

Introduction or searching for profession. *Europromo?*

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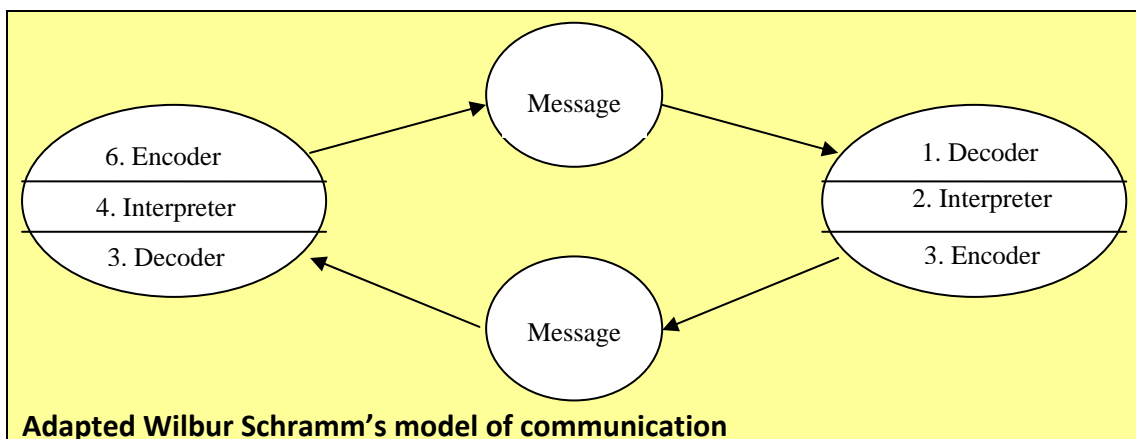
Typical spinning

One could say that the essence of communication science is finding problems in communication that are not grasped by the others. The communication specialists are constantly looking for the answers to the following questions:

- Why we do not necessarily say what we think?
- Why the persons we are talking to not necessarily hear what we are saying?
- Why the persons we are talking to not necessarily understand our message even if they hear it?

The main goal of communication is discovering every single structural barrier in the way of a message. Looking for the reasons why different persons perceive information differently, why they express themselves differently, how the messages get distorted in various transmission channels or why the same signals do not reach every audience are everyday *raison d'être* of communication specialists.

In a simplified model of communication, professionals directly working with communication (e.g. journalists, marketing managers, advertising agents or public relations specialists) spin in a theoretical cycle of communication with their every audience in their everyday activities:



First, the communication specialists have to receive the information that is useful and necessary for their job. Moreover, they have to make sure they receive it correctly.

E.g. I cannot say I have seen the full picture of the book I read yesterday if I am only done with the introduction and conclusions.

Second, they have to understand the message that they have received. They must know the general picture and all the possible circumstances of the message. They must understand its true goals and the socio-cultural aspects they are wrapped into.
E.g. I dare not analyse scientifically the advertisement of the toothpaste I have seen on TV if I am not acquainted with dentistry.

Third, the communication specialists have to formulate what they want to say in a succinct sentence. Their story should be simple, popular and appealing so that the message is clear, commonly understandable and “edible”.
E.g. I do not to speak of four-floor formulas of the soft-drink if I want to sell it.

Fourth, they look for ways to convey their messages to their audience in a persuasive way. This entails adapting the message and the way it is communicated, as well as choosing the appropriate transmission channel so that it reaches the audience it is intended for.
E.g. I should not blabber modern slang on a progressive music channel to present the discounts for pensioners.

Fifth, the public relations specialists have to explain their message so that their audience conceives the information and makes use of it. Thus, both effective and efficient presentation, as well as lucid explanation is needed.
E.g. even quantum mechanics is just a game with tiny balls to start with.

Sixth, they need discover whether their message has reached every head they were aimed at and whether everyone correctly understood them. Various questionnaires are therefore sent out and oral interviews are carried out in order to find out whether the whole cycle of communication has been successful.
E.g. if I have spent months introducing a sophisticated football, I would not be happy observing people playing volleyball with it.

Besides, the typical communication specialists have to report to their superiors and colleagues on the *chic* and vague activities they conduct.
E.g. it is not naturally certain to everybody that the idea behind attending the splendid party yesterday, was giving birth to this easy going image of our company (in theoretical terms, using the right time and right place to pass the right message to the right people).

