

SYLLABUS - MANAGING CORPORATE REPUTATION (10 Credits)

Total Qualification Time: 110 Hours

The strength and magnitude of an organisation's reputation represents the way in which a complex range of stakeholders perceive an organisation, entity or destination. All too often, a gap develops between the way an organisation intends to be seen and the reality, namely the way stakeholders actually perceive it. This can be due to a range of forces, some slow, foreseeable and manageable, and some sudden, unforeseen and relatively unmanageable. All can result in organisational underperformance, destabilisation, financial difficulties, leadership change, a fall in market valuation, and even difficulty in raising finance or recruiting the right personnel. This unit explores ways in which organisations can minimise the gap and avoid these potentially serious issues.

Broadly this unit is concerned with learning to manage in the following ways:

- Critically evaluate the way organisations develop their identities and some organisations use these to form images and assign reputational status
- Critically analyse the elements that contribute to the identity that an organisation projects to its stakeholders, sometimes through a corporate brand
- Critically evaluate linkage between how an organisation wants to be seen and how it is seen, namely corporate communications

Students will normally base their learning and development of these issues on an organisation. However, some may choose to use this unit to explore the reputational development of a place. This might involve for example, a tourist destination (eg, country or region), a business area (eg, seaport or park) or a city or town. The detail specified in this syllabus is based on ideas, practice and the research literature relating to corporate branding, communications and reputation.

This unit consists of three parts: Part 1: Understanding the nature and characteristics of reputational management, Part 2: Managing the dimensions of an organisation's reputation and Part 3: Developing effective corporate communications.

Part 1 Understanding the nature and characteristics of reputational management Weighting 25%

The focus of this part is on developing knowledge and understanding of what reputation means, the array of practical and intellectual elements involved in the management and development of a reputation, the rationale for an organisation's directors to support the overt management of corporate reputation, and the identification of the key stakeholders. External stakeholders include shareholders, customers, suppliers, communities, trade unions and the media. Internal stakeholders comprise management and employees.

This part of the unit considers reasons why senior management needs to be concerned with the reputation of their organisation, and identifies particular forces that influence it. In addition it explores what reputation means in a corporate context, and identifies key elements that are considered to constitute corporate reputation. From this base, subsequent parts of the unit examine ways in which managers can understand and develop the reputation of their organisation, including corporate identity, branding, positioning and communications.

1.1 Developing the rationale for managing corporate reputation

1.1.1 Critically evaluate the context and concepts relating to corporate reputation:

- *Development, evolution and perception*
- *Corporate image versus corporate identity*
- *Context: industrial, not-for-profit, competitive, societal, political*
- *Criteria: credibility, trustworthiness, reliability and responsiveness*

1.1.2 Justify the importance and significance of managing an organisation's corporate reputation:

- *Financial performance*
- *Managing shareholder value*
- *Improved competitiveness*
- *Relative ease of recruitment*

1.1.3 Identify the forces that can influence an organisation's reputation, and develop forecasts concerning their level of current and potential influence:

- *External Forces: environmental, financial, political, social, industry-wide, legal, technological, community-based, digital, social media*
- *Relational: competitive and collaborative strategies, resources, mergers/acquisitions, repositioning*
- *Internal forces: resources, political, strategy, structure, behaviour, communication climate*

1.2 Determining the scope of corporate reputation

1.2.1 Critically assess the compatibility of an organisation's corporate strategy, structure, systems and culture in relation to its positioning and reputation:

- *Vision, mission, values, objectives*
- *Organisational structure and culture*
- *Organisational communication climate*
- *Perception and positioning*

1.2.2 Develop processes leading to the identification of key external and internal stakeholders, and understand the nature of associated communication programmes:

- *Stakeholder analysis and mapping, identifying target publics relating to corporate reputation*
- *Investors – investor relations*
- *Customers – marketing communications*
- *Employees – internal communications*
- *Government – public affairs*
- *The public – public relations*

1.2.3 Propose and justify the use of a portfolio of broad indicators to evaluate the strength of an organisation's reputation:

- *ROI*
- *Brand equity*
- *Shareholder value*
- *Media comment*
- *Social media comment, blogging*

Part 2 Managing the dimensions of an organisation's reputation

Weighting 25%

The purpose of Part 2 is to enable students to manage the various elements that are thought to constitute the processes and dimensions that affect the way organisations are perceived. Students are expected to undertake an analysis of an organisation's character and the way it currently presents itself to stakeholders (as an identity or brand), and to make recommendations concerning the strategic management of the corporate brand, structure and architecture.

This part of the unit will explore issues associated with understanding the character of an organisation, sometimes referred to as its personality, and the development of corporate identity, image and reputation. In undertaking the analysis, students should be able to provide an assessment of the organisation, its brand and communication performance, and the issues and challenges it faces in enhancing its reputation.

