

University of Hull

## Reputation by accident or design?

To what degree and under which circumstances may we expect a politician's reputation to be managed strategically – rather than tactically?

An exploration of current practice.

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## 1. Introduction

The research problem I will be dealing with in this study originates from my professional experience as communications manager in politics. I spent more than a decade advising politicians on their relations with the public in general and the media in particular. This research project was driven by my interest in the strategies and techniques that are used by communicators to build up and safeguard a politician's reputation. This was the broad perspective I adopted when commencing work in January 2005. In the course of the past eight years and after several bends and detours a more specific focus has emerged.

I have sought to explore if and to what degree a politician's reputation is being planned and managed strategically. Inspired by my own professional experience I intended to investigate if what communication advisors and some academics portray as being a planned and strategic process is perhaps more akin to a streak of somewhat haphazard publicity activities as well as reactive and tactical media relations. I should at this early stage clarify that for practical reasons I decided to limit my attention to the relationship between communicators on the one hand and conventional journalism on the other, which turned out to be a complex one driven both by constant rivalry, frequent collaboration and occasional collusion. Gregory points out that the word communication is the preferred term for all public relations and marketing activities in government (Gregory, 2011). This is why throughout this study I refer to communicators, unless there are specific reasons to distinguish between public relations and marketing advisors.

An underlying assumption of this research project implies the centrality of images and reputation which is shrewdly touched upon by the Spanish philosopher Baltasar Gracian who reminds us that phenomena cannot be taken for what they are but for what they appear to be (Gracian 2005). When we turn to the map of the world we see continents and countries whose location, shape and size seem familiar and plausible to us. Though what we normally look at is a Mercator projection of the world which for the sake of nautical navigation gives a precise representation of directions and shapes

and thereby vastly distorts the sizes of countries which only vaguely resemble actual world proportions. A factual deficiency most of us won't notice nor easily accept since the traditionally used image of the world looks so appropriate and unquestionable to us (Schechner, 2002).

This example aptly points at how we may be misled by appearances that we take for granted. A lesson politics has learned since the onset of civilisation. Leary details how political leaders throughout history have recognised that their effectiveness and power depends in part on their public persona (Leary, 1995). Thus, since the early 20th century it has been debated that public opinion may be much less swayed by the electorate's grasp of a factual matter or the candidate's policies (Lippmann, 1997). Instead, politicians would have to reckon with public images and reputation (Boorstin, 1992; Eisenegger, 2010). In the view of Eisenegger (2010) the focus on a candidate's or incumbent's personality has long been used to emphasise and epitomise executive power.

Whilst formerly the party leadership found its support soundly anchored in the party rank and file, nowadays its legitimacy hinges upon the audience's willingness to grant it (Gould, 2002). The British philosopher David Marquand (2004) notes a return of quasi absolutism in politics. Instead of God, he argues, it is now the mass audience the head of government obtains its blessing of legitimacy from.

Today it may therefore appear that the individual politician is taking centre stage both in people's perception and media coverage. Already in the 80s and 90s findings described the public's attitude towards on-screen political protagonists as highly personalised (Hart, 1998). This in turn raised expectations for a politician's impression management practice (Marquand, 2004). Communication advisors at the time took up the cue and Ronald Reagan's aide Michael Deaver claimed that images of politicians sometimes are as useful as substance: "Not as important, but as useful" (Deaver, 1987, p.73). Waterman observed that image creation had become a serious business that had critical implications for a politician's success (Denver et al.,

2012). Already in 1999 for Plasser et al. self-presentation had become a fact of political life and a core concern for any ambitious politician. At the time of Plasser's writing New Labour exhibited an interest in candidate images that in the view of some observers verged on the obsessive (Rowan, 1998) - an alleged advantage the Conservatives sought to catch up on a decade later with the ascendancy of David Cameron (Shepherd, 2008).

Politicians have adapted to these growing expectations and learned the ropes of public performance in what Sarcinelli (2005) calls a media-representative democracy. Waterman reminds us that "in politics, candidates and incumbents spend considerable time and money cultivating a preferred image" (Waterman et al, 1999, p.11). In his view the recognition that a politician's image may oscillate between the positive as well as the negative concedes professional communicators a pivotal role in the political process and makes their expertise in designing images and building reputation indispensable. Thus the concern with images and the tangible personalisation in politics played into the hands of communications advisors who seek to position politicians prominently and present them to specific publics. On television politicians have therefore been portrayed as a clique of individuals who replace policy advocacy with carefully rehearsed sound bites (Maarek, 2011).

When in 2007 Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair in 10 Downing Street , The Economist launched a poignant criticism against the new Prime Minister claiming that what was known about his personality was "unappetising" (The Economist, 2007, p. 44). The author eerily concluded that "for Mr. Brown perhaps personality is destiny after all.". Indeed for many of the preceding months the media had busied itself with a debate about the new Labour leader's personal strengths and weaknesses. While Gordon Brown's ideological credentials and political visions for the country still appeared to be shrouded in mist, political pundits and the electorate sought to find clues that might help interpret his personality. In the spirit of this debate Theakston (2010) reminded us that a politician's job specification requires individuals to score well on policy vision, emotional intelligence and communicative

competence. In other words, both the media and academic discourses raised the question as to whether Brown's public persona could be related to his fitness to govern the country. In a similar vein Marquand had argued that the public may not be able to distinguish between the government, the office holder and the private individual but concentrates its attention on the leader both in his political role and his private life (Marquand, 2004). Brown's case is evidence for the relevance of a candidate's and incumbent's reputation for political success which has been testified to in interviews Le Landtsheer conducted with 50 marketing experts in various European countries. Respondents agreed that a politician's public profile was a prerequisite political careers may hinge upon and therefore of "capital importance." (De Landtsheer, 2008, p. 218).

In response, politicians seek to ensure that their public persona at least appeared to be competent and appealing. Swanson and Mancini et al. (1996) explored how politicians build up a support structure that helps accommodate and reconcile their respective public persona with expectations that media and the electorate raise. What Swanson and Mancini (1996) describe are instruments and techniques related to political impression management and tools to alter and adjust a politician's reputation. In a more recent comparative study of political personality PR practice Esser and d'Angelo (2006) insist that candidate selection in the UK was driven by concerns for telegenic criteria, while communications managers were explicitly expected to guide politicians' public persona in response to media expectations.

These and similar phenomena in the view of De Landtsheer et al. (2008) comfortably fit into concepts of political marketing theory. In this context the candidate is seen as the product and the citizens as consumers that withdraw their support if they are not kept satisfied. It may therefore be argued with some credibility that consumerism has found its way into the political arena and is leaving its mark on democratic processes (Newman, 1999a, 1999b; Lees-Marshment, 2004; Maarek, 1995, 2011). On the surface it would appear that today marketing concepts have become firmly established in a political context and eagerly used by politicians and their advisors to create images of

candidates (O'Shaughnessy, 1990; Maarek, 1995; Newman, 1999a, 1999b). Politicians see themselves and are seen by others as performers whose objective it is to influence public perception and gain their audiences' support (Schwartzberg, 1977; Newman, 1999a; Maarek, 1995, 2011). A reliance on technical expertise and the recruitment of special advisors to fulfil the function of communications professionals – popularly referred to as “spin doctors” - testifies this development (Wring, 2004; Negrine, 2007; Negrine, 2008).

The relationship between political communicators and journalists has seen a realignment of power in recent years (Negrine, 2008). When investigating the contest between political actors and journalists Negrine found that both sides have become more professional. In particular, the 1990s witnessed strenuous efforts by New Labour to recruit professional communicators who were tasked not just with advocating the party's cause. Rather their brief was to emphasise the position of party leaders, help them communicate their messages and gain support among the media (Cook, 1998; Wring 2004). The journalist Andrew Rawnsley analysed these developments and detailed how improved organisational skills and techniques can potentially give political actors an edge in their personal media relations (Rawnsley, 2010).

Moreover, in their attempts to shape individual politicians' reputations, communications managers have been espousing the notion of planning and strategic management which writers in marketing and PR defined as a research based process led by objectives (Grunig and Repper, 1992; Smith, 2012). Planned action and strategic thinking is believed to increase efficiency and effectiveness as it suggests future action and anticipates developments. Trux (2002) advocates that a strategic plan will bring about better results than reactive and improvised action. This may explain why communicators have sought to create themselves more room to manoeuvre strategically by personalising party political communications, while keeping the respective political party officials at arm's length and relegating the electorate to passive spectators of stage managed appearances (Swanson and Mancini, 1996; Barkham et al., 2005).



However, when applied to political communication management the case for planned and strategic action starts to appear less feasible. Notwithstanding strenuous efforts in media relations management it seems fair to say that total control of messages has so far been elusive as events upset the communicators' news agenda, change the political narrative and potentially damage reputation (Smith, 2001). Gould (2002) argued that images in politics are fickle and so is the environment politicians and communicators are operating in. In his view campaign objectives and strategies cannot easily be controlled if at all. Adaptability to constant change is a core requirement for any political communicator. Gould finds that current literature about communication management does not sufficiently take into account the vulnerability of images as a result of the unpredictable nature of politics and political journalism (Gould, 2002). Indeed, in his comprehensive survey of strategy making and planning in a communications context, Moss elaborates on the added challenges posed by a dynamic environment (Moss, 2011b). He contends that across different industries managers tend to have "little time for planning and abstract strategy formulation" (Moss, 2011b, p. 30). Already in the mid-1970s some of the management literature called the notion of strategic management a myth, replacing it with an image of haphazard, reactive action (Mintzberg, 1975). In line with both Moss and Mintzberg O'Shaughnessy et al. (2012, p. 357) acknowledge that the media environment politicians operate in is unpredictable and fluid to a degree that "defies any attempts at political management." From this they infer that communications management in politics needs to up its game. Baines (2005) recognised that a volatile environment, sudden shifts in public mood, scandals and eruptions of accusations have to be addressed through more effective and efficient marketing tools and mechanisms.

In these introductory paragraphs I have very briefly touched upon the defining issues that motivate and guide this study:

First of all, the centrality of images and personality in political communications explains why individual candidates and incumbents seek to manage their public perception (Smith, 2001). Secondly, the unpredictability of events and

the volatility of the environment challenge intentions to project reputation strategically and to plan communication activities systematically.

Against this backdrop I seek to explore the discrepancy between what political communication management purports to be doing (exercising a strategic function) on the one hand and how communication practitioners in politics actually operate (tactically and reactive) on the other. As I will be detailing in my literature review, management and communications research has largely ignored this gap. Moss (2011b, p.40) insists therefore that this distinction “requires closer attention if we are to understand more fully the nature of the managerial role in the communications context.”

This backdrop informs my research objectives which are as follows:

- To explore and identify features that distinguish a planned, strategic communications approach in political reputation management from a reactive, tactical one.
- To consider the resources and circumstances that enable or militate against a strategic approach in political reputation management.
- To understand if, to what degree and under which circumstances we may expect a politician’s reputation to be managed strategically.
- To integrate findings into predictive theoretical framework of strategic personal reputation management in British politics.

To forestall equivocation and misunderstanding it is worth clarifying that the subject of this study is not primarily the political candidate or incumbent, but the political advisors’ collaboration with the politician. Together they devise arrangements that allow communication management activities to take place.

The following literature review takes an interdisciplinary perspective and serves to establish that research on this subject area is at an incipient stage. I will be arguing that the practice of individual reputation building in politics has so far not been comprehensively explored in marketing, public relations or

political communication studies. As individual reputation management in politics lacks a theoretical framework, I considered it best to choose an inductive explorative research design. I use elite interviews with communicators and journalists in order to identify correlations, patterns, consistencies and meaning within the practice of political communication management.

The value of my research findings is intended to be twofold. I expect

- to advance political public relations practice by identifying prerequisite features for strategic management of reputation in politics. I assume that a strategic approach carries practical advantages in terms of efficiency and effectiveness: Thus by constituting a model which assists PR managers in steering personal reputation management more strategically, arguably my findings will help communications advisers in politics to operate more successfully.
- to make a theoretical contribution to the discipline by generating a model that serves as predictive tool which allows us to identify and forecast the presence or absence of strategic practice in political reputation management.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In a nutshell the purpose of this literature review is twofold: First of all I am trying to discuss political communications strategy and tactics with the intention to establish features that distinguish a planned, strategic communications approach from a reactive, tactical one. This discussion is broadened by a consideration of the resources and circumstances that enable or militate against strategic practice.

Secondly, in reviewing the political communications, marketing and public relations literature, I am trying to highlight that the question as to whether and to which degree reputation of political protagonists is being systematically managed has not been raised in academic discourse in either discipline.

I start out by presenting the distinguishing concepts of the two disciplines this thesis is grounded in: public relations and marketing. In section two I am trying to analyse how writers on political communications reflect on themes and issues that condition the ascendancy of marketing concepts and techniques in British politics. It will be highlighted how an ever more professional communications management as well as the debate about personalisation in politics serve as the context of this study and justify its purpose.

My decision to present a historical overview (section 2.3) relates to Negrine's (2007) argument that the professionalisation of political communication has been an uneven process which was accelerated or slowed down both by external and internal circumstances as well as individuals that manage and lead political parties and governments. He goes on to say that election defeats or the sheer will power of a leader may increase commitment to centralise communications, upgrade technical know-how as well as skills and focus on strategy. In line with Negrine I present literature to suggest that the professionalisation of political communication in the British government and the leading parties proceeded cyclically. In part this drive for professionalisation was a response to politicians' recognition that in an era of mass media generated images they were increasingly being treated like celebrities (section 2.4).

To direct communication management towards an objective, politicians and communicators will need an agreed notion of the type of public persona that should be shaped and presented. This train of thought is echoed in literature about the ideal politician which in part originates from or culminates in the idea of the charismatic leader (sections 2.5 and 2.6).

Any subsequent discussion of reputation management in politics needs to be based on and grounded in an unequivocal understanding of the key terms identity, image and reputation, which in academic writing are used at times interchangeably and confusingly (section 2.7). Subsequently, it is being attempted to relate the definition of reputation, its emergence and decline to concepts of communication management.

Once we have established how reputation and its emergence are conceptualised across the disciplines, a consideration of strategic management frameworks helps us gauge if and to what degree communicators' approach to and activities of reputation management actually do meet the basic professional and academic conventions of strategic communications processes. Reviewing concepts of planned and emergent strategy help discuss, understand, and categorise phenomena we expect to encounter subsequently in our data (section 2.8).

At a more tactical level, media and communication management are instrumental in a power struggle between journalists and communicators for access to and control over the news agenda. I relate PR and marketing literature that presents how tactical and strategic deployment of communication tools allows communicators to frame information. Arguably, evidence of a tussle over the news agenda may testify to a more tactical media relations policy that is short of strategic purpose (section 2.9.).

In section 2.10 communication literature is considered that acknowledges the structural as well as technical conditions and resources needed by communicators to pursue objectives effectively. Centralisation, questions of access, numbers and expertise of staff are key issues that are thought to contribute to or militate against a planned communication perspective.

In conclusion, political reputation management is grounded in a number of disciplines, ranging from media relations, political science and social psychology to management, public relations and marketing. Drawing on these disciplines, but assuming a public relations perspective, this literature review

aims to define the communication related strategies and tactics that help establish a politician's public persona. This subsequently allows us to understand phenomena in our data and relate them to the existence or absence of a planned strategic approach.

## **2.2. Defining competing disciplines: Political PR and political marketing**

### **2.2.1. Political marketing**

When individuals, political parties or organisations deploy marketing concepts, theory and approaches in a political context we may call this political marketing. The fundamental objectives of political marketing are addressing public perspectives and views, the propagation of political convictions, campaigning, winning majorities of the electorate and finally legislating with the intention to meet the expectations and hopes of particular segments of the electorate (Newman, 1999b).

Newman (2002) contends that the marketing rationale helps understand why, how and to which purposes candidates, parties and government departments take strategic decisions. Hence marketing concepts appear to offer a valuable framework for a study that endeavours to understand the degree to which strategic considerations and decisions feed into the political communication process (Harrop, 1990).

Marketing strategy is described as the interface between any entity – political or not – and its surroundings with particular regard to its key audiences (Mavondo, 2000). Lilleker et al. (2006a) and Lilleker and Negrine (2006b) emphasise the mutual nature of marketing in politics which promises to satisfy both the electorate's expectations and the organisation's needs. For a comprehensive and recent definition I suggest Osuagwu (2008, 795) who conceptualised political marketing as:

*“...the systematic and objective analysis, planning, implementation, evaluation and control of political and electoral programmes, policies and processes*

*designed to create, build, sustain and enhance mutually beneficial exchange transactions and relationships between a political party (on one hand) and its relevant audience (such as votes, electorates, party members, funder, etc) for the purpose of achieving efficiency and effectiveness.”*

The academic discipline of political marketing is still relatively young (Baines and Egan, 2001b). Only in the late 1960s the concept of strategic marketing was slowly adopted by non-profit organisations and political parties (Kotler and Levy, 1969). At that time Kirchheimer (1965) perceived a change in western European political communications. He pointed out that political parties had become comparable to branded products. Initially, Kotler and Levy (1969) pioneered research to establish the degree by which marketing and branding expertise could be applied in the politics environment.

Newman (2002) reminds us that initially distinct academic disciplines dealt with political marketing and applied their respective perspectives. A range of authors from disciplines such as political sciences, communications and marketing have followed Kotler and Levy's example and examined election campaigns to detect evidence of marketing strategy (Newman 1994b; Bartle, 2002; Kavanagh, 2005). How marketing style, strategies and tactics have been deployed by parties and candidates in a political context has by now been explored extensively in academic writing (Kotler and Kotler, 1981; Newman, 2002; Ormrod and Henneberg, 2010).

Judging by the amount of literature that has been published about the subject in past years we are arguably experiencing the emergence of a new sub discipline in its own right which sets itself apart through the use of its own terminology: *Political Strategy, Spin, Political Advertising, Packaging* (Pearson and Patching, 2008). It should be noted that most literature on political marketing focused on the political system, media channels, the public and their interaction in either the USA or the UK (Butler and Collins, 1996). A range of writers also look into what the strategies of competing parties have in common and where they differ (Wring, 1996; Wring, 2004; Wilson, 2011; Cook, 2011; Rennard, 2011).

Newman (2002) points out that political candidates and parties avail themselves of marketing strategy and tactics that hitherto had been widely used in the profit sector. Miller for instance likens electoral behaviour to economic consumption and thus justifies the presence of marketing in both spheres (Miller, 1997). It has been assumed therefore that the classical concepts and principles of marketing as well as the analytical approach to the discipline are informing marketing practice in politics (Lock and Harris, 1996; Henneberg, 2006). This is a phenomenon which Wring (1999) has described as “colonization” of the field. While some writers still question if marketing should have a role to play in politics (Lilleker, 2005; Savigny, 2012) a majority of scholars and practitioners agree that politics and marketing are closely related. They also consider marketing as instrumental in reengaging the public with the body politic (Lees-Marshment, 2008), since both disciplines are concerned with facilitating exchange processes and aim at improving the quality of life (Kotler and Kotler, 1981; Kotler and Kotler, 1999). This optimism is grounded in the assumption that it is through the appropriate application of strategic marketing techniques that the voters’ expectations can be readily identified and addressed (Smith and Saunders, 1990; O’Shaughnessy et al., 2012).

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of an entity’s marketing activities it is mandatory to align their behaviour and offerings with the expectations of its most critical audiences (Fill et al., 2010). Already in 1992 Webster observed that marketing conditions the culture universal to any organisation. Osuagwu (2008) concurs and describes marketing as determinant organisational culture both in the profit sector and in politics. This for years has been the rationale for politicians and their consultants to deploy tools and strategies of marketing to propel their efficiency (Bauer et al. 1996).

Marketing’s potential role in political communication management has been probed into by writers who explored if and to what degree concepts and techniques are applicable both in a commercial and a political setting. Lock and Harris (1996) as well as Ormrod (2005) recognise diversity in publics as a



relevant feature that political marketing and non-profit marketing have in common. Mauser (1983) set out to identify the similarities between commercial enterprises and politics by suggesting that consumers may be likened to voters while the means of communications are the same in both disciplines. According to Mauser (1983) both candidates and businesses strive to retain voter or customer loyalty which incentivises the use of appropriate marketing strategy. However, Mauser's (1983) advice to view the drawing up of a policy or campaign agenda on the one hand and the designing of a commercial product or service on the other hand as identical processes is not shared unanimously (Maarek, 2011). Still, Mauser's claim does find support in Ormrod and Henneberg (2006) who liken political campaigns to the process of product positioning. Their view of planning and campaigning for votes as being essentially comparable to any marketing communications task appears to be in line both with practitioners' experience and academic literature such as Busby's (2009) study which contrasts the promotion of products and services to the electoral campaigns that are stage managed for political candidates.

Marketing strategies in a political context entail activities such as issue-tracking, targeting audiences, image management, formulating agendas and policies as well as timing campaign schedules and election days (Smith and Hirst, 2001). A range of marketing tools applied in politics - such as advertising, direct mail or publicity - have long been established in the marketing of the commercial sector (Clemente, 2002). Therefore, the appropriate means to explore and explain the use of communication tools in politics is through a prism of political marketing (O'Cass, 2001).

Rather than producing gimmicks and media stunts, political marketing arguably concerns itself with building up and maintaining a long term relationship with its publics. It is assumed that this may benefit the electorate as well as the candidates and their respective parties. The underlying belief is that this reciprocal benefit may be achieved on the basis of a symmetrical exchange process (Henneberg, 1996; O'Shaughnessy, 2001). Nimmo (2001) and Smith and Hirst (2001) concurringly support this view by arguing that

political marketing is transcending its short term tactical function that for years was limited to the processing of data during election campaigns. In their view political marketing has largely assumed a strategic function which is evidenced in its long term managerial involvement with policy formulation. This development acknowledges established marketing knowledge which is focused on the satisfaction of target audiences (members, voters, funders, media) as the intended outcome of mutual and long term strategic exchange processes between an organisation and its environment.

When talking about political marketing there appear to be recurring misunderstandings that have to do with diverging definitions of the subject. A fundamental and inconclusive discussion is noted by Walsh (1994) who questions whether marketing helps candidates mainly to communicate their messages or if marketing advice is already involved at a hierarchical level where the policy agenda is developed. Jennifer Lees-Marshment had tried to disentangle this debate by suggesting three categories of marketing (Lees-Marshment, 2008, 2001b). Her concept is derived from Keith (1960) and his three stage evolutionary model. First of all there is the product-oriented approach, which suggests that the party develops its policies and afterwards asks the public to support them.<sup>1</sup> Even if public endorsement was to fall short of expectations the party would stick to its convictions. Secondly, the sales oriented option. Here, again, the starting point is the agenda which is based on the party's political beliefs and convictions. Should public enthusiasm for what is being offered be lacking, the party would embark on a communication campaign to generate public support for its policies. At the heart of this model is the campaign management that can twist and manipulate voter preferences to align them with the convictions held by the party. Finally, Lees-Marshment (2008, 2001b) talks of market oriented political marketing. This essentially

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<sup>1</sup> What in a commercial context would be the product or service in politics is probably an amalgamation of past performance, party policy, leader image and promises (O'Shaughnessy, 2001). Lees-Marshment (2008) would also consider the party constitution, party conferences, principles, members of the legislature, staff and symbols as part of the party's product.

describes how policies are drawn up in accordance with the results of market research. What is being presented is meant to be in line with what the electorate want (Lilleker et al., 2006a, 2006b; Ormrod and Henneberg, 2006).

Ormrod and Henneberg (2006) emphasise that Lees-Marshment's third option essentially suggests a concentration on client satisfaction. Diamantopoulos and Hart (1991) for good reasons remind us that this pathway has proven its efficiency for organisations that operate in particularly competitive environments. O'Shaughnessy (1990) concurs in this analysis by adding that market orientation should constitute the ideal approach. One fundamental argument in favour of this option was its presumed potential to overcome the divide between what the public expects from their political institutions and representatives on the one hand and what political parties and candidates plan to do on the other hand (Baines and Worcester, 2002a). Another advantage ascribed to market orientation was an increase in the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency (Webster, 1992; McKenna, 1991). It is understood that market oriented marketing in the political context essentially entails the collection of data about the electorate, the spread of this information across relevant organisational units within party headquarters and the coordination and execution of a strategic campaign plan (Deng and Dart, 1994; O'Cass, 2001; Ormrod, 2011). Lock and Harris (1996) agree with Lees-Marshment in that political marketing may only be in a position to guide political actions if a market oriented strategic framework is adopted. When comparing this to the actual use of marketing by practitioners we are reminded that often neither a party nor a candidate take a conscious decision in favour or against one or the other perspective. Instead it is suggested that emerging preferences hinge on a party's structural and ideological make-up as well as a multitude of stakeholders whose interests need to be reconciled by the party leadership (Gibson and Römmele, 2001; Mortimore and Gill, 2010).

There appears to be consensus among observers that – at least in the UK - candidates and parties are more and more espousing a market oriented stance, while product and sales orientation are having ever less clout with

party managers (Smith and Saunders., 1990; Wring, 1996; Henneberg, 2002; Lees-Marshment, 2008; Schneider, 2004). The rationale for this development in Lees-Marshment's (2008) view is expected electoral success that supposedly comes with market orientation. Yet this analysis does not go uncontested. Mavondo (2000) suggests that bringing products and services in line with the electorate's expectations does not necessarily guarantee success in the market place. Indeed, marketing literature so far has struggled to link market orientation and electoral outcomes (Robinson, 2010). Still, it goes largely undisputed that market oriented political marketing is in ascendancy and in past decades elevated the discipline from a tactical to an essentially strategic role in party politics and campaigning which is owed to the acknowledgement in political management literature that organisational efficiency is critical for the achievement of electoral competitiveness (Butler and Collins, 1996; Robinson, 2010; Ormrod, 2011).

A main strand in political marketing writing explores aspects of branding in a business context and inquires how this relates to political marketing (Lock and Harris, 1996). Lock and Harris identify political parties as general brands and term specific policies as sub-brands. Butler and Collins (1996) agree as they liken both political parties and candidates to products in a business context. In line with this they are suggesting that marketing in politics is a means to extend the brand of a political party and individual candidates. By now there is common agreement that brands are constructs that are instrumental in political communication management and critical for political parties and politicians who engage with stakeholders (Needham, 2005; Smith, 2009).

The use of brands in politics resembles their function in a business context: The creation of positive consumer preferences and directing voting behaviour (Phau and Lau, 2000; Smith, 2009). More pertinent to the subject under consideration in this study is the article *The Forces Behind Merging Marketing and Politics* in which Newman probes the interface between branding and three main candidates in the 1992 presidential race (Newman 1994a).

Based on this case study Newman expounds in detail the options politicians have when they strive to turn themselves into a brand. In his view candidates' brand image consists of the perception of their personality, their ability to lead and the messages they disseminate in the mass media as well as other daily political news the voter is surrounded by. To this De Landtsheer (2004) adds the significance of visual impressions in this process. These impressions are being transmitted through the politician's physical presence. Newman (1999a, 1999b) also gives suggestions as to how images are developed and ultimately turned into a brand. One recommended option is through association with celebrities which have the potential to alter a politician's image.<sup>2</sup> In recent years this strategy had been taken up eagerly by David Cameron who associated himself in public with the green activist Zac Goldsmith and the campaigner for African poverty relief Bob Geldof (Beckett, 2006). Norris (2000) and Palmer (2001, 2004) draw upon examples from the 1980s to remind us how Prime Minister Thatcher made tangible changes to her appearance, particularly her way of dressing and her hairstyles. This is interpreted as an attempt to match aesthetical expectations with the prime ministerial persona. In subsequent years the branding of politicians may arguably have become more encompassing and substantive while still invoking the aesthetic. David Cameron sought to change his brand with his emphasis on green issues by planting a wind turbine in his garden and visiting and speaking out for fair trade products, while previously William Hague had striven to subject his public persona as party leader to a makeover by attending the Notting Hill Carnival and sporting a baseball cap (Smith, 2009). In this context Newman (1999a, 1999b) reminds us that a politician's brand must be condensable to a single sentence which expresses both the individual's assets and at the same time sets them apart from all competitors.

While evidently the concept of marketing and the construct of brands provide a useful strategic tool to analyse, understand and guide political communication practice, questions about the suitability and applicability of marketing concepts in politics remain. At a more practical level, the marketing

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<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion of celebrity and image building see section 2.4.

concept espouses features which arguably may not do justice to the democratic process. More explicitly, a marketing strategy demands conformity in message and behaviour, which goes counter to the notion of democratic discourse. At times marketing strategy accepts or even encourages sections of the electorate to abstain from voting (Needham, 2005). Whilst marketing activities usually assist in interpreting highly competitive markets, national politics in the UK appear to be less competitive than the fast moving consumer good markets. Until recently a stable rivalry pitched the two main parties against each other, while the electoral system marginalised smaller and new competitors. This arrangement is typical for what economists would term an oligopoly which classical marketing concepts may not fully account for (Osuagwu, 2008). Also, some critical aspects of public opinion and voter behaviour such as protest voting are difficult to account for in a marketing framework. Likewise comparative and particularly negative advertising are phenomena that usually are not constitutive of commercial marketing. By contrast, in a political context they do have their place. Lees-Marshment (2008) rightly reminds the reader of the difficulty to index the performance of a political party or leader. This too sets politics apart from commercial enterprises and deprives marketing in politics of a critical point of reference marketers in businesses may be able to exploit in their communications activities.

More critically, marketing's focus on brand building during an election campaign is too narrowly focused on an anticipated exchange process and therefore fails to do justice to the broader concept of an on-going reputation development plan addressed at a variety of stakeholders (Newman, 1999a; Baines et al., 2002b). Political marketing is usually conceptualised in relation to campaigns that ultimately should secure the public support needed to gain or retain political power in democratic electoral systems (Farrell and Wortmann, 1987). This focus limits our perspective and does not account for the practice of reputation management which is understood to be an on-going, long term exercise that transcends the period of an election campaign and is broader than marketing's predominant concern with exchange processes (Ledingham and Bruning, 2000; Watson and Kitchen, 2008).

No less problematic is marketing's failure to acknowledge the complexities of media relations and to recognise journalists' agenda in the communication of politics as well as the shaping of reputation. While marketing literature treats news media as yet another channel of communications, it does not give credit to the impact journalists have on setting the agenda and framing messages quite independently from political communicators' intentions (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Maarek, 2011; Savigny, 2012). The repercussions resulting from this are twofold: It questions marketing's effectiveness in generating and managing reputation, which is contingent on the media's third party endorsement as I am trying to illustrate in the following section. Also a failure to engage with the mechanisms of media relations rules out marketing theory as interpretative prism to explain and account for processes in political reputation management.

### **2.2.2. Public relations and the process of reputation management**

In this section it is intended to discuss both the management of communications and the relationships an individual or an organisation entertain with their respective environment through a framework of public relations and with an eye on building up and safeguarding reputation. Economic, social, technological and political factors contribute to dynamics among publics and their expectations. It is widely recognised that a core function of PR is to predict, influence and respond to these changes (Grunig, 1984; Broom, 2009). This activity is instrumental in building up and maintaining trust and support among key reference groups. External understanding and support are believed to be vital for an individual in a position of public authority to perform effectively (Ronneberger and Rühl, 1992; Szyszka, 1992; Bentele and Seeling, 1996; Tench, 2009). Reputation is thought to play a central role in this process of generating trust through its equation to social capital whose accumulation in turn potentially secures and increases trust. Writers in PR (Faulstich, 1992; Merten, 1992; Morris and Goldsworthy, 2012) attribute to their discipline a pivotal part in the exercise of

building trust due to its general association with the construction of images and the management of relationships with critical publics. It is therefore suggested to conceptualise a politician's environment in terms of publics, which are a broad and flexible concept that transcends marketing's focus on markets and does not presuppose the existence of exchange processes.

While both marketing and public relations are theoretically grounded in management and communications research, authors in public relations tend to stress the differences between the disciplines and in particular the limitations of marketing in describing and analysing political communication practice. Cutlip et al. (2000, p.8) writing from a public relations perspective remind us of a core distinction between the two disciplines:

*“Marketing focuses on exchange relationships with customers. The result of the marketing effort is quid pro quo transactions that meet customer demands and achieve organisational economic objectives. In contrast, public relations cover a broad range of relationships and goals with many publics – employees, investors, neighbours, special-interest groups, governments, and many more.”*

Ehling et al. (1992) concur by emphasising that marketing is mainly concerned with furthering the exchange process with customers in contrast to the public relations function that is dealing with a wider range of objectives and publics. From a PR perspective marketing is therefore viewed as the appropriate framework to conceptualise election campaigns and voting behaviour. In contrast PR emphasises the use of trust and understanding in order to create good will among relevant publics (Gregory, 2007; Smith, 2012). PR stresses not just the persuasive aspects but also the building of quality relationships which in turn is expected to nurture reputation (Grunig, 2002; Grunig and Huang, 2000).<sup>3</sup> The strategic value of relationship management may arguably be more pivotal in political public relations than in corporate public relations as the environment appears to be more dynamic,

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<sup>3</sup> See also the definition of PR by the Chartered Institute of PR which emphasises that PR is about reputation, reciprocal understanding and support.



unstable and rife with active and critical stakeholders (Strömbäck and Kioussis, 2011).

