Change seems to be the normal condition of organizational life. Continuously changing operating environments, competitive landscapes, and legislative infrastructures, together with unpredictable shifts in customer behavior and technological development, all pose significant strategic challenges to contemporary business organizations. And to cope with these changes, organizations engage in a myriad of strategic change projects, constantly inventing and implementing new strategies, policies, and practices for carrying out their mundane operative activities.

This chapter elaborates on the challenges that managing top-down initiated change projects and emergent change processes at the same time brings about for strategic communication. The focus is especially on what top and middle managers need to know about the processes and practices of communication through which top-down initiated change projects and emergent change processes are managed and coordinated. Here the notion of strategic communication refers to the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission. Strategic communication is concerned with the processes and practices through which the organization presents and promotes itself, in the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication practitioners (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, & Verčič, 2007). Although strategic communication is premised upon the active participation and commitment of the entire personnel, it is argued that the management plays a particularly important role in introducing discursive templates as well as in communicating and coordinating change (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

This chapter covers both emergent and top-down initiated strategic change. A strategic change process refers to organizations as emergent properties of change (Thomas, Sargent, & Hardy, 2010; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Carlsen, 2006). By contrast, a strategic change project is a change initiative that involves either a redefinition of organizational mission or a substantial shift in overall priorities and goals to reflect new emphasis or direction (Gioia, Thomas, Clark, & Chittipeddi, 1994, p. 364). In this context, multi-change refers to a bundle of either simultaneous or partly overlapping change projects, each of which contains project specific goals and meticulously expressed directions.

To examine the communication challenges that multi-change situations involve, this chapter draws on the concept of sense making. Organizational sense making is fundamentally a social process, meaning that organization members interpret their environments in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively (Maitlis, 2005, p. 22). A part of organizational sense making is understanding the different organizational
practices. Here the term “practice” refers to coherent and consistent patterns of purposive activity, which is performed in the organization through several interconnected mental and bodily behaviors (Reckwitz, 2002, pp. 249–250). Practices are grounded in and guided by particular collective structures of knowing, reasoning, and understanding.

As one viable solution, the chapter proposes corporate branding as a tool for managing and coordinating strategic communication in a multi-change environment. Corporate branding is based on the vision and mission of the company, and it crystallizes the message for all stakeholders of the company. The corporate brand is based on a promise given by the organization to the stakeholders. The success and reliability of the corporate brand depend on how well the entire organization gives content to and delivers on the given promise (Järventie-Thesleff, 2011). During a change situation, moreover, it is important to support a change affirmative culture. This refers to a culture characterized by communicative practices that support continuous change. A vignette at the end of the chapter provides an illustration of an actual multi-change situation and highlights the importance of building a strong corporate brand and promoting a change affirmative culture.

### Table 35.1 Key concepts in strategic communication during change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic communication</td>
<td>Purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission. How the organization presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees and communication practitioners</td>
<td>Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler and Verde 2007: 3, 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate brand</td>
<td>Is based on a promise given by the organization to its key stakeholders. The success and reliability of the corporate brand depends on how well the entire organization gives content to and delivers on the given promise.</td>
<td>Järventie-Thesleff, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic change project</td>
<td>A change initiative that involves ‘either a redefinition of organizational mission or a substantial shift in overall priorities and goals to reflect new emphasis or direction’</td>
<td>Gioia, Thomas, Clark &amp; Chittipeddi 1994: 364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic change process</td>
<td>Refers to organizations as emergent properties of change</td>
<td>Thomas, Sargent and Hardy 2010; Tsoukas and Chia 2002; Carlsen 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-change</td>
<td>Refers to a bundle of either simultaneous or partly overlapping change projects, each of which contains project specific goals and meticulously expressed directions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational sense making</td>
<td>Fundamentally a social process, meaning that organization members interpret their environments in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively</td>
<td>Maitlis 2005:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices</td>
<td>‘Routinized types of behaviour which consist of several elements, interconnected to one other: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, things and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion, and motivational knowledge’</td>
<td>Reckwitz 2002: 249</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizational Change

In the literature on strategic and organizational change, the importance of communication in explaining organizational change processes has long been discussed and generally acknowledged (Lewis, 1999). Communication and organizational change implementation are generally viewed as inextricably linked (Lewis, 1999), as change is inevitably a process that is created, sustained, and managed in and by communication (Ford & Ford, 1995, p. 560).