2.1 Understanding the current corporate reputation

2.1.1 Critically evaluate the corporate 'character' (personality) of an organisation:

- *Organisation culture*
- *Strategy; mission, values and positioning, formulation process*
- *Organisational structure*
- *Communication climate*

2.1.2 Critically assess the strength and potential of the corporate identity and/or brand:

- *Meaning: visual, organisational, corporate, visual identity versus strategic identity*
- *Identity mix: behaviour, communication and symbolism*
- *Brand strategy: structure, architecture and promise*
- *Systems and processes, eg, formalistic or organic, developing or established, communication culture, use of digital communications*
- *Measurement of reputation using commercial systems, eg, Brand Asset Valuator, BrandZ, Equitrend, Brand Power, USA's Most Admired, Reputation Quotient, Rep Track*

2.2 Developing corporate brands

2.2.1 Critically evaluate the nature of corporate brands and make recommendations concerning any gap between identity and image:

- *Definitions*
- *Elements: differentiation, transferability, psychic value, recall, premium*
- *Typologies: Olins, Kammerer, van Riel*
- *Drivers: strategy, organisational, employee, value*
- *Levels of corporate endorsement*
- *Rebranding*

2.2.2 Propose changes to enhance the systems, structure and processes necessary to support the management of corporate reputation:

- *Communication audits*
- *Targeting stakeholder groups, including digital stakeholders*
- *Targeting employees*
- *Reputation platforms*
- *Corporate stories and story telling*
- *Corporate positioning*

Part 3 Developing effective corporate communications **Weighting 50%**

This part of the unit is concerned with the linkages between the 'character', identity and images that compose the broad corporate reputation process. The focus is on how corporate communication can be used to communicate with external and internal stakeholders.

Attention is given to issues concerning what is communicated, the particular occasions when corporate communication becomes more significant, and the tools, media and methods that organisations can use to communicate organisation-wide matters.

Students will examine issues associated with positioning organisations and developing communication strategies designed to provide points of sustainable differentiation that are of value to stakeholders. This will encompass ideas relating to ethics and corporate responsibility.

3.1 Determining the dimensions of corporate communications

3.1.1 Critically appraise the nature and characteristics of corporate communications:

- *Definition*
- *Corporate communications mix: management, organisational, marketing*
- *Principle activities: internal, investor, marketing, public affairs, issues management*

3.1.2 Critically assess the different reasons for using corporate communication:

- *Aims and purpose: four visions*
- *Tasks, eg, informing, exploring, relating, negotiating and mixed formats*
- *Circumstances, eg, periodic reporting, crisis, merger/acquisition, repositioning, strategic change, decline*
- *Stimulating and embracing change eg, knowledge, attitudes, behaviour*

3.1.3 Propose what is to be communicated to particular stakeholders and how to measure the effectiveness of the communications used:

- *Vision, mission and values*
- *Identity or brand*
- *Ethics, CSR, Sustainability and Environmental issues*
- *Strategic repositioning*
- *Measuring the effectiveness of corporate communications: eg, Kelly Repertory Grids, Natural Grouping, Q-Sort, Photo-Sorting, Attitude Measurement, Card Sorting*

3.2 Corporate communication strategies and methods

3.2.1 Critically evaluate the different methods through which corporate communications can be delivered in order to deliver effective messages and enhance reputation:

- *Tools; corporate advertising, public relations, sponsorships*
- *Media; offline and digital/online, social networking*
- *Symbolism; logos, names, signage, music, styling, uniforms, design and architecture*
- *Behaviour: employees, management performance, corporate, brand, communications*

3.2.2 Formulate approaches to corporate communications that are *investor* focused and contextually determined:

- *Roles of investor relations, eg, compliance, relationships, building (reputation)*
- *Purpose: create demand for shares, reduce churn, present/past performance, predict future performance, manage perceptions*

3.2.3 Formulate approaches to corporate communications that are *customer* focused and contextually determined:

- *Tools, eg, advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, marketing, public relations*
- *Media, eg, offline/online, digital media and social networking*
- *Messages: informational and emotional dimensions of engagement*
- *Experience marketing*

3.2.4 Formulate approaches to corporate communications that are *employee* focused and contextually determined:

- *Types: structure, flow, content and climate*
- *Roles: efficiency, shared meaning, connectivity, satisfaction*
- *Intellectual and emotional engagement*
- *Messages: information and emotional dimensions of engagement within the organisation*

3.2.5 Formulate approaches to corporate communications that are *government* focused and contextually determined:

- *Breadth: regulators, legislators, elected officials and appointed representatives*
- *Public affairs*
- *Lobbying, relationships, timing and objectivity*
- *Use of digital media and social networking*

3.2.6 Formulate approaches designed to *defend* an organisation's reputation:

- *Nature of issues management: detection, marshalling and strategy*
- *Crisis communications: nature, risk analysis, agenda setting, response and rumour management*