A theme both marketing and public relations have in common is persuasion. An on-going debate in public relations in particular is about the role persuasion should play in the communications practice pitches the two schools of thinking against each other. On the one hand persuasion is seen as an integrated part of the discipline, while on the other hand it is argued that public relations should be limited to facilitate understanding between publics. These opposed positions are reflected in Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four traditional models of public relations I will return to in section 2.8.8. The British Institute of public relations appears not to advocate the notion of persuasion when they defined public relations as "the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding, between an organization and its public" (Black, 1962, p.3). This is echoed in Cutlip et al's (1978) description of "mutually satisfactory two-way-communication" which they consider critical for the achievement of goals (Cutlip et al, 1978, p.31). It is debatable – and will be addressed in section 2.8.2. - if a mutually satisfactory two-way-communications exchange can ever be directed towards the achievement of strategic goals. A further definition of PR which offers to reconcile notions of persuasion of publics with the creation of understanding between interrelated systems is provided by Nolte (1979) who makes explicit reference to PR's role in building reputation (public approval). He describes the discipline as a management function which seeks to adapt an organisation (or individual) to the expectations raised by its environment, while concurrently it seeks understanding amongst publics for the organisation's (or individual's) behaviour. Ideally this impacts on senior management's decisions and helps accumulate good will and approval among publics.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) remind us of what is problematic with various attempts at defining public relations. In their view most authors in the field appear to propose too ambitious and comprehensive definitions that entail both expectations as to how PR should be practiced and the intended effects that are sought. Grunig and Hunt (1984, p.6) therefore suggest we should

boil down our notion of PR to the lowest common denominator. In his view this is an understanding of PR as “the management of communication between an organization and its publics”.

Before we can use it any further Grunig and Hunt’s (1984) definition of public relations needs to be adapted to accommodate the objectives of this study. This becomes necessary in response to this project’s focus on candidates and incumbents rather than organisations. While Grunig talks of communications between an organisation and its publics, in this particular case we should consider PR as communication between any entity and its publics. Alternatively – and this is what is being suggested here - we may perceive leading politicians as the hub of human and material resources they hold at their disposal. This interpretation reflects to a large degree reality as politicians at national level don’t usually operate as individuals but as senior managers in their own right within smaller or larger supportive structures. Therefore, in terms of communications management processes the term “organisation” and “politician” may in this study be used interchangeably. Equating a political leader with an organisation would however not suffice to accommodate and account for explanatory variables that are unique to the political context and set it apart from any other organisational – particularly a commercial, environment.

### **2.2.3. Redefining political public relations**

The practice of public relations is thought to have its origin in the early era of mass societies when it had an initial impact on national politics (Le Bon, 1982). Already in the 1920s Edward Bernays, a self-styled founding father of public relations, advocated the use of PR in politics (Bernays, 1955), though decades later he questioned the practice of political consultants whose work he refused to consider PR (Bernays, 1985). While research into political PR is incipient and academic literature only a few years ago was still lacking a monograph on this subject area, most scholarly work to the present day strongly focuses on PR’s role in a corporate or non-profit context. Yet, work that has been published in recent years acknowledges a broad consensus

about PR advisors' centre stage in British politics. PR's connection with political parties and governments has become part of Britain's political culture (Moloney and Colmer, 2001; Brissenden and Moloney, 2005). Political PR relies on communication techniques to garner support for policies among the media and voters (Froehlich and Ruediger, 2005). McNair's (1995) concept of political PR comprises government information management, internal party communication and reputation management. Out of the three categories, the third – dealing with images and reputation – is closest related to the research question at hand. Any of these practices should be seen against the backdrop of mounting pressure to communicate and persuade professionally that derives from the growing gap between politicians' power to deliver on the one hand and public expectations placed on incumbents on the other (Cook, 1998).

PR managers whose support politicians draw on are more specifically categorised as professional political consultants, media experts and party officials with an explicit brief in media relations (Esser et al., 2001). The latter group, whose members are often deeply rooted in the party machine are more prominent in Europe, whilst Esser et al.'s (2000) findings identify the weakness of political party structures in the USA as a cause for the flourishing of independent consultants that provide their services to candidates. Communication managers' use of media channels is not aimed at the legitimisation of governments only: PR practitioners seek to engage with the media on behalf of individual politicians whose respective reputation they are tasked with building. The mutual relationship between senior politicians and journalists emphasises celebrity protagonists and is said to have propelled consecutive Prime Ministers centre stage, which in turn helps them define the terms of communication (Seymour-Ure, 2003; Heffernan, 2006).

The concern with public profile transcends all areas of British politics and extends from the pinnacle of power right into the constituencies. In a study exploring MPs' media relations Jackson and Lilleker (2004) detail how backbenchers deploy communication tools to build and maintain a public profile with the electorate in their respective constituencies. Not only senior

ministers, but also the bulk of ordinary MPs had to recognise that without consistent communications aimed at the local communities success at the ballot box is increasingly difficult to achieve (Jefkins and Yadin, 1998). Against this backdrop Gaber (2000) synthesized the power communications management is ascribed to as well as the implications it may have on the trajectory of a politician's career and concluded that politicians' very ascendancy may to a large degree be conditioned by the very message that anticipates their likely ascendancy.

This liaison between journalism and political PR has for years stirred interest among journalists who focused specifically at what McNair (2000) terms process coverage, which reflects how in politics messages are created, interpreted, planted and responded to by PR advisors. A decade earlier it was already evident that political PR had become a story in its own right, as Bennett (1992) discovered when analysing the news content during American presidential and congressional elections. In time suspicion grew among political scientists and journalists alike: Some discussed if an emphasis on presentation obscured substance, while others were concerned the public sphere may be detrimentally affected and the political discourse twisted in favour of those in possession of means to resource communication campaigns (Moloney, and Colmer, 2001; McNair, 2007). Minifying portrayals of public relations as *just PR* or pejorative terms such as *Spin Doctor* for political communication practitioners mirror sceptical views held among academics and many journalists (Turnbull, 2007). While practitioners became widely perceived as a "malign and evil force at the heart of the body politic" by twisting the truth and manipulating the news (Esser et al., 2000, p. 213), the term *Spin Doctor* itself held no academic significance, nor was it ever adopted by the profession. Instead, it served as journalistic notion to discredit practitioners who were widely seen as media manipulators (Esser et al., 2001). It is little surprising therefore, if political PR managers tend to deny the label (Sumpter and Tankard, 1994). Though no matter which term is applied, the criticism appears to stay as Mannheim (2001) found who in his balanced reflection questions if in political communications style may actually trump substance and indeed communication managers are recurrently lambasted for

their efforts to manufacture public consent by choreographing politicians' statements, gestures and actions (Stockwell, 2007). The interpretation of facts and figures amounts to the claim that communications experts handle the media to a degree that allows them to mould reality (Sitrick, 1998).

These concerns gained particular attention during the years of the Labour government when observers may have wondered if political PR advisors were to establish what amounts to a fifth estate (McNair, 2004).<sup>4</sup> This led writers to debate if and to what degree it is acceptable for PR advisors to interfere with policies and ensure a politician's objectives and actions are aligned with public sentiment (Maltese, 1994). This debate was taken further by Gaber (2000) who made the point that political public relations may actually have little to do with imparting information, which takes second place to practitioners' covert machinations. As a result of this discourse the British public came to associate political communication with manipulation, a view that adversely affected advisors' effectiveness to devise messages and implement communication activities on behalf of politicians (Moloney and Colmer, 2001). Voices which sought to defend PR's role as an activity that furthered democracy and public discourse were few and far between (Esser et al., 2001). While this critical debate among political scientists on the image and nature of political public relations shapes a considerable part of the academic discussion, this section will limit itself to reviewing research that explores the managerial angle of political public relations and the work of practitioners.<sup>5</sup> As a starting point one may accept the basic definition proposed by Esser et al. (2000, p. 218) who conceptualise PR managers as "key figures through which journalists get access to the candidate." Further empirical investigation into their practice is expected to encounter a tangible challenge acknowledged by Johnson (2001) who reminds us that political PR advisors are rarely frank about the technicalities of their job and the means by which they achieve their objectives.

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<sup>4</sup> Though Brissenden and Moloney (2005) see in the wide spread criticism of spin doctoring at the turn of the century an attempt to discredit the Labour government, rather than a genuine weariness of communication techniques

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive consideration of PR's role in society and its impact on democratic political discourse, see Pitcher's (2003) *The Death of Spin*.

From a theoretical perspective PR practice is conceptualised in models ranging from the one way public information type that reflects a persuasive approach to a symmetrical type which incorporates a reconciliatory understanding of PR (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). The question addressed here is related to the applicability of these models – which are duly reviewed in sections 2.2.2. and 2.8.4. – in a political context: After acknowledging candidates' efforts to create legitimacy by accommodating their electorate's expectations and concerns Jackson and Lilleker (2004) in their study of constituency MPs argue that the political context offers most opportunities to communicators who subscribe to two-way symmetrical practice of PR. They argue that the kind of communication may hinge on the distinct situations politicians are in: When speaking on behalf of their respective party or government they tend to pass on information without provision for feedback. By contrast, when acting as political agents in their own right politicians may be in a position to develop their stance through dialogue with publics (Jackson and Lilleker, 2004). Only a few years later Jackson (2010) returned to his earlier position (Jackson, 2003), thereby disputing political PR's dialogical nature. In similar vein, Moloney's (2006) definition of political PR as weak propaganda appears to imply a persuasive approach. Xifra (2010) takes a position that potentially reconciles both the persuasive and the dialogic stance by reminding us of the senior PR manager's strategic responsibility that comprises both research and planning ahead.<sup>6</sup> Others emphasise an explicit need in politics to understand and accommodate the environment that is if anything even more unpredictable than what communicators deal with in a corporate setting (Liu and Levenshus, 2012). Xifra (2010, p. 180) even goes so far as to predict "communications dysfunctions" if an organisation lacked the willingness to understand external expectations. Yet, the ability to adapt to dynamics and adopt appropriate policies requires not just an open culture (Dozier et al. 1995), but also a degree of responsiveness which arguably goes counter to the widespread assumption that communication efforts are guided

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<sup>6</sup> A study by Xifra (2010) suggests that the emphasis on strategy in Political PR may be less developed in other countries. He found among practitioners in Spain the view that PR may well be tactical and seeks to support the overall political strategy.

by objectives that were agreed on in an initial “campaign planning stage” and strategy development (Kopfman and Ruth-McSwain, 2012, p. 77). Suchman (1995) attempts to reconcile both perspectives by suggesting that regardless to the increased demand for responsiveness, both persuasion and adaptation are essential in political communication in an attempt to gain support and build legitimacy. A view shared by Moloney and Colmer (2001) who found evidence both for the tactical media relations role and the more strategic intention to use personality and content to activate audiences’ attention.

The degree by which PR managers are perceptive to environmental changes may arguably depend on their position within an organisation’s hierarchy: The higher up – in the view of Xifra - the more complete their perspective (Xifra, 2010). Regardless to their position in the organisational hierarchy though, communications managers during recent years have not confined themselves to the role of mere conduits that transported messages on the politician’s behalf. Instead, they assumed the role of advocates that represented a politician’s agenda (Osborne and Walters, 2004). This pro-active perspective is reminiscent of Esser et al.’s (2000, p. 212) definition of campaign communication which is characterised by “central planning and controlling of all campaign communication activities as part of an integrated communication strategy that follows the patterns of commercial PR (...).”

This latter model is challenged by Liu and Levenshus (2012) who are not prepared to accept the assumption that efforts to plan ahead could ever sufficiently anticipate and control events in politics.<sup>7</sup> Mannheim (2011, p. 32) goes further by suggesting that what he terms “focusing events” – such as scandals, economic downturns or international crises - may be overriding factors and thus be critical in defining frames of perception. These largely unpredictable external dynamics are arguably compounded by politicians and their media handlers who feed the media un-attributable slight with an eye toward discrediting a colleague in their respective party (Heseltine, 2000). Liu

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<sup>7</sup> Sellers (2010) has portrayed the endeavours by communication managers in American politics to control messages and the news agenda in an effort to build up and safeguard party reputation. He points out that external events and the attacks launched by political opponents are at times insurmountable obstacles that thwart communication plans.

and Levenshus (2012, p. 104) therefore wonder if perhaps there is “no point in planning” for issues or crisis situations. Since Martinelli (2012) equates issues management with the strategic planning process, a failure among communicators to scan the environment, monitor publics and anticipate issues, suggests that political communications practice by nature has to be reactive. In the view of Martinelli the lack of forward planning and a reactive approach are the defining nature of political public relations which sets it apart from public relations in the corporate sector. Yet a review of works on strategically planned as well as reactive PR in politics is complicated by academics who show a lack of rigour and precision when using these technical terms. Negrine and Lilleker (2003) as well as Jackson and Lilleker (2004) for instance appear to minimise the distinction between strategic and tactical by equating the first with PR managers who actively seek media coverage and the latter with non-actively sought media relations. Concepts of strategy and tactics developed in management and marketing literature that help clarify and compare the phenomena are presented and critiqued in chapter 2.8.

Moloney and Colmer (2001) found that intense media attention required politicians and their staff to respond by upgrading message delivery speed as well as message variety. In similar vein Meyer (2002) asserts that the use of PR techniques in politics merely echoes the mediated nature of politics. In other words, the weary media and a critical electorate force political communicators to resort to promotional tools in order to shape and communicate messages (Moloney et al., 2003). Tony Blair is not the only high profile politician who is known to have complained about the recurrent media attacks he found himself exposed to. A phenomenon politicians counter by resorting to tools of media relations management (Heffernan, 2006). Sampson (2005) recognises this but cautions that communicators’ display of skill and assertiveness is still countered by unprecedented aggressiveness among journalists who strive to determine the agenda and thus leave politicians and



their staff little alternative to reacting defensively (Page, 1996).<sup>8</sup> In this context Lilleker et al. (2002) speak of attempts by the national media to discredit candidates and incumbents which induces some politicians to prefer contacts with local journalists at the expense of relationships with national newspapers and broadcasters. Others respond by seeking to tighten their control over media relations.

Stockwell (2007) challenges this view: He believes the balance of power tips in favour of communication managers who through orchestrating political statements, emphasise a specific news angle and thus limit journalists' freedom of action. These endeavours to control the news agenda are arguably more likely to be rewarded with success when large political parties pull their weight, whilst they become more of an impossible mission for smaller groups in parliament. The latter are said to be particularly frustrated by their failure to gain extensive visibility in the media at all (Grender and Parminter, 2007). Attempts at news media control by any political PR manager is strongly resented by the media which at times resorts to drastic counter measures as occurred when journalists downed their cameras on Blair's campaign bus in protest of what they perceive as unacceptably robust media handling methods (Moloney and Colmer, 2001). Ruthless media relations involve the expulsion of hostile journalists from the information loop which is particularly painful for the individuals concerned whose role in a news room becomes precarious once they lose their official sources of information (Gaber, 2000; Esser et al., 2000). While specifically Blair's spokesperson Campbell displayed a preference for intimidating journalists, the full range of media relations tools transcends blunt threats and ranges from wooing and winning over to seducing and misleading. Gaber (2000, p. 512) has explored and listed distinct techniques deployed by communication managers to cajole journalists and set the agenda, ranging from efforts to plant a story to activities of "firebreaking" aimed at taking off the media's attention from a potentially negative story.

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<sup>8</sup> Tunstall (1996) details how the British press deploys far more aggressive journalistic methods by comparison than the German media.

In recent years speed in media operations has gained critical relevance which led parties to institute instant rebuttal units equipped to respond to an opponent's attacks with instantaneous counter statements (Stephanopoulos, 1999; Esser et al., 2000). The core of media relations practice often relates to the creation of a positive narrative that ties in with public and journalistic demand. The appeal of a purposeful narrative is judged to be superior to that of shopping lists that contains an assortment of policy promises (Grender and Parminter, 2007).

How on aggregate this variety of PR tools and techniques may well help shape the news agenda was detailed by Bentele (1998) who investigated the degree by which PR material was adopted among journalists who often failed to attribute the sources their information originates from. Heffernan's (2006) analysis by contrast stresses limitations of PR influence in the agenda setting process which in his view hinges on the appropriate balance between performance and substance. He suggests that political PR may not be able to create and sustain images that cut across reality (Heffernan, 2006).

Of interest to practitioners and relevant in the specific purpose of this study is Mannheim's (2011, p. 36) contention that "strategic skill" or the lack of it can shift the balance of power in favour of one protagonist or the other. This places the skill and ability of website designers, event managers, image consultants, speech and copy writers into an elevated position that is critical for communication outcomes (Moloney and Colmer, 2001). The ability to apply skill and strategic understanding in daily practice may to a considerable degree be contingent on the politician's communication managers, whose professional expertise and input at times vastly exceeds their modest media relations brief. Their role vis a vis the politician Seymour-Ure dedicated a study to that defined the Prime Minister's press secretary as advisor on media relations and coordinator of government policies (Seymour-Ure, 2003). She argues that these advisors find themselves placed in a powerful position as intermediaries between journalists and politicians, who are expected to understand both political processes and the media logic (Esser et al., 2001).

Communication managers' power is also related to resources and organisational arrangements (e.g. budget, speaking with one voice, party unity etc.) which Liu and Levenshus recognise as a prerequisite for the attainment of communication objectives.<sup>9</sup> The need to bring together otherwise disconnected campaign decisions and integrate them into a single campaign argument is recognised by Mannheim (2011), who calls strategy a medium to align campaigns. In his view a prerequisite for this to happen is a comprehensive self-analysis by the protagonist, a careful audience segmentation, on-going research as well as outcome evaluation. The use of research in political PR practice is known since the first polls were commissioned in the early 1930s in the USA (Eisinger, 2000). Electoral surveys have been credited with the repositioning of Clinton and the re-branding of the Labour Party in the UK (Worcester and Baines, 2006). While writers in political communications occasionally challenge the ethical implications and scientific rigour of opinion research, the availability and accessibility of research data for parties, politicians and their staff is not questioned (Savigny, 2007). In line with this apparent consensus, Grender and Parminter (2007) remind readers that without systematic research message formulation will fail. It is necessary for research and – in a second step - messages to be marshalled in support of overarching objectives. For Seitel (2001) there seems to be no doubt that communication techniques only stand a chance to succeed within a strategic framework and grounded in the data the communicator is reliant on in order to understand the expectations voiced among key publics in politics. Therefore, the PR planning process in politics requires managers to define both audiences and messages in line with objectives (Gregory, 2002; Jackson and Lilleker, 2004). Leaders or prospective leaders may for instance aim to enthrall audiences by proving their respective utility and leverage (Heffernan, 2006). In brief: It is understood that communications led by objectives are only viable if resources are allocated that are adequate to ensure that communication activities do not appear “haphazard and arbitrary” and are directed towards implementing strategic processes and achieving objectives (Taylor, 2012, p. 216).

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<sup>9</sup> For the organisational, political and communicative implications of party unity see Aldrich and Rohde (1995)

The functioning and outcomes of communications processes led by objectives are dependent on an infrastructure that allows for flexible and skilled decision making processes which enable strategic action – or (if they slow down or obfuscate processes) militate against it (Mannheim, 2011). An analysis of these structural features counts towards the variables that feed into and partially inform the empirical part of this study that seeks to understand what defines reputation management practice. Largely ignored in texts on communication strategy and tactics but at least touched upon by Brissenden and Moloney (2005) is the notion that an individual's genuine talent for communications or the lack thereof may offset the most carefully choreographed and scripted performance on stage and screen.

Another aspect of political public relations not widely recognised in academic literature is its role in the creation of relationships – a concept pioneered by Ferguson (1984) - and the building of reputation.<sup>10</sup> Often the definition used is much narrower: Lilleker (2011) points out that in the political context public relations are often merely seen as a communications activity in support of marketing. By the same token public relations in politics have been described as media relations. Strömbäck and Kiousis (2011) contend that these reduced definitions are offered by marketers who fail to appreciate the strategic dimension of public relations and consider it instead a technical function and a welcome add-on to marketing. As it were, the definitions that have been offered to qualify political public relations have emphasised technical dimensions as well as communication tools (Korte and Froehlich, 2009) or alternatively sinister propagandist scenarios as mentioned above (Brissenden and Moloney, 2005). Only very recently has political public relations' contribution to the building of relationships with stakeholders and managing reputation been acknowledged (Griffin, 2008; Cornelissen, 2008; Strömbäck and Kiousis, 2011). These writers agree that media relations is an unacceptably narrow definition that is rooted in the tradition of marketing public relations which conventionally focuses on generating publicity in

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<sup>10</sup> Liu and Levenshus (2012) do emphasise the role of relationship building only as a means to prevent crisis situations. They don't recognise it as an instrument to build up and manage reputation.

support of a new product and is therefore more tactical in nature (Lilleker, 2011). In other words, marketers appreciate PR as a means to spice up a product in the eyes of the audience and make its appearance exceed its substance (Moloney, 2006). Lees-Marshment (2001) reminds us that marketing models relegate PR to the implementation phase, preceded by policy design and adjustment.

An integration of political PR into marketing would result in a detrimental restriction of the communicative focus on customers who are intent on engaging in an exchange process (Jackson, 2010). In response to this narrow definition Martinelli (2012) believes that political communicators lose influence and as a consequence become less effective if their role is curtailed to that of a media relations officer who is neither in charge of the establishment and the maintenance of long-term relationships nor primarily responsible for the creation of a narrative that aligns a politician's strengths with the political messages advocated by party and government (Grender and Parminter, 2007). Ferguson's (1984) advocacy for PR as an exercise in relationship building has been supported by later writers such as Ledingham (2001) who more specifically emphasises the need to organise relationships around shared interests and goals which in his view are the source of understanding and thus serve the interests both of the politicians and their publics.

To what degree relationship management calls for external dynamics to be heeded to or rejected is conceptualised in contingency theory, which essentially portrays political communication processes as dynamic exchanges between an organisation and its publics (Cameron et al., 2001; Reber et al., 2003). Crisis situations politicians encounter in the course of their careers may also be conceptualised in terms of contingency theory. Against this theoretical backdrop Coombs (2000) describes a crisis that threatens a politician's reputation as the result of a breakdown in relationships with publics. Today the establishment and safeguarding of relationships with key publics is not only seen as a core function of PR and protective tool in crisis situations, but also as conditional in the management of reputation (Ledingham and Bruning, 1998; Grunig and Huang, 2000).

Concepts of reputation feature more prominently in models of corporate public relations (Hutton et al., 2001). The notion of reputation has been taken up by public relations writers in a non-corporate context only recently. By now, the relevance of the concept is little disputed: Liu and Levenshus (2012, p. 103) write about the “debilitating consequences” a damaged reputation may have for public institutions. Evidence of the role reputation management holds with regard to individual politicians appears to be widespread as Negrine and Lilleker (2004) established in their study which ascertained that reputation is of concern not just to cabinet ministers and party leaders, but also to many constituency MPs. In national politics, the use of means to build up reputation as a strategy for parties in opposition to re-engage voters and regain power has featured prominently in communications research (Lees-Marshment, 2001). It is important to note that the focus adopted in corporate public relations is useful to our political context too as it is taking us beyond the boundaries of a specific political campaign by analysing reputation management practice as a communication and relational process over a longer time scale (Griffin, 2008; Cornelissen 2008). This perspective is welcome as far as it contrasts with political communication writers who focus their attention predominantly on the campaigns in the run up of election-day (Young, 2007). In the view of Young (2007) researchers’ emphasis on elections in communication studies is limiting and not reflective of political practice beyond the campaign period. Writing a decade earlier Saxton (1998) advanced a similar argument by pointing out that reputation is acquired through the course of an extended time frame: A notion I discussed in more detail in chapter 2.7.5. Saxton (1998) goes on to argue that well managed communications are an effective tool to build up reputation. This suggestion contains the two key terms “management” and “communication” which are the constituting elements of public relations and instrumental in reputation building and stakeholder perception management (Carroll and McCombs, 2003). Griffin (2008) reminds us that the very nature of reputation management requires a broader perspective of audiences that transcend the marketers’ narrow focus on customers.

This notion of reputation linked to a comprehensive perspective of PR in politics would broaden the marketers' view of the discipline and help improve our understanding of communication processes in politics. By the same token communication managers are called upon to adopt a more long term, broader and considered strategic view rather than a merely tactical or technical stance.

We may conclude that while the marketing paradigm is more widely used to describe communication management in politics, in this study a public relations perspective is adopted which is grounded in the understanding that public relations offers a broader interpretative framework. It incorporates marketing public relations as well as corporate public relations and thus combines tactical with strategic elements. Political public relations use communication tactics to build relationships as a strategic means to manage reputation. While this perspective may not replace the marketing paradigm it offers a different model that helps us analyse and understand communication management processes in a political context.

### **2.3. The ascendancy of professionalism in politics**

It has been widely argued – and it is not my purpose to challenge this convention here – that after Mrs. Thatcher's ascension to the leadership of the Conservative Party, political communication in a modern sense gained access to party headquarters (Watts, 1997)<sup>11</sup>. The Saatchi brothers are given credit for stirring the Conservative leadership's enthusiasm for ideas of market research and voter targeting – by now well established means of modern political communication (Franklin, 2004; Negrine, 2008; Lees-Marshment, 2008). It nicely fits into the picture that in this period the Prime Minister's press secretary Bernhard Ingham was reported to hold tangibly more sway with Mrs. Thatcher than media relations staff were expected to have in previous governments (Budge, 2007; McNair, 2003). In her autobiography Mrs.

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<sup>11</sup> Brian Mc Nair (2003) mentions that in the 1980s the Conservatives commissioned Saatchi and Saatchi to do value research and psychographics which to this extent had never been used in the UK before.

Thatcher called Ingham her advisor and close confidential (Thatcher, 1993).<sup>12</sup> Issues of access for communicators and clout within the internal decision making hierarchy are further explored in section 2.10.3.

By the end of the 1980s politicians on both sides of the floor recognised the value of publicity and sophisticated communications management to further their careers and their popularity with the public. Matthew Parris described this phenomenon when he suggested that politicians were as keen on publicity as horses on oats (quoted in Franklin, 2004).

After the exit of Bernhard Ingham upon John Major's arrival in 10 Downing Street, three press secretaries succeeded each other in relatively short intervals. None of them are remembered as a high profile advisor to the Prime Minister (Marx, 2008). Even though it should be admitted that the Major government's divisions over Europe and a succession of sleaze scandals that involved members of the cabinet did do a lot to shatter the administration's popularity. Some of the government's poor standing with the public could probably be blamed on inadequate PR which failed to respond to the combined assault of a hostile media and a rejuvenated New Labour Party (Major, 2000; Jones, 1999). Major's spokesperson Sir Christopher Meyer complained in his memoirs that public relations in Downing Street at his time were handled in the most haphazard way. Apparently, Meyer could not even arrange for the daily papers to be delivered to his home every morning. Meyer gives credit to his successor, Tony Blair's press secretary Alastair Campbell, for introducing a much tighter, efficient and professional structure into the Prime Minister's public relations operations (Meyer, 2005).

During the 1990s the Whitehall observers became aware that New Labour's communications had become more than just a ways and means of informing and persuading the public. Political communications had developed into a defining and central element of New Labour (Gaber, 1998; Scammell, 2007; Scammell, 2008). John Bartle put it this way: "To be in the media is to exist as

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<sup>12</sup> Ingham himself adamantly denies to have been an all powerful quasi minister of communications (Ingham, 2003, p.100-120).



a politician.” Politicians see themselves as another consumer product and anxiously ask: “Are they still buying me”? (Bartle cited by Garner and Short, 1998, p.181).<sup>13</sup> Thus both Franklin and Scammell may well have a point when they claim that it is hard to exaggerate the role of media and marketing in shaping politicians’ public persona (Franklin, 2004; Scammell, 2007; Scammell, 2008).

The central role communications gained in the political process in the UK may be seen in the context of similar developments in other western democracies. In the USA, the UK and Germany centre left politicians came to the helm during the 1990s. Incidentally, their coming to power was associated with a consistent use of innovative political communication tools. The trailblazer for this development is understood to have been the Democrat’s campaign of 1992 in the USA which could draw upon financial resources unheard of in other countries and a highly sophisticated political consultancy industry. In the 1990s it was estimated that in the USA about 1000 freelance consultants and about 40 specialised agencies offered their services in the field of political marketing (Holzer, 1996; Althaus, 1998).

What was particularly remarkable about Bill Clinton’s campaign in 1992 was the speed and immediacy of political rebuttals, often within minutes a competing candidate had released a statement. Both the rapid response and the concentration on a limited set of core messages were seen as critical tools that contributed to the eventual electoral success (Butler and Collins, 1996). No less attention was given to the set-up of the campaign headquarters, the so called ‘war room’ intended to coordinate the campaign, which at the time attracted an unusual amount of attention in the USA and from abroad (Butler and Collins, 1996; Stephanopoulos, 1999; Matalin and Carville, 1994).<sup>14</sup> Clinton’s successive election victories in 1992 and 1996 stirred interest and

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<sup>13</sup> Erik du Plessis (2008) discusses in his book *The advertised mind* rising retention rates through repeated stimuli of synapsis in human brains. Repeatedly stimulated synapsis allow information to be firmly lodged in the brain. This phenomenon is a rationale for politicians to appear on television regularly.

<sup>14</sup> In this context Joe Klein’s novel *Primary Colours* reflects on how political marketing in the USA operated in that period of time.

led political communication consultants and campaign managers internationally adopt some of the techniques used by Clinton's team.

It has been suggested that the American campaigns taught two lessons. The first concerns a more professional approach to political communication which entails - and this is the second lesson - a direct involvement of communication advice at the decision making level (Marx, 2008). Tony Blair upon taking up the Labour leadership in 1994 moved the party headquarters into Millbank Tower in Westminster, where he set up the Labour Party's version of a 'war room' (a large shared office space modelled on the example in the US) and his own rapid rebuttal unit. The party official in charge of the war room was Peter Mandelson who arranged the office procedures in a way that guaranteed regular barrages of well sourced press releases in response to any attack by the Conservative Party (McNair, 2003; Jun, 2004; Butler and Collins, 1996; Gould, 1998a; 1998b). It has been reported that a relatively small team of confidants orchestrated Tony Blair's campaign in 1997 who were guided mainly by the results of opinion polling data. A sample group of 5000 non aligned voters were used as source for continual feedback on policy and presentational issues. Based on these insights the party proposed five clearly identifiable promises which they had printed on pledge cards and distributed among the electorate. These core messages were meant to be the central themes in all media interviews the party leadership was invited to give. But it was not only innovations that set political communications in 1997 apart from what had been practiced previously. Tony Blair's communications were also markedly more expensive. Whilst the campaign in 1992 had cost the party 43 million pounds, the 1997 campaign was an investment of about 100 million pounds. (Jun, 2004; Butler and Collins, 1996).

Thus an increase in financial resources and innovative management in combination changed Labour's communication practice as Tony Blair's pollster Philip Gould summarises:

*"In a campaign, you must always seek to keep the momentum (...). Gaining momentum means dominating the news agenda, entering the*

*news cycle at the earliest possible time, and repeatedly re-entering it, the stories and initiatives that ensure that subsequent news coverage is set on your terms. It means anticipating and pre-empting your opponents' likely manoeuvres, giving them no room to breathe, keeping them on the defensive. It means defining the political debate on your terms."*

(Gould, 1998a, p.294)

Once in government Blair's Labour administration gave its media advisors more operational freedom while the cabinet was less rooted in ideology (Seymour-Ure 2003). At the same time the new Labour government went about centralising communications to an unprecedented degree. The rationale for this was an intention to coordinate and unify messages and to avoid dissenting views. This re-organisation echoed earlier calls for change that resulted from the Mountfield Report, an investigation into the practice and quality of government communication:

*"All major interviews and media appearances, both print and broadcast, should be agreed with the No. 10 Press Office before any commitments are entered into. The policy content of all major speeches, press releases and new policy initiatives should be cleared in good time with the No. 10 private office...the timing and form of announcements should be cleared with the No. 10 Press Office"*

(Mountfield Report, 1997).

The government tried to ensure that communications were not left to chance. The Mountfield Report (1997) made suggestions for senior policy officers and communicators to meet daily in order to align messages and content. Furthermore, structural changes were introduced to strengthen the government's ability to research and understand publics and their attitudes. Secondly, a unit was established and tasked to manage, coordinate and advise on policy and presentation, suggest wordings to ministries for interviews as well as speeches and work with individual departments to make

sure that departmental communication staff were aligned and not in competition with each other (Franklin, 2003). Any departmental communicator or cabinet minister who failed to align their respective messages and channels of communications with the guidelines and instructions issued by No. 10 Downing Street were asked for a justification.

