Logemann Studies, Practices Corporate Communication in Today's World

Dr. Aldemaro Romero Jr.
College Talk

Dr. Logemann, courtesy of Dr. Logemann.

"It's a good thing for the communication degree to be combined with business knowledge. Business acumen is more and more necessary in corporate communication. My own history has been full of twists and turns, and it's brought me finally to the subject of communication. I simply didn't know as a young person that you can study communication. I didn't know what to do, so I ended up in a business school."

That's the way Dr. Minna Logemann explains how she became an expert in a field that is more and more in demand today: corporate communication. She is originally from Turku, Finland, and got her master's from the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration and her doctorate from Aalto University, both of them in Finland. Today she is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College.

Given her practical experience in many countries, one wonders how she conveys that experience to her students in the classroom. "I can refer to my own experiences as life cases almost all the time. When they ask questions, it's so easy to pull out from my memories a situation that is very similar and makes a good example," says Logemann.

But what is the essence of good corporate communication? "In today's world, it's increasingly integrity and truthfulness. We live in a society where trust is deteriorating and has almost disappeared. This has happened in maybe the last twenty years. Therefore, whatever you do as a communicator, never lie. That would be my first instinct."

Logemann agrees that in today's globalized world there is always a danger in sending the same message to peoples of different cultures. "It's a very fine balance between showing the same face and treating people according to the same practices and principles all around the world, and yet adjusting to the local conditions." She explains that often, if the headquarters is in Finland but the company operates in several Asian countries, there can be conflicts. "When you go Asia, there are actually three cultures on top of each other. There is the Asian-geographic national culture of that particular country; there is a local management culture; then there is the multinational culture. It can cause clashes, and it definitely is a challenge for a multinational corporation."

But this issue is not just within different countries but also within different demographics in the same country. "We are living in a very interesting time, and in a way a bit of a sad time. I grew up in the 70s in the age of admiring the UN, finally getting rid of the Cold War, advancing world peace, and all these ideals. Now we are living in an era that seems to be abandoning the values our generation grew up with. It's almost scaring me how we grew up with tolerance for diversity and emphasized it when raising our children, but now there's real resistance to diversity. It's so easy to build your own followerships and communities, and kind of close your eyes to everything that's different on the outside," says Logemann.

One of the reasons corporate communications is so interesting is its interdisciplinary flavor. "You need to understand the internal and external stakeholders in the corporation. You need to understand the business operations of the company. That's why we built Baruch's corporate communication program, to cover all these different areas of business, from finance to strategy. We need to understand people's mindsets, how they make sense of things. So, it gets very close to psychology."

A buzzword used everywhere today is strategic planning, and Logemann has experience in that area as well. "It's very closely related to identification, how people identify as members or parts of a corporation. This has a direct link to how they understand the meaning of their own roles in the company, and through that the meaning of the strategy as well. It's a very interesting function in today's world because people are savvier. They want to know much more. And it's a good trend because changes have become so constant that people need to be able to make a decision about their own work level, so that when the change comes, they will take the next step in a direction that's aligned with the big strategy."

Logemann has also worked in investor relations. Nowadays investors are taking a more active role in corporations, so what are the best strategies a corporation should follow to keep its investors happy? According to Logemann, "Investors are a funny audience among stakeholders. They hate surprises. Keeping the information transparent and the market well aware of what's going on in the corporation is essential."

In the world we live in today there is more of a gray area between what's right and wrong, what's ethical and what's not. "We do actually discuss that quite a lot in class. It has been my experience not only here but also in Europe. That's one of the topics that students really love talking about, because they're young people, and they still have clear values. They often exercise a high degree of integrity, and they have high ideals, which makes them concerned about these things. That's why I have been particularly glad to see that, here at Baruch, the college is courageously and loudly expressing its own values. That's our mission, or I would say my mission, as an older teacher of young people: to encourage them to stand up for their values."

Then Logemann concludes: "If we don't tell them what's wrong, the young people will start to think that it's okay."

Aldemaro Romero Jr. is the Dean of the Weissman School of Arts and Sciences at Baruch College of the City University of New York. The radio show on which these articles are based can be watched at: https://vimeo.com/254544611 He can be contacted via Aldemaro.Romero@baruch.cuny.edu