Of course, everything operates much more complex in real life – with many more layers. However, the principle is just the same: making sure everybody gets your message as you want it.

This is the basics of the realm of communication theory. But there is something more when we speak of communicating the ideas and policies of the European Union.

Euro-spinning

If you are reading this, most probably you are an information officer, an advertising agent or a public relations specialist working with a European Union's (EU) initiative, programme or project. No matter what strategy of marketing you are up to:

- **informing** (giving information: *“European Union provides the funds for improvement of the living conditions of its citizens”*);
- **advertising** (effectively repeating positive information: *“European Union provides money for better life of its citizens! EU provides money for its citizens! EU money for its citizens!”*);
- or **conducting public relations** (informing, describing and suggesting an opinion: *“The European Union provides the funds necessary for improving the living conditions of its citizens. Every organisation can benefit from the funds. The EU has always focused on its citizens firstly and the money will contribute strongly to future prospering of the Europeans.”*);

Your tasks will generally concentrate on enlightening yourself about the ideas of the European Union and its policies and looking for the audiences and the ways to explain and promote these ideas, as well as to monitor how they were perceived. We would like to call it **europromo** (European promotion activities). This is your typical communication spinning, just a little bit special.

This collection of practices is aimed at helping us all in effectively and efficiently conducting *europromo* activities throughout Europe and it is full of examples and advice from “A” to “Z”. However, studying this publication carefully and applying something in practice will not save you from a sarcastic question from a guild of marketing professionals: “Are you now a marketing expert?” Neither will it save you from similar questions from the guilds of advertising agents or public relations specialists.

Therefore I considered it important to raise a provocative counter-question: “Cannot we single out *europromo* as a new profession in the general field of communication”? As a matter of fact, I would like to presuppose that the answer is “yes”. Why?

White crows in communication

The *europromo* specialists, resemble white crows in a troop of communication specialists. And the whitest four feathers of theirs are these:

First, many are not trained specialists of communication with background in it or any related disciplines: journalism, marketing or humanities. Quite a few are reoriented public servants. Bearing in mind the load of specific information that a *europromo* specialist must possess, the specific knowledge of an ex-bureaucrat can be very much desirable when applying for the *europromo* post and helpful when working, indeed.

E.g. there was a vacant position of public relations specialist in my department, so I decided to quit those boring papers and I vanquished those public relations professionals who knew nothing about this particular EU mechanism when they came for an interview. Only then I realised I do not know much about public relations.

Second, *europromo* specialists should accept that there is a certain level of bureaucracy in communication. Usually, we should apply the rules of public procurement if we were to publish a brochure, should strictly follow the requirements of putting the EU flag right side up and we should demand the same from our beneficiaries or our colleagues. And we should stuff our messages with the necessary official information. Not to mention that everything we do must have a long tail of written proof.

E.g. I slept with my head on a newspaper and a ruler in my hand tonight, as I had to bundle an EU flag, our logo, the “European Regional Development Fund” and my message into a 5x5 cm² advertisement. And my message was: “Our new website: www.....eu”. I accomplished this task this morning. Now I have to describe what I have done in writing.

Third, *europromo* specialists are invigilated with much greater suspicion than their counterparts in typical communication sectors. Simply because we have bureaucrats as colleagues! We have to be patient and spare some time explaining them why the money should be spent on this and that and why particular “odd” things better were done. We often have to fight the windmills of “why act so strange, if you can do it in a simple way”. Thus, it is not only our audiences, but also our colleagues we should be constantly conveying and clarifying messages to.

E.g. I organised a very interesting training yesterday for teachers from our region. Everybody was so surprised with those little quizzes as cheer-up pauses, and they also thanked me for that modest tour in the town. The only ones disappointed were my colleagues, who said they did not finish work on time that day because of my useless attractions.