At the same time the style of media management operated by government communicators is said to have changed tangibly. Gaber (1998) accounts how critical journalists were denied interviews with members of government. Alan Rusbridger, the Guardian's editor at the time, agreed and added that government communicators expected him to place specific articles on page one and drop critical coverage altogether. If he refused to comply it was threatened that exclusive information would in future only be sent to his competitors at the Independent (Osborne, 1999). Blair's head of communications Alastair Campbell advised press officers already in 1997 to assume a more assertive stance in their dealings with journalists and to dictate the headline (Timmins, 1997). What this implied is explained by the journalist Nick Cohen who believes that leading political protagonists and their communicators have the

*“ability to refuse interviews to presenters or journalists who are out of favour. The state has a thoroughly politicised propaganda machine which can swamp reporters with recycled news, diversionary announcements and leaks to the boys and girls who won't bite the hand that force feeds them”*

(Cohen, 2001, p.18).

There seems to be agreement that the effectiveness of media management is to a large degree dependent on the assertiveness, insistence and even power to threaten journalists in an attempt to influence coverage, as Pearson and Patching (2008) detailed in their seminal study about spin doctoring in the UK, Australia and the USA.

However, Wolfsfeld (2003) cautions against fast conclusions and reminds us that this power balance between journalist and communicator is not inevitable.

If the number of prime time sought-after news programmes is limited and difficult to access, a politician may become dependent on the good will of a few gatekeepers who as a result stand a chance to negotiate on their terms. Notwithstanding this alternative perspective, Franklin is adamant that the strategic impact and managerial powers of government communicators is a legacy of the Blair years which may survive the Labour administration (Franklin, 2004).

Meanwhile after a bitter and unprecedented succession of electoral defeats the Conservative Party still found itself in opposition and the party's Central Office decided to follow suit and adopt key features of New Labour's innovations for its own political communication activities. Just as Clinton had done in the USA in the early 1990s, the Conservatives now merged their policy department with their media and PR units and let them work together in close proximity. This innovation for the 2001 general election campaign was the Conservatives' variant of the war room. Furthermore, The Conservative leader William Hague put former journalists in charge of presentational matters, just as Tony Blair had entrusted experienced reporters (Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell) with his media relations. On both political sides professionalism in political communication had reached a hitherto unprecedented level raising questions of how a sceptical and increasingly cynical electorate would react to a political debate that at times resembled a carefully drafted and choreographed role play. (Butler and Kavanagh, 2002; Rawnsley, 2001; Jones, 2001).

This coherent presentation in style and content hinges largely on politicians' decision to permit to some extent their communication advisors access to the policy making process (Esser et al., 2000a, Esser, 2000b; Korte, 2009). In section 2.10.3 I will be discussing observations that suggest communicators have entered centre stage in the political arena and established themselves squarely at the organisational heart of political parties and government in a way that makes one wonder if there is still a distinction between presentational and policy issues (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999; Franklin, 2004).

Interestingly in the 1990s both Clinton's team and New Labour's leadership opened up to their communications activities to the public and allowed their communication strategies and tactics to be reported about. Parry-Giles and Parry-Giles (2002) see this as part of an effort to create authentic images of the candidates and their teams which eventually may appear more credible to the audience than reality itself. Parry-Giles (2002) pointed out the need for authenticity in a political era that is largely made up of images and hyper-reality. He observed that the dividing line between reality and fictional images has become blurred to a degree that may have made the distinction between the two already become meaningless.

Marx (2008) advances a concept that helps us understand why well publicised political marketing activities in their own right contribute towards building the images of candidates and political parties. In his view Clinton's war room management as well as new Labour's innovative communication policies in the mid 1990s were deliberately publicised by the respective candidates as an indicator of their management skills and efficiency. The coverage of modern political communication management is seen by Marx (2008) as a kind of meta communication which was intended to help journalists and the wider public predict the degree of efficiency the respective candidates may be expected to display when managing an administration.

In this section it has been considered how the past three decades have seen a professionalisation in political communications which is grounded in the unprecedented use of communication strategy and tools as well as resources and structures. Historical and personal accounts suggest politics is operated with acute and perhaps growing awareness of the strategic role of communication management. Efforts to establish centralised and more efficient communications management processes has institutionally separated and emancipated the function from party structures and led to changes in the government communications unit which I will be exploring in a subsequent section.

In this section we explored how political scientists and contemporary historians detail the development and the techniques of strategic communication efforts political parties and candidates have been deploying to achieve their respective objectives. We found throughout how it is implicitly taken for granted that political communications are conducted purposefully. Apparently, neither historians nor political scientists appear to critically explore the question as to whether the practice of communication and reputation management is planned, active and strategic or alternatively tactical and reactive. When historians and political scientists do turn to the question it remains unclear how they conceptualise strategic communication. And while they do write about personalisation it is not clear how they interpret the concept of image and reputation.

As we have seen throughout this section any writer on professionalisation in communications management will need to detail centralisation, access to decision makers, the link between policy making and communications, expert external advice and research. At the same time one needs to bear in mind that the advance of these features seems to be going cyclically depending on the political situation the party or politician is in and on whether individuals are ready to espouse them. So far it has not been elaborated if and how the knowledge and availability of strategic communications alters the approach individual politicians take towards the management of their respective reputation - whether candidates and incumbents in specific cases make use of resources, concern themselves with planning and show willingness to engage with communication strategies and external advice. Up to now, the question if a politician's public perception is the result of planned communications management or the tactical response to external issues has not been systematically addressed by either discipline. We will therefore draw on related disciplines in order to clarify key concepts: Contributions made by marketing and public relations are expected to offer insights into how political communications practice is conducted and thus provide the framework for practitioner interviews and benchmarks that subsequently help interpret findings.

## **2.4. Why reputation counts: Personalisation and Celebrity Politics**

What exactly we mean by personalisation has not been fully clarified (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2007) and more interestingly it is not even fully agreed if a process of personalisation can be observed at all in the political and corporate news coverage. Kaase insists that “all findings support the notion that personalisation cannot be observed” (Kaase, 1994, p.211) and reminds us that public communication has always placed an emphasis on individual protagonists (Häussler, 2008). This view conflicts with those who observed explicitly that media reporting about corporations, political parties and government is increasingly construed around individual leaders (Imhof, 2010). It is argued that the media is implicitly encouraging both politics and corporations to place individuals at the centre of their messages. A willingness to comply with this expectation leads to a higher degree of media attention and media coverage (Bentele and Fähnrich, 2010).

Since Walter Lippmann’s seminal work in the early 1920s it has been attempted to establish the news value of stories. In other words both practitioners and scholars have been seeking to explain how and why media selects one particular news item while it ignores others (Lippmann, 1997; Eilders, 1997). In response Galtung suggests that “the more the event can be seen in personal terms, as due to the action of specific individuals, the more probably it will become a news item.” (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, p.68). It is therefore critical for communication managers to adapt their communications strategy and tools to the criteria deployed by media to select news. Personalisation of messages is a tool whose effectiveness is widely recognised (Bentele and Fähnrich, 2010).

Concerns about personalisation have been mainly raised by political scientists who fear this development could de-institutionalise democracy and instead establish a direct relationship between leaders and their publics and thus marginalise parliament and government (Sarcinelli, 2005). While political scientists are concerned with the risks of personalisation, research in public relations appears to show stronger interest in opportunities and challenges



that come with personalisation. Communication managers and writers on the subject have focused on strategies and tactics which can be deployed in support of individuals that have assumed a personalised and visible leadership role (Nessmann, 2009). It has been noted that the strong emphasis news coverage in politics is placing on leading actors may be explained by television's ascendancy as leading channel of communication, which relies on images, movement and emotions all of which can be found in individuals rather than in organisational structures (Marcinkowski, 1998; Eisenegger and Konieczny-Woessner, 2009).

It has been argued that personalisation is playing a critical role in simplifying political messages and procedures in an expectation to render politics more accessible and comprehensible for the electorate. Edelman (1964) sets out to analyse the connection between the complexities of the modern world and an avalanche of confusing and at times contradictory information mass media provides. He goes on to argue that their incapacity to make sense of this situation encourages people to look for personalised leadership that promises to interpret and control the plethora of views, facts and phenomena we are confronted by every day. Brettschneider (2002) agrees, arguing that the public is unwilling to spend too much time processing political news and therefore seeks to identify politicians' reputation as a shortcut to understanding their policies. This is arguably a way to simplify and emotionalise issues and thus helps citizens to orient themselves in an otherwise confusing political setting. Bromley (1993) elaborates on this point further suggesting that politicians should build up a public persona which personifies their values. Rather than finding themselves pressed to take sides in arguably complex political debates, voters may instead choose to rely on the views advanced by politicians they trust and support (Brettschneider, 2002).

## **2.5. Reputational objectives: The ideal politician**

### **2.5.1 Introduction**

Political marketing literature has sought to discuss ideal traits in a politician and pointed out how the management of perceptions may contribute to generating a public persona that matches this range of personal features and public preferences (Wray, 1999).

Some characteristics are apparently universally acclaimed – such as honesty, competence and loyalty. These arguably may be part of a public persona that promises something akin to universal popularity. However, a different set of values, preferences and behaviour may appeal to a specific audience only (Leary, 1995). It is the focus of this review to consider what type of person electorates prefer and which values a political contender may want to demonstrate. The notion of ideal traits in a politician arguably constitutes the objectives for any reputation management campaign. We would therefore need to understand how and to what degree political communicators are familiar with which desirable personality traits may be sought in a politician. The absence of this awareness may suggest that long term intentions to manage and alter reputation have not been discussed or agreed upon. The findings of this review therefore should serve as a framework that helps to focus subsequent interviews, recognise relevant data and understand findings.

### **2.5.2. Defining the attributes**

Specific attributes assist politicians to appear as the right people for the jobs they are called upon to perform. They may help make them seem understanding and sympathetic to the people and their concerns. Darren Lilleker contends that a politician uses political communication to show that he really is a “rounded, human being, who shares all the emotions with his audience” (Lilleker, 2006, p.79). Bucy (2000) argues that our judgement of political leaders is linked to their ability to show emotions publicly. The argument goes that emotions in politicians help us judge if they are authentic and if we decide to trust them or not. Lilleker agrees (2006) and advises the need to emphasise the humanity in a politician. Only if the public has access to their emotions can they identify with them (Lilleker, 2006). Erikson (1969)

draws a similar conclusion in his analysis of inspirational leaders throughout history. He believes that outstanding politicians appear to share essential conflicts, identities and needs with their public who expect their fears, hopes, experiences and convictions to be echoed in their political representatives (Erikson, 1964). Bucy (2000) agrees and reminds us that the public tends to have a better opinion of leaders that behave in their private lives in the same or similar way most citizens would act, as that allows voters to extrapolate if that politician would share the public's view when it comes to taking decisive decisions for the country.

Gardner (1995) takes Bucy's argument further and argues that a politician's apparent ordinariness is most effective if combined with extraordinary charisma and spirituality. Some followers are attracted to physical strength and power whilst others like to see originality of ideas in their successful leaders. Politicians may strive to satisfy both groups. Revered leaders such as the American Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln visibly possessed a combination of attributes such as flexibility, superior tactics and knowledge which in the view of Winter (2004) helped earn them great esteem and recognition by the public.<sup>15</sup>

More systematically, Schweiger and Adami (1999) aggregate a range of cases in order to arrive at a definition of attributes voters may look for in a politician. A political candidate in their view needs to display a distinct style, charisma and credibility. Furthermore they recommend candidates to draw up policies and messages that not only match these attributes but also appear to be relevant to the audience, credible and authentic. Other researchers too recognise authenticity's pivotal role in the management of reputation (Eagly et al., 1991; Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984). More specifically, Schweiger and Adami (1999) place most emphasis on trust as a *conditio-sine-qua-non* in reputation management. To them the success of perception management is based on relationships grounded in trust. They therefore conclude that only

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<sup>15</sup> See also Vidal (1984) who gives evidence about the relationship between personal traits and his recognition as a great leader in the case of Roosevelt. Haley (1969) portrays the particularly informing example of Jesus Christ whose reputation as unique religious leader directly derived from his personality.

candidates the public trusts to deliver on their promises stand a chance to maintain a competitive reputation (Schweiger and Adami, 1999).

How trust and trustworthiness are defined and conceptualised in a political context is addressed by Levi and Stoker (2000). At a more practical level Gomibuchi understands trust as a strategic tool deployed by political leaders to fend off opposition and rally supporters in times of crisis (Gomibuchi, 2004). Williams et al. (1991) too speak of trust as a key feature in a politician. However, they argue that quite apart from trust, voters expect politicians to be dependable, friendly, loyal, reliable, responsible, self-confident, understanding and honest. These were considered the decisive criteria audiences were looking for in candidates (Williams et al., 1991).

Millon (1986) tested what personality traits the public felt suitable for a politician to display. His findings were corroborated in 2002 by Immelman and in 2004 by Immelman and Beatty. They drew up a list of personality patterns that in the past had been used in experiments of clinical psychology. It was found that the public tended to have more sympathy for extroverted individuals who displayed outgoing personality traits.

In political psychology, personality traits have since been categorised as either “Teflon personality” or “Velcro personality”. While the former refers to the outgoing, extrovert who seems to be impervious to criticism the latter is defined as an individual who is easily associated with criticism and negative news (Newman, 1999a).

Newman and Davies (2006, p.22) went beyond this catalogue of desirable traits and present criteria that had been developed in the 70s and 80s during focus group sessions. These are intended as a list of attributes that are most decisive in positive and negative popular judgements of politicians.

- These are: *A capable leader*
- *good in a crisis*
- *understands world problems*
- *tends to talk down to people*

- *rather narrow minded*
- *too inflexible*
- *has sound judgement*
- *more honest than most politicians*
- *down to earth*
- *understands the problems facing Britain*
- *patriotic*
- *has got a lot of personality*
- *rather inexperienced*
- *out of touch with ordinary people.*

Newman and Davies (2006, p.22)<sup>16</sup>

Rather than looking at politicians in general, the social psychologist Leary focuses on what he terms political 'leaders'. Leary suggests there are "five particular impressions" central to any leaders' image. (Leary, 1995, p.81). They are as follows:

1. A leader is typically judged by terms of presumed effectiveness (Leary, 1995). Leaders that are regarded knowledgeable may be seen as experts who are trusted and who thus sway more influence (French and Raven, 2001).
2. French and Raven (2001) claim that politicians want to be liked while still being viewed as competent. Leary (1995) warns that it may be difficult to blend likeability and the image of competence in a politician. Though it has been argued that this conflict can be overcome if politicians were self-deprecating on issues and attributes that are not associated with their leadership qualification (Jones et al., 1963).
3. The need to abide by moral and exemplary standards even extends to attributes that bear little relevance to a politician's core professional activities. For that reason US presidents are expected to have an impeccable family life (Klapp, 1964).

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<sup>16</sup> IpsosMORI has used these criteria in their analysis of perceptions of British politicians since the 1980s, even though on occasions some variables were added and others dropped.

4. Leaders want to be seen as powerful, calm, decisive and in control, in particular if their constituency or the country at large are under attack in times of crisis and war.
5. Leary (1995) suggests that in specific moments politicians even prefer to be seen as intimidating.

It appears these somewhat general considerations do not sufficiently take into account that popular preferences are transitory and may change over time. Waterman et al. (1999) reiterate that images therefore tend to reflect the political concerns of the time. In the United States throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century voters preferred the *common man* to represent them in the White House. As expectations towards a professional government grew the image of master politician was created. During the 1970s in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal the image of the professional insider had become discredited and stood for corruption and deceit. Finally, the notion of the outsider emerged which suggested a candidate should not have been tainted by too close familiarity with the machine of professional politics (Waterman et al., 1999; Busby, 2009).

Likewise, themes in election campaigns alter cyclically (Barber, 1980). At times the discourse focuses on conflicts, on other occasions conciliation takes centre stage or conscience is asked for. In line with the respective themes on the agenda a different kind of personality is required in the candidate (Barber, 1980). This led political psychologists to assume that the electorate's appreciation of a candidate's qualities evolves in accordance with the situational context (Winter, 2004). What politicians seem to have in common both in the UK and beyond is a tendency to create a narrative to frame themselves respectively as being modest and of limited material means who through hard work and against the odds ploughed their way up the political hierarchy (Busby, 2009).

## **2.6. Reputational objectives: Achieving charismatic leadership**

### **2.6.1. Charisma and the public persona**

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century both sociologists and psychologists have been exploring the origins of reputation. Their research focused on exceptional political leaders and the particular clout they exerted over their followers which they referred to as charisma. In this section I will be briefly presenting the main currents in this debate about charisma which is directly linked to questions of leadership personality and in turn informs ideal images of a politician. The German sociologist Max Weber (1947, p.258) considers charisma “as a certain quality of an individual’s personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with super natural, super human, or exceptional powers or qualities” (Weber, 1978, p.241).

The attention the charismatic element in a politician’s personality seems to attract, is perhaps best accounted for by a notion of celebrity culture which in the view of Franck (1998) is part of a logic that dictates modern news selection and media coverage. Alternatively, it has been speculated that public sympathy for charismatic politicians may be enhanced by situations of national crisis. In particular problems that are complex and difficult to decipher for the individual give rise to calls for leaders gifted with charismatic personalities who are widely trusted to overcome challenges (Weber, 1978; Abels, 2004). Spinrad (1991) concurs and reminds us that charisma can best be defined as the public’s perception of the person who is deemed best equipped to do what needs to be done – politically, morally or militarily. In his view charisma is accompanied by particular social conditions that generate a demand and support for emergent leadership. Elaborating on this analysis, but taking a psychological perspective, is Aberbach (1996) who tries to explain the unique quality of charisma by describing it as the union between the audience’s emotional instability and the leader’s particularly developed talents and assets. Ultimately, it has been suggested that the neoliberal notions which dominate society are presenting strong, charismatic leadership as a role model that both political and business leaders aspire to (Imhof, 2010).

Specific sanctity, heroism or the exemplary character of an individual person are in the view of Weber the pillars charisma rests on (Weber, 1968). This emotional bond has been referred to as the “core of charisma” (Froman, 1963). According to Weber the leader’s outstanding talents and the audience’s extraordinary devotion constitute the unique features of a charismatic individual (Weber, 1968). This view is shared by Schweitzer (1984) who contends the charismatic concept is founded in the almost worship-like devotion the public feels for a leader. However, the German sociologist Weber who is the point of reference for any writer on charisma failed to define what charismatic qualities are. It therefore remains hard to anticipate whether and when the public detects charismatic features in a leader (Ake, 1966).

Adding to Weber’s writing and reflecting on the concept in a managerial context, Bromley (1993) claims that charisma and individuality are powerful factors in the formation of reputation. Charisma in Bromley’s view depends on a degree of remoteness from the audience. Familiarity, according to Bromley, breeds contempt in the sense that intimate knowledge of another person puts the charismatic aspect of the person into a wider context and diminishes its effect.

An individual who strives to possess charismatic command in Leary’s view needs to appear as highly competent and never at risk of losing the moral high ground. To be genuinely liked by their followers, Leary maintains, it would help when charismatic leaders sounded as if on a moral crusade (Leary, 1995). In Weber’s text we encounter this missionary zeal in reflections about a religious or quasi-religious calling which Weber believes to be one of the two bases an individual’s charisma rests on (Weber, 1978). Not surprisingly, therefore, charismatic leaders have at times been described as superhuman and as saviours that are associated with a godlike being (Willner, 1984). Bendix (1998) even observed in a charismatic leader’s audience awe, reverence, blind faith and emotions usually associated with religious worship. Since politicians are not normally divine it would then be open to debate if politicians can actually be endowed with charisma (Friedrich, 1961).



Natural forces and talent are the second basis charisma in Weber's view is rooted in (Weber 1978). Here charisma is personified by a magician type of individual who puts a spell on their public through extraordinary sentiments. Thus charisma becomes emotionally charged and adopts a significant role in the political arena (Schweitzer, 1984). In this context Weber talks about a political leader in terms of an ethical prophet, who breaks the power of the demons and cures the victims of hate, anxiety and need (Schweitzer, 1984). Such leaders would be confident to be executing a divine mission and their conviction helps them to perform exceptional deeds (Schweitzer 1984).

We shall now turn to the relationship between charismatic leaders and followers. It has been said before that the particular devotion of followers helps propel the politician into the status of charismatic leadership. Political leaders at times appear to be generating prophet-like support. No less do leaders in war, in the church or parliament. That suggests the leader is the tool to carry out a higher calling. Thus it is not formal position or bureaucratic power that enthuses the people, but a strong belief in him (or her) as the saviour and the hero that has come to rescue them or at least to considerably better their lives (Gerth and Mills, 1958).

Leary (1995) adds that regardless of competing definitions, charisma certainly is closely related to the leader's image in the followers' perception. It has therefore been suggested that charismatic leadership involves the use of means of communication and the skilful management of impression to help followers to see, recognise and pursue their leader's vision (Conger and Kanungo, 1987). However, the concept of charismatic leadership appears to confront reputation management with serious challenges which are caused by the media's tendency to be instrumental in both the creation of celebrities and their subsequent destruction once the comprehensive belief in their mythical abilities is being questioned (Weber, 1978; Eisenegger, 2010). In as far as charisma requires deference and devotion it is not easily compatible with the irreverence the British media likes to make a point of.

### 2.6.2. External circumstances: Events and charismatic leadership

In this discussion on charisma a thought should be directed at the function of *events* and *crisis* in generating charisma. Ratnam stresses that extraordinary situations call on an individual to show unusual talents (Ratnam, 1964). In support of this thesis Weber draws on the example of the warlord who turns into a perpetual charismatic leader in a permanent military conflict. (Weber, 1978).

Looking back at the past two centuries of history we come across a range of significant historical crises most of which are connected to the name of a charismatic leader. Ann Ruth Wilner (1984) defines the charismatic leader in these historical phases as someone who is stretching reality beyond the limits of what hitherto had been thought politically possible.

Robespierre for instance was said to be “remembered at best as an ornament of the Arras bar until the French Revolution propelled him to notoriety” (Roberts, 1978, p.93) and Simon Schama confirms that prior to the revolution his contemporaries thought of Robespierre as a marginal civil servant of the ancient regime (Schama, 1989). Not very different was the case of George Washington who lived the quiet life of a farmer in Virginia before the War of Independence placed him at the helm of the fledgling continental army. Prior to this he had not shown any outstanding talents or professed a burning wish to accomplish something grand in his life. The transformation from provincial farmer to national hero is beyond rational explanation other than the event that constituted a career changing opportunity (Freeman, 1957).

Quite a number of individuals who in later life were cut out for charismatic greatness had in early life been anything but awe-inspiring figures. Garibaldi was said to have been short, bow-legged and humourless before events helped to spill him to the helm of Italy’s unification army (Hibbert, 1965). Likewise Abraham Lincoln, who was known for his thin neck, the high-pitched voice and the ill-fitting clothes, was not the politician that would have left a lasting let alone positive mark on his contemporaries (Brogan, 1935). A range

of other examples could be added, not least Gandhi, who in the words of his biographer Louis Fischer was mediocre, unimpressive, handicapped and floundering (Fischer, 1982). Probably the most unexpected and dramatic rise from nonentity to charismatic power was Adolf Hitler's. His youth and young adulthood did not reveal to his friends and neighbours that this man would one day bring continental Europe to its knees. All that was known about him at the time seemed to point to a future of insignificance and mediocrity (Kershaw, 1991).

Only months before his entry on the Russian revolutionary stage, Lenin could have been taken for the local grocer or so his biographer Ronald W. Clark (1988) wrote. He must have been below average height and "literally in no way distinguishable from ordinary citizens" (Clark, 1988, p.110). It is widely known that Churchill in the 1930s was considered unelectable, a liability to the Conservative Party and not only his political adversaries were inclined to diagnose his passionate rhetorical diatribes as early signs of some psychological degradation.

The above examples lead to the conclusion that the crisis – or in more prosaic terms, the "event" – is the launching pad for charismatic political figures. It were the crises in Germany and Italy that allowed Bismarck and Garibaldi respectively to emerge. Russia's breakdown in the First World War afforded Lenin with an opportunity he eagerly seized and the Nazi threat in 1940 made British politicians believe that extraordinary times needed an extraordinary politician to face up to them. Upon that admission Churchill became Prime Minister and by all standards a charismatic leader.

There seems to be evidence that charismatic dimensions become evident under certain circumstances. Or put in different terms, there need to be events happening that afford individuals with a challenge grand enough to display their talents. If the correct opportunities do not arise, a potentially talented and forceful leader may be seen as a less than effective politician whose actions were of limited or no consequences.

Yet a charismatic public persona does not appear to hinge exclusively on external factors. Researchers on charisma acknowledge that a particular set of skills and behaviour pertinent to personal communications do help a politician establish charismatic status (Bass 1988; Bryman 1993; Shamir et al. 1993). They recognise a number of skills and behavioural patterns that are believed to contribute to the perception of charisma: Rhetoric and speech making (Bryman 1993); symbols and symbolic communication (Shamir et al. 1993); energy (House and Howell, 1992) creativity (Shils 1965) and finally cognition and intelligence (Bass, 1988).

If we turn to political communication research we find a range of other features that may support a politician's charismatic public persona. Literature in this field identified the need for politicians to comprehend and follow operational conditions set by the media (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991), a profound comprehension of what constitutes a strong story line (Cook 1996), effective presentational and verbal skills (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999), a sense of and some sympathy for dramatisation (Gitlin, 1980; Meyrowitz, 1985), skills to manage media opportunities and events (Bennett and George, 2005) and finally the aptitude and willingness to network intensely with the media community who are the gatekeepers for traditional news channels (Bennett and George, 2005). Thus sociologists and political psychologists under the umbrella of political communications have entered a fruitful discourse to explore and define the origins and dimensions of charisma. In conclusion, charisma can be understood as short shrift for a set of behavioural rules, circumstances and skills that allow politicians to mould a public persona which may help them gain clout over the electorate. We may infer that behaviour, communications and relationship management are implicitly recognised as building blocks for charismatic leaders. The concept of charisma in turn offers a description of public perceptions, preferences and notions of the ideal politician which on aggregate are critical to the strategic management of a public persona.

However, writers on charisma apparently fall short of providing any systematic or comprehensive explanation as to how charismatic qualities may be aided

or attained through communication management. Neither the strategic approach nor the technicalities or the resources needed to navigate a public persona are dealt with by writers on charisma. While they conceptualise an ideal they do not pose nor answer the questions as to how politicians achieve and protect this intended charismatic public persona.

## **2.7. Defining the terminology: Identity, image and reputation**

### **2.7.1. Introduction**

I have outlined previously that the assumption about the relevance of reputation serves us as justification for this study. On the following pages, I will be discussing the various concepts that describe identity, image and reputation. This should allow us to understand the terms and their relevance for individuals who perform in the sphere of politics. Arguably, a discussion and clarification of these themes is a critical prerequisite for any attempt to explore the communication and management of reputation in politics. It is to be demonstrated that the terminology we will be dealing with is deeply rooted in research that has been primarily conducted in business related disciplines. It should become clear that terms and concepts that define and examine identity, image and reputation have emerged in a range of disciplines thereby complicating shared understanding and debate.

In the literature misunderstandings have been surfacing with regard to the appropriate meaning of terms such as corporate reputation, identity and image. Depending on the author's perspective and academic discipline, the literature treats these concepts as either completely separate, or as overlapping and even at times as identical (Gotsi and Wilson, 2001). Regardless of this imprecision and even contradicting applications in places, we will recognise that by and large reputation is credited with a more

comprehensive meaning than image. I will be siding with authors who argue that image is dealing with current perceptions, while reputation encapsulates the aggregation of past and current perceptions and relates them to future expectations (van Riel and Fombrun, 2007). I hope to conclude therefore that reputation as used in current business literature appears to be the concept that needs to be incorporated into political practice and terminology, as it helps shed light on the relationship between politicians and their respective publics and is instrumental in generating trust and support.

The following pages draw upon literature from political science, marketing, psychology and sociology which all add perspectives to the debate and enrich the discussion whilst at the same time appear to complicate the conceptualisation of core issues. Bromley (2001) points out that the meaning of terms and phrases describing identity, personality, image and reputation tends to be equivocal when disciplinary boundaries are crossed. Shenkar and Yuchtman-Yaar (1997) remind us that the relative standing of an organisation or an individual is described in various disciplines by different terms: Whilst sociologists are more familiar with prestige, economists possibly prefer to talk of reputation, for marketing scholars it is image and for their colleagues in accountancy and law the appropriate term may be good will (see chart 2.7.1. /1).

*Chart 2.7.1. /1 Organisational Standing in Various Disciplines (Shenkar et al., 1997)*

<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Terms used</i>	<i>Focal unit</i>
<i>Sociology</i>	<i>Prestige</i>	<i>Occupation, Industry, Organisation</i>
<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Image</i>	<i>Organization</i>
<i>Law &amp; Accounting</i>	<i>Goodwill</i>	<i>Organisation, Individual</i>
<i>Economics</i>	<i>Goodwill &amp; Reputation</i>	<i>Organisation, Individual</i>
<i>Business</i>	<i>Reputation (Image)</i>	<i>Organisation</i>

Likewise the questions raised vary according to discipline. Writers in organisational behaviour, public relations, communications, sociology, advertising, organisational strategy and marketing may each apply a different

focus. Each discipline looks at specific aspects of the phenomenon. Researchers in communication studies for instance investigate the meaning hidden in messages and examine how information is encoded by an organisation and decoded by recipients, whilst marketing scholars tend to strive for an understanding of how consumers react to information about products, services and organisations (Brown et al 2006).

Over time each discipline has also built up its own distinct terminology to deal with issues related to the management of organisational communication. It has been rightly noted therefore that any interdisciplinary discussion on the subject is likely to be confusing if not outright incomprehensible (Gioia et al., 2000; Whetten and Mackey, 2002; Pratt 2003).

Regardless to any choice of terms: Management of corporate and individual perceptions remains intangible and elusive and does not allow for a straight forward exploration and definition either conceptually or empirically. This difficulty to access the meaning of reputation, prestige or image is possibly the reason why terminology is little used in cross disciplinary studies.

### **2.7.2. Identity and personality**

In this section I try to identify existing concepts of identity and demonstrate how these may be differentiated from and related to a model of reputation that is applicable in politics and reflective of situations faced by political candidates and incumbents.

It will be argued that for the understanding of reputation and image in the course of this study it is critical to keep in mind that an individual's or an organisation's distinguishing attributes which we refer to as identity are in turn based on an entity's personality. Identity is seen as a construct that is meant to feed into the audience's mental image and serves as distinction between two or more entities (Ryckman, 1982; Bromley, 2001). Arguably less instrumental in the shaping of images is the concept of personalities which are

applied both to individuals and organisations and grounded in the aggregation of personal traits, values and beliefs (Shee, 1989; Martineau, 2003).

Whetten (2002) emphasises identity's critical role for an organisation's strategic success by reminding us of its central, enduring and distinctive nature. The main feature of Whetton's definition finds itself reflected in van Rekom's (1997) much earlier concept of corporate identity that encapsulates the main points mentioned so far. In his view identity consists of

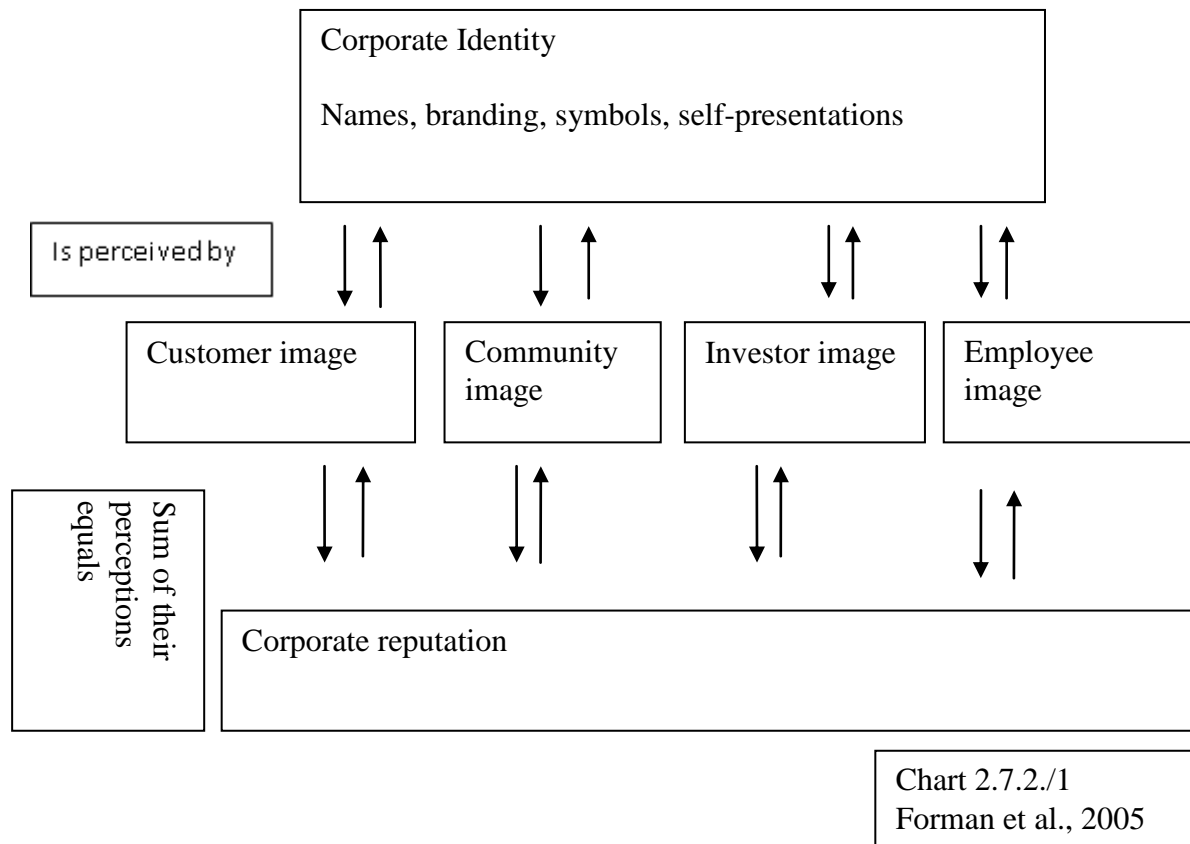
1. attributes regarded to be the core of an organisation
2. features that distinguish an organisation from another
3. continuity of these attributes.