Organizational change can be conceptualized in several distinctive ways (Pettigrew, Woodman, & Cameron, 2001). Mintzberg and Westley (1992), for example, distinguish deductive and inductive change. Deductive change proceeds from thought to action, whereas inductive change evolves from concrete to conceptual in an emergent fashion. Deductive change is in line with deliberate strategy making and inductive change is connected to emergent strategy. In addition, Weick and Quinn (1999) draw a line between change that is episodic, discontinuous, and intermittent, and change that is continuous, evolving, and incremental. Continuous change is similar to inductive change, since small continuous adjustments that are created simultaneously across organizational units can accumulate and create substantial change.

Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 579) are also proponents of a less intentional way of conceptualizing change, arguing that “change in organizations occurs without necessarily intentional managerial action as a result of individuals trying to accommodate new experiences and realize new possibilities.” This view is based upon the belief that change is inherent in human action and that human action also changes continuously in the organizational context. However, in their argument, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) still reserve a role for managerial intentionality. Managers are privileged to introduce new discursive templates, to lead the members of the organization to notice new issues and see new connections.

The notion of a continuous change has been discussed particularly in the literature on “organizational becoming” (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Carlsen, 2006; Thomas et al., 2010). This approach to organization studies subscribes to a theoretical reorientation from a substance ontology to a flux ontology (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), which emphasizes movement, flux, emergence and process over end-states, entities, stability and discrete periods (Pettigrew, 1992; Carlsen, 2006). Thus, attention is directed towards “becoming” rather than “being,” and reality is understood in terms of ceaseless process, flux and transformation rather than as a stable world of unchanging entities (Nayak & Chia, 2011, p. 281). Based on the perspective of “becoming,” we look at organizations as emergent properties of change and as unfolding enactments of continuously changing practices (Thomas et al., 2010; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Carlsen, 2006).

Rather than seeing organizational change as a realization of a top-down initiated plan, the perspective of “becoming” treats change as an ongoing normal condition of organizational life (Ford & Ford, 1995; Weick & Quinn, 1999; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). Change is grounded in continuous updates of work processes (Brown & Duguid, 1991) and social practices (Tsoukas, 1996). The interest is directed to the dynamic, unfolding and emergent nature of change, and organizations are assumed to consist of situation-specific webs of social relations (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

Next, we will discuss the strategic communication challenges during change by following the division introduced above, between top-down initiated change projects and change as a normal condition of organizational life.

Communication Challenges During Change

In the practice of organizations, the basic task and objectives of strategic communication vary depending on the nature of organizational change that needs to be managed. If change is carried out as a senior-management-initiated intervention, top-down, strategic communication is understandably
geared at supporting the successful implementation of the change intervention. If, however, organizational change is something that needs to be managed as an ongoing process as the normal condition of organizational life (Brown & Duguid, 2001; Tsoukas, 1996), the focus of strategic communication shifts to facilitating the social and communicative processes through which all members of the organization effectively and constructively make sense of the change.

**Communication of Top-Down Change Projects**

In the case of top-down–initiated change projects, the aim of strategic communication is to create and disseminate messages that are clear and unambiguous as well as to ensure the reliability of communication processes and exchange processes so as to encourage participation and to avoid uncertainty. Communication is thus used as an instrument for management control, and directed at making change as bearable or tolerable as possible, by trying to play down fear, for example (Hübner, 2007). In these contexts, the basic task of strategic communication is to support three basic practices of change management (Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008; Balogun, 2001): education, showing direction, and collaboration.

**Education: Informing versus Facilitating Learning**

Education refers to the textual and interpersonal communication through which the top management communicates and explains the reasons for change and presents the means of strategic change (Johnson et al., 2008). It is about explaining, giving sense to the objectives and logic of the strategic change, and building trust in top management, mainly through top-down and lateral processes of communication.

The objective of this type of communication is to have the employees understand and deliver the change as planned, effectively and cost-efficiently. The challenge is to design the communication strategies and practices of communication that support active employee sense making and self-directed learning. It is important that employees themselves make sense of the strategic change and the associated changes in strategic vision and goals in a way that helps them to deliver the change in active, flexible and context-specific ways (Järventie-Thesleff, 2011).