Fourth, our messages are primarily not related to tangible objects and obvious visions, but to complex European ideas. Besides, much of them reach us encoded in a new language - the *Eurojargon*. We are like abstract artists trying to convince our everyday viewers that our mysterious EU paintings are, in one way or another, related to their everyday lives. We have to operate with notions like “cohesion”, “objective 2” and “cross-border cooperation”. We ought to promote assuredly mysteries like Single Programming Document, Lisbon strategy or TACIS. Above all, our purpose is to make people believe and understand that the European Union is not purely bureaucratic fiction that it shares values and it works for people. We have to create a warm face for the cold body of the EU buried in its treaties, regulations and other documents.

E.g. it took hundreds of ladies and gentlemen from over 20 countries three years constructing the name for the useful and attractive programme: Objective X Cohesion Instrument Y. And I spent one hour in changing the name of the programme to the “Cool Tool”.

We possess specific and general knowledge that goes beyond the framework of the general communication theory. We apply bureaucratic principles in our “creative industry” activities and we work in a special environment. Moreover, we operate with transnational European ideas and the jargon. This, we believe, makes *europromo* a profession. On the one hand, a good *europromo* specialist does not make a good communication specialist all at once. On the other hand, neither does a good communication specialist make a good *europromo* specialist all at once.

And by proliferating the idea of the *europromo* profession we hope that this will help all of us not to feel left alone behind the enemy lines, swinging between communication and bureaucracy theories. We expect that this will give an impetus to form professional networks (e.g. INFORM network under *DG Regio*: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/country/commu/index_en.cfm), draw common guidelines on legal, theoretical and practical issues, and exchange information and advice in order to learn, create and not to invent a bicycle, if it has already been invented.

For a starter

To kick off this compendium of good advice, there are four general suggestions that may be useful in *europromo* routine, stemming from the four peculiarities of it:

- 1. Never be just a specialist, try and become an expert.** Do not hesitate attending trainings on communication and public relations and trust the professional public relations companies or advertising agencies enough to outsource some of your tasks to them. You are so important to your job (acquainted with facts, feeling the situation, having access to information, and knowing the general picture) that the sub-contractors will not leave you jobless.

E.g. once the public relations company providing services to us showed me their list of most frequent slogans used for cooperation. Surprisingly enough, there were four out of five phrases on that list I had used for our conferences. And I had spent hours making them.

- 2. Bureaucrats may be useful in communication.** The sooner you acknowledge that bureaucracy is not resident evil, the sooner you will realise, it can set the whole promotion track of yours in order, it can keep your and your beneficiaries' promotion consistent and it may save you from disinformation mistakes.

E.g. it took me twelve activity reports from beneficiaries with the stars of the European flag upside down and phrases like: “European Regional Development Foundation”, “Part-financed by the TACIS initiative INTERREG” or “Leader Plus” before I realised it is better to simply provide the beneficiaries with a ready-to-use sticker they could put on all their promotion items. Now, that they have the stickers and stick them, they can concentrate on creative promotion of their projects.

- 3. You have a super-audience – your colleagues.** Spare some time explaining them your activities and their purpose. Remember that your colleagues are your primary source of information and you are their expert in terms of the European

Commission visibility requirements. Attract them to join your actions as much as they want to, and you will soon be rewarded with smiles, understanding and valuable assistance.

E.g. I asked some of my colleagues to help me in the last huge conference I had organised. Some of them were happy to discover some interesting vocations and abilities they had, like assisting the VIP guests or decorating the conference room.

4. Beautiful euro-ideas hide behind complicated euro-phrases. Nobody will blame you for putting the European ideas in simple and popular words and presenting them in an innovative and creative way. Remarkable ideas get usually polished to a level of common minimum denominator during negotiations of many countries. Our task is to grope these ideas and to re-reveal them.

E.g. the name of the European Union programme I work with consists of twelve words. No surprise that many people tended to forget the name or misuse it. But when we thought of a two-word name for the programme, it became much easier for everybody.

Last but not least, **there are more white crows throughout Europe**. So, let us make use of the grand collection of good practice of our *europromo* colleagues.

This issue is just a small part of this good practice already present. Just a few examples of successful communication plans, visual identity and branding examples, tools and measures of *europromo*, cases of successful relationships with beneficiaries, networking and efficient monitoring and evaluation of our activities. There is still much more each of us has to offer and be proud of. So, if this selection of existing practice will give a stimulus to join forces and set grounds for working together, it has reached one of its important goals.