While both Whetten and van Rekom define the normative role and the strategic relevance of identity in an organisational context, the scope and features of identity management continue to be contested. By and large the discourse is divided between authors who conceptualise identity either as visual (tactical) or alternatively a strategic communication function.

Apparently, corporate identity may be perceived in two different but interrelated ways. While practitioners tend to concentrate on the tactical nature of identity the academic discourse is focused on identity as a strategic management activity (Balmer, 1995; 1998; Balmer and Soenen, 1997c; Cheng et al., 2008). Alessandri (2001) whose reputation-image-identity model we will be dealing with later on in this study agrees that academics have picked up more intangible issues that are largely neglected by practitioners. It appears this difference in approach may have been critical in understanding why consensus between academics and practitioners about the definition of corporate identity has been lacking and at best amounts to a recognition among writers of the need to converge on a common denominator (Hancock, 1992; van Rekom, 1997).



Forman and Argenti's (2005) model is a case in point to demonstrate practitioner's concern with visual or tactical features in organisational identity (see chart 2.7.2./1).



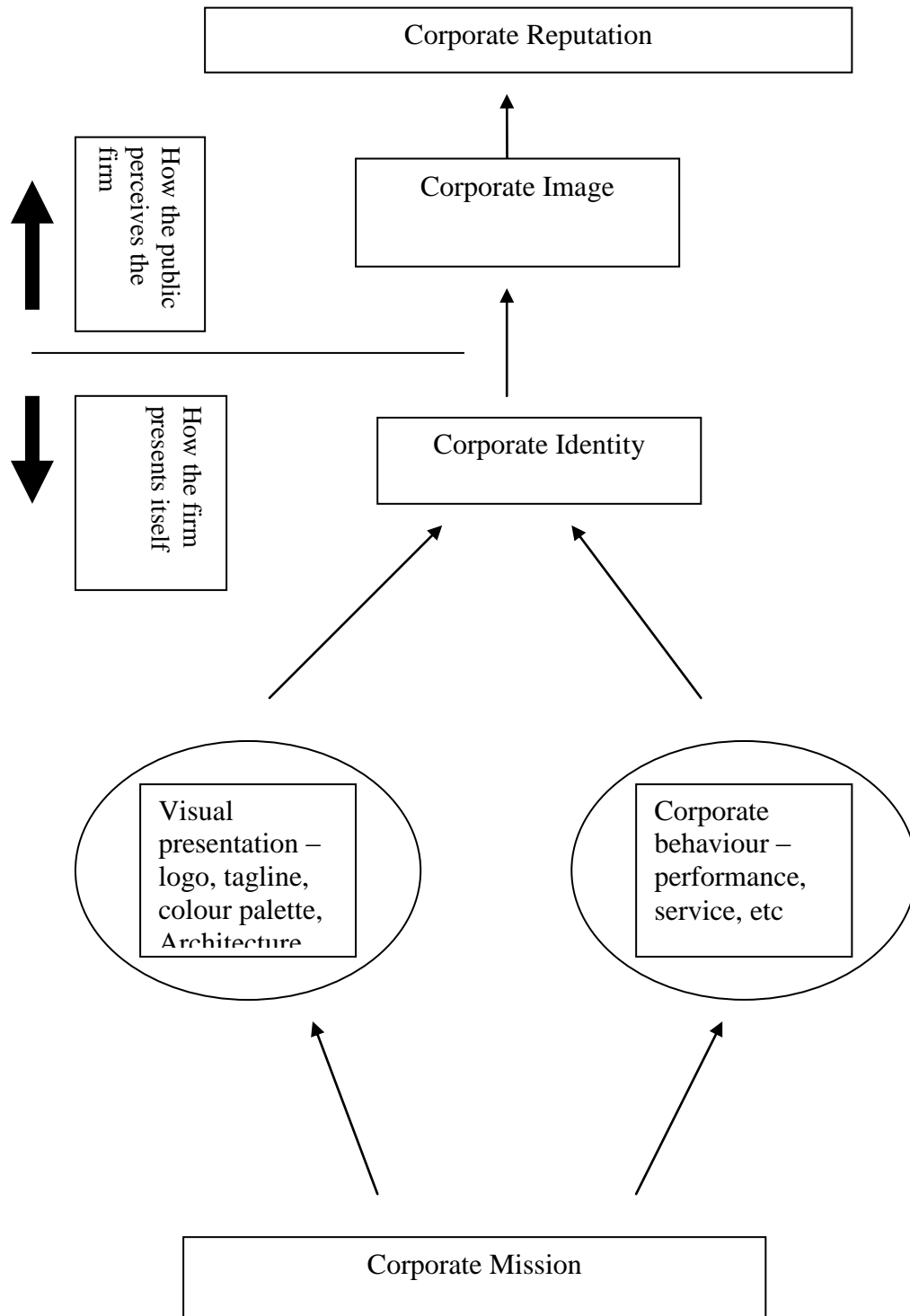
The weakness in Forman and Argenti's model is its limitation of identity to visual and presentational features. He fails to recognise it as a function of organisational behaviour. In other words, Forman's model can only be one element in an integrated and fully applicable model of identity and reputation management.<sup>17</sup> A definition of corporate identity arguably needs to combine high level strategic and operational aspects. I expect both approaches to aid understanding when we move on to explore how in politics identity management is conducted.

<sup>17</sup> Another flaw in Forman's model becomes evident in the following two sections. While he reasonably acknowledges the range of images held by individual stakeholders, his claim that reputation is universal does not seem plausible. If we understand reputation to result from a sequence of images that takes shape in the mind of individuals, surely it cannot be universal but will differ - just like images - from recipient to recipient.

These notions of integration are in conflict with the distinction made within the discipline between the visual school and a strategic school that each assumes a different approach to the conceptualisation of identity in a corporate context. The former is concerned primarily with operational aspects whilst the latter is focusing on the organisation's strategic objectives (Hatch and Schultz, 2000). An admittedly extremist position for instance is advocated by Schmitt et al (1995) who highlight the aesthetic perspective of an organisation's personality and advances the term corporate aesthetics management as a new framework to study visual elements. In stark contrast, Balmer (1998) develops operational aspects of identity further by adapting the four Ps – proprieties, products, presentations and publications. He intends to encourage management to apply these technical tools in the context of strategic corporate identity management (Balmer, 1998).

Alessandri (2001) suggests a more reconciliatory idea of identity thereby accommodating notions raised by writers of either the visual or the strategic school. He advocates a practical definition by arguing that corporate identity comprises all visual aspects of an organisation as well as its behaviour towards stakeholders (see chart 2.7.2./2). Alessandri (2001) contends that corporate identity is the purposeful presentation of an entity with the intention to create positive images in the people's minds and eventually over time build up a specific reputation. This model reflects a comprehensive understanding of managing impressions as it creates a framework that reflects the critical aspects related to identity and furthermore it accommodates the distinct roles of corporate reputation and corporate image. Alessandri (2001) also allocates a position for the corporate mission which he likens to the organisation's philosophy or vision (Abratt, 1989; Leuthesser and Kohli, 1997). This model assumes that every organisation either explicitly or tacitly has a vision about how they intend to conduct business, why and what is to be achieved. Alessandri's model is introduced at this stage of the literature review as it advances convincing suggestions for the definition and allocation of key concepts of impression management. Particularly useful is his distinction between presentational aspects the company has control over and those that emerge beyond an organisation's will (Topalian, 1984; Lambert, 1989; Leitch,

1999; Grime, 2011). The former are the organisation's mission and its identity, while the latter are understood to be images and reputation which are shaped in audiences' minds and thus lie beyond the source's control. Corporate image as the public's perception of an entity is seen as originating through the interaction with the organisation's identity (Abratt, 1989; Gray and Balmer, 1998; Davies and Chun, 2002), while reputation is believed to be shaped over time through recurrent



impressions of both positive and negative images (Gray and Balmer, 1997; Markwick and Fill, 1997). Both concepts are dealt with in the following two sections.

Alessandri (2001) also visualises that interaction between the stakeholders and the organisation's identity must be established through means of communication management in order for the public to form mental images.

### **2.7.3. Image**

For decades authors in business management have demonstrated an acute interest in the key function of image as an asset beyond actual physical performance data. Marketing literature in particular has placed image at the centre of the debate about performance and organisational success. Already in the late 1960s Stagner (1969) reported that 65 percent of managers in the USA attributed to image higher priority in their managerial decisions than to considerations of return on investment. The sociologist Perrow (1961) had observed a similar tendency which caused him to worry that resources may be misdirected away from the genuine mission (such as quality) of an organisation towards extrinsically salient issues such as outward appearance.

Those who choose to take on the subject tend to consider corporate images as shared views of an entity or trait among a public or audience (Balmer, 1995). In the view of Olins corporate image is simply what the public thinks of an organisation's personality (Olins, 1989). Fill (2010) takes up the concepts of identity and personality we discussed in section 2.7.2. He stresses that a public's understanding of an entity's identity traits are instrumental in shaping an image of the organisation. Christensen and Askegaard (2001) support this interpretation by arguing that image is merely how an environment perceives an organisation.

This limited selection of definitions highlights that authors generally see image as being synonymous with the perception of an object (Abratt, 1989; Gregory and Wiechmann, 1999, Topalian, 1984). It is therefore only in the perception of stakeholders that an organisation has an image at all. A commonly used definition which conceptualises image in conjunction with brand describes brand-image as a typical collection of emotions, values and expectations that are related to a brand by means of communications management (Fill et al., 2010).

In short, images are developing in the minds of an individual's or an organisation's constituencies who elsewhere are referred to as stakeholders or publics (Perrow, 1961). Images seem to emerge in people's minds and are thought to inform what we think or how we behave (Bromley, 2001). Our tangible expressions are believed to be guided by images which at times are shared by several people or a larger group. A person's or organisation's image is therefore understood to refer to a group's collective state of mind towards that entity (Balmer, 1998). We are reminded that among different constituencies varying and at times conflicting images of an entity exist at the same time (Dowling, 2002).

The organisation's ability to control images in people's minds therefore is limited (Bernstein, 1984). From these observations it has been concluded (Christensen and Askegaard, 2001) that while organisations may not be able to influence how audiences decode impressions they instead focus on managing their corporate identity. In other words, we may assume that a mental image is informed by a range of tangible variables – not least someone's actual behaviour as well as an organisation's or individual's visual identity (Baker and Balmer, 1997).

While Balmer argues that a corporation's image directly projects the organisation's identity (Balmer 1997a) there may be reasons to have reservations about this claim. Bromley (2001) warns that neither an identity within an organisation nor consequently the images this entices are

completely consistent and clear cut (Bromley, 2001). Bromley's concern seems plausible both in the context of a sophisticated organisation and with regard to an individual whose personality is arguably more complex than any audience's mental image could easily reflect.

What might be needed in an organisation or an individual in order to be able to send the right and coherent set of messages to stakeholders is possibly the awareness of and knowledge about current and pre-existing images nurtured among relevant publics. Therefore, Gioia et al (2000) explicitly point out that an organisation that best monitors its environment will be in an advantageous position to manipulate the images that have developed in the minds of key publics. The organisation may then even be in a position to identify a niche to occupy or a current of opinion among its stakeholders that it needs to adjust to in order to retain legitimacy among its publics (Suchman, 1995).

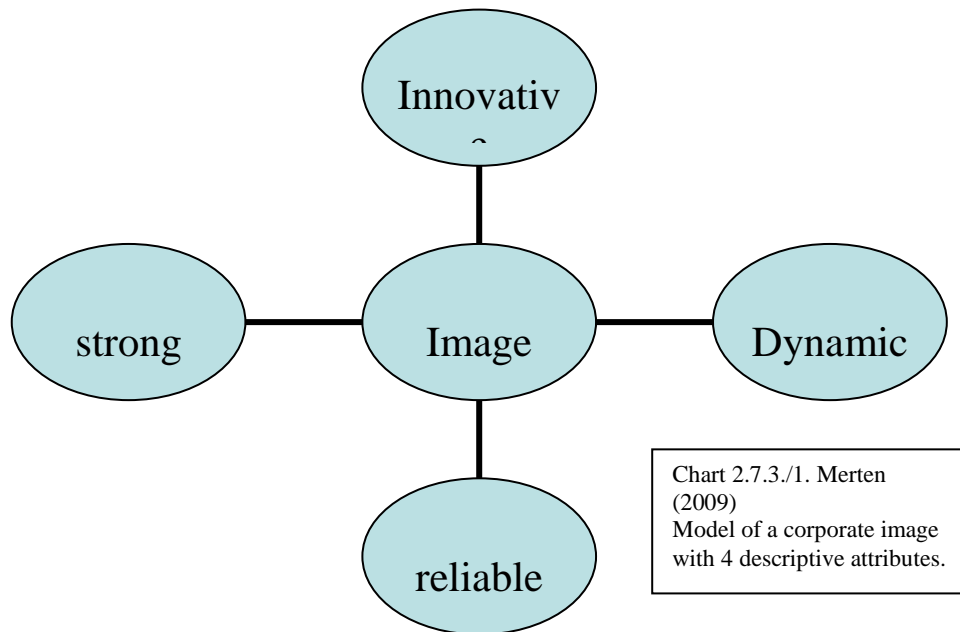
In an effort to prevent people's mental images of the organisation from getting muddled, an attempt may be made to bring the perception of an organisation's behaviour or its actual behaviour back in line with its intended identity or self-image.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, it is vital for an organisation and an individual to monitor the environment and react swiftly if a discrepancy between the self-image – or identity – and the public's mental image of the organisation emerged.

According to Harrison (1995) personality, values and ethics feed into corporate identity and in turn contribute to the corporate image. We could thus say that the collective perception of an object is made up of many judgmental attributes. This definition is taken up by Merten (2009) who visualised it in a model, which in line with Harrison (1995) takes account of personality traits, but fails to accommodate some critical ideas of image that have emerged so far in this review. He visualises the associations and attributes (see chart

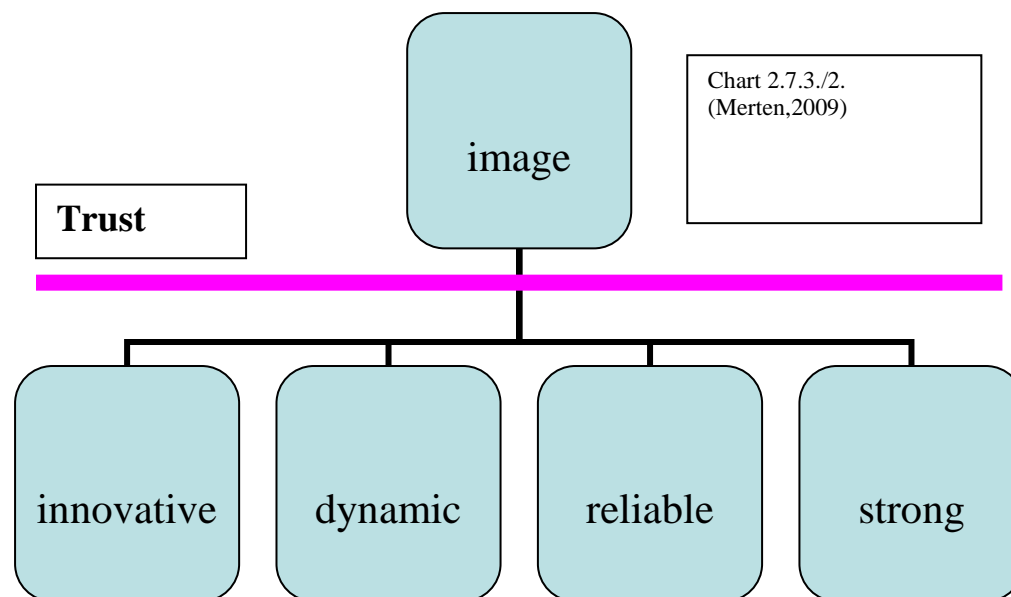
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<sup>18</sup> Dutton and Dukerich (1991) illustrate this in a discussion about the policy pursued by the New York Port Authority with respect to a growing number of homeless on their premises. It is argued that the organisation's identity as high quality and first class was threatened by the expanding scope of a homeless issue. In an attempt to protect their positive corporate image senior management pressed to deal with the presence of homeless people on the Authority's premises. This is a case where behaviour is used to develop the identity and ultimately translate into image.

2.7.3./1). Yet his focal point is at least partially flawed as the model fails to recognise the image as the aggregation of attributes. Instead it visualises the image as something separate from the attributes it is grounded in. It is not clear if this is a weakness of Merten's visualisation or a more fundamental conceptual problem.



Merten goes on to argue that trust between the organisation and its stakeholders needs to be reflected in the image for it to be beneficial to the entity it represents. He therefore further modifies and develops his model in order to account for this additional variable. (See chart 2.7.3./2). The notion of trust as a critical factor in political reputation management is taken up in section 2.6. where concepts of an ideal politician are explored. Merten's model again assumes that specific attributes are external to an image while I would argue in line with the literature reviewed so far that these features are a constituting part of any image.



Merten's model and Bromley's (2001) observations remind us of how closely corporate and personal images are related. In business literature attributes that are usually associated with humans such as *happy*, *faithful*, *clever* or *cruel* are attributed to organisations in order to take account of mental images held by audiences. We may therefore assume that at a technical level, the creation and management of public images for individuals shares some critical strategies and techniques with the handling of corporate images. Namely the endeavour to associate complex or abstract entities with tangible and familiar attributes stakeholders can easily relate to. This conceptual adaptability in corporate image management arguably justifies the examination of marketing and public relations literature in section 2.2. in an attempt to identify how a corporate perspective of communication management theory is applicable to a political context.

#### **2.7.4. Image in a political context**

The versatility of the concept of image and its role in shaping attitudes may explain why it is being used beyond the corporate context. Image has become incorporated into the political discourse by political scientists and marketing experts alike, particularly with regard to political parties and candidates.



The concept of image in the context of political parties and candidates appears to be no fashionable fad of recent origin. The concept dates back to the origins of communications writing. Already in the first decade of the century Graham Wallas (1910) pioneered the concept of party and image.<sup>19</sup> About a decade later in the 1920s Walter Lippmann (1997) argued that pictures were the most effective means to communicate an idea. Lazarsfeld et al. (1948) held a view of political images that went beyond the merely visual as he expounded in his book *The People's Choice*. Milne and Mackenzie (1954) mentioned the concept in their coverage of the 1951 election, while Benney and Geiss (1950) were discussing the class image of a political party in 1950. At about the same time communication practitioners started contributing to the discourse (Abratt, 1989). What did change in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century however, is the idea of image as something that can be altered and artificially created. In this sense image became interpreted as something that was shaped by advertisers and marketers who associate it with politicians and political parties (Denver et al., 2012).

It has been said that in the USA just as in the UK, a tendency of declining party loyalty may constitute a reason that helps understand why the image of politicians assumes a pivotal role in political communication (Pfiffner, 1994).<sup>20</sup> Waterman et al. (1999) argue that the public is more aware of the image than the policies a politician pursues – a claim, however, which does not go undisputed. Wayne (1992) for instance contends that the role of images within the democratic selection process is tangible but limited. Notwithstanding this caveat images appear to provide politicians with what has been termed “an appearance of success” (Waterman et al., 1999, p.11). This would confirm

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<sup>19</sup> Wallas wrote: A party “is primarily a name, which, like other names, calls up when it is heard or seen an ‘image’ ...It is the business of the party managers to secure that these automatic associations shall be as clear as possible, shall be shared by as large a number as possible, and shall call up as many and as strong emotions as possible.” (1910, p.84). Wallas saw the danger of this image being manipulated in political campaigns. On page 5 he notes “if the rich people in any modern state thought it worth their while...to subscribe a third of their income to a political fund, no Corrupt Practices Act yet invented would prevent them from spending it. If they did so, there is so much skill to be bought, and the art of using skill for the production of emotion and opinion has so advanced, that the whole condition of political contest would be changed for the future.” This, I would like to point out, was written in 1910!

<sup>20</sup> Paul Whiteley et al. (2009) give an account of what in their view has been a declining attachment of electors to political parties which arguably has been going on for nearly five decades in the UK.

Wilson's argument who in the late 1980s argued that anyone who appears to be successful has got an increased opportunity to transform this appearance into real success. The conclusion he draws is that appearance is no less crucial in politics than reality (Wilson, 1989). This phenomenon nicely ties in with Boulding's (1956) much earlier observation that image is a way to structure knowledge. In other words current events or political decisions may be easier to comprehend if they are compared to existing images. One might want to expand this notion and suggest that the same argument lends itself to explaining a downward spiral in public appreciation. Once the image is charged with negative attributes this might encourage the public to interpret new information about a politician in line with the existing negative expectations. An experience both John Major and Gordon Brown as well as a range of other leaders towards the end of their careers may be somewhat familiar with.

In recent years image of candidates is a theme that has attracted a considerable share of attention in political marketing research (De Landsheer, 2008). Patterson (1980, p.133) is one of the earlier writers who exported the concept from its initial corporate context and translated it into a political setting when he defined image as "the subjective impressions that voters have" of a politician. Writing 20 years later Newman's view still echoes Patterson's take on the construct: Images, he argues, are visual impressions that are transmitted through the politician's physical appearance, media presence and experiences that relate to political leadership (Newman, 1999b).

Nimmo offers a conceptual variation by defining the politician's image as a go-between that helps interpret outgoing electronic or print messages from media departments and incoming feedback from the respective audiences. In his view image is being created in a process of transactions between messages. While messages mould an image, the existing image in turn helps mould and interpret messages (Nimmo 1995). While I would not dismiss this perspective a priori, it does conflict with current interpretations of reputation as I will be outlining in the following section. The same caution is warranted when dealing with Savage who too believes the images of politicians may be the result of

experiences that accumulate in the course of years. He claims for instance that the affective orientation towards a leader is preceding cognition. In line with views held by writers on communication the political scientist Savage (1995) contends that in early years people build up a fundamental aversion against or faith into political protagonists. This latter observation focuses on long term implications and is more commonly associated with the concept of reputation as I will be exploring in the following section.

Evidently, there are intricate variations in the use and interpretation of the origins and concept of personalised images in politics. However, for the purpose of this study we may content ourselves with a more general outline: First of all an understanding of image as being a cluster of perceptions that define voters' views of a politician. Secondly, that the image of individual politicians takes a prominent position in media coverage (Denver, 2012).

The theoretical gap that opens up between the communications literature which seeks to define image in politics on the one hand and the more managerial concerns about creating and managing images on the other is perhaps bridged by a model drawn up by Denton in the context of US American presidential elections, which may well prove useful in other political systems (Denton and Woodward, 2000). The model consists of three variations, the first of which is termed the candidate-driven model which suggests candidates impose their respective images on voters. The second variation consists of a voter driven image, which - as the term indicates - arises in the electorate's perception and in turn is associated with candidates. Finally the candidate-voter interactive variation which has it that the public develops an image of the politician which is informed by the messages he or she concurrently transmits (Denton and Woodward, 2000). This latter approach echoes notions of reciprocal message transmission which is the communicative approach I identify in section 2.8.2. as the model favoured by political public relations managers.

### 2.7.5. Reputation

Now that I have explored the meaning and usage of *image* I will turn to a closely related concept which constitutes the bedrock of strategic communication practice: *Reputation*. Throughout this study I chose to apply the concept of reputation rather than branding. Whilst the latter is rooted in marketing literature, reputation is widely recognised as defining and guiding the practice of public relations, which – as I argued in sections 2.2.2. and 2.2.3. - appears to be the suitable prism for an exploration of communication management activities in politics. More specifically, whilst branding is said to be aiming at generating positive buying decisions among customers, reputation reflects the likelihood of garnering goodwill and receiving support among stakeholders (Fombrun and van Riehl, 2004; Watson and Kitchen, 2008). Evidently, the latter appears to chime in with a politician’s concerns about personal public perception, and therefore merits further conceptual probing in this literature review.

My personal experience with reputation in politics is best represented by Shenkar (1997) who describes reputation as an “uncertainty resolving mechanism”.<sup>21</sup> He suggests that a lack of information about products and services leads people to look for other cues such as reputation. His view is shared by Dowling (2008) who in his survey of Australian corporations reminds us of reputation’s function to reassure internal and external stakeholders. With regard to its applicability in politics it is worth noting the decisive impact of reputation on customers in the service industry, where it is understood to be difficult to make judgements on quality as the purchase decision often predates the service (Fombrun and Rindova, 1996; Roper and Fill, 2012). The assessment of quality therefore is exceedingly complex in a service context as there is no tangible product which would lend itself to verification before usage. Therefore, reputations are often used both to attract

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<sup>21</sup> Shenkar (1997) uses the term “standing”, which in his view is interchangeable with reputation, image, goodwill and prestige – all of which are terms that according to Shenkar are used by different academic disciplines to describe a comparable concept. Shenkar goes on to propose “standing” as a substitute cross-disciplinary term. However, in the course of this study I subscribe to Westcott Alessandri (2001) who differentiates between image and reputation. This distinction seems to me a useful descriptor of current and time-bound perceptions.

and to retain customers (Omar 2005). It would appear that this perspective links communications management in the service sector to the specific challenges one encounters in politics. Both settings deal with content, quality and promised performance which customers usually find similarly difficult to measure in advance.

What prevents us from applying the concept of *reputation* straightforwardly in politics is twofold. First of all, the notion is deeply rooted in business literature and therefore needs careful consideration before it can be safely adopted by another discipline. Secondly, as I have outlined before, the terms identity, image and reputation are not being used consistently. There certainly appears to be an overlap if not outright contradiction between the two as definitions and applications vary. Barnett et al. (2006) have been dealing with this lack of an appropriate definition. Their research confirmed a suspicion that the range of literature on reputation originating in various distinct academic disciplines are at the root of this confusion of perspectives and definitions.

When looking into the marketing literature alone we find that not even within this discipline there is an accepted distinction between corporate reputation and corporate image nor any consensus on how the two are related to or different from each other (Clardy, 2012). Admittedly, recent research does produce a plethora of literature on the subject which however has not brought a definite clarification (Fombrun and van Riel, 2004; Barnett et al., 2006; Clardy, 2012).<sup>22</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s most writing on the subject almost disregarded the concept of reputation and instead concentrated on corporate image (Boorstin 1992; Kennedy 1977). Gotsi (2001) believes this might be explained by a fashion among marketing writers who in that period preferred the term image over any alternatives. A tendency was evident at the time among business writers to equate corporate image with corporate reputation (Analogous School). Kennedy (1977) made it explicitly clear that image was congruent

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<sup>22</sup> Even though Otsi (2001) even claims that marketing literature has been dealing with notions of reputation for four decades.

with reputation and it was understood that an organisation needed several years to cultivate them.

Still in the 1980s both Dowling (1986) and Dichter (1985) maintain that image and reputation are identical. Rindova (1997) contends that the public relations background of many writers within what became known as the analogous school may explain this perspective. At the time it was not clear whether PR's particular interest was with image rather than reputation, nor was there any clarity as to what distinguished the two constructs. This latter failure, which arguably is owed to PR practitioners' reluctance to identify conceptual common ground and differences, may well be at the root of some of the current confusion in the discussion about image and reputation (Caruana, 1997).

We now take a closer look at the writing that advocates a distinction between image and reputation. This perspective is taken up by what is known as the differentiated school which within itself represents three main currents of argument. First of all, there is the understanding that image and reputation are two separate concepts. This view is accompanied by growing opposition to the use of *image*. Cutlip (as cited by Grunig in 1993) almost disparagingly describes images as a mere reproduction and imitation that etymologically originates from the Latin *imitari* (imitation). Grunig (1993) sees the term related to deceit and Olins (1995) associates it to notions of manipulation. With this amount of negative writing related to image, it is conceivable why academics and possibly also practitioners may have been motivated to espouse a new and apparently more substantial term. The tendency therefore to emphasise the use of reputation is mainly motivated by image's newly acquired dismal connotations (Balmer, 1997a, 1997c; Balmer and Stotvig, 1997b). Whilst image came to be equated with superficial actions intended to make someone or something look better, reputation was linked to substantive and responsible activities to inspire trust and support (Rindova, 1997).

The second strand within the differentiated school which we now turn to contends that image is not based on imitations of reality and deceit (Norman,

1984). Rather than isolating the two constructs, the interface of image and reputation is being probed into to explore how they affect each other (Barich and Kotler, 1991, Mason 1993). This second strand within the differential school concurs with much earlier research that regarded images not as a deceitful distortion of reality but as a reflection of the environment in our mind (Boulding, 1956).

Decades later this view was supplemented by Norman's (1984) useful qualification that even though mental images may not represent the entire reality they may still reflect social reality. Barich and Kotler (1991) take this further and define images as the aggregation of attitudes, impressions and convictions that individuals or groups of people share about an individual or an organisation. Mason (1993) as well as Barich and Kotler (1991) add a new aspect to the discussion by emphasising the link between image and reputation. They agree - and thus surprisingly differ from more conventional definitions - that corporate reputation has an impact on the corporate image which the public holds about an organisation or individual. Particularly Barich and Kotler see reputation and public awareness as variables that determine the corporate image and fail to explain how image may help shape reputation – whilst most writers in marketing and PR under review here understand the direction of influence to go the other way round. The models proposed by Mason (1993) and Barich and Kotler (1991) appear to be even less tenable since the authors seem to treat image as a more or less uniform phenomenon and thus do not address the more differentiated view – detailed by Dowling (2002) - that distinct and concurrent images are held by two or more stakeholder groups.

By contrast, the third current of what we refer to as differentiated school, accepts that reputation is the reflection of a range of distinct images held by various stakeholders (Fombrun, 1996). This perspective describes corporate reputation as a representation of an entity across various publics and managed through behaviour and communications tools (Saxton, 1998). Crucially and in line with most writers Fombrun (1996) is pointing out that in contrast to image, reputation encompasses the time as a factor and thus

records what over a period of time the public have been thinking about a specific organisation or individual.

The review of the literature produced by advocates of both the analogous and the differentiated school is inconclusive. It is probably practical to assume that the public's interpretation of images is influenced by pre-existing reputation, and indeed a majority of writers conceptualise reputation as resulting from a sequence of images over time. One may argue therefore that the difference between image and reputation is not so much a matter of perspective as argued by Weigelt and Camerer (1988) and Dutton and Dukerich (1991), but instead is rooted in the introduction of time as an additional dimension. By subscribing to the argument that the aggregation of images leads in the long run to reputation is aligned with Alessandri's (2001) model which encapsulates the build-up of corporate reputation and conceptualises image as a constituting part of it. The underlying assumptions for this model are shared by a number of writers who agree that repeated impressions of an image in the long run shape reputation (Gray and Balmer, 1997; Markwick and Fill, 1997; Maarek, 2011).

Maarek just like Harrison confirms that reputation does not only reflect the current image of the firm but also its past behaviour (Harrison, 1995; Maarek, 2011). Fombrun (1996, p.72) defines reputation as "a perceptual representation" of what the firm was known for in the past. It also entails future expectations that define the company's general appeal to all of its target markets in comparison with its closest rivals in these markets. Black and Carnes (2000) write that corporate reputation is seen as representative of the public's cumulative judgements of firms over time, while Fill (2009) recognises that an organisation's or individual's reputation consists of a range of deeply ingrained images that are informed by an individual's perception of identity cues which accumulated over an extended period of time. The way of seeing an organisation or individual is thus the result of a number of transactions and contacts one may have had in the past. Murray and White (2004) add to this definition the aspect of consistency. The strength of a



particular reputation is contingent on a public's appreciation of an attribute's or entity's consistency in the course of time.

This element of time appears to be not only the clearest line of distinction between image and reputation but also a normative perspective to consider and review tactics, strategy and results in communications management. In section 2.8. we will be reminded of how public relations planning implies time bound frames which are reflective of an understanding that conceptualises reputation as a phenomenon that is managed and emerges over time.

We may at this stage try and summarise the features that constitute reputation. As a starting point we may agree that reputation arguably is related to the facts or actions through which an organisation was well known in the past and is at present (Argenti and Druckemiller, 2004). From the public's perspective this entails the experiences people had with the organisation over a period of time (Murray and White, 2004). Caruana and Chircop (2000) add to this an awareness for reputation's emotional potential which has contingent on the overall esteem in which the organisation is held (Caruana and Chircop, 2000). To clarify the various perspectives it is worth turning to Fombrun (1996) once again who provides us with three core criteria that define reputation. These points underline that while dependent on image, reputation is a much broader concept which due to the time factor appears to be less flexible, yet more enduring in comparison to fickle images that may change from day to day. Of particular merit is Fombrun's definition of reputation as a means to distinguish one entity from another. He also places emphasis on reputation's ability to integrate images. In brief: For Fombrun (1996) reputation is constituted of features that define and differentiate an organisation from competing ones as well as an attempt to accommodate a range of views constituents hold of an organisation in any given time (Fombrun, 1996).