The challenge here is to avoid an outcome where the educational communication of strategic change boils down to mere information transfer: Strategic change communication is geared at transferring information from the top management to the employees without engaging them in the learning process as active participants in processes of strategic change (Järventie-Thesleff, Moisander, & Laine, 2011). Another challenge is to overcome the shared understandings and taken-for-granted ideas that are embedded in existing organizational practices through which the employees attempt to make sense of the change initiative.

**Showing Direction: Authoritative versus Charismatic**

Showing direction is about informing, persuading and convincing stakeholders through processes of one-way communication (Johnson et al., 2008). It is based on the use of authority to set direction and means of change, utilizing top-down processes of communication—communicating information and orders through cascading processes of communication.

The objective of this type of communication is to establish a clear strategy for the organization and a plan for implementing the strategy. This may sometimes be accompanied by the use of organizational control and power to impose particular work practices, standards and explicit rules on the employees.

The challenge here is to be able to communicate the managerial, strategic vision in a convincing manner and to persuade the stakeholders about the strategic intent and the critical success factors.
and priorities involved. There is a need to design communication strategies that show direction in a supportive, charismatic manner, instead of merely imposing the strategy on the employees in an authoritative manner through hierarchical power relations.

**Collaboration: Enrolling versus Engaging**

Collaboration refers to interpersonal communication, both bottom-up and lateral processes of communication, through which the change recipients—employees—are engaged in strategy work (Johnson et al., 2008; Balogun, 2001). The goal is to get the employees involved in the development of the change agenda, setting up priorities, and drawing up action plans. The fundamental objective is to build a sense of ownership and commitment to the change agenda among the employees, thereby increasing readiness and capability for change.

The challenge here is to design communication strategies and practices of collaboration that not only elicit consent and enroll the employees in strategic change, but also acknowledge the strategic agency of the employees. It is important to appropriate the knowledge and expertise of the employees in strategy work, not only as change agents and change recipients, but also as knowledgeable practitioners who may provide valuable inputs in the development of the change agenda and the practices and policies through which change is implemented in the organization.

**Communication During Emergent Change**

From a communicational perspective on managing organizational change (Hübner, 2007) organizations can be viewed as essentially constituted by communication (Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011). Communication, in this view, is not to simply one of the many factors involved in organizing. It is rather the means by which organizations are established, composed, designed, and sustained (Cooren et al., 2011, p. 1150). From this perspective, change may be understood as a continuous process that gradually unfolds, emerging through different kinds of discursive and organizational activities, of which the management has only partial control (Thomas et al., 2010, Tsoukas & Chia, 2002).

In dealing with this kind of emergent change, all members of the organization—and the top management in particular—need to understand that communication is not merely a simple tool for management control and discursive leadership. It is not only something that helps the middle management to transmit information and implement the change initiative effectively and in a way that helps them steer clear from negative or unintended organizational consequences. Rather, communication may have an important performative role (Cooren et al., 2011) in the organization: it actively contributes to and shapes the processes and practices through which change emerges in the day-to-day of organizational life.

In the context of emergent change, therefore, communication cannot be reduced to effectively providing and obtaining information, creating understanding, and building ownership (Ford & Ford, 1995, p. 542) through carefully planned internal communication strategies, implemented by the communications department. It is rather necessary to create practices and policies through which change can be embedded in the deep structures of the organization (Hübner, 2007), and to make sure that all members of the staff, on all organizational levels, are capable and motivated to make sense of the change process in the course of their daily activities, both individually and collectively.

In the practice of organizational life, “making change from below” in this way requires specific types of practical knowledge and skills (Dutton, Ashford, & O’Neill, 2001, p. 732). Since the meaning of organizational change is negotiated among actors in their communicative interactions (Thomas et al., 2010), it is important, in particular, that all members of the organization learn how to talk effectively and constructively with each other—across functional and status boundaries (Ashkenas & Jick, 1992, p. 271).
Overall, this means that both the top management and the corporate communications function have only a part to play in social and communicative activities through which the top-down initiated change projects are managed in organizations. Although the management has an elementary role in introducing discursive templates, as well as in communicating and coordinating the change, it is crucially important to engage all organizational units, departments and teams on multiple levels of organizational hierarchy in the change communication process as well as to create conditions and practices that foster and support active participation in the processes of individual and collective sense making through which the change emerges in the organization.

Moreover, as Cheney, Christensen, Zorn and Ganesh (2004, p. 328) remind us, it is important to keep in mind that the solutions for specific change communication problems always need to be examined within the specific contexts of their occurrence.

