

Forecasting and Evaluating the Impact of Marketing Communication

Reviewed by **ANGELA SINICKAS, ABC**

Angela Sinickas, ABC, is president of Sinickas Communications Inc., an international communication consultancy helping corporations achieve business results through targeted diagnostics and practical solutions. Her work has been cited in *Harvard Business Review*, *Investors Business Daily*, *HR Magazine*, *Executive Solutions*, *PR News*, *Journal of Communication Management*, *Ragan Report* and *Communication World*, among many other publications. Sinickas' work has received 13 IABC Gold Quill awards.

Don Schultz co-authored the first book on Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in 1994, which he describes as the “seminal work on this still-emerging topic.” His current book provides many useful ideas on how to implement and evaluate the “conceptual framework” of his earlier work.

“IMC The Next Generation” is organized around the authors’ five steps for using IMC, three of which involve measurement. Other chapters cover the background of IMC and its future, guiding principles for implementation and how to organize a company so it can better integrate and align its functions around customers. Much of the content is based on changing marketing’s focus from the traditional Four Ps—product, price, place and promotion—to the Five Rs of customers—relevance, receptivity, response, recognition and relationship.

The book’s strength is its focus on metrics, with nearly 40 percent of the content devoted to measurement before, during and after campaigns. The book concentrates on forecasting and evaluating the impact of marketing communication (marcom) activities on audience behaviors, not just counting news clips and ad placements with the hope that they were heard or seen and might have some impact on attitudes that might one day result in sales.

Don and Heidi Schultz provide a useful and interesting methodology for calculating the lifetime value of a customer, which can be used to select “like-behaving” audiences to target for IMC, and then for calculating the long-term and short-term return on investment for the communication used with them. The book also connects IMC measures with brand-value and share-value metrics. It takes complex economic concepts and translates them into step-by-step worksheets and real-world examples so that a reader without a business degree can apply them.

On the cautionary side, be prepared for the book’s

pervasive condescending tone. The authors frequently belittle the work of marketing communication practitioners, PR and advertising agencies. My own experience and conversations with marcom professionals while reading this book confirm that most marketing communicators are far more strategic in how they currently target stakeholders and plan communication campaigns to drive ideal purchasing behaviors than the Schultzes give them credit for.

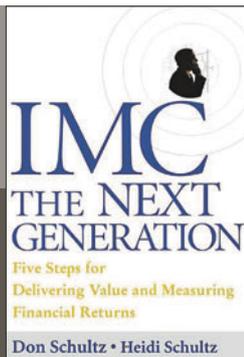
The book repeatedly says that marcom focuses only on changing attitudes and not on changing behavior, which seems quite out of touch with the current level of practice in the field. Marketing is the one branch of communication that has always focused on clear-cut behavior changes—getting current customers to buy more and non-customers to start buying. Even internal communicators have been focusing much of their work on changing employee behaviors for more than a decade—safety, quality, productivity and change management in general.

The book recommends approaches for how to bridge functional silos within a company and with its external communication vendors. The authors suggest new organization charts and reward systems. However, the Schultzes equate integration and alignment of the various communication functions with having them all report to the marketing department: “[c]ommunication must be centralized” and “internal marketing is the next major step in IMC development,” they say.

Few readers would disagree that organizations can benefit from closer working relationships among communicators. However, having all communicators report to marketing can create new problems, with PR focusing exclusively on product publicity, and employee communication turning into internal marketing happy-talk.

On balance, I strongly recommend reading the book. The goal of integrating any function in our heavily siloed organizations is an admirable one, and the book’s practical, business-based approaches to measuring the value of IMC are stimulating thought-starters for communicators. Just be prepared to mentally “talk back” to the authors as you read about how dumb most of us are in the way we approach our work. **CW**

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IMC The Next Generation: Five Steps for Delivering Value and Measuring Returns Using Marketing Communication

by Don Schultz and Heidi Schultz
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