These latter views and expectations in the course of time appear to change and consequently performance and presentation of organisations and services may have to adapt and meet evolving standards if we want them to

contribute towards the build-up of reputation. Depending on the kind of business, the type of constituents and the competitive environment public expectations appear to vary. In the 1950s for instance, service efficiency and the lack of clerical errors may allegedly have been sufficient to satisfy bank customers and grow the bank's reputation (Katona, 1957). Today additional value is expected to match growing expectations among bank customers.

Due to their mutability an exploration of the sources that feed into reputation may prove valuable in a study that seeks to select a corporate reputation model in view of adapting it to a political setting. This concern with the origins of reputation is discussed by Harrison who argues that an organisation's attributes, particularly its values, may contribute to the reputation it possesses (Harrison 1995). Yet one may want to question if reputation is the result of aggregated attributes only. Alternatively or complementary to this assumption it may be an independent value in its own right. Bromley (2001) points out the possibility of reputation change in cases where its defining attributes (personality and identity) remain unaltered. This is an issue that would require further investigation as it seems to suggest that reputation to some degree is autonomous of the identity it hinges on. Possibly a pre-existent strong reputation may generate public appreciation, which results in strengthening the reputation even further in an upward (or indeed downward) spiral.

Other conceptual contributions to the debate about the sources of reputation were made over past decades: Both marketers and sociologists add that esteem is a function of performance, while poor performance likewise causes disesteem (Erickson and Nasanchuck, 1984; Hutton et al., 2001). Relevant for its view on a potential applicability in the context of political communications is the notion of power and influence as a source of reputation. On this note Edwards (1969) acknowledges that the power to control resources does help build up reputation. Babchuk et al. (1960) go on to explain that power may be seen as the basis of reputation as it permits an organisation or an individual to render services to the community, while it facilitates the assumption of responsibility to respond to key challenges and problems stakeholders may face.

It is critical for an organisation's reputation to be robust and develop because – as we have seen - it will make an entity recognisable and set it apart from its competitors (Schweizer and Nachoem, 1999). Marketing literature ascribes to image and reputation advantages an organisation may reap. A number of these advantages that are contingent upon successful reputation management will be discussed now.

Eisenegger (2010) identifies a critical advantage that comes with reputation and probably is of particular applicability in politics. He found that the build-up of reputation is not just aided by power, but rather that the acquisition of reputation is an effective strategy to gain and maintain political power.<sup>23</sup> With a closely related focus Seymour-Ure (2003) defines the aims of professional impression management in politics as an effort to strengthen a politician's authority. In her view both skilfully staged public performances as well as media management are designed to serve this purpose. If authority and power hinge on a well managed reputation we should keep the sources of a politician's reputation in mind. She suggests there are two sources that can be identified. First of all there is popular approval that is directed both at politicians and their party. Opinion polls help measure this source. Secondly, there is approval for the politicians that originates from within their party in the constituency but even more so at Westminster (Seymour-Ure, 2003). These distinct and critical sources of reputation may be identified through systematic research which is a constituting element in strategic communication campaigns and will therefore be discussed in connection with our exploration of the communication planning process in section 2.8.

With regard to competition – commercial or political - it is conceivable that an organisation or individual finds itself engulfed by rivals who strive to advance their respective reputational profiles by emulating successful reputation management practice. Therefore, a strong reputation would need to be developed and strengthened to a point where competing organisations may

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<sup>23</sup> This nicely ties in with Edwards' (1969) reverse claim that power of resources would build up reputation.

find it difficult to emulate it (Schwaiger 2004). Fombrun seems to have found an answer as to how reputation may be protected from competition. He found evidence that organisations which systematically strive to present both their mission as well as their identity had a stronger reputation than those competitors that ignored this advice (Fombrun 1998).<sup>24</sup> Consequently, Fombrun warns against conspicuously altering reputation. He advises instead to treat reputation as a multi-disciplinary idea which continues to be bound to the essential strategies and aims of an organisation or individual and consistently reflects its mission, values and vision, in short, its identity (Fombrun, 1998).

There seems to be evidence to illustrate why organisations should invest in the build-up of their reputation fairly early on in their life cycle (Kay, 1993). Once reputation is well entrenched there is an expectation for a trade-off between strong reputation and customer loyalty which adds to the organisation's equity (Cameron and Whetten, 1981; Cretu, 2007). In its early phase it appears reputation can not yet be traded into other resources but is simply needed to enter a market (Weizsacker, 1980; Falkenreck, 2010). This is a consideration that arguably reveals parallels between commercial organisations and individuals in a political context that are in need of reputation in relation to their publics.<sup>25</sup> At a more mature stage reputation and image appear to immunise a system against outside risks and acquire therefore a pivotal role in dealing with difficult environments. Likewise when public mood is adverse techniques of managing perceptions are critical to keep up and facilitate communication between an organisation and its key publics (Howard 1998).<sup>26</sup> In a phase of decline reputation is seen by accountants as an asset that may be used to ask for a premium price when mergers or sell outs are negotiated. Fombrun C. J. (1996) lists further points

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<sup>24</sup> Wun et al. (2006) insist that consistency along with transparency and distinctiveness are the decisive criteria an organisation has to meet in order to achieve high quality reputation.

<sup>25</sup> Think of fledgling journalists who want to get their first articles published in a newspaper or a Chinese car manufacturer who tries to win over consumer confidence in Europe – these are just two cases to illustrate how reputation may help to enter a market.

<sup>26</sup> Burns et al. (1961) found in a study about post World War II businesses that companies felt a good image would help them resist and weather economic downturns.

that may be helped by strong reputation and image in a business setting such as employees' loyalty as well as finances and debt management.

Particularly, reputation's function to immunise against external threats and its means to establish and safeguard communications with critical publics would justify its centrality in a politician's communications management. However, these analogies are largely speculative as political communications literature has not addressed reputation's function in a party political setting in any detail as marketers have done for organisations operating in a commercial environment.

We may now move on and attempt to seek a working definition for reputation. Gotsi's (2001) interdisciplinary approach appropriately reflects the literature reviewed so far. His is a synthesis which broadly satisfies the traits of reputation as far as they have been discussed:

*“A corporate reputation is a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time. This evaluation is based on the stakeholder's direct experiences with the company, any other form of communication and symbolism that provides information about the firm's actions and/or a comparison with the actions of other leading rivals.”* (Gotsi et al, 2001, p.27.)

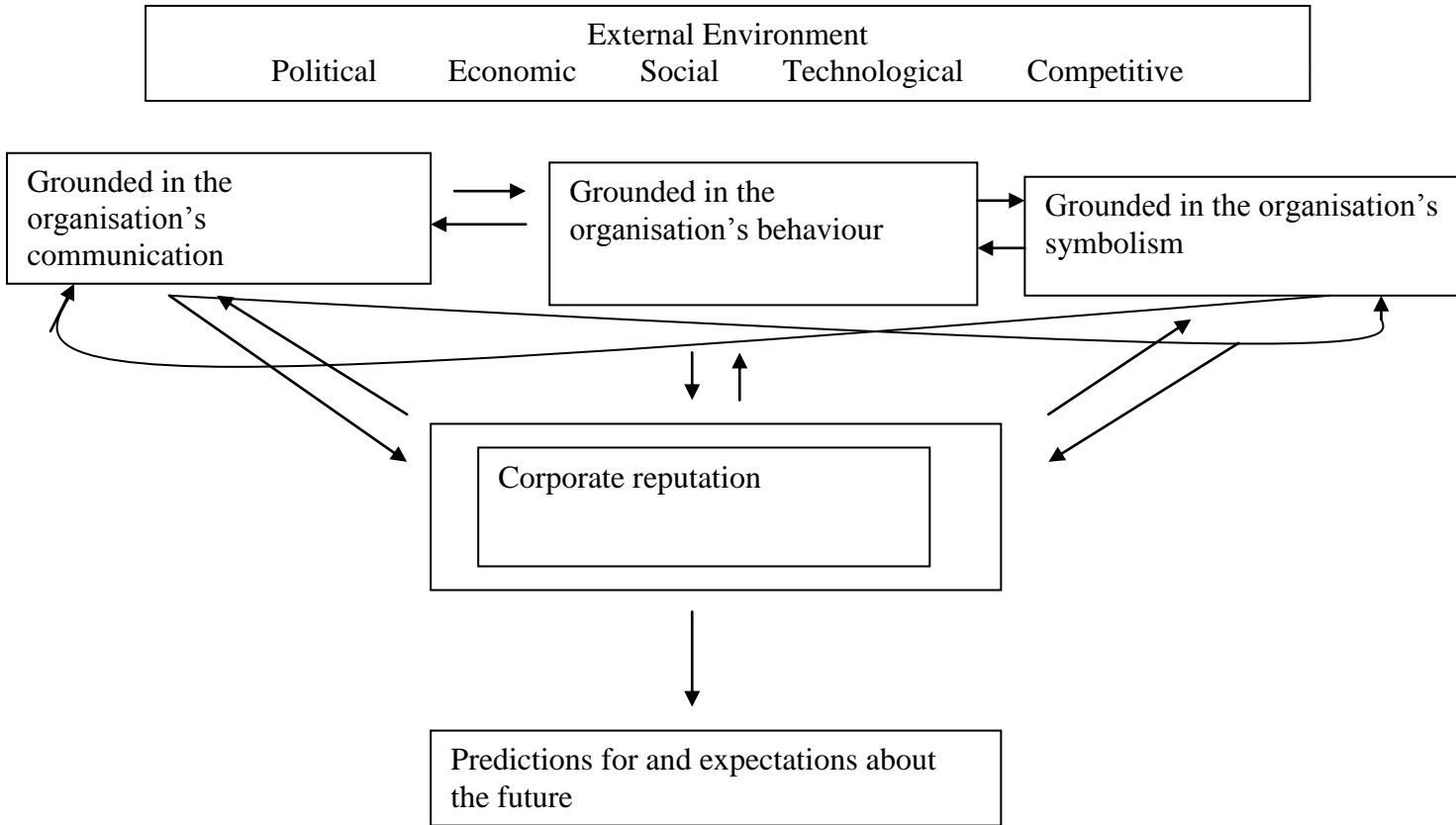


Chart 2.7.5./1. Gotsi, 2001

What is not reflected in this definition is reputation's capacity to make predictions about future performance. It goes without saying that in a business context the reduction of uncertainty about prospective developments is a rationale for the use of reputation. The same holds true for politics, which is currently not echoed in the definition. If we were to develop and adapt Gotsi's quote we could argue that generating confidence among the electorate about a party's or candidate's ability to deliver on policies is an essential purpose for political communications. If we take this aspect into account the first sentence of Gotsi's (2001) definition above would read:

*A reputation is a stakeholder's overall evaluation of an individual or organisation over time and a means to predict future performance.*

(See also chart 2.7.5./1)

Two further amendments might have to be borne in mind when attempting a definition. The first comes up in light of an observation discussed both by Bromley (2001) and Dowling (2002). In their view it is worth keeping in mind that an organisation's or individual's reputation is not absolute but relative to various stakeholder groups whose mental images of an entity vary. Therefore, it has been argued that at any time different groups respectively hold various distinct reputations in relation to the same entity (Bromley, 2001; Dowling, 2002).

The second issue that may need to be considered when devising a definition for reputation management originates from the suggestion that the operationalisation of reputation may require two dimensions: On the one hand one would explore the attributes that account for an individual's or organisation's reputation. On the other, one would need to evaluate the intensity of interest and involvement a specific reputation generates among stakeholders. This would call for an ecological analysis and very akin to similar exercises in consumer behaviour (East, 1997) that explore how much attention space is taken up by one person (or product) and how much attention is left for potential competitors. Bromley (2001) would call this the extent or size of reputation.

Any practice based definition would need to conceptualise reputation's instrumental function in and dependency on the relationship between an organisation or individual and its respective environment. What is missing in the literature that has been reviewed is an exploration of the media-driven mechanisms and techniques used by communicators to design, maintain and safeguard reputation in a political context. As we see in section 2.9. the relationship between politician and journalist encapsulates a sophisticated power game which conditions reputation building in politics. However, it appears that media relations are not a sufficiently visible theme in business, marketing and management literature which has made the most extensive contribution to research into reputation management. The occasional study that has been conducted about the contribution of media coverage to the build-up of reputational dimensions suggests that journalists' judgements are

seen as welcome information sources that help judge organisations or individuals (Einwiller et al., 2010).

We may conclude that both identity and reputation are constructs that rely not only on the visual aspects of impression management but much more so on the appropriate individual or organisational behaviour. The subsequent empirical part of this study will echo this dichotomy as it informs my efforts to define and identify evidence for strategic intent and practice.

The understanding of reputation we have identified in this review suggests a need for an organisation or individual to engage in relationship management and to adapt to evolving expectations in a dynamic environment. This is a reciprocal perspective of political communications which is reminiscent of a key feature that constitutes strategic communications planning as we will be discussing in section 2.8.3.

## **2.8. Strategic communication management process**

### **2.8.1. Introduction**

It is the purpose of this section to explore and define the strategic communications process in politics. In the course of this we need to review the conflicting perspectives of strategic management. I will subsequently be introducing the perspectives and approaches PR offers to the management of reputation. Thereafter, I consider strategic communication management pathways that are either being used by government departments or suggested in current public relations research. In the following sections I take a look at systems theory and evaluate how an open two way model may help adapt communications management to a fast changing unpredictable media and political environment.<sup>27</sup> The typical features of this environment are

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<sup>27</sup> Dozier (1993) and Moss (2011b) clarify how systems theory amongst other areas of social science is pivotal both to the management and our understanding of Public Relations, which claims a boundary-spanning function and thus access to the dominant coalition in an organisation.



analysed in section 2.8.4. about publics. This provides a comprehensive understanding of the setting and key audiences politicians and their staff need to address their communications activities to. Once I have categorised these stakeholders I review options of formative environmental research that in communication management planning is understood to be the critical initial phase in any campaign to build up reputation. This step is followed by a second phase that serves to define objectives and ultimately strategy design. This latter stage echoes the notion that strategy either is a planned or alternatively an evolutionary process. I conclude with a section about the evaluation of strategic management procedures and outcomes.

I have the expectation that the following sections are the core of a discussion that allows me to evaluate and benchmark communication professionals' practice and gauge if their approach echoes our understanding of strategic communications management.

## **2.8.2. Analysing the process of reputation building: Models of Strategic Communications Management**

It was Edward Robinson who in 1969 declared the death of the *gut feeling* approach in public relations. In his view communications managers would from now on operate as if they were applied social and behavioural scientists whose decisions and actions are largely based on research. Broom (2009) warns us that still today PR practitioners at times allow themselves to be led by hunches, intuition and individualistic approaches rather than strategic thinking and the data provided by research activity. Yet, as Broom (2009) points out, the open systems approach I introduce in this section requires a combination of research-led problem management and proactive planning of strategic decisions. More practically, a growing professionalism and increased competition in political PR generates a need to justify the allocation and

expense of resources and to account for processes and outcomes.<sup>28</sup> Forbes (1992, p.32) agrees and comes up with this concise definition of strategic management as “a process that enables any organisation – company, association, non-profit, or government agency – to identify its long-term opportunities and threats, mobilize its assets to address them, and carry out a successful implementation strategy.”

Broom (2009) takes this further by detailing that public relations in its most sophisticated and developed form is a key function in an organisation’s or individual’s change management or problem solving policies and as such informed by systematically procured and scientifically processed research data.

As I hope to identify and integrate my findings about the political reputation management process into a model that takes account of the variables which potentially enable and condition strategic communications management in Westminster politics, we now need to review some existing strategic planning models. These planned communications programmes are designed and carried out as step by step processes. In other words the analysis of inputs, the planning of alternatives, the taking of decisions and their implementation are all elements which in their aggregate constitute a sequential management procedure that comprises the entire scale of communication activities. Writers in both communication management disciplines, PR and marketing, have devised a number of paths which detail the course of steps that need to be taken. This begins with the identification and analysis of a problem, leading to the implementation of action and ultimately terminating with an evaluation of the process and its outcomes. While they vary in the sequence and number of steps, the different models share the underlying intention to reflect and schematise what is otherwise a complex plethora of activities and phenomena (Smith, 2012; Tench, 2009).

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<sup>28</sup> For a description of growing professionalism in political communications in British politics see Negrine’s (2008) *The transformation of political communication* and Negrine (2007) *The professionalisation of political communication*.

Almost half a century ago, John Marston's (1963) RACE model, while written for the benefit of communicators, refers to communication only generically and makes no distinction between strategy and tactics. Nor does Marston seem to appreciate the value of objective led planning. One may imagine that it is probably hard to design and follow up a plan without a clear consensus on what will have to be achieved. Compared to earlier models Marston's suggestions stand out in their appreciation of evaluation which puts the results of communications activities into perspective.

The sequence of steps proposed in various strategic communication planning models in more recent years may appear somewhat random. The following is a selection to illustrate the point: Jerry Hendrix (2006) advocates the ROPE model (research, objectives, programming, evaluation), whilst Kendall (1995) maintains that communication planning is best encapsulated within the five step RAISE (research, adaptation, implementation strategy, evaluation) acronym. Kelly (2000) by contrast offers ROPES (research, objectives, programme, evaluation, stewardship) in an attempt to synthesise and categorise phases of the strategic planning process. Her colleague Crifasi (2000) offers ROSIE (research, objectives, strategy, implementation and evaluation) which she hopes to provide a framework that assists in identifying key stages of communications planning. Moss (2011b) reviewed existing managing frameworks and integrated their core features into the findings that resulted from his observations of communications practice. This led him to generate a management model that assists in organising and analysing public relations and marketing related work. He identified a sequence of four principles: Analysis, Choice, Implementation and Evaluation which he presented as the Communications – hence C – model C-MACIE (Moss, 2011b).

In the following paragraphs I endeavour to review a limited number of models and critique their contribution to our understanding of managing practice as well as their suitability to reflect key phases and variables in complex communication management processes. Following the example of Moss (2011b) my starting point is a conventional management model described by

Haner et al. (1973) who identified a list of critical decision making stages that may be adapted to fit a communications context.

1. *Definition of the objective*
2. *Formulation of measures of effectiveness*
3. *Generation of alternatives*
4. *Evaluation of alternatives*
5. *Selection of preferred alternatives*

(Haner et al. 1973, p.29)

Haner's model may be criticised for its failure to differentiate between strategy and tactics. Probably the most serious criticism of this model is the absence of an appropriate research phase, which would have been a prerequisite for working towards an appreciation of key publics and facilitating mutual understanding which may result in the reciprocal behavioural adjustment one would expect in current communication management practice. This shortcoming is addressed in the model developed by Haynes et al. (1975) to portray the PR decision making process.

1. *Consciousness of the problem provoking situation.*
2. *Diagnosis, recognition of the critical problem and problem definition.*
3. *Search for and analysis of available alternatives and their probable consequences.*
4. *Evaluation of alternatives and selection of course of action.*
5. *Securing acceptance.*

(Haynes et al., 1975, p.15)

The strength of Haynes' model is its recognition that internally acceptance for decisions must be secured. Lees-Marshment (2009) pointed out that in particular in party political settings the power is located with the lower echelons of activists and any decision maker will have to win over their approval and support. For the further progress of this study this variable will

have to be borne in mind as we critique the design for management models that do not only comprise critical phases in strategic communication management processes but should also be reflective of circumstances that are unique to political parties or government.

For a practitioner’s perspective in this review we may turn to a planning and evaluation matrix introduced by Group Attitudes Corporation, the research subsidiary of Hill & Knowlton, a leading international PR firm.

PR Research Planning and Evaluation Matrix						
Key Audiences	Planning		Monitoring			Evaluation
		Developing a Communications Strategy	Research to identify PR problems and to develop PR programmes	Research to pin point communications sources	Research to assess communications process or flow	Research to measure communications receptivity
	Descriptive Research (quantitative)	Exploratory Research (Qualitative)	Research to analyse communications messages	Research to assess communications process or flow	Research to measure awareness or knowledge change	Ultimate outcomes
			Research to measure actions or behaviour change	Research to measure opinion or attitude change	Research to measure awareness or knowledge change	Research to measure actions or behaviour change

(Quoted in Grunig et al., 1984).

This model integrates data grounded in PR consultancies’ practical experience with planning processes. Its particular contribution is a detailed exploration of the research stages and the expected functions of research throughout the management process. Yet this model of a communications management process would have to be expanded and added to in order to integrate those stages that succeed the research phase. As it is this model largely reflects Kotler and Bliemel’s (1992) recommendation to start the communication management process by first analysing the environment, followed by the identification of audiences and objectives. The next step

would be the development of a strategic design which ultimately feeds into the plan's implementation.

In 2006 the British government adopted its own communication management framework known as ENGAGE. This was seen as a response to the Phillis Review (2004) which had pointed out the weaknesses of government communications practice. The thrust of this criticism was addressed at a lack of consistency and failure to support departmental objectives. The framework that government departments were asked to adopt in 2006 aimed at strengthening the communication unit's responsibility for conducting stakeholder research and connecting strategic decision and policy making with insights about expectations entertained among key publics. The intention was to organise communications as an activity that is more strategic than tactical and integrated into the policy and administrative process rather than an add-on and afterthought (GCN, 2010).

The government's ENGAGE model has a comparatively simple structure and consists of four steps. Stage one, called SCOPE, requires the communicators to clarify what they intend to achieve and to specify the research that needs to be done. Stage two is termed DEVELOP and deals with the question of how the objectives may best be met. This is followed by step three, IMPLEMENT, which refers to the types of arrangements for communication activities available to convey messages. The sequence of steps is completed by an EVALUATION phase to assess how the campaign worked and if it achieved its objectives (GCN, 2010). The ENGAGE model broadly reflects approaches taken towards communications planning by a range of authors in public relations (McElreath, 1997; Austin and Pinkleton, 2006; Smith, 2012). The popularity of this model among political communication planning practitioners appears to be testified through the interest taken by a number of governments outside the UK who either intend to introduce or already use it (Gregory, 2011).

A much more detailed analytical device has been developed by Smith (2012, 10) who in his model splits up the management process in four fundamental phases which are subdivided into 9 individual steps.

- *Phase One: Formative Research*
  1. *Analysing the situation*
  2. *Analysing the organisation*
  3. *Analysing the publics*
  
- *Phase Two: Strategy*
  1. *Establishing goals and objectives*
  2. *Formulating action and response strategies*
  3. *Using effective communication*
  
- *Phase Three: Tactics*
  1. *Choosing communication tactics*
  2. *Implementing the strategic plan*
  
- *Phase Four: Evaluative Research*
  1. *Evaluating the strategic plan*

The disadvantages of a particularly detailed guide are manifold: It may need alterations to adapt it to the requirements in specific environments and situations. Detailed sequences of procedures may be of limited use in a volatile environment that forces all participants to operate under considerable time pressure and in response to external factors that drive actions beyond the control of planned management processes. Broom (2009) warns that a highly detailed communication management process model may not do justice to a dynamic setting which does not allow a clear compartmentalisation of diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation stages. Smith (2012) himself shows awareness of these limitations by reminding his readers that circumstances may require communicators to skip individual steps, evaluate, adapt and simplify planning processes due to necessity. One would therefore

have to think about a more malleable variation of this chain of actions that allows for opt-outs at specific or all key points in the process. Alternatively, in order to deal more effectively with unpredictable circumstances one might be well advised to identify a more flexible and broader planning approach that lends itself easily to being deployed in volatile political communications environments. However, Smith's model may arguably prove useful in an attempt to analyse and identify distinct key elements in strategic planning phases. The level of detail will therefore be used in the empirical part of this study as an analytical tool to detect behaviour among communication managers that suggests their engagement in strategic action and planned activity. In other words, Smith's model may be drawn upon to inform the guiding questions in preparation for interviews with practitioners.

A similar level of detail as in Smith (2012) yet more consideration for the specific setting of electoral politics is found in Newman's (1994b) model of political marketing, which is informed by his research on presidential campaigns in the USA. In contrast to Smith (2012) Newman has designed a checklist of steps that echoes the necessities and pressures candidates and their staff are exposed to in campaigns. To put it differently, Newman is integrating some of the variables into his communication planning model whose relevance we are critiquing in sections 2.9. and 2.10. of this literature review. These variables are specific to a political environment and arguably would have to be taken into account by any customised integrated model of reputation management:

Newman's model (Newman, 1994b, 42)

*Candidate focus*

- a) *Party concept*
- b) *Product concept*
- c) *Selling concept*
- d) *Marketing concept*

*The marketing campaign*



*Market (voter) segmentation – to:*

- a) assess voter needs*
- b) profile voters*
- c) identify voter segments*

*Candidate positioning:*

- a) assess candidate strengths and weaknesses*
- b) assess competition*
- c) target segments*
- d) establish image*

*Strategy formulation and implementation*

- a) The 4Ps (product, push marketing, pull marketing, polling)*
- b) Organisation development and control*

*Environmental forces*

- a) Technology (PC, TV, direct mail)*
- b) Structural shifts (primary convention and rules; financial regulations, debates)*
- c) Power broker shifts in influence (candidate, consultant, pollster, media, political party political action committees, interest groups, voters)*

*The political campaign*

- a) pre primary stage*
- b) primary stage*
- c) convention stage*
- d) general election stage*

Newman's (1994b, p.42) model is based on the American experience and features factors we would have to ignore or reconsider in a British context. Some of the formal elements in the political campaign – such as a primary stage and the convention stage – are absent in the British general election calendar. Other building parts of Newman's model constitute an improvement on Smith's (2012) plan. Clearly, his exploration of the information that feeds into voter segmentation (voter needs, voter profile, voter segments), though not contradictory of Smith's call for research, may help to specify the features I will be looking for when interviewing political campaigners about their formative research objectives. It is helpful to recognise – as Newman (1994b) does - the party organisation as a force candidates have to reckon with, though it may be fair to argue that in the UK the candidate's political party might not be counted among external "environmental forces" but instead be closer linked to "candidate positioning". After all, in the UK the political party conditions the candidates' ideological positioning and limits their range of political options.

Newman's view prescribes specific approaches, stages and factors that on aggregate help explain and ideally even predict a candidate's campaign. Kotzaivazoglou (quoted in Lees-Marshment, 2009) reminds us that particularly local politicians or any candidate or incumbent with limited resources will find it hard or impossible to follow up the professional and costly research procedure that both standard management models and Newman's (1994b) campaign framework take for granted. Based on his research into Greek politics, Kotzaivazoglou designed a sequence of steps that extends the market oriented party model to MPs as well as regional and local politicians. He acknowledges that at this level candidates may have to rely on secondary data due to lack of resources that would be needed to commission primary research. Yet, Kotzaivazoglou's (quoted in Lees-Marshment, 2009) insistence for candidates to address and confine their appeal to niche sections of the market is less than persuasive and perhaps owed to arrangements of the Greek electoral system. A more valuable feature is a section entitled "product adjustment", Under this heading the section

“reaction analysis” specifies that the candidates’ product design should reflect the ideological fabric of the party they respectively represent. This echoes the notion that the candidates’ message content and style are limited by what is acceptable to party officials. Kotzaivazoglou goes on to recommend a SWOT analysis of the candidate which is intended to gain a better understanding of his or her strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in comparison to competing contenders. This information will be instrumental in differentiating the political product – that is the candidate - from rivals.

Both Newman (1994b) and Kotzaivazoglou (as quoted in Lees-Marshment, 2009) analyse election campaigns. Their focus is on the candidate rather than the party and they discuss objectives of product design with voters’ behaviour and the elections in mind. In other words: While the strategic management process used by both authors is informative and feeds valuable insights into considerations of policy and image design in politics, the notion of reputation building in these models appears to be of secondary relevance at best. Furthermore, these approaches that focus on the run up to election day appear to generate models that rigidly follow through a prescribed sequence of steps which are consistently oriented towards a specific deadline. What may be required to respond to the need for a continuous, day to day routine of researching, planning for and adjusting a politician’s reputation is a long term perspective that leads to a more flexible and adaptable framework which exclusively addresses genuinely reputational objectives as opposed to concerns of electoral effectiveness.

These concerns had been taken account of in a much earlier framework suggested by Grunig and Hunt (1984) who advocated a more flexible and theoretically grounded communications model which is sufficiently broad to be used in various contexts. While this would potentially allow for its use in politics, we may find that it is in need of modification to suit specific political communications settings. The design of this model is reflective of a systems theoretical approach. I shall try to give a brief summary of this integrated framework which critically emphasises the volatility of communications processes, the decisive role of external impacts and the recognition that

communications activity may not only be orchestrated around campaigns of limited duration but instead be an open ended, on-going management process which needs a long term perspective and flexibility to adapt to a variety of expectations. The purpose of this model appears to be to efficiently align both the planning and the actions taken to achieve communications objectives. It lends itself to analysing and guiding communications actions both of organisations and individuals.

The two key terms that need clarifying in Grunig's theory are behaviour and molecule (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Behaviour is defined here as an individual's or an organisation's engagement in a communication activity such as for instance the design of a brochure, the organisation of a press conference, the writing of a press release or the commissioning of a survey. A molecule is defined as the smallest structural unit that comprises the same features as the larger unit it forms a part of. For their concept of units and behaviour Grunig and Hunt draw on the framework of Kuhn's systems theory of management (Kuhn, 1975). The behavioural molecule is a model that leads us through the steps of planning and selecting behaviour and in so doing addresses the critical elements of the decision making process. This approach accommodates a considerable degree of flexibility. It furthermore allows for critical evaluation throughout the process and if needed suggests a return to previous planning stages or a restart of the sequence. This model also takes into account two fundamental approaches to public relations, namely efforts to adapt to or control a unit's environment which is discussed in section 1.8.1. The sequence of steps suggested in this management model progresses in endless loops and thus reflects the actual sequence of tasks managers, candidates or PR deciders engage in on a day to day basis (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). This latter thought is echoed by Broom (2009) who emphasises the continuous and overlapping nature of the PR problem solving process which he describes as cyclical in nature.

1. Detect – manager or candidate identify a problem which in the context this study could be the appreciation that public expectations and candidate reputation are not in line.

2. Construct – at this stage within the molecule managers or candidates through cognitive processes conceive, plan and construct an idea in response to the problem. They think of a solution through defining the problem and choosing an objective (and alternatives) that promises to solve the issue.
3. Define – here a strategy is considered and defined. It is thought about costs, effects, time scales and other resources. For example one could decide to explain why particular features or behaviour of a candidate are in the publics' respective interests and therefore correspond with what the situation requires. Alternatively, one could decide to help the candidate alter attributes and align them with public expectations.
4. Select – the candidate or manager selects either the original plan or an alternative and is guided by reference criteria that are usually based on past experience, research or linked to values. If an alternative cannot be selected they need to return to the construct stage.
5. Confirm – though this step is not usually found in management decision making processes it seems useful as it allows the manager or candidate a moment to step back and think of consequences, risks and worst possible scenarios of the chosen path. If no overriding concerns are found, the candidate implements by moving on to the “behave” step. Otherwise one will have to return to the segments construct or select.
6. Behave – elsewhere this is referred to as tactics and is the actual communication tool used by the candidate or manager, such as a press release, a meeting, a news story, a TV appearance, direct mail campaign or possibly the actual change of the candidate's behaviour to alter public perceptions.

7. Detect – the endless loop continues where we started. Candidate or manager analyses the feedback and detect if their objectives have been met or if they need to change the behaviour and return to the construct segment.

(Grunig and Hunt, 1984)

This model conceptualises strategic communication as an open ended process. It helps define and describe how individuals take decisions and – more pertinent to this study - is instrumental in analysing managerial practice. These steps will be critical in an exploration of the degree to which reputation management in politics is a planned strategic process.

Reflecting on management models Smith (2012) makes two valuable observations that I should be taking into account when interviewing communicators. He predicts that communication managers may at times be inclined to skip stages of formal planning phases once they are satisfied they have appropriately recognised the problem. Furthermore, he experienced that PR staff may occasionally believe they weren't consciously guided by a management plan. Yet he also observed that when probing further the ensuing conversation may reveal that in fact communicators do go through step by step routines that are comparable to variants of planned strategic management processes. This finding subsequently affects the empirical part of my study in two ways: First of all, in semi-structured interviews I should perhaps not expect any communications managers to be able or willing to engage into discussions about types and applications of communication management plans. There may not be easily discernible awareness among practitioners of the procedures they follow. Secondly, I need to apply a broad understanding and flexible definition of planned management process models that allow me to accommodate the various approaches managers may be taking. Calls for flexibility may collide with Smith's (2012) nine step communication management model which arguably appears as being too rigid for a practitioner to follow closely. Yet his detailed exploration may help the researcher identify activities and understand practice that is fully or partially

reminiscent of strategic communications processes. Therefore, the steps offered by Smith help the interviewer become aware of key phenomena in strategically planned communications practice, shape questions, understand answers and analyse data.