Making Sense of Change

In this chapter strategic communication is viewed as a two-way process, the aim of which is to create a sense of collective understanding and engagement. In other words, during change it is important to promote and support organizational sense making.

Organizational change projects engage various members of the organization in complementary and reciprocal sense making and sense-giving activities (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000a, 2000b; Balogun & Johnson, 2005). According to Weick (1995), sense making refers simply to how we make sense of the world we live in. In order to make sense of the world, people select certain information to which to pay attention and then decide how to interpret that information. Ultimately, sense making is a process of social construction (Berger & Luckman, 1966) in which individuals attempt to interpret and explain sets of cues from their environments (Maitlis, 2005). Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld (2005) describe sense making as an effort to create orderly and coherent understandings that enable change.

Rouleau (2005, p. 1415) defines the reciprocal sense making activities as follows:

Sense-making has to do with the way managers understand, interpret, and create sense for themselves based on the information surrounding strategic change. Sense-giving is concerned with their attempts to influence the outcome, to communicate their thoughts about the change to others, and to gain their support.

The above definitions of sense making and sense giving apply to the initial phase of all change projects, for example, to the phase when the objective is formulated and a rough implementation plan is drafted. This chapter, however, focuses on both collective and organizational sense making and sense giving activities encompassing several change projects. Boyce (1995, p. 109) defines collective sense making as the process whereby groups, both in the corporate center and the operative level, interactively create social reality. Similarly, Maitlis (2005, p. 22) regards organizational sense making as a fundamentally social process, meaning that members of the organization interpret their environments in and through interactions with others, constructing accounts that allow them to comprehend the world and act collectively. Accordingly, strategic communication is viewed as a two-way process, the aim of which is to create a sense of collective understanding and engagement instead of solely transmitting information. In the contemporary competitive environment, organizations are characterized by multiple, overlapping smaller and bigger change projects that might well be perceived to have conflicting objectives. “Customer focus” with an emphasis on understanding the needs and wants of the customers and aggressive cost-saving projects can be perceived as giving conflicting guidance to everyday operational activities. Dynamic contexts characterized by features of multi-change can intensify experiences of complexity and ambiguity.
As a consequence, various members of the organization might run the risk of “change burnout,” which is conceptualized as the termination of a capacity or willingness to continue to participate in change projects (Lewis, 2006, p.27). In a case of change burnout, the change projects cease to make sense.

Managing and Coordinating Strategic Communication

In order to remain competitive, organizations are compelled to initiate a myriad of strategic change projects, and they constantly incorporate new ways of carrying out their mundane operative activities. As stated above, a continuous flow of change projects can pose a challenge to employees’ endurance, engagement and feeling of significance (Lewis, 2006). Next, corporate branding and the framework of continuous change cycle (Lawrence, Dyck, Maitlis, & Mauws, 2006) are discussed as two practical approaches to strategic communication that can support the management in engaging the personnel in continuous change.

Corporate Branding

It can be argued that the concept of corporate brand has the potential to provide guidance to the processes and practices of strategic communication through which the top-down initiated change projects and the continuous, emergent change processes are managed and coordinated. In the current, fast-changing global competitive environment, corporate branding has become an important source of sustainable competitive advantage and a central element of corporate strategy that can be used as an umbrella construct giving direction and linking the variety of change and innovation efforts together (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2003, 2008; Knox & Bickerton, 2003; Järventie-Thesleff et al., 2011). With the help of corporate branding, companies can communicate their competitive position and their long-term strategy to both internal and external stakeholders of the organization.

In marketing literature, the corporate brand is usually conceptualized as the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of an organization’s identity and its unique business model (Balmer, 2001; Knox & Bickerton, 2003). It is typically referred to as a proposition, a “brand promise,” that represents the organization and reflects its heritage, values, culture, people and strategy (Aaker, 2004). It thus serves as a crystallization of the company’s competitive advantage in the market (Balmer & Gray, 2003), and may be viewed as a strategic asset or strategy tool with which the organization seeks to create difference and preference within its target markets. Hatch and Schultz (2003), for example, theorize corporate branding in terms of a set of brand alignment tasks through which the value of the brand asset base is continuously produced and sustained.

