are available that it's often an 'either/or' for PR and marketing," said study author Marlene Neill, Ph.D., assistant professor of journalism, [public relations](#) and new media in Baylor's College of Arts & Sciences. "People perceive them as quite similar," although their responsibilities are distinctly different.

The research indicates that both groups' focus on the C-suite, with members that include chief executive officers and chief financial officers, is too narrow. "Everybody wants more power and influence, but "strategic issues arise at the division level as well as executive-level committees," Neill said.

The study—"Beyond the C-Suite: Corporate Communications' Power & Influence"—is published in the *Journal of Communication Management*.

Neill conducted 30 in-depth interviews with senior executives in three Fortune 500 companies and a fourth multinational company that has been featured among Inc. 5000's list of the fastest-growing private companies.

None of them had both marketing and PR executives in the C-suite, she said.

Those interviewed included executives in [corporate communications](#), marketing, sales, human resources, investor relations, finance and operations, as well as division presidents.

"The executives' interviews indicated that corporate communications and marketing do supply distinct and essential services that justify their membership in executive-level decision teams," Neill said.

While PR executives in corporate environments generally manage social media, reputation, internal communications and government relations, marketing executives had influence due to their expertise in [market](#) research and branding.

Factors affecting the power of PR and marketing are industry type, CEO preferences, organization hierarchy and domain expertise.

"PR had a bigger role with companies handling crises and reputation, while marketing was more dominant when the company was focused on branding and sales," Neill said.

She suggested that both groups need to build internal relationships with their colleagues to educate them on the contributions they can provide. For example, in one company, the corporate communications group initially was excluded from the decision team for a wellness initiative. But after an unsuccessful launch, the communication team provided key messaging about why employees' health matters to their families. Participation rates increased.

"It requires an effort on the part of the manager of public affairs to really build the internal relationships . . . so that people always think to call them," said one public affairs [executive](#).

In the interviews, executives discussed these issues: transition from a

print to an electronic publication; public relations' response to two crises; a merger/acquisition; fee increases across business units; appearances on a national television show; an employee wellness program; and a new business partnership.

Provided by Baylor University

Citation: Vying for seats in the C-suite: Marketing and PR's focus is too narrow, study finds (2015, May 11) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-05-vying-seats-c-suite-pr-focus.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.