We may conclude that for it to be used in a political context any management model that is to reflect strategic communications processes would have to be adapted and expanded by further variables. As mentioned above the need to find acceptance and support internally for strategy and tactics is critical in a democratically organised structure such as a political party. Related to this is the recognition that ideological preferences and commitments set out by politicians' respective parties may pose limitations to a plan's content and style. Equally, the volatility of the media environment and its power to set an agenda that diverges from or contradicts the politician's intended messages should be considered comprehensively as it may fundamentally militate against a planned approach and instead require an evolutionary perspective. This is a general concern with planning models taken up by Gregory (2011). While she concedes that the planning process in communications management offers guidance and direction, she cautions against the design of a prescriptive formula. Flexibility and the practitioner's professional judgement should allow the model to be adapted to situations. Therefore, management models' step by step processes may be applied and adapted according to the situation. Individual steps may be skipped as long as the framework remains and assists in providing a structured approach, clarity of purpose and a reminder of how relevant it is to be planning ahead (Gregory, 2011). This discussion is expanded on in section 2.9.

### **2.8.3. Communications management as a reciprocal process**

The strategic management systems presented both by Smith (2012) and Grunig et al. (1984) are describing an organisation that perceives itself as an open system. This approach acknowledges that the constant interaction and ability to adapt to changes in the environment are critical to a system's

survival and ultimate success. The same concept of communications is suggested in Dozier et al.'s (1995) excellence theory of public relations.

Dozier et al.'s normative theory is the outcome of a survey among practitioners and academics which has identified ideal working arrangements and approaches in PR. While excellence theory conceptualises PR in its capacity to influence the environment it explicitly stresses its role as facilitator of change between related systems. From this perspective systems are viewed as interlinked and striving for equilibrium. The sociologist Peter Blau (1976) uses the terms adjustment and counter adjustment to describe the process which is founded in the recognition of a dialectical pattern of social change. PR managers assist the organisation or the individual by developing responses to change and disruptions to the equilibrium. These may be:

1. *Identifying interpenetrating systems.*
2. *Determining which interpenetrating systems are most likely to upset the equilibrium.*
3. *Planning communication programmes to ensure that the movements in the moving equilibrium can be smooth ones.*

(Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.140)

These steps are reflected in the research and strategy stages of management processes. Grunig and Hunt's (1984, p.140) three steps underline that communications are seen as striving to achieve a "moving equilibrium" which is equated with overcoming the discrepancy between identity and public perceptions. It is the interdependency between systems that leads Grunig and Hunt (1984) to conclude that public relations require a two-pronged approach to deal with the systems encountered in the environment: Adaptation to external expectations and attempts to alter and shape these expectations.

In the context of this study we can expect to be dealing with politicians who are adapting their respective behaviour and at the same time design and implement strategies of communications to manage expectations entertained



by key publics. The interpretation of a politician's behaviour would be informed by a systems theoretical understanding of entities which interpenetrate each other both ways: An organisation towards its environment and vice versa. This implies that if one system did not have consequences on another system, we would not need to engage in communications management. In other words the existence of public relations processes is a result of interactions between systems and thus justifies the adoption of a systems theoretical perspective of individual and corporate behaviour (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Moss, 2011b).

Public relations are understood to bridge the boundaries between subsystems: It contributes to a mutual understanding between an organisation or an individual on the one hand and its environment on the other (Pieczka, 2006). In other words it can be conceptualised as an intermediary function between a politician (or indeed an organisation) and its environment. This concept of PR is informed by a systems theoretical approach that originated in ecological studies and was introduced into public relations in 1952 by Cutlip and Center (Broom, 2009). Based on this assumption of an interdependence between individuals and organisations on the one hand and their environments on the other, public relations theorists tend to view an organisation and its publics as interpenetrating systems. In brief, all entities are interlinked and their behaviour or change of behaviour does have repercussions on related subsystems (Miller, 1978). For this reason PR staff are tasked to monitor and respond to external changes (Broom, 2009).

Systems can be classified by the degree to which communicators interact with their environment (Gregory, 2007). In contrast to the open system communicators refer to closed systems when they describe an organisation that is adverse to development and refuses to adapt to external expectations and changes. In this case the organisation may still inform the public and regularly send out messages, yet it would be reluctant to engage with feedback and categorically renounce a reciprocal exchange of information (Gregory, 2007).

Katz and Kahn (1978) contend that any organisation tends to strive both to adapt to its environment and to control it. Inspired by the concept of an open system which emphasises reciprocity, this pro-active view of PR would suggest that changes are brought about with the intention to create a more satisfactory equilibrium. Yet change to accommodate an issue may adversely affect the organisation's environment elsewhere and create a new problem that needs to be addressed in order to maintain or re-establish equilibrium. We thus find that the equilibrium is affected by every single action the organisation or individual take to solve specific reputational problems.<sup>29</sup> Gregory (2007) describes this process as an ongoing and genuine dialogue between the organisation and its publics.

#### **2.8.4. Models of communications management: The two way symmetrical process**

Conventionally, public relations is seen both as a strategic and technical activity that blends management and communication (Cutlip and Center, 1978; Tench, 2009). This understanding is linked to an assumption that suggests an organisation can achieve its desired objectives not only through the use of material resources but also through the use of communications (Rindova and Fombrun, 1999). Yamauchi (2001) goes even further by pointing out that corporate communication in effect is a management strategy in its own right.

Burke (1998) links communication back to reputation by detailing that varied, regular and comprehensive communications with key stakeholders creates a better understanding of an organisation's or an individual's activities and performance which in turn helps build up support and ultimately reputation.

In Grunig and Hunt's (1984) categorisation of communication, what is referred to as two way symmetric communication squares with the approach that informs the open systems model we explored in the previous section.

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<sup>29</sup> Kunzick (2002) details that organisations in closed systems may try and maintain the equilibrium by treating a temporary imbalance as a flaw in the system, while in an open system one may not strive to maintain the initial balance. Instead one would accept and adapt to pressures that alter the initial status.

Two way symmetric communications may be viewed in the context of four communications models that have been categorised by Grunig and Hunt (1984). These models serve to contextualise the various approaches communicators take in their practice of the discipline. Grunig and Hunt (1984) recognised that communications consist of two fundamental elements. It does contain the element of persuasion which may assist to control particular groups. Alternatively, communications may help understand and in a next step adapt to external events and expectations. Reflecting this approach is the two-way symmetric model which attributes to public relations the role of mediator between systems and their publics who are encouraged to engage in a symmetric exchange that should ideally lead to compromises and mutual understanding (Pieczka, 2006; Cutlip et al., 2006).

Depending on whether PR is guided by an open- or closed-systems perspective a specific communications approach can be observed which echos most closely how the organisation interprets the role of communications (Maniha and Perrow, 1965). A two way symmetric perspective is believed to facilitate adaptation to changing and dynamic external expectations more easily. A comprehensive analysis of the politician's strengths and weaknesses as well as a sound exploration of relevant publics and their likely expectations may inform the selection of the appropriate communications approach and objectives.

#### **2.8.5. Environmental audit – Understanding expectations**

Grunig and Hunt (1984) contend that the identification of issues and consequences outside an organisation initiates the management process. It is usually the key function for any communicator to predict consequences their respective organisation may have on the environment and find factors in the environment that could impact on the organisation or the individual they represent. This screening exercise precedes any other activities in the communication strategy design (Wilcox, 1998). In a subsequent step communicators may initiate and follow through the management plan (Everett,

1993; Moss, 2011b). It has been shown previously that this reciprocal approach is particularly appropriate in fast moving, unstable environments and finds its analogy both in the open systems model and the symmetric model of PR practice (Everett, 2001).

In the view of Rebecca Hart (2006) an initial comprehensive audit arguably assists the PR manager to acquire a better grasp of the external and internal situation and is also believed to contribute towards the overall success and ability to achieve objectives. Grunig and Hunt (1984) recommend that PR managers should research the publics that are affected by an organisation's or individual's behaviour. In the view of Cutlip et al. (2006) this research may be either or both systematic and anecdotal and draw on sources such as personal contacts, key informants, focus groups, call-in-telephone lines or mail analysis that may contribute to preliminary data. Research allows defining the communications problem and discrepancy of expectations which politicians may encounter when they deal with the external environment. Only then can a catalogue of objectives be drawn up (Grunig and Hunt, 1984).

Gregory (2007) defines the role and contribution of PR staff to the research process detailed above. In her view PR professionals are exceptionally well placed to manage the communications between an organisational unit and its key environments. This is explained by PR practitioners' location in the organisational chart. They are typically straddling the borders of otherwise separated systems and cultures which allows them to inform, explain and persuade both the receiving and the sending side in political communication processes. They are seen as boundary spanners who are best placed to gather internal information and communicate the organisation's messages to particular external publics. At the same time they are held to be in the ideal position to report back how messages are perceived in the environment (Moss et al, 1998).

Management studies have been using a set of standardised formula that detail prescribed stages of environmental testing. Gregory (2007) recommends PEST or EPISTLE analysis for the public relations context. The

Initials stand for Political, Economic, Social and Technological, Legal and Environmental factors.

Gregory (2007) hints at the need to further add to this tool by including culture as an additional variable that deserves integration into a communications research template. This would be justified as a response to the recognition that different publics may have various distinct cultural backgrounds which impact on their decoding of messages (Cameron et al., 2008). It is understood that this environmental analysis helps the organisation to appreciate and predict key factors its behaviour and communications may be affected by.<sup>30</sup> A better understanding of this may help shape insights into what crucial publics expect from an organisation or individual. This in turn may assist in forming or adapting the reputational objectives to the range of expectations and ultimately to turn this understanding into a communication strategy that aims at achieving these objectives.

As we have seen so far, communications management processes hinge heavily on the use of comprehensive research. Most stages that make up part of the process rely on and are informed by external information. If this was lacking Grunig and Hunt's (1984) behavioural molecule theory would deflate and consist of little more than the behaviour segment. All stages in this process are dependent on the intelligence produced through either formative or evaluative research. While the former helps arrive at a decision and ultimately direct behaviour, we talk of the latter when we describe the feedback we receive after the decision was taken and implemented (behaviour). Lerbinger (1977) differentiates between the various stages of environmental research and specifies which function it may have in a process of communications management. The following points integrate Lerbinger's research classification and Grunig's communication management model:

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<sup>30</sup> Cameron et al. (2008) illustrate how top executives in various professions are in danger of losing touch with their essential constituents. Periodical research may be instrumental in re-engaging management and publics. We may equate this phenomenon with politics the electorate.

1. Environmental monitoring – at the detect stage the public opinion and news trends in the social political climate are explored.
2. Social auditing – within the detect segment the organisation or the candidate consider which consequences they may have had on their publics and if there is a need to alter this behaviour.
3. Public relations auditing – this is the analysis of what the relevant publics are and the exploration of the relationships between the publics and the organisation or the candidate. This audit is started at the detect stage in Grunig's model but provides most useful information for the construct segment.
4. Communication auditing – which is the evaluation of the effects caused by a specific behaviour.

We have discussed earlier that communications management in an open systems model would strive to adjust the politician's public persona to public expectations. At the same time it would attempt to explain and justify the reputational traits the candidate is associated with and find a rationale for their existence and appropriateness. To anticipate how publics react to these messages and the politician's communications (which as we have said early on in this study comprises both literal action but also their communications) and to bring expectations, identity and images in line, research of the external environment and internal attributes is conducted. In communications management, objectives and strategies are informed and shaped by the environment which in turn is constituted of publics. We turn now to clarifying the concept of "public" and its role in the context of communications management.

#### **2.8.6. Researching Publics**

In this section I argue the case for researching publics and discuss how they are related to the communications management of politicians. We will be considering if a focus on publics may help design and adjust communication objectives and inform the selection of strategy and tactics. Gregory (2007)

holds this view and contends that a failure to research and prioritise relevant publics, their interests, aspirations and concerns appropriately may lead to a lack of information which should ideally inform the management process. This may adversely impact on an organisation's or individual's communication activities.<sup>31</sup>

Against this backdrop it is worth noting Grunig and Hunt's (1984) claim that practitioners have only a vague notion of what the concept of publics means and at times describe it as the opposite of private. Another misconception may be to think of publics in terms of a general public as Grunig believes to be the case among practitioners he interviewed (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). In contrast PR literature tends to contend that the concept of a general public was impossible for logical reasons, as a public is defined by the common problem or concern its members share (Cutlip et al., 2006). For Smith (2012) the defining principle of a public is how they are affected by an organisation's messages or behaviour. Authors today appear to accept an understanding of publics that is shaped by the sociologist Herbert Blumer and the philosopher John Dewey who was writing in the 1940s. Blumer's (1966) definition of public has the advantage of being specific. He perceives a public as something homogenous as opposed to heterogeneous masses. He specifies that members of a public are united by a joint problem or issue. Dewey (1927) in his days had defined publics as people who face a similar problem, who concur in their recognition that a challenge or issue exists or who organise to do something about it.

A focus on publics may help identify how a leader's reputation mismatches popular sentiment and aspirations. In this context Deborah Mattinson (2010) reminds us of Tony Blair's declining popularity ahead of the looming 2005 general election. There seemed to have been a growing concern among publics that the Prime Minister was aloof, not responsive to grievances and more concerned with building his personal historical legacy. It was when New

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<sup>31</sup> Gregory (2007) reminds us of Shell's ill considered decision to sink the oil platform Brent Spar into the North Sea. This decision sparked off an unexpected wave of public protest all over Europe which eventually forced Shell to abandon its plan.

Labour addressed these issues in the course of a marketing relations campaign that poll ratings of both the party and the Prime Minister improved and secured New Labour's victory over Michael Howard (Scammell, 2008).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggest that communication programmes will have to be in line with the publics' communication behaviour and expectations. In order to facilitate and focus strategic management of public relations to take place there needs to be an identification of the types of publics an organisation communicates with.<sup>32</sup>

To this effect, Johnson and Scholes (2002) developed the power-interest-matrix which describes respectively the level of power and the degree of interest a specific public exercises. As we have discussed earlier, publics may have a different set of expectations towards the reputation of a politician which at times may be identical or at least overlapping. It is conceivable that different groups nurture expectations of a politician's reputation that are contradictory. Reputational objectives may therefore in some cases have to be tradeoffs between conflicting external pressures. The power-interest-matrix serves to inform communications managers' efforts to create a politician's reputation in two ways. First of all, they help understand which categories of publics there are, which function they hold and which structural power they have on the policies and career of the politician. Secondly, they allow categorising this assortment of publics (non-interested, interested, powerless and powerful) which should inform communication professionals to make considered judgements about intended objectives, to specify strategies and make predictions about resources reasonably needed.

The significance of this consideration becomes even more tangible if we imagine a reputational strategy that is aimed at distinct groups that entertain conflicting vested interests such as for instance the party rank and file as

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<sup>32</sup> Smith (2012) reminds us that in marketing literature there is a tendency to define first the objectives and only subsequently select the publics that should be addressed through communication activities, while in public relations there is a tendency to look at publics first and decide which may warrant particular attention. Only as a result of this initial research of publics and their perceptions one progresses to define how a politician's image is to be managed.



opposed to the electorate. The personal traits and behaviour that need to be emphasised to satisfy either public may be markedly different. The relevance of this scenario may be appreciated against the backdrop of Bannon (2005) and Lilleker's (2005) findings that highlight the important function party members have for a politician who seeks election. This may afford them a prominent position in Johnson and Scholes' (2002) power-interest matrix.

Communicators may have to evaluate the power and interest of relevant groups and based on the respective outcomes and predictions, fine tune the politician's behaviour and communications strategy. Knuckey and Lees-Marshment, (2005) describe this process in their analysis of the 2000 US presidential campaign of George W. Bush who in the primaries prioritised engaging his own party faithful by portraying himself as the conservative reformer, while after his nomination he sought to appeal to the more centrist electorate by adopting more moderate issues and terminology.<sup>33</sup> The example of George W. Bush exemplifies how politicians who plan a reputational strategy need to take into account a range of relevant publics within and outside their party, who in themselves are split up in sub publics with distinct concerns and expectations. Grunig's model helps describe, understand and predict these processes.

### **2.8.7. Objectives in the context of strategic communication processes**

If we look back at the behavioural molecule theory we find that at stage 2 (construct) the candidate or communications manager are required to identify an objective. Objectives answer to the need for direction and a focus that subsequently guides actions of everyone who is involved in a strategically planned process. They are also critical to ensure that all decisions that relate to an activity are taken in a consistent manner. Thus objectives help initiate

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<sup>33</sup> Knuckey and Lees-Marshment (2005) suggest Bush's self portrayal as "Compassionate Conservative" was picked to soothe the sentiments of the main stream moderate electorate, while initially during the primaries he talked of himself as "A reformer with results" to strengthen his appeal with the Republican rank and file. Also his selection of non traditional Republican campaign issues such as health care reform and childhood education are owed to his intention to open up new electoral markets that would not traditionally vote for a Republican candidate.

and steer a communications process, allocate resources, manage planning as well as staff and schedule activities (Gregory, 2011; Austin, 2006).

Grunig and Hunt (1984) remind us that at a later stage, management process outcomes need to be evaluated which constitutes a second and equally crucial rationale for drawing up objectives. Rossi (1972) takes this up and advocates specific, measurable objectives that allow continuous and subsequent evaluation. Weiss (1972) shares this view and details that in order to be of use in management processes objectives should be clear, specific and measurable. These recommendations are grounded in the understanding that public relations in general and the management of reputation in particular require resources whose allocation needs to be justified (Macnamara, 2009).

There is evidence that for a long time public relations practitioners showed little awareness for the necessity to define measurable objectives (Grunig and Hunt, 1984; Austin, 2006). Communications practitioners give time constraints and limited budgets as reasons for not addressing objectives and evaluation appropriately (Macnamara, 2009).

#### **2.8.8. Strategies: Determining a course of action**

Strategy deals with the preferential route to take in order to cope with challenges, overcome problems, make use of opportunities and achieve objectives. Lukaszewski (2008) defines strategy design as a process that forces participants to focus on specifics and actions that assist in attaining the desired outcome. Robbins (1990, p.121) regards strategy as the “adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out” specific goals. Haberberg and Rieple (2008) distinguish between managerial decisions and strategic decisions, the latter of which distinguish themselves through their relevance, their long-term consequences and the amount of resources committed.

Perhaps the most conventional way of conceptualising a strategic plan is in terms of a rational, thought through design that is implemented in a step by

step process (Haberberg and Rieple, 2008). Mintzberg et al. (1998) caution against this perspective and warn that a strategic plan may not be identical with the action that is ultimately implemented. This in Mintzberg et al.'s view would require a perfect foresight and a determination not to adapt the plan to changes in the environment that may occur over time. Here Mintzberg et al. echo a concern raised in section 2.8.2. where we discussed to which degree communication management models take volatile publics and a dynamic environment into account.

This issue is reflected in corporate literature which juxtaposes planning mode and the evolutionary mode in strategy design and goes on to differentiate between accident and design (Broom, 2009; Haberberg and Rieple, 2008). The planning mode echoes traditional strategic thinking. It usually commences with a SWOT analysis and is organised around a sequence of formalised steps that suggest the creation of strategy in the form of a systematic plan, based on rigid guiding instructions on how to achieve pre-set objectives. Plans of this type reflect the thinking of both the design and the planning schools of strategy and are often found in corporate or government planning departments (Mintzberg et al., 1998). Both schools agree that strategists tend to be situated in an organisation's most senior echelons. This position further removes the strategist from the details of implementation and the vicissitudes of a shifting environment. Ultimately therefore, this organisational arrangement is judged problematic (Mintzberg, 1987).

The planning school of strategy in particular subscribes to the notion of prescriptive planning and places emphasis on the drawing-up of sophisticated plans. Steiner (1969) explains how advocates of planning ask for checklists and techniques to break down general objectives into sub-objectives that specify results expected for sub-systems of the plan. In Steiner's (1979) view, strategies need to be subdivided into smaller units in order to facilitate their implementation. This level of detail allows senior managers to control and guide.

By comparison the design school arguably describes a less mechanically prescribed process and allows for plans to be more basic. However, it does conceptualise strategy as a conscious and deliberate decision which subsequently is being implemented as intended. This perspective of strategy again generously defines the power to top management or individual leaders who are in command of the planning process. A position they arguably may use to interfere and fix communications processes step by step as if external factors were predictable (Hayes, 1985). This school does not allow for an incremental development of strategy over time, but requires fully developed prescriptions ahead of implementation. This division between thinking and acting is a defining feature of the design school of strategy (Andrews, 1981). A rigid arrangement of this kind once again raises the question of how in the course of implementing a plan, a changing environment could be taken into account and responded to (Andrews, 1981).

Mintzberg et al. (1998, p.41) recognise that particularly “unstable and complex environments” do not allow to keep up this divide between the planning and the implementation stages. In their view, the formulation and the enactment of strategy would need to be integrated as a means to feed information directly to the strategy formulator who should then be in a position to learn and adapt planning incrementally. Advocates of the planning school have tried to respond to calls for more flexibility in the face of a changing environment by planning scenarios. Their response is grounded in the assumption that changing variables cannot be predicted. Therefore, the management plan needs to offer in-built contingency options that are invoked if and when specific variables were to change – or an unforeseen scenario to occur (Porter, 1985; Wack, 1985). While seasonal recurring events or environmental features may well be captured in such a predictive scenario, it has been argued that unexpected changes, such as disasters or technological breakthroughs, are “practically impossible” to predict (Makridakis, 1990).

This concern is echoed outside the planning and design schools in attempts to accommodate an evolutionary mode, which conceptualises strategy building as an incremental process that responds to a dynamic environment.

As a result of this arising paradigm the manager has been described as a trouble-shooter who is engaging in fragmented activity rather than the conscious development of plans (Moss, 2011b). This led to an emergent pattern of action that may not precisely reflect the original intentions. Yet it is only by tracing back decisions and actions that a strategic pattern becomes discernible which had not been expressed in the original plan. This does not imply that external events exclusively guide strategy building, even though Haberberg and Riple (2008, p.51) talk of “imposed strategy” to define policies external factors forced an organisation to “adopt.” Perhaps the concept of emergent strategy is best encapsulated in the writings of Elias who likened it to his observations of relationships between people. He acknowledges that while individuals have their respective intentions, not even the most powerful person is in a position to implement them to the full, but instead is engaged in negotiations with other people who likewise try to pursue their respective agenda. In the end our actions tend to be guided by our intentions, yet what we end up doing is usually a compromise that reflects both what we want to do and what our environment allows us to do. This perspective may help overcome the polarity between the planning and design model on the one hand and a purely emergent alternative on the other (Elias, 1991).

This evolutionary approach has become more accepted in PR particularly due to its reflection of open systems theory which is widely seen as a fair description of the expectations and pressures of a volatile reality many communications practitioners operate within (Robbins, 1990).

Smith (2012) takes up the notion of generating strategy in an evolutionary mode and applies it to communications management by differentiating between proactive strategies and reactive strategies. Communicators in the context of proactive strategies shape plans and activities along a time frame and route of action they would determine in accordance with the interest of their organisation only. Reactive strategies in contrast emerge in response to an external impact or opportunities that the organisation may avail itself of as a result of external events. Smith (2012) counts action and communication among the proactive strategies while in his view pre-emptive action, strategic

inaction, rectifying behaviour, commiseration, diversion or defensive responses may be regarded as reactive communication strategies.

### **2.8.9. A planned approach towards communications management**

Smith (2012) identifies two clusters of proactive strategies. One is communication based, the second is action based. To appreciate Smith's argument we need to remind ourselves of an observation we made earlier in this study which suggested that PR is concerned both with presentational aspects of an organisation or an individual as well as issues of corporate policy design and performance (Lattimore et al., 2009). As we have discussed elsewhere, strategic communications essentially reflect an organisation's or individual's aspiration to appear in the media, and more specifically to gain third party support through positive interpretations by journalists whose expertise and judgment is valued by particular publics (Carroll, 2003). In contrast, the performance related cluster is guided by plans that are generated within the organisation (Smith 2012). These two dimensions are mirrored in Alessandri's (2001) concept of reputation management. In Alessandri's view reputation is based not only on communication skills but also the actual behaviour and values. Davis Young (1996) accords with Alessandri and emphasises the key role performance may have on reputation. This supports Smith's view that performance management may be considered proactive PR strategy.

This performance based perspective may be integrated into the system's theoretical notions we have considered in sections 2.8.1. and 2.8.2. We remember that this theory requires the accommodation of conflicting external and internal expectations and interests through the alteration and adaptation both of presentational features and behaviour (Peters and Waterman, 1982). If we blend performance strategy with systems theory we may arguably be able to extend our understanding of PR's potential role in the reputation management process. At the same time this exercise at integration may

reveal something about the dynamics of reputation which arguably is an outcome of conflicting or harmonising relationships between systems. Given communicators' potential role in anticipating and resolving external conflicts, it would appear that PR management needs to have at least an advising if not a guiding role in performance matters, which just like presentational issues impact directly on how reputation develops over time (Grunig and Repper, 1992).

Smith (2012) refers to external factors that exert considerable leverage on both shape and content of communications as reactive PR strategy. It appears that impression management shares with other aspects of politics a certain dependence on events that are often difficult to predict, at times beyond the control of the single politician, yet with at times remarkable consequences. These events may be leakages of adverse or controversial information, policy failures and adverse news or essentially any event that throws a negative light on an individual. This comprises any predicament that may make a politician look silly, foolish, clumsy, stupid and so forth (Edelman 1987; Miller, 1992) and eventually dilute or upset the impression that was originally intended (Schlenker, 1980).

When Harold Macmillan was asked by a journalist what in his view were the most critical challenges throughout his career as a politician, the former Prime Minister answered that events he feared most (Sandbrook, 2006). Macmillan touched upon a phenomenon that in PR is referred to as issues management and crisis communications (Geissler, 2001). This would require a strategy that deals with a situation that is created by sources that emerge outside the communicator's control.

#### **2.8.10. Message strategies in public relations**

We shall now briefly return to Grunig and Hunt's (1984) models of PR which had already been referred to in section 2.8.2. I argue that Grunig and Hunt's categories of PR may inform three critical message strategies that help

categorise, analyse and predict communications behaviour in political PR. These three are the information, persuasion and dialogue models.

The information model reflects Grunig and Hunt's notions of press agency and public information. The idea for the information model goes back to research undertaken by Shannon and Weaver (1949) who generated a visualisation of what they termed the mathematical theory of communication. They considered messages almost like virtual data that were encoded and transmitted to a receiver who decoded it. Shannon and Weaver's (1949) work conceptualised communications as monologue, a notion that was later taken up again by Berlo (1960) and Schramm (1971).

The intention to influence and to exercise advocacy is at the core of the persuasion strategy which arguably is comparable to Grunig's asymmetric approach to PR communications. Persuasion is a natural part of human behaviour and may play a role in the communications management of a number of organisations and individuals that aim at convincing their publics of particular way of thinking or behaviour.

When later on in the empirical part of this study we try to gather data that links communications processes to the management of reputation, we may arguably find evidence to suggest that PR practitioners' strategic communications planning is caught between the persuasive approach on the one hand and the dialogue model of communication which mirrors the symmetric exchange of information on the other: In the dialogue model emphasis is placed on the generation of a reciprocal exchange and the creation of a relationship between systems. This is seen to be a fundamentally conscious interaction among two sides. It aims at fostering mutual understanding and mirrors the notion of communication developed by the philosopher Martin Buber (1947). This approach is taken up in Evelyn Sieberg's (1976) interpretation of dialogue as a process of sharing at an existential level. In the context of management practices mutual communication is critical to consensus building and conflict resolution. It is the technique indispensable to understand the needs and expectations of two



parties which in our case would be politicians on the one hand and their publics on the other. This concept is shared by Volker Nickel (1990) the former spokesperson of the association of the German advertising agencies. In his view a one way communicative process is deficient at best and reactionary at worst. A reasonable solution of conflicts would require a behaviour inspired by social responsibility and a genuine interaction with the publics. Only after a phase of hearing and listening is the organisation in a position to adapt and take external suggestions and expectations on board. Nickel (1990) considers this a core contribution to an informed strategic internal decision making process of any organisation or individual. This prescription echoes Grunig and Hunt's call for "mutual understanding" as a purpose of PR (Grunig and Hunt, 1984, p.22). At a practical level this may lead us to the tentative assumption that a specific approach and understanding of communication may have tangible effects on the effectiveness and efficiency of the process. It may therefore be argued that an individual or an organisation can arrive at a mutual understanding with their environment if their communications approach is guided by the notion of adaptability to external expectations.

In an effort to search for conditions and criteria that further optimise communication between two entities Nickel (1990) agrees with Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1987) which asserts that communications is a multidimensional process which in order to function appropriately requires every participant's acceptance of fundamental principles of understanding. These are in the view of Habermas intelligibility, truth (talk about something that the partner also accepts exists), truthfulness (honesty) and legitimacy. For mutual (or symmetric) communication to take place under perfect conditions and in its most ideal nature these validity claims need to be in place. An expectation which Burkart (2009) warns may at best exist by approximation. Habermas' requirement for the smooth flow of communication as a conflict solving process would be that all partners in the context of an open discourse have the opportunity to voice their concerns about truth, truthfulness and legitimacy and will receive answers they find satisfactory. This condition along with Habermas' definition of a discourse as

the “unforced force of the better because more plausible argument” (Habermas, 1995, p.116) are in the view of Burkhart (2009) in reality virtually impossible to attain.

It may be worth drawing attention to Habermas’ warning and advice to make a distinction between strategic and non-strategic communicative action. Whilst the former in his view is success oriented and strives to achieve intended objectives regardless to the effects on partners, the latter is seen as a genuine consensus oriented communication between persons without a hidden agenda. In other words what Grunig and Hunt (1984) and Habermas (1987) refer to as symmetric or communicative acting is exclusively concerned with understanding while it eschews persuasion. A number of writers pick up this notion but suggest that communicative action may well incorporate intentions and objectives and therefore be success oriented too (Greve, 1999; Tugendhat, 1992).

It should be noted that communications management is at various times and in different situations likely to fall back on either of these approaches and we may find evidence in today’s political communications that echo one option or another or – more likely – a blend of the two. Each approach emphasises a different aspect of communications and we may therefore argue that they are complementary to some extent.

### **2.8.11. Evaluation**

The discussion of this issue is marked by some considerable confusion as to how evaluation in PR is best conducted. More fundamentally however, there is the firmly entrenched recognition that communication practitioners are expected to account for resources spent and justify how and why money and staff are being allocated in a particular way (Watson and Noble, 2007). A range of definitions stress aspects and relevance of communications effectiveness (Pavlik, 1987; Blissland, 1990), though this at times does not imply what the criteria effectiveness was meant to be judged and measured

by. Literature about management by objectives has helped move this debate forward by emphasising that communications outcomes need to be measured against specific benchmarks (Macnamara, 2009). This notion Watson and Nobel. (2007) refer to as objectives-effectiveness informs the approach taken in this study since it appears to be a suitable tool for evaluating outcomes in PR.

It is understood that evaluation is progressive and should support and inform communication managers throughout a campaign. Against this backdrop Macnamara (2009) recommends compiling progress reports to track how tactics are implemented. At certain key points during a campaign, progress reports should provide preliminary evaluations and allow for modifications and adaptation of strategy. Taylor (2008) and Wilson (2010) alert us of the necessity to ensure that the communications problem that had been identified and the objectives and strategy drawn up to address it are in tune with each other. These tracking studies should in the view of Smith (2012) lead to a final or summative report that seeks to answer if and how the tactics met the objectives that had been agreed upon in the beginning.

Public relations evaluation appears to rely on a wide range of tools which are at times of dubious quality. Rice and Atkin (2002) and Xavier et al. (2005) point out that communication practitioners still often agree with their clients on output evaluations. These essentially measure the amount of tools used and the quantity of material produced and disseminated. Although these measurements tend to be applied in a professional commercial setting they are arguably ill suited to establish the effectiveness of a communication programme (Smith, 2012). In 1990, Blissland criticised the measurement of output as a mere recording of who says what through which channel. Outputs are associated with the counting of attendance at open days and events, clicks on web pages or the number of articles in a newspaper (Lindenmann, 1997). Wilson (2010) suggests that this kind of evaluation is a judgment of the process of communications itself and largely unrelated to considerations of

effects. Recording of quantity is therefore associated with now dated approaches to communications and media effects research.<sup>34</sup>

Ken Gofton (1999) reminds us that while advertising measurement tends to concentrate on audience exposure, the evaluations of public relations activities potentially go further and evaluate perceptions, impacts and reactions to communication activities as well.<sup>35</sup> In the view of Smith (2012) a pre-test/post-test arrangement would be appropriate to identify changes in public perceptions. Grunig and Hunt (1984) suggest an evaluation process in five stages. A specification of objectives is followed by measuring the current situation. In a third step data is collected, analysed and compared to the specific objectives that serve as a benchmark. Step four is according to Grunig and Hunt (1984) the reporting of results to decision makers who finally in a fifth step feed the results into a new cycle in the management process.