In the realm of marketing, corporate branding is one of the activities that can function as a useful platform for communicating the competitive positioning or the total offering of a company both externally and internally (Balmer, 2001; Balmer & Grey, 2003; Aaker, 2004). Corporate branding has a broad scope, and it addresses all stakeholder groups of the company. Furthermore, it requires perseverance and commitment and, as a consequence, the responsibility of corporate branding cannot be limited to marketing and communication departments; instead, importantly, all employees need to participate in building the corporate brand. Recent research on employee branding has highlighted the importance of brand affirmative ambiance within the organization (Macrae, 1999; Ind, 2001; Urde, 1994, 1999, 2003; Morrison, 2001; Kunde, 2000, 2002). In order to be able to support the building of the corporate brand, employees need to understand what the brand and the required changes are about. Understanding means that everyone in the organization knows who the company is, where the company is going, and what needs to be done to get there (Morrison, 2001; Fairhurst, 1993). Furthermore, it should be possible for the employees to participate in, and commit
themselves to, developing and delivering the brand promise. The participation and commitment of
the employees is believed to be more successful if they feel proud of the brand.

In this study, we build on the following definition of the corporate brand (Järventie-Thesleff, 2011):

The corporate brand is based on a promise given by the organization to its key stakeholders. The
success and reliability of the corporate brand depends on how well the entire organization gives
content to and delivers on the given promise.

Recent research has provided a multitude of frameworks and models on corporate branding. However, the understanding of the day-to-day brand building activities or the dynamics that
either support or slow down the corporate brand building process has largely been left unanswered
(Kärreman & Rylander, 2008). The “doing” of the corporate brand consists of continuous improvi-
sation enacted by organizational actors who try to make sense of the corporate brand and act coher-
ently (Orlikowski, 1996). According to this view, corporate branding consists of an ongoing change
rather than intentionally managed and controlled episodic events (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). We claim
that corporate branding can be conceived as an umbrella strategy that, on the one hand, can be
implemented by initiating a number of specific, top-down initiated change projects, and on the
other, can function as a strategic communication tool providing guidance and coordination to the
emergent, bottom-up initiated change processes.

**Practices of Strategic Communication in a Change-Affirmative Culture**

The other practical approach to strategic communication that is suggested here builds on the cycle of
continuous change (Lawrence et al., 2006). The objective in building the strategic communication
on the framework of continuous change cycle is to make sure that all members of the staff, on all
organizational levels, are capable and motivated to make sense of the change process in the course
of their daily activities, both individually and collectively. By drawing on the continuous change
cycle, people in managerial positions can create practices and policies through which change can be
embedded in the deep structures of the organization (Hübner, 2007).

This framework depicts the underlying structure of continuous change in terms of four phases,
illustrated in Figure 35.1.

The first phase, “using influence to sell ideas,” focuses on the idea—an insight, intuition or
belief—that motivates someone to question the way things are done. This idea needs to be articu-
lated and communicated in order to influence change. During this phase strategic communication
should concentrate on selling the idea to key organizational members. Different, persuasive commu-
nication strategies should be used to approach different stakeholder groups. The second phase, “using
authority to change practices,” focuses on change support that is communicated and which empha-
sizes what it takes to translate the idea into action. Strategic communication is needed especially
to support the change, to decrease possible anxiety, and to deal with possible resistance. The third
phase, “embedding change in technology,” focuses on the systems or designs necessary to embed the
change into corporate routines. Often this requires some technological change. During this phase
strategic communication is very much information oriented. The fourth phase, “managing culture
to fuel the cycle of change,” emphasizes the importance of an innovative culture. During this phase
the strategic communication should support employees in gaining expertise and motivation so that
they would be able to both enact change and to extend and elaborate on it (Lawrence et al., 2006).

Since the meaning of organizational change is negotiated among actors in their communicative
interactions (Thomas et al., 2010), it is important to create a culture that encourages all members
of the organization to talk constructively with each other—across functional and status boundaries
Vignette

**Struggle Between Sense Making and Sense Dimming**

The case company (“Basico”) is a large, industrial, transnational company (TNC). Its roots and history go back more than 100 years. Led by visionary and audacious industrialists, the company grew based on large investments, heavy expansion and utilization of the latest technology. The company formed into its present state at the end of the 1990s as a result of a merger of equals. Soon after the merger, the company grew by acquiring smaller companies from its major markets; it acquired production units all over the world and capitalized on an extensive sales network. The formation of Basico created a truly global operator in its line of business. Simultaneously, however, the formation of Basico brought together different strategies, different ways of operating, and different company cultures. Consequently, the post-merger phase was characterized by several change projects aimed at creating uniform processes, integrated ways of working, and a common company culture. Basico started also to build its corporate brand and it linked the brand promise into a dynamic, continuously improving and customer-focused way of operating.

Generally speaking, a continuous flow of change initiatives posits high demands both on strategic communication and organizational sense making. Organizations should keep the flow of change communication continuous, yet they should avoid such an information overload that makes it difficult for the employees to recognize what is important, and what is not.

In the case company Basico, the corporate brand building endeavor was a top-down initiated change project, the aim of which was to motivate the personnel to continuously improve their mundane operative activities. Simultaneously the corporate brand was supposed to act as an overarching change program that would link together smaller, individual change projects. In Basico, the practice of multi-change communication was characterized by the dominance of formal communication at the expense of informal face-to-face communication between colleagues. Furthermore, the flow of communication varied. Right after the launch of a new change project, there was a high intensity of formal communication through intranet, personnel magazines and distributed PowerPoint presentations. The latest change projects were also usually included in unit-specific routine meetings.

---

**Figure 35.1** Communication in a change affirmative culture (adapted from Lawrence et al., 2006)
However, closures, evaluations or connections between various change projects were seldom covered in the communication channels.

The corporate brand did not succeed in linking together the individual change projects, nor did it inspire the personnel to translate the meaning of the corporate brand into their mundane activities. On the contrary, some of the change projects were considered to be conflicting with each other and the personnel struggled in making sense of the overall change of the company. Furthermore, the conflicting change projects tended to dim sense among the personnel. By *sense-dimming* we refer to confusion, ambiguity and contradictory interpretations of the multiple change projects and their corresponding objectives.

Basico had an ambitious attitude to corporate branding, which however was not supported by communicative practices or policies that would have supported a culture of continuous change. By following the processes and practices of strategic communication in order to create a change-affirmative culture, the corporate brand as a unifying purpose would probably have functioned better. Basico should have invested more time in informal face-to-face communication during its corporate brand-building process. At the outset of the branding endeavor, the emphasis should have been in a convincing introduction of the corporate purpose in the form of the corporate brand. Trying to increase employees’ courage to bring up ideas about corporate brand-related operative change initiatives would probably have supported the change-affirmative culture. Furthermore, Basico should have supported employees in gaining expertise and motivation in giving content to the corporate brand.

As stated before, it is crucially important to engage all organizational units, departments and teams on multiple levels of organizational hierarchy in the change communication process as well as to create conditions and practices that foster and support active participation in the processes of individual and collective sense making through which the change emerges in the organization.

**Conclusions**

This chapter has discussed strategic communication during change, focusing particularly on the challenges that people in managerial positions face when dealing with several simultaneous top-down initiated change projects and emergent change. According to Balogun and Johnson (2004), middle management has two interlinked roles in tackling these challenges: to act as change recipients and as implementers of change. Overlapping, top-down initiated change projects and emergent change processes pose a strategic communication challenge for them. If change is conceptualized as a top-down project, strategic communication needs, first and foremost, to support the implementation of change. By contrast, in the context of emergent change, internal communication strategies implemented by the communications department are not the right approach. Rather, the focus of strategic communication lies on all members of the organization on all levels of organizational hierarchy, and on their ability and motivation to make sense of the change process. Therefore, the aim of strategic communication is to create a sense of collective understanding and engagement by supporting active participation in the processes of sense making. Communication in a change situation should, thus, not consist only of transmitting information.

For supporting middle managers in their demanding roles as change agents, the chapter has emphasized the importance of building strong corporate brands and change-affirmative organizational cultures, so as to better guide and coordinate the activities of strategic communication through which the top-down initiated change projects and emergent change processes are managed and the personnel is engaged in continuous change. Corporate branding is offered primarily as a tool for creating an overarching goal that links together the different change projects. Corporate branding functions as an umbrella strategy that can be implemented by initiating specific, top-down change projects. It also provides guidance to the emergent, bottom-up change processes.

Furthermore, the chapter has suggested that people in managerial positions work towards a change affirmative culture that supports continuous change. It seems important to create communication practices and policies through which change can be embedded in the deep structures of the
organization. With the help of such a change-affirmative culture, all members of the organization would be enabled and encouraged to make sense of the change process in the course of their daily activities, both individually and collectively.

References

Rita Järventie-Thesleff, et al.


Kunde, J. (2002). *Unique now or never: The brand is the company driver in the new value economy*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education.