As far back as 1977 Stamm provided a feasible framework that informs when to evaluate, where, how and what should specifically be evaluated. He emphasises that evaluative research should accompany the entire strategic process and relevant assessment should already help direct the planning process which within the behavioural molecule framework is referred to as “construct” and “select.” This early evaluation is expected to ensure that the ensuing communications programme is appropriate and efficient. Stamm (1977) goes on to argue that evaluations should be designed to take into account the audience’s attitudes and concerns and not be limited to the organisation’s point of view. Thirdly, a continuity of small comparable studies is deemed to be of more use than a one shot broad study which does not allow tracking deficiencies and strengths over time. This view is shared by Grunig and Hunt (1984) and endorsed by Wilson (2010) who differentiates

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<sup>34</sup> Considerations of communication effectiveness that focus on the quantity of messages and the selection of communication channels only date back to Harold Lasswell’s research. For further details consult Lasswell’s (1971 – new edition) *Propaganda Techniques in World War One*, which was first published in 1927.

<sup>35</sup> McQuail (1994) in chapter VI outlines the complexity of accounting for media effects. There appears to be a tendency to understand media effects as a negotiated process that requires interpretations to be embedded in a societal context. This calls for more sophisticated evaluative strategies in reputation management for politics.

between process and outcome evaluations and emphasises the value of a tracking process which arguably allows predictions about the viability of a programme's progress.

### **2.8.12. Conclusion**

We have now dissected existing communication management models in search of what could turn out to be the barebones for a reformed and integrated model of political communication and reputation management. The managerial aspects described in sections 2.8.1 to 2.8.9. do not address several critical variables that condition communications practice in a political context. These variables – such as the role of journalists, media relations and agenda setting techniques as well as resources - will be identified in section 2.9. and may help generate an integrated communications management model.

The immediate benefit of the discussion in sections 2.8.1 to 2.8.9. is that through a better understanding of strategic communication management models I may develop a more accurate perception of specific behaviour that reflects a strategic, planned or emergent approach towards communications processes. In other words, this review provides the prism necessary to identify and analyse processes communicators engage in to manage a politician's reputation. These findings will help guide my semi structured interviews later on in this study's empirical part.

This literature review blends the two disciplines PR and political science in order to develop the conceptual framework needed to identify and understand phenomena that condition the communications between politicians and their environment. This integration of disciplines broadens our perspectives and adds to the conventional political marketing approach which – as we have seen in section 2.2. – is more concerned with a somewhat narrowly defined enquiry into voter satisfaction and exchange processes between candidates and the electorate. What public relations may contribute to this discussion is a

concept of trust which is grounded in mutual exchange that eventually feeds into the generation of reputation.

It may be argued that overlaps and concurrent traditions between both marketing's and public relations' conceptual frameworks are evident. The market oriented approach that declares the customer a partner in the development of services and products, may roughly find its equivalent in an open systems interpretation of public relations which defines the communicator as facilitator between two systems – in our case politician and media. I would argue however, that whilst in the tradition of marketing the mutual understanding between two entities is a means to achieve a particular tangible end in the form of a profitable exchange, public relations arguably allows for the possibility of reciprocal exchange and understanding as an end in itself. This apparent lack of purpose may be instrumental in the build-up of trust which in 2.7.5 has been identified as critical for emergence of reputation.

A weakness in the existing literature is that models that are generated with the political context in mind are apparently not portraying a communication process that aims at the build-up or management of reputation. Also, authors in marketing tended to concentrate their analysis of communication processes on a time period leading up to election day. This suggests that the sequence of planning and implementation phases they describe are a reflection of a brief campaigning season which do not strive for long term effects that are needed to build up reputation (see section 2.7.5.). What is missing in management models is an acknowledgement of strategic political communication management as it evolves throughout non-election years and with particular focus on its strategic reputational objectives. This perspective is taken and discussed in section 2.9.

It was the purpose of this section to convey a notion of the features a strategic communications management procedure that is intended to manage a politician's reputation needs to incorporate. This discussion has provided benchmarks that help plan for and guide research interviews and at a later stage help understand data, identify patterns and interpret findings.

## **2.9. Reviewing professional practice: Managing political communications**

Social psychologists have conceptualised issues relating to the creation and communication of a public persona and identified how communicators tasked with modelling a politician's reputation face a number of challenges. This section allows us briefly to touch upon a few aspects of this literature that border on the brief a political communicator responsible for a candidate's or incumbent's reputation will be dealing with.

Whether on stage or in a broadcast, political protagonists have to reckon with the general necessity to behave in part theatrically and to rely on visual devices that are perceivable in public. In the process politicians make use of techniques we would normally expect in theatrical performances. There is an assumption that the politician's quasi theatrical self-presentation serves to display convictions and to demonstrate power (Arnold 1998).

The theatrical performance has to help forge, focus and send messages in a nutshell: Greg Jenkins, former TV producer and charged with travel logistics at George W. Bush's White House made it clear that he wanted stories to be told in one camera shot rather than sentences of journalistic commentary (Hujer, 2003). Body language and rhetorical skills are at premium in any television broadcast while the print media still tends to stress a story's facts and figures somewhat more (Meyer et al., 2000). Popular media that rely strongly on the power of images portray – for instance - a hand shake as a popular gesture to demonstrate understanding and trust (Nolte, 2005).

As a consequence media savvy politicians appear to be in a comfortable position. Considering the coverage available in the audio-visual media, gifted actors in politics strive to emotionalise, simplify and visualise their performances (Nolte, 2005). Social psychologists speak of impression management tools such as “ingratiation” or “exemplification”, the latter of which is based on the communication of virtue (Jones and Pittman, 1982).

Moral virtues such as honesty, integrity, generosity or dedication and self sacrifice are apparently conveyed to foster an individual's public image.

Theatrical presentations are helped along, justified or even created by events. If events are in short supply media advisors are known to organise them systematically. These constructed media opportunities come in the disguise of party conventions, press conferences or talk show participation. These are phenomena Daniel Boorstin coined the term "pseudo-event" for (Boorstin, 1992). Some pseudo-events take a much more intimate story line and reveal aspects of a politician's private life such as fears, hopes, personal experiences or pastime activities.

However, there appear to be a number of constraints that limit the range of options in impression managements. The effectiveness of the tools in impression management we heard of so far is limited by the audience's attitudes and preconceptions. These pre-conceived views about a political party or political leaders may be stronger than presentational efforts to counter them. Leary (1995) mentions Richard Nixon who after he was found guilty of having masterminded the Watergate scandal was widely seen as an unredeemable crook. Any efforts he may subsequently have undertaken to present himself as honest and law-abiding would have been mocked outright. Jones and Pittman (1982) have shown that publicly known or accessible facts about our present and past lives considerably limit our capacity to manage impressions.

Research on impression management confirmed how events have the potential to wreak havoc. Policy failures and adverse news or third party interference potentially throw a negative light on an individual. Predicaments may make a protagonist look silly, foolish, clumsy, stupid (Edelman, 1987; Miller, 1992) and may eventually ruin the impression that was originally intended (Schlenker, 1990).

Social psychology explores relationships between people or groups and seeks to interpret reactions. However, social psychologists writing about



impression management fail to explore the strategic aspect and ignore institutional resources needed to research, project and implement communication techniques. Also exchanges with the media and the specific institutional environment of political communications are not widely covered by social psychologists who examine impression management.

To be able to understand the specific circumstance impression management instruments are being applied in, we now turn to an analysis of the media environment political communicators operate in.

### **2.9.1. Media and political communication management practice**

In this section I intend to discuss to what degree the understanding of the media and its mechanisms are critical for communicators who seek to manage messages and set the agenda. This entails their ability to sense what journalists look for, what they expect, how they process stories and how they present them in their respective media (Burton, 2007). Tiffen in his 1989 landmark study reminded us of how politicians adapt to and use patterns of communications that journalists react positively to. In this context McCombs (2008) detailed how political leaders endeavour to influence the news coverage which requires them to understand the relationships of mutual dependency between politicians and the media and to engage in agenda setting mechanisms which I will be discussing in the following paragraphs.

If the role of political journalism as crucial facilitator of opinion building in the public sphere, authoritative point of reference for the public and leading interpreter of political processes constitutes a core part of democratic society it may be worth taking a closer look at the underlying rationale that shapes media coverage. A Journalist's job description requires them to select and summarise the information that is accessible to them in order to adapt it for their respective audiences (Gans, 1979; Conboy, 2011). Yet ever since Edmund Burke in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century described the beginnings of the free press in the UK it has been questioned if journalists actually confine themselves to reporting events and passing on facts for the sake of educating

citizens. Walter Lippmann was under no illusions when he wrote in 1922 that a newspaper is the result of selection processes that determine which story is printed, in what size and on which page (Lippmann, 1997). While in the decades ensuing Lippmann's writing debate about media effects remained inconclusive, there was agreement that through their power to select and interpret information, journalists gain a pivotal function in political communications (McNair, 2003).

As most events and issues in society are outside the grasp of most citizens the news media's pivotal role is not only limited to allocating relevance to some issues over others, it also entails interpreting themes one way or another. Gerstle et al. (1991) hold the view that journalists interpret meaning and explore what is relevant in politics. It is this initial interpretative framework that emerges when over time different media interact with their audiences. This framework becomes the reference point and in the long run the agenda for subsequent reporting (McNair 2003). The power of the media to select issues, define attributes and thus influence public opinion has allowed journalists to exercise a crucial political function (Weaver, 1996; McCombs, 2008).<sup>36</sup>

From a communication manager's perspective the differentiation between setting the agenda and framing issues is critical. By framing we mean attempts to interpret issues, to emphasise as well as de-emphasise particular traits or qualities in an organisation or individual and highlight selected aspects of a story (Balmas and Sheaffer, 2010; Gitlin, 1980). Curtin (1999) and Turk (1986) contend that the practice of PR is intrinsically linked to agenda setting since the tools deployed by communication managers largely generate information which in turn is offered to journalists in an expectation that they feed this into the news agenda. This relationship between the media and communication managers is described in competitive terms. While the journalist seeks independent information, the communicators are trying to

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<sup>36</sup> Greenaway et al. (1992) introduce a variant agenda setting concept which is more of a collaborative approach between politics and the media. Miller et al. (1998) use this approach to analyse the HIV/AIDS campaign the government ran in the 1980s once the media had alerted the public to the health risks.

force their information and interpretation onto the journalist (Ohl, 1995; Gans 1979).

Tedesco (2011) takes this argument further and adds that PR managers not only push themes on the agenda but at the same time influence the emphasis of reporting events or individuals. This emphasis may intend to direct the public's attention on candidate's qualities such as honesty, competence, or compassion (Hallahan, 2011). Framing theory conceptualises political communicators as sources – or framing strategists - who send information that echoes their preferred interpretation (Hallahan, 1999). The media in turn is referred to in framing literature as intermediaries. Communicators strive to use these media channels to extend their preferred frame (Entmann, 2004). Though alternatively the media may decide to reject the frame suggested by the public relations manager and re-frame the story or the individual (Kypers, 1997). The notion of framing adds a cultural dimension to the relationship between communicator and journalist that has been likened to a barter trade with an almost business like perspective. While politicians try to interpret – or frame - their decisions or their personalities in a favourable way, journalists have been seen to accept or decline this frame and instead offer their own which they expect is more in line with how their audiences interpret events (Ryan, 1991; Scheufele, 1999).

As we have discussed earlier in this literature review sufficient financial resources and expertise are in the view of Wolfsfeld (2003) critical in a politician's endeavour to shape the agenda and control the frame. Once communicators have defined the frame, they engage in impression management activities that shape the public's understanding and images of the politician (Hallahan, 2010). These tactical options range from media stunts and press releases to selecting the right colour of a tie and the organisation of pseudo-events. While analysis of communication techniques is not the focus of this study, their power to focus public attention and mould public perceptions of candidates and incumbents need to be borne in mind (Brewer and Sigelman, 2002). Similarly, Wolfsfeld emphasises the centrality of real events that are outside the communicator's control. Adverse events that

cannot be prevented may be interpreted by communicators to support an existing news frame. In other words, what is being perceived by the publics, but not controlled and guided by the political communicator may still be interpreted in conflicting ways by a range of political contenders who each seek to use the appropriate frame in an attempt to legitimise their respective policies or personality (Wolfsfeld, 2003)

It has been argued that the technicalities of agenda setting are not particularly complex. Zoch and Molleda (2006) detail a step by step procedure starting with the recognition that information sources are needed. Yet they also point out that the quality of the relationship between communication manager and journalist is pivotal to the success of agenda setting. In their view it is the mutual recognition of trust, openness and credibility that ensures and determines the effectiveness of the relationship between communication professional and journalist. From the managerial perspective we are concerned with in this study it is worth stressing this latter point that is taken up by Howard (2004). In his view, agenda setting hinges more than anything else on the interpersonal relationship between journalists and their sources. This is an observation made and acknowledged by a number of writers in past decades (Delli Carpini, 1994; Wanta, 1991).

The power of well-resourced communicators to set the news agenda is limited by what in communication studies is referred to as “news value”. Part of media logic dictates journalists to echo what their audiences like to see printed and broadcast (McCombs, 2008). In turn communicators would have to shape their selection and content of messages to meet these values and interests. If they fail to take this environment into account they lose the edge their resources would otherwise have given them in their relationship with the media (Schudson, 1991, Palmer, 2000). The relevance of financial and staff resources for the effectiveness of the agenda setting process will be looked into in section 2.10.

At this point a final consideration needs to be raised which helps understand and to some degree predict a communicator’s ability to access the media and

potentially affect the agenda: Status, reliability and expertness are the characteristics that in the view of Simons and Jones (2011) add weight to a source in communication processes. Davis (2003) refers to this as media capital or “legitimate authority” to speak out in public and be listened to. This privilege is usually linked to a formal position in business or politics to represent a constituency or represent issues and thus be taken seriously. Smith (2012) expands this list and emphasises the need for sources to be credited with charisma, credibility and control. He identified authority as a third fundamental prerequisite for the successful use of persuasive rhetoric. Broom (2009) cautions us against jumping to conclusions and draws attention to inconclusive research results. In his view the effectiveness of source attributes can be questioned. He suggests their impact is contingent on variables such as the specific situation, issue and time. Broom’s agreement with his peers appears to be limited to the recognition that depending on the scenario sources may have a considerable but varying effect on the initial receptivity to messages.

At this point it should be noted that gaining access to the agenda particularly for senior political figures and relevant institutions may arguably not be the highest priority. Instead they are thought to aim more explicitly at managing information which at times requires keeping news off the agenda and hindering journalists’ access to critical data (Ericson et al. 1989; Jones, 1999; Pearson, 2008). However, this also implies that political outsiders, newcomers or dissidents may struggle to gain access to news media. In order to offset this presentational disadvantage they arguably feel inclined to formulate more radically, propose extreme policies or engage in unique publicity stunts as a means to attract media attention and secure coverage (Wolfsfeld, 2003).

### **2.9.2 Agendas and frames in communication management**

The way in which journalists approach their profession has highly practical consequences for politicians’ ability to access media channels in order to convey messages to their publics. We shall therefore now briefly look at the literature about political journalism from the politician’s perspective.

It was outlined in the previous section that media access hinges on the communicator's appreciation of the media process and an ability to frame messages in a way that is recognised newsworthy and pertinent to the audience. In other words politicians are expected to generate news which journalists accept to be relevant and gripping (Cook, 1996; Gitlin, 1980; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009).

In the view of Shaefer (2008) there are two categories to differentiate what makes its way onto the news agenda. Category one consists of themes, events or personalities that in a political-cultural context are deemed important to society. A high ranking government politician who is about to announce a crucial change of policy would therefore provide journalists with two reasons to pay attention (Wolfsfeld 2003; Bennett and George, 2005). The second category that shapes the news agenda reflects largely the media's own journalistic instinct and economic logic: An interest in the unusual, novel and dramatic as well as an endemic tendency to personalise and dramatise (Staab, 1990; Wolfsfeld 1997; Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999).

These categories constitute the context for a constant and ongoing struggle for attention and dominance. Not represented in Shaefer's (2008) model however is a point raised by McCombs (2008) who wondered if journalists limit themselves to reporting facts or instead pursue their perspective political agendas. From a politician's perspective the key to access the news agenda is engagement with political events and conflict which attract media attention and thus compete with senior political figures who in their own right are being allocated a share of media coverage. (Schlesinger 1993; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995).

Strategic perspectives to succeed in this contest for media attention and positive frames are presented by New Labour's former media manager Mandelson (2011) who details how communications departments regularly use parliamentary lobby journalists to test and air tentative policy proposals or names of candidates in view of likely media feedback and potential public

support. This practice intended to test public reactions suggests that media relations are not only part of a mutual bargaining process between media and communicators, but also requires politicians and their staff to be open and responsive to external expectations posed by the environment. This perspective ties in with a discussion about mutual exchanges in communication processes which in sections 2.8.1 and 2.8.2 have been considered in the context of communication management planning.

The opportunities for politicians to feed journalists information and see it published or broadcast afterwards is greatly aided not only by an extended number of news channels, particularly in broadcast and online media, but also by the ever more limited financial and personnel resources available to editorial offices as well as tight deadlines and growing work pressure. (Davies, 2008; Morris and Goldsworthy, 2008). It would seem that this mixture of factors make the ready-to-use media information provided by party and government communications departments appear a welcome shortcut for journalists (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994; Quinn, 2012). It could be argued that politicians who have the appropriate budget and professional advice may be best equipped to understand media production and then focus their public relations most accurately at the needs of particular journalists. The role of communications officers as information subsidisers was already described by Gandy (1982) in the 1980s and a decade later by Manheim (1994) which suggests that the phenomenon transcends the current financial squeeze on journalistic resources. Communication managers who bear this in mind and seek to get the right data as well as the best prepared sound bites delivered at the right point in time and well ahead of deadlines for the news editions may have an edge over competitors who do not dispose of comparable PR resources (McNair 2003).

While in theory any politician can frame public perception through influencing how the media covers an issue (Fridkin and Kenney, 2005), it has been established that in this struggle over power of interpretation the rules and customs of news making favour incumbents as opposed to challengers (Clarke and Evans, 1983). Incumbents tend to have this advantage due to

greater resources to orchestrate the production and disseminating of information (Fridkin and Kenney, 2005). Also, Cook (1989) reminds us that journalists are much more inclined to phone up the incumbent as it is here where authoritative information is produced which a challenger can never claim to have. Graber (1997) adds that a news desk to ensure journalistic success is dependent on a good relationship with incumbents and therefore will probably give the incumbents' message more space and possibly front page coverage where the challenger may have had to do with less space and air time or none at all.

By the same token a party or government job offers individuals a valuable opportunity to demonstrate their skills, talents, knowledge and competence (Leary, 1995). Thus incumbents seek to use their party or ministerial briefs as a means to demonstrate their strengths and talents (Baumeister, 1989). A core skill is said to be their ability to establish cordial relationships with journalists (Graber, 1997). Pearson (2008) concurs that politicians' efforts are aided by journalists' quest for news which are a prerequisite for the sales of papers or the ratings of broadcasts. This state of affairs arguably reflects the pressure journalists are exposed to in order to fill airwaves and pages (Campbell, 2011). This also reminds us how journalists pressure politicians to provide them with newsworthy material for news (Lloyd, 2004). The reason for these mounting demands appears to be found in the growing competition between broadcasters and publishers for stagnating and dwindling audiences for political news reporting (McNair, 2003).<sup>37</sup> Growing pressure and competition among journalists for political news may also be driven by increasing speed and turn-over rate in news reporting which is illustrated by Lloyd who explains how both radio and television run news stories repeatedly until a subsequent news item takes their place (Lloyd, 2004). Arguably, politics has earned itself a reputation for having been particularly well placed to satisfy journalists' hunger for events and news (Blumler and Kavanagh, 1999). This craving for news can be seen as an incentive for both sides to engage in mutually beneficial collaboration which guarantees the journalist

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<sup>37</sup> Apart from CNN and Sky News with its constantly updated 24 hour news cycle the BBC set up its own all day rolling news programme on Radio 5 and BBC News 24 on television.



information whilst the politician in return can hope for extensive and positive coverage (Boorstin, 1992).

Already in the early 1960s, this mutual dependence and the pressure to produce content had accelerated the emergence of a phenomenon that Boorstin terms “pseudo-events” (Boorstin, 1992). These are events that did not have intrinsic news value and are intended for communicative purposes only. Pseudo-events in politics may come in the form of a series of carefully orchestrated leaks, verbal attacks, scandals and crisis management (McNair, 2000)<sup>38</sup>. It comes as little surprise that the media’s parasitic dependence on other institutions such as government and political parties to generate news is said to have been growing over the past years (Tiffen, 1989; Davies, 2008; Quinn, 2012).

It has been argued in this section that journalists have their very own agenda and aim to dramatise whilst politicians’ may pursue a different set of objectives. This sets the scene for a politician’s working relationship with the media as does another perhaps less obvious observation made in this section that needs emphasis here. It has been argued that incumbents and candidates are not given the same opportunities to present themselves and their policies in public. The incumbent appears to gain preferential treatment which clearly may be of use to a politician who needs both media attention and leverage to frame the thrust of the coverage. While writers in communication studies do offer us the insights into the mechanisms and motivations of media reporting, they make little mention of the technicalities of strategic media relations and the tactics of presentational policy that we would expect communication managers and politicians to pursue.

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<sup>38</sup> With regard to events and pseudo-events it is worth looking at Kaid et al. (1991) who make a valuable distinction between objective, subjective and constructed reality.

## **2.10. Defining resources: Expertise, structures and access**

Whilst journalism has become faster and more aggressive politicians have responded by professionalising their public relations. This development in turn raised concern among observers of political journalism. It is feared journalists may allow themselves to be guided if not manipulated by increasingly well-resourced public relations managers (Michie, 1998; Pearson, 2008). There is a suspicion journalists could be too gullible when dealing with political communicators who try and divert them from their critical path of investigation and reporting (Bagdikian, 1984; Davies, 2008).

This section intends to explore how political communicators needed to professionalise and draw on resources necessary to operate effectively. Also I shall be reviewing literature about organisational arrangements that define a communicator's role and responsibilities inside a political party or in a government office. It shall be seen which organisational structures and arrangements of access to senior deciders would be needed to allow PR related expertise to be fed into the political decision making process and inform the policies pursued and implemented.

This discussion is grounded in the assumption that the process of systematic and strategic communication management hinges on the resources that are made available. Some connection may actually be identified between financial and personal resources as well as organisational structure on the one hand and the ability to conduct research based communications by objectives on the other.<sup>39</sup>

An increase in resources has created the conditions for more professionalism in the communication management practice, which has arguably been formative for political communication in recent decades. In the following section I seek to discuss the growth of professionalism in political PR as an

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<sup>39</sup> For a definition and discussion of the strategic communication process see section 2.8.

indicator for the degree to which notions of communications planning and strategy are pursued.

### **2.10.1. Professionalism**

Professionalism is a term which sums up a number of features that describe how communication management modernises its techniques and adapts to a changing environment. For Papathanassopoulos et al. (2007) professionalism is grounded in technological, social and political structures communications managers have to operate in. They list examples such as the use of specially designed campaign headquarters, polls, experts, faster and multi-channel news management to name just a few. Papathanassopoulos et al. (2007) conceptualises professionalisation as an ongoing alteration of practices that help centralise and organise resources with the intention to improve performance. Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) particularly point at the re-organisation of political parties and government departments, improvements in data gathering and voter segmentation, more efficient use of communication channels and more sophisticated media management techniques which they term the professionalised paradigm.

Negrine (2007) describes professionalisation through an analysis of change and adaptation to the developments in political communication over time. More specifically, Scammell, considers technological progress as a sign of “professionalism” (Scammell, 1998, p.255). This latter definition is closer to the common usage of the word and implies a continuous improvement of practice. This is in contrast with the discourse held among professions such as medicine and law whose members meet a catalogue of criteria to recognise their status as a profession (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2007). Negrine (2007) agrees that the interpretation of what constitutes professionalism for those who work in political communication is much looser and does not match the rigid categories – ranging from a code of conduct to a definable body of knowledge – as have been identified by Freidson (2001).

Scammell goes on to argue that in two respects political communications in parties and governments have tangibly become more professional. One entails a higher level of specialisation. Largely as a consequence of more generous financial resources being available, communication departments seek to draw on the expertise provided by specialists of a specific communication function such as polling or online communications (Scammell, 2007, 2008). Secondly, Scammell points out that political leadership relies more heavily on the views of and advice from professional strategists rather than party officials (Scammell, 2007, 2008). This latter phenomenon has been subject to research by political scientists who mainly view it in terms of the consequences external advice may have on the power structures of political parties (Mair, 1998). From a communication management perspective, questions about the degree to which communication and marketing specialists find access to the decision making processes in political parties is probably more relevant. Lees-Marshment (2008) and Farrell and Webb (2002) are zooming in on these issues which may indicate if and to what extent strategic communication knowledge and skills are drawn upon in reputation management activities. The literature appears to suggest wide agreement about the considerable presence of communication and marketing experts in the planning and implementation of election campaigns in the UK which may potentially be indicative of the strategic communications expertise available. (Plasser and Plasser, 2002; Thurber and Nelson, 2000).

For a political party to adapt its communications to a changing environment and maintain a competitive advantage it needs not only the appropriate expert staff but also suitable structures. As has already been pointed out in section 2.3. the Labour Party pioneered since the late 1980s a campaign headquarters external to the political party headquarters. This allowed a nucleus of experts to manage communications with limited interference from party officials who were kept at a distance at least physically (Gould, 1998b).

### **2.10.2. Resources**

For communication objectives to be achieved, strategies to be developed and tactics to be implemented, politicians in the UK tend to rely on a support infrastructure which is either sponsored by their respective party or various parts of the departmental civil service. The dependency on a well organised communication department, expertise of expert staff and finances is beyond dispute and has been discussed since political communication became an academically studied phenomenon. Already in 1963 Abrams reminded us that a well organised political party organisation, expert communications department and money were key factors of success in political communication. The same thrust of argument had already been used by Kelly less than decade before (Kelley, 1956). More recently Plasser and Plasser (2002) asserted that financial resources are critical to any communicator who aimed to draw on professional expertise grounded in research data.

In 1996 Tunstall contended that at the time British government communication units in Downing Street and at departmental level were only able to operate in politically calm periods. As soon as issues emerged that led to controversy and perhaps a crisis situation, the government's communication department would flounder due to a lack of staff and expertise. This situation has changed since Tunstall made his observation as mainly the Blair government tangibly increased resources available to government communications both in terms of finances and staff (Negrine, 2008). Most personnel are at the disposal of the Prime Minister's office. The political PR functions in ministerial departments may either all be covered by a single communications professional or addressed by various specialists within the Minister's office, aided by civil servants, external consultants or agencies (Negrine, 2008).

While Tunstall's argument reminds us of the pivotal role of resources and their impact on the quality of communication services in the mid-1990s and beyond, Negrine (2008) highlights that a dearth of staff still occasionally limits the communicative options in departments today. Yet, quite apart from numbers the skills and training background of new recruits arguably makes a

difference as both Blair and Campbell demonstrated when they predominantly drew on former journalists to fill government communications jobs. Their alleged strength appeared to be their understanding of the news media logic. They imbued government's PR activities with the means and approaches usually adopted by journalists. They arranged for instance for Prime Minister Blair to have 166 newspaper articles published with his by-line in the first two years of government alone (Franklin, 2003). This sensitive media relations work that directly aided cabinet members' image was taken care of by special advisors, who in UK politics are traditionally appointed upon the understanding that they were completely loyal to the politician and supportive of their respective political objectives. Both responsibilities and numbers of special advisors increased in comparison with civil service press officers (Franklin, 2003, Jones, 2001).

The distribution and the balance of resources between the media and communication managers are arguably critical in determining the influence and power in this competitive relationship between politicians and journalists. Aeron Davis accounts how in recent years the resources available to journalists have shrunk while news sources tend to increase their efforts to equip communicators with appropriate and growing resources (Davis, 2003). The re-balancing of resources in public relations' favour has in recent years been affecting journalists' editorial autonomy as they increasingly rely on newsworthy material that is provided by communicators themselves. In other words the more human and financial resources a communications department has at its disposal, the more it is likely to invest in media contacts which in turn strengthens its position in the agenda setting process (Miller, 1994; Manning; 2001). However Davis (2003) cautions against the conclusion that the link between resources on the one hand and the amount of coverage and the quality of media relations on the other is linear.

### **2.10.3. Internal organisation and access**

Internal organisation and issues of access for professional advisors to the political leadership are critical for the effectiveness and efficiency in political

communications processes. Negrine describes how political parties tend to employ external experts to help specifically with campaigns while party officials tend to stay in overall control (Negrine, 2007).

Politically neutral civil servants claim to be handling government communications while at the same time politicians make ever more extensive use of external political advisors and outside experts who are tasked to oversee communications operations (Negrine, 2007).

A communication professional's political power and influence within their party or department varies and hinges on formal arrangements. Some may work as full time political advisors and gain a pivotal role in the politician's entourage such as Alastair Campbell for Tony Blair or initially Andy Coulson for David Cameron. Others may for a variety of reasons be only temporarily employed. The latter are for instance experts that are hired specifically to support during campaigns, but otherwise kept at a distance from issues of content and policy making (Negrine, 2007).

A reason why in government departments communications special media advisors are not always fully integrated into the organisational structure is related to the British notion of an impartial civil service. This notion is difficult to reconcile with the approach taken by partisan political advisors or experts who are tasked to bring about a politician's or a party's re-election (Phillis, 2004).

One may wonder about the consequences of these organisational arrangements and question if they allowed for expertise to be offered, taken on board and acted on. This question gains in relevance in view of the notion that communications management expertise is only effective if given access to the decision makers at top level (Botan, 2006; Hallahan et al., 2007). Strömbäck et al. (2011) warn that communication managers' efficiency is tangibly reduced if they are not granted access to top decision makers. It is argued that advisors who are not involved at the point of deliberations running up to decisions find it hard to manage relationships with publics and

safeguard reputation. However, Andrew Cooper, who was in charge of the Conservative's 2001 polling operations conceded that most of the external expert advice was ignored (Cooper, 2002).

Kelley (1956), a pioneer in political PR writing quotes a practitioner who already in the 1950s detailed that the communication manager is only of value if they "sit in on all planning sessions and do his part in the selecting of issues". Further on he insisted that "public relations in a campaign are worthless unless the PR man has at least a voice in selecting, determining and projecting issues" (Kelly, 1956, p.211-212). Kelley believes that PR managers can only have an impact and shape the relationship with critical publics if they are involved in policy making. This normative perspective appears not to be echoed in organisational reality. Writers on public relations consider the communications manager who is admitted to meetings with senior management an exception (Moss, 2011b).

While the exclusivity of access to senior management echelons at the expense of PR advice appears to be the norm in businesses, a different case may be made for political organisations due to their visibility as well as the competitive and volatile environment they operate in (Strömbäck and Kioussis, 2011; Grunig et al., 2002). Castells (2009) and Thompson (2000) remind us that political settings are prone to scandals which add to the demand for PR to be part of the highest levels of the management structure (Ulmer et al., 2007; Stacks, 2004).

A range of specific internal strategic and tactical tasks as well as reporting and communication structures suggest that it is perhaps not appropriate to discuss communicators as one homogenous group: In reality communication professionals have a range of different functions, roles and skills. It may be argued that their respective position and contribution in the campaign management dictates and regulates the degree of access to the party leadership or ministerial offices. Against this backdrop Johnson categorises communicators and suggests three groups: Strategists who are tasked with developing strategic advice; specialists whose views are drawn upon for data



about polling or speech writing; finally, vendors - also referred to as technicians - who are briefed to produce or deploy print material, website content or mailing lists (Johnson, 2000). Of these groups, poll takers tend to be granted access to the most senior decision taker boards as they were seen not only as a resource for research information but also as source of considerate and balanced judgement (Harris, 1963; Gould, 1998a; Mattinson, 2010). However, Harris details that the expert's level of involvement may vary and be dependent on the individual's role, which may allow them to be privy to the most critical strategic decisions. Branigan (2006) concurs with this description and suggests that Philip Gould as New Labour's pollster used focus group results to advocate and bring about the Labour Party's reorganisation.

It is partly because of this intense involvement that it is worth asking if and to what degree communicators had a say not only in the delivery of the message but in the process of policy selection and content development as well (Negrine, 2008). Already in 1966 Windlesham pointed out that advisors tasked with effective presentation of political messages may try to mould the message itself. Alastair Campbell, Tony Blair's head of communications at Downing Street believed that communications objectives and policy objectives should be aligned by communicators. This view required a professional practice the civil servants felt deeply uncomfortable with (Negrine, 2008). The civil servants in the Government Information Service were ill equipped to support Campbell's active and partisan communication agenda that at times verged on the aggressive and manipulative. While they may have been relied upon to distribute information, they lacked the strategic and dynamic approach Campbell had in mind (Seldon, 2005). The quality of support provided by the civil service structure to communicators varied and was arguably inferior to what sheer numbers and budget figures might suggest.

This becomes evident in findings in the Public Administration Select Committee's Sixth Report which identifies a lack of interest in communications and presentational issues among senior civil servants who are involved with drawing up policies (Public Administration Select Committee, 1998). The use

of special advisors has since 1964 been a response to deal with this shortcoming. Their brief often includes public relations functions as Blick details in his study (Blick, 2004). However, it was found that the presence of individual special advisors until the late 1990s did not compensate a lack of coordination among departmental communication departments nor was the arrangement conducive to the formulation and implementation of a coherent communication strategy. This analysis of communicative failure was published in the Mountfield Report which had investigated the quality of government communications (Mountfield Report, 1997). Seven years later the Phillis Review concluded that government communications still lacked coherence and were in need both of modernisation, centralisation and professionalisation. This shortcoming may be largely attributable to the civil service staff in government communications units who were still adhering to the view that the dissemination of information on the one hand and giving advice on the content of policy decision making on the other were separate functions that should be kept apart (Phillis Review, 2004).

The ensuing centralisation comprised both the communications as well as the policy planning arm of government. It has been argued that this led to a concentration of power in Downing Street which arguably altered how the Prime Minister was presented to and perceived by the public. In this context it is perhaps not a surprise that Rose (2001) and Seymour-Ure (2003) saw the Prime Minister's position and image became to some degree "presidentialised" while in subsequent years his grip on government communication activities arguably surpassed the control exercised by his predecessors (Negrine, 2008). This centralisation allowed Campbell in the name of the Prime Minister to control and integrate messages systematically. He aligned the messages and expected press officers in all departments to include in all their communications with the media – for instance - the standardised template that the Labour administration was a "government for all the people", that is "delivering on its promises" and aims to pursue a course of "mainstream policies" (Financial Times, 1997, p.2).

In conclusion, resources, internal organisation and issues of access appear to provide a framework that determines effectiveness and efficiency of communication professionals. It may be argued that the planning process and the intensity and quality of advice hinge to some degree on the role and position communicators are allocated as well as the quantity and quality of financial and personal resources they have at their disposal.

## **2.11. Conclusion**

While the literature review may serve as benchmark to guide and focus the subsequent gathering and analysis of data, it is also instrumental in justifying the direction and purpose of this study by identifying a gap in the existing knowledge. Admittedly, both the personalisation in politics as well as concepts about planned communication management have for years been subject of broad debates. Likewise, public relations practice and its role in reputation building have been comprehensively explored.

Yet, how communicators go about establishing and maintaining the reputation of individual politicians is a question that has not drawn comparable scholarly attention. While this issue is discussed both in political science and communication literature, neither of those disciplines has attempted to clarify empirically by which degree politicians owe their personal reputation to a planned and managed strategy or alternatively to a blend of tactical media relations and reactions to unpredictable events. This is the gap in the literature I have identified and hope to fill by addressing my research objectives which aim

- to explore and identify features that distinguish a planned, strategic communications approach in political reputation management from a reactive, tactical one.
- to consider the resources and circumstances that militate against or enable a strategic approach in political reputation management.

- to understand if, to what degree and under which circumstances we may expect a politician's reputation to be managed strategically.
- to integrate findings in a predictive theoretical framework of strategic personal reputation management in British politics.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

It is the purpose of this chapter to select and justify an appropriate research strategy to address my research questions. Both the approach to and the conduct of empirical studies are informed by research theory which shapes all critical decisions that are taken throughout this project (Mason, 1993). We are reminded that theory in qualitative research must not be understood as an additional or dispensable feature but instead as the guiding principle that is evoked repeatedly to guide, modify, approve or reject all ideas that condition research (Coffey, 1999).

If this research is not originating from a hypothesis this is due to theoretical reasons which I am trying to present in the following lines. We have established in the preceding chapter that the literature about the use of communications management strategy to build up politicians' reputation is at an incipient stage. The behaviour of and professional approach taken by communications consultants in the process of political reputation building has so far not been conceptualised within the theoretical frameworks of communication management literature and will hence be in the focus of this study. It is therefore suggested that an inductive explorative approach is needed to shed light on this subject area. The design and method that I have selected ensure an inductive investigation that is grounded in theoretical assumptions expounded in public relations literature.

The qualitative, inductive research design I have chosen should lead to the identification of features and patterns within political communication management and concurrently shed light both on internal and external factors that condition how communications management is being practiced. I anticipate findings that may help us understand if and to what degree strategic communications management does take place, how it works, who and what is instrumental in researching, agreeing and meeting reputational objectives, how and which resources are used to operate effectively and to what extent reputation management is contingent upon or autonomous from a political party, political decisions or communications management expertise and advice. Eventually findings may contribute to the development of a theoretical model that represents the explicit and underlying variables which shape these processes.

This chapter is divided in to sections that spell out the selected research design and method, and reflect on their respective strengths and potential weaknesses. Further down I will explain the rationale for my decision to apply a qualitative paradigm which justifies the use of in depth semi-structured interviews. I try to argue that my explorative qualitative design is best suited to identify meaning and illustrate processes and their conditions, just as I expect to encounter them in communication management (Creswell, 2008).

It also needs to be clarified why and how I expect in depth semi-structured interviews with communication managers - professional communicators, who operate both from within the civil service and party offices and from outside as special or external advisors – and political journalists to generate data that should help illustrate the subject area and address the research question. I will suggest that dynamic processes and complex concepts related to reputation in politics, impression management, media relations, power relationships, professional functions, as well as intervening factors such as external events, constraints on practice, available resources, internal organisation, external expectations and individuals' personalities may arguably best be explored through semi structured interviews which are believed to be an appropriate method to produce data that eventually allows

the design of a theoretical model which may be subject to quantitative corroboration at a later stage (Flick, 2006).

In a subsequent section I will be expounding how data has been processed through open, axial and selective coding as prescribed in grounded theory. I remind readers how in a subsequent step the material has been synthesised into a story line that ultimately led to an integrated model of strategic communication processes that accounts for relevant factors which feed into the management of a politician's reputation. I will contend that these grounded theory procedures of data analysis are appropriate in settings where none or only limited prior theoretical concepts are available. Moreover, grounded theory's explanative and explorative capacity is best suited to give meaning to primary data, establish relationships between phenomena and assist in the generation of a theoretical model (Creswell, 2008). For the researcher it is critical to understand that by implication, grounded theory is an iterative analytical method that allows for adjustments of the analytical focus as data is gradually processed (Creswell, 2008).

A more detailed discussion of methods both of data collection and analysis as well as considerations on academic viability and replicability will be provided in the concluding sections of this chapter.

### **3.2. Paradigms of qualitative research**

The paradigm I consider most appropriate to guide this study is qualitative and linked to a constructivist understanding of investigation which emphasises the creation of meaning through the individuals involved. Gray (2009) illustrates this by contrasting the process with the positivist paradigm that endeavours to discover meaning. Ontologically, the former implies that the notion of absolute, external truth detached from an individual's perception and interpretation is not conceivable.

The paradigm I have adopted is anti-positivist and largely – though not entirely - in line with the inductive approach that allows me to unearth

meaning and understand phenomena such as communication management processes. Methodologically this paradigm defines the rationale for the selection of tools to explore individuals' personal experiences. I am aware that this construction of meaning takes place in the context of a prevailing cultural setting which arguably impacts on the creation of a new and fuller meaning. The selected paradigm does not require researchers to discard preconceived assumptions and beliefs and detach themselves from the object of study. Instead it is understood that the creation of truth is an interactive process between individuals that are being studied and the researcher (Snape and Spencer, 2003).

My research paradigm calls for flexibility in gathering and processing data. This expectation is met by the methods of data collection (semi structured interviews) and data analysis (grounded theory approach). Gray (2009) points out how interviews allow probing for information and encourage respondents to elaborate on their answers. As typical for constructivist research the data generated reflects both the respondents' perspective and the meaning they and the researcher ascribe to phenomena within a specific cultural setting.

### **3.3. Design Issues**

Research design needs to be clearly connected to the purpose of the study. Lewis (2003) reminds us that the approach and method selected will have to fit the research questions. The research design I shall try and present in this chapter is meant to echo practical necessities owed to the research context as well as restraints in terms of time, money and accessibility. We may conclude that research design tends to be what Bechhofer and Paterson call "a matter of informed compromise" (2000, p.71).

In line with Pole and Lampard (2002) I treat social research as an exploration of the unknown, which is understood to produce unanticipated challenges in the course of the process which in turn may require alteration and adaptation of the initial design. I therefore concord with Lewis (2003) who encourages

researchers in social sciences to constantly review their original design plan and accommodate issues as they occur. This demand is reflected both in the grounded theory strategy and the method of in depth semi structured interviews which both allow for and even require adjustments and refinements in the course of data collection and analysis respectively. These adaptations to design and method are accepted and even welcomed as they are evidence of growing understanding of the phenomena and conditions involved in the subject and thus help refine the analysis (Creswell, 2008). Further along in this chapter I will outline my arrangements for data collection and analysis in more detail and expound how this methodology accepts and even encourages the accommodation of diverse data and in turn allows for readjustment of the initial research focus. However, it needs to be kept in mind that even against the backdrop of this recognition, meticulous planning remains imperative in social research projects.

### **3.4. Strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research design**

Earlier on in this chapter I outlined that it is the ultimate purpose of this study to endeavour the construction of a theoretical model of communication management that accounts for the processes involved in building up, maintaining and altering a politician's reputation. It is this purpose that appears to necessitate a qualitative design as outlined by Gray (2009). A qualitative research design promises to be suited to generate insights about the issues under investigation and ultimately provide us with answers to the research questions. This expectation is grounded in holistic features of qualitative studies that accommodate both investigative attitudes and tools which allow for interaction with individuals in everyday life. This naturalistic procedure addresses relationships and causalities in the setting where they occur (Gray, 2009).

Traditionally, qualitative research tends to be associated with inductive attempts of theory building, whilst quantitative studies in the past were often concerned with the verification or falsification of theory (Creswell, 2008). It



may be argued that in more recent studies the divide between these research approaches has probably become less distinct. Gray (2009) acknowledges that the crude division between the inductive and the deductive approach has been an oversimplification that does little justice to the genuine complexity of research design. Much earlier Brennan (1992) found evidence to suggest that the two approaches as well as theory building and verification can be found in diverse types of research. This claim was later supported by Bryman (1999) who reflects on the use of a theoretical framework as the starting point of qualitative studies. This variation may have been seen by traditionalists as contravening more conventional notions that prescribe a strict definitional divide between inductive and deductive designs. Today this flexibility gives me the opportunity and a justification to depart from an older convention and integrate initial theoretical assumptions into a qualitative path. Therefore, in advance of any empirical work, my thinking is guided by a tentative theoretical notion of communication management which is conditioned by the literature review in the first part of this study. A consideration of theoretical assumptions at the outset of the data collection process arguably help with writing a discussion guide and assist in attributing meaning to responses given by interviewees.

This theoretical assumption at the outset of the data collection process is evidence of my explicit involvement with the research exercise and with the subject area under investigation. This involvement may conjure up doubts about the author's objectivity. While I recognise this criticism I concur with Silverman (2000) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) who claim that personal involvement is the qualitative researcher's path to access people's social reality and cultural constructs. Criticism of this kind is put into perspective by May (1997) who reminds us that arguably detached and allegedly objective quantitative researchers may encounter issues of objectivity in their own right as they organise information into categories which respondents may not regard reflective of their intended answers. Quantitative research at times meticulously organises into one category identical answers which may have been given for two sets of distinct and unrelated reasons. This relative blindness for the causes and motivations of phenomena deprives quantitative

researchers of an explanatory component for their findings. A shortcoming which by contrast qualitative researchers know how to avoid: By giving answers that explain “why” phenomena occur. This question of “why” is critical to the understanding of processes as well as interactions between people and therefore appears to be a reflection of managerial procedures that constitute strategic communication in politics.

While the investigative perspective taken by qualitative studies may admittedly generate authenticity in a particular cultural setting, the debate as to whether findings in a specific context allow for wider generalisation appears not to be over (Gray, 2009). One may question whether generalisability is an achievable objective at all, since from an epistemological viewpoint the concept of reality is arguably less general and absolute than one may have expected. Snape and Spencer (2003) raised this concern by pointing out that certainties are limited by time and context and thus by definition are void of overarching meaning.

While issues of verification may still be a concern, we need to remind ourselves of the unique strength this qualitative approach offers when incidents of conflict, causalities, interests or motivations have to be probed into (Charmaz, 1995). It is qualitative rather than quantitative research that reputedly strives to make sense of individuals’ ways and accounts for their behaviour (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Likewise, qualitative techniques are promising in circumstances with little or only limited knowledge or understanding of a particular phenomenon available, or in situations that necessitate a new perspective on familiar issues (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It is also conceivable that the variables identified in a qualitative study are later revisited quantitatively.

### **3. 5. Choice of methods - Qualitative research in an epistemological context: A rationale for the use of semi structured interviews**

Qualitative methods are associated with an epistemological stance that echoes the particular understanding of the production of knowledge (May, 1997). For instance we tend to link quantitative methods to positivism since both share similar views about the value and use of natural sciences (Devine, 2002). Just as the positivist paradigm requires objective and tangible data, researchers that operate within this theoretical context will have to select methods that generate data that is grounded in the observable (Halfpenny, 1982). The positivist paradigm initially necessitated research to be organised and structured as if it was an experimental situation in an attempt to make coded replies statistically reliable (Fielding, 1993).

In contrast, qualitative methods reflect an interpretive epistemology which conceives the social environment as dynamic, constructed and in constant change. Objective truth is not sought and in fact not considered existent. Instead the reality is explored from the perspective of the conscious actor and researchers understand that the involved actor will add their own subjective meaning to their actions and interpretations (Benton, 1977). These perspectives may arguably be best understood through qualitative interviews. The emphasis with this method is on understanding people's behaviour and providing information about their motivation. Thus in depth interviews will not require statistical variables but the ability to listen to people talking and sensitivity for the insights and descriptions respondents give of their thoughts and actions (Fielding, 1993).

Devine (2002) cautions against too strict a distinction between methods and epistemological stances. Just as not all quantitative researchers are positivists (Marsh, 1984), we also encounter researchers who combine research methods and do not treat them in a mutually exclusive way. Rather than maintaining a formal distinction, researchers are concerned with deploying research methods that are best suited to collect necessary data to answer particular empirical and theoretical questions (Bryman, 1988). Bearing in mind

these considerations I will expound my choice of method and the rationale for this selection in the following section.

### **3.6. Collecting primary data through interviewing**

Interviews may be functional in studies with explanatory purposes that seek to produce an understanding of what is happening and of causal relationships between variables. Interviews are also seen as a data collection method that is commonly used in the context both of a grounded theoretical and phenomenological approach (Gray, 2009). Since interviews are hoped to construct meaning people associate with particular phenomena, Arksey and Knight (1999) consider them an instrument of making explicit meaning that hitherto may have been only implicit. Semi-structured interviews may concede both the interviewer and the interviewee to develop their emphasis, explore thoughts, probe and even diverge from the pre-arranged catalogue of questions. They are an attempt to unearth subjective meanings individuals ascribe to ideas, events, actions and decisions (Gray, 2009).

Cohen et al. (2000) have developed a catalogue of reasons that help researchers decide if interviews are the appropriate tool for them to gather data. This instrument is recommended in particular for anyone who seeks to ascertain a person's knowledge about a particular subject or issue. Likewise, values, preferences and attitudes may be identified in the course of interviews. In a second step they allow the researcher to clarify the meaning of behaviour and decisions immediately. In line with Cohen et al. (2000) rationale for the use of interviews I intend to use the anticipated data in order to

1. answer my research question
2. identify variables
3. establish relationship between variables.

The semi-structured interview allows for a frank and open ended conversation. It also gives the interviewees the opportunity to vary and

emphasise their answers as they see fit. This promises an insight into their personal experiences and encourages them to share the professional knowledge they have accrued in past years. These conversations are meant to reveal implicit knowledge as well as personal perspectives and judgements that impact on actions and decisions.

This technique of semi-structured interviews is often used in social sciences in order to develop hypotheses or alternatively to analyse rare societal phenomena and unusual groups (Schnell et al., 2005). The kinds of complex relationships we may encounter are reason to think that semi-structured interviews were the appropriate method that fits the research question at hand.

### **3. 7. Preparing interviews and planning credibility**

Research needs to produce results that can be trusted. Therefore, credibility is the core concern in any research design. Credibility is grounded in considerations of validity, reliability and reflexivity which will be discussed in this section.

We may already acknowledge that the uniqueness and alterability of circumstances in which interview data is generated may not bode well for expectations of replicability. I suspect that due to the unique professional background of my interviewees each conversation may have its own emphasis. This may lead to specific follow-up questions that are not necessarily stipulated in the author's discussion guide. Interviews are therefore likely to develop in ways that are exceptional and may by implication not be replicable. This uniqueness of each interview and the large degree of flexibility the interviewer enjoys in conducting it has been described by May (1997) and is dealt with in section 3.13.

### 3.8. Validity

Considerations of validity are concerned with research tools – such as interviews – and their ability to measure what they are expected to measure. I endeavour to ensure validity by following the advice provided by Gray (2009) and Arksey and Knight (1999). In the case of semi-structured interviews Gray (2009) suggests that the content of questions should be a direct reflection of the research objectives. Moreover, a number of criteria have been mentioned which are believed to increase the validity of findings in interviews. Primarily, Arksey and Knight (1999) recommend the establishment of a relationship of trust between interviewer and interviewee. They also advocate the allocation of sufficient time for interviewees to explore their thoughts and arguments in depth. Furthermore, they encourage interviewers to probe further after an interviewee's initial statement. Finally, it is advised to draw on questions that are informed by insights provided by the literature review.

As I already hinted at in section 3.4. concerns of external validity which is also known as generalisability have to be addressed. Gray (2009) reminds us to deal with questions as to whether and to what extent research findings may be generalised to a wider population. Whilst in the quantitative tradition great care is taken to pick samples that are understood to be representative of the research in an effort to extrapolate to wider populations, qualitative researchers focus their data collection to defined periods and locations. Within these limits qualitative research takes care to aim for depth and intensity of insights (Gray, 2009). For this reason Bryman (1999) cautions qualitative researchers against making claims about the generalisability of their findings that exceed the limited confines of the specific scenario they investigate.

Arksey and Knight (1999) recommend researchers to adhere to two fundamental criteria in order to make any subsequent generalisation gain in plausibility.

1. Selection of a sample that allows all relevant properties of a subject to be viewed.

2. In the course of the data gathering process the researcher should increase the sample size to address all features of the subject that may be identified. New names should be added to the list of interviewees until no new themes emerge and the gathered data is saturated.

These two recommendations required me to study and analyse data after each interview and then decide which interviewees may need to be approached next. The definition of the scope of my study and the selection of interviewees are such that they ideally provide in depth information about reputation management in national politics at present and in the recent past. Any attempt to draw conclusions on a wider scale may not be feasible as an alteration of key variables (resources, culture, technological changes) would undermine the study's credibility.

### **3.9. Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with the consistency of data collection. In our case this translates into concerns about interviewer bias in different interview settings with various interviewees. In the view of Gray (2009) this issue is best addressed through standardisation of questions and procedures. Oppenheim (1992) assembled a list of causes for bias in interviews and suggests addressing them by adhering to standardised questions.

Oppenheim's (1992) criteria imply a rigidity that is perhaps not in keeping with this research approach. The perspective we have so far been guided by would concede the interviewer considerable flexibility and space to diverge from pre-arranged interview instructions (Bryman, 2004). The same is probably true for attitude and factual questions which may have to be adapted to correspond to the researcher's gradually growing understanding and to specific features of particular interviewees. Furthermore, Bryman (2004) cautions against the hope that rigid discussion guidelines could be the guarantor of unbiased interviewing. He sees the qualitative interview as taking the direction in which the interviewee takes it. This flexible arrangement may

even question Oppenheim's (1992) and Gray's (2009) prescription to use question guidelines to safeguard an unbiased conduct of interviews. Scheurich (1995) takes this up and reminds us that the conventional positivist view of unbiased interviewing does not do justice to the uniqueness of each semi-structured interview which as we have expounded in the beginning of this section, is conditioned by the historical context and personal backgrounds of interviewers and interviewees who are guided by their personal, professional and emotional bias. In the following section we will be exploring how researcher "reflexivity" may help to deal with this arguably precarious reliability in qualitative interviewing.

### **3.10. Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is concerned with potential researcher bias particularly with regard to the collection of qualitative data. It explores the relationship between researcher and the subject at hand and puts risks of bias into perspective (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007). During the past 30 years research designs that are based on interviews were particularly dissected for issues of reflexivity (Ryan and Golden, 2006). The main arguments suggest that the researcher in qualitative investigations is not a neutral bystander but actively involved and thus in a position not only to select and evaluate information, but also to create meaning. It is feared that this gives researchers an opportunity to bring their bias to bear on the outcomes. Fontana and Frey (2005, p.696) therefore call the notion of scientific neutrality in interviews mythical and emphasise the interviewer's "empathetic" role.

In taking up this point Coffey (1999) asked researchers to demonstrate awareness for how their respective backgrounds and identity may impact both on the way research is conducted and how data is subsequently selected, processed and interpreted. This problem has arguably been aggravated by the silence in many research diaries and summaries about the researcher's role (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003).



Gray (2009) makes a distinction between epistemological reflexivity and personal reflexivity. While the former asks how the research question and design could influence findings, the latter endeavours to find a possible link between the researcher's attitudes, experiences and beliefs on the one hand and the conduct of research on the other hand. Gray (2009) also encourages investigating how the research process impacted on the researcher's initial assumptions and attitudes. This reflects an earlier suggestion by Dupuis to make researchers formally part of the research design and require them to engage continually into self-introspection (Dupuis, 1999).

The understanding of the function and relevance of reflexivity is echoed in literature that provides practical guidelines of how to achieve this. Gray (2009) encourages researchers to employ multiple investigators in an effort to balance any potential bias. The scope and the financial resources of my study are not such that assistants could be paid for. Another proposition however can be adopted which requires the keeping of a diary. Lincoln and Guba (1994) and Dupuis (1999) devised variations of what essentially appear to be similar concepts of recording the logistics of the data collection that account for changes in the design and any methodological decisions. Dupuis (1999) emphasises the need to detail in writing if and how a researcher's attitudes, assumptions and beliefs changed in the course of the research process. This is practical advice that even with limited resources I integrated into my study.

### **3.11. Interviews**

Both the qualitative approach and the grounded theory strategy I have chosen for this research are incompatible with rigidity and premature assumptions in the course of empirical exploration (Bryman, 2004). Bryman therefore recommends interview questions to be kept flexible in order to allow the researcher to probe into and follow up issues the respondent may raise. Lofland and Lofland (1995) discuss the sources or cues researchers may derive their questions from. Most pertinent to this study is their appreciation of a literature review's capacity to stimulate the design of question catalogues. It

is recommended both by Gilbert (1993) and Lofland and Lofland (1995) that researchers should reflect on what they find unusual or puzzling about phenomena they have dealt with in the literature review and take this as a starting point for the development of an outline that features interesting points of query.

Gilbert (1993) recognises that researchers may apply these broad themes throughout all their interviews. Moreover, he asks interviewers to develop more specific questions (which he calls probes) that may be adapted each time they are used. Or indeed they may be used only selectively in some interviews. While Gilbert (1993) concedes that both questions and follow up probes may be prepared as written reminders to the interviewer, Bryman (2004) concurs and cautions against formulating comprehensive questionnaires. Instead he suggests that for some researchers memory prompts may be sufficient guidance.

The prompts, probes or questions should at least for the initial part of the interview be kept open (Flick, 2006) to assure that the interviewers assumptions are not imposed on the respondent. Only later on in the interview does Flick (2006) see an opportunity to introduce more structured questioning. Flick (2006) emphasises that interviewers should ensure that answers are both free from the researcher's guidance and at the same time charged with specific meaning to the respondent. Flick (2006) believes to achieve this through what he calls retrospective inspection which essentially is the recall of a particular situation or event in the course of the interview. It is upon the interviewer to come prepared with prior knowledge that helps shape questions which make specific reference to a meaningful situation in the respondent's past. Merton and Kendall (1946) insist that on the one hand these specifications should be focused enough to help respondents relate their answers to individual events or situations, while on the other hand interviewers need to allow space for their subjects to develop their answers and emphasis therein freely.

Meuser and Nagel (1991) make a valuable distinction between the semi-structured interview in general and the expert interview in particular. Of critical interest to this study is the latter type of interview which in contrast to biographical interviews is not used to illuminate aspects about an individual respondent, but instead to illustrate particular phenomena or behavioural patterns of individuals as far as they represent a group. In my study it is the expertise of communication managers the interviewer's focus is directed at. This leaves the researcher with the responsibility to restrict the scope of answers and breadth of conversation to the anticipated topic and to exclude diversions that blatantly won't make a contribution to the area under investigation (Flick, 2006; Meuser and Nagel 1991).

Meuser and Nagel (1991) identified a number of problems researchers may encounter when conducting expert interviews. They discuss the possibility that through a flawed selection procedure an individual may be approached who is not an expert. Alternatively, the subject might tempt the interviewee to enter into a discussion of internal feuds and accounts of in-fighting. Thirdly, the expert may feel inclined to give a long winded formal presentation on the issue and not reply to the questions the researcher raises. Finally, Meuser et al. (1991) refer to a tendency observed in respondents to switch from the role of expert to that of private person and backwards. This last point may occur in the empirical part of this study, particularly since the focus of this investigation is directed both at the knowledge an expert has accrued over time, but equally on individual experts' personal decisions and behaviour as far as they are prepared to reveal them. I decided for this study that either stance the expert would take was acceptable.

For the interviewer to stay focused and appear knowledgeable in the context of expert interviews, both Meuser and Nagel (1991) and Flick (2006) recommend to prepare a question catalogue. This discussion guide I have thus drawn up is intended to generate something akin to a discussion between researcher and interviewee which in the view of Schostak (2006) is to be aspired to. On a practical note Bryman (2004) lists a number of directly

applicable criteria that help shape tentative questions. He recommends qualitative, explorative interviews

- to order interview questions to guarantee a flow in the ensuing conversation
- to formulate interview questions in a way that assists answering the research questions
- to use language that is understandable to the respondent
- to refrain from asking leading questions
- to ensure that the person specific data (name, age, employment etc) are recorded.

The indicative themes in this discussion guide reflect issues that have been identified in the literature review as potentially relevant for a communication management process and the build-up of reputation. Thus, the more complex and broad phenomena of the study have been operationalised, that is split up into a number of individual themes which I hoped would better reflect the interviewees' more practical experiences and professional environments (Glaeser and Laudel, 2004). Diekmann (1997) too recommends interviewers to organise themes as categories of questions, each of which consisting of core questions and a number of supplementary questions as suggested by Schnell (2005). This helped me ensure that even in short truncated interviews at least one relevant question from each section could be covered. In the initial interview guide I provide a brief explanation and justification for each question category which outlines what I hope to explore. The initial and a second evolved discussion guide can be found in the appendix 7.2.1. and 7.2.2.

As illustrated in the table below each theme is linked to the specific section in the literature review they originate from. This arrangement is meant to clarify how themes of interest are arrived at by grounding them in academic discourse.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Section</b>
<i>Refers to a group of questions in the discussion guide that address a specific theme. For the questions see appendix 7.2.1. and 7.2.2.</i>		<i>Literature review section this theme was addressed in</i>
Category 1	Relevance of reputation for politicians	2.4.
Category 2	Factors for reputation change	2.7., 2.7.1., 2.7.2., 2.7.3., 2.7.4., 2.7.5
Category 3	Analysis of the Situation	2.5., 2.5.1., 2.5.2., 2.5.3.
Category 4	Planning process and PR & marketing Resources	2.10., 2.10.1., 2.10.2
Category 5	Communication Management -strategic or technical function	2.8.4., 2.8.5., 2.8.6., 2.8.7., 2.8.8., 2.8.9
Category 6	External and internal variables' impact on the management process – personality, political agenda, record	2.7.5., 2.8.2., 2.8.6., 2.8.7., 2.9., 2.9.1., 2.9.2.
Category 7	Structure of communication management over time – and planning phases	2.7.5. 2.10., 1.10.1., 2.10.2. 2.10.3.
Category 8	Sophistication of communication management (e.g. ability to deal with unexpected external factors)	2.9., 2.9.1., 2.9.2.
Category 9	Evaluation during and after the reputation management effort	2.8.9.

### **3.12. Conducting the interview**

Respondents had been informed in advance about the background of the researcher and the purpose of this project. In the beginning of each interview meeting it was made clear that the interviewee was free to answer and encouraged to illustrate and clarify whenever he or she believed it would benefit the argument and assist understanding (Schnell, 2005; Meuser, 1991). It was agreed that participation in the interviews was voluntary and anonymity would have been granted, but was never requested.

The set-up and conduct of individual interviews was customised, to take the emphasis of each particular interviewee's remit of interest and expertise into account. Lamnek (1995) concurs that researchers may not have to follow up

the questionnaire in a set sequence of questions. I therefore changed their order if that promised to improve the conversation and make the interviewee feel more at ease with the situation. My theoretical focus was subjected to on-going reflection in between one interview and another. This is critical to making research more relevant by sharpening the focus of questions over time. New information gained with respect to the theme of research informed and impacted on subsequent interviews as it helped evolve the question guideline. This was instrumental in assimilating findings as the investigation progressed. This approach allows the pursuit of new and additional threads during the course of the study that promise to contribute to the development of a theoretical model (Schnell, 2005; Glaeser and Laudel, 2004).

### **3.13. Selection of interviewees**

In line with a grounded theory strategy the sampling for interviews is purposive. In other words a random sampling from among a known population in order to achieve statistically generalisable data was not sought. Sampling of interviewees was undertaken with the explicit intention to access additional information that contributes to the generation of conceptual categories (Robson, 2002). Researchers in grounded theory refer to purposive sampling as theoretical sampling to make explicit their objective to build theory. They specifically select interviewees whose abilities, knowledge, professional or private background fits in with particular needs of the study.

For expert interviews individuals had to be identified who could add to the existing knowledge about personal reputation management in politics. I defined an expert to be anyone who holds privileged insights into the reality of a particular group or social processes. The group of interviewees was intended to be a selection of typical cases that bear characteristics comparable to those found in the entirety of experts. The definition of selection criteria was informed by the objectives of the study. Clearly, the interviewees needed to be familiar with the themes they were meant to be interviewed about (Schnell, 2005; Meuser, 1991). For the purpose of this

study the selection was to include experts in political communication (both external consultants and in house staff) as well as political journalists. The term expert in political communication implies that the selection includes a number of individuals who may not hold formal office in a political party or the civil service that would by definition put them in charge of communications functions. In other words, it is understood that a number of participants play informal roles in their discipline only. A list of interviewees is provided in the appendix, section 7.1.

In the initial interviews I asked the interviewees to come up with names of further experts in the field that may share information relevant to this study. This approach is regularly used in the social sciences and sometimes referred to as a snowball system or nomination technique and deployed in other contexts to explore social networks (Schnell et al., 2005). This approach towards identifying potential interviewees was in use with some success in studies that investigate clandestine groups (Robson, 2002). This arguably is analogous to the communications industry in as far as the circle of PR consultants is - even though not explicitly clandestine - somewhat elusive and not formally recognisable.

### **3.14. Recording of data**

As a first step I had the recorded interviews transcribed word by word. These transcripts also reflect non verbal communication such as pauses, laughter and interruptions. The transcripts were compared to the sound recordings to ensure all factual information was represented as accurately as possible. Upon request interviewees were given a draft copy of their respective transcript for editing and authorisation in an expectation that this would encourage them further to speak out openly throughout the interview. Moreover, this arrangement served to meet the quality criteria of communicative validation as used in qualitative research (Steinke, 2000).

### **3.15. Data analysis**

By comparison to figures in quantitative studies the words a qualitative analysis is based upon are more concrete and almost undeniable (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The weakness of qualitative data analysis is probably closely related to its flexibility. Gray (2009) contends that there is not one agreed procedure and agreement is limited to an appreciation of an inductive approach and a call for the coding of data. The situation is further complicated by notable divisions about the degree to which the researcher should interfere with data in the analytical process. On the one extreme we find Strauss and Corbin (1998) who contend that researchers should merely present the data (e.g. interview transcripts) and not risk distorting the material through their personal biased attitudes. They expect data to speak for itself and reach the reader directly without being manipulated by the researcher. Alternatively, Wolcott (1994) portrays data presentation in descriptive terms and advocates storytelling as an appropriate way to relate results to the reader. Gray (2009) reminds us of two further options of data analysis. One is suggesting a detached role when describing data that previously had been meticulously selected and synthesised. The other path is concerned with the interpretation of data in an attempt to arrive at insights for the purpose of generating theory.

What the various approaches of qualitative data analysis have in common is the process of breaking down information into smaller units. This step ideally reveals characteristics of behaviour as well as decisions and overall contributes to a better understanding of causalities and correlations.

### **3.16. Data analysis method: Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory is understood to be a flexible research design which allows the researcher to develop theory that relates to the theme defined in the research question. This model or theory is grounded in the information



collected in the course of the study through conducting interviews or making observations. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define grounded theory as a strategy that prescribes the discovery, development and provisional verification of data, through the systematic collection of information and its analysis with particular respect to the phenomenon under investigation.

Grounded theory is an approach that had been developed by the American sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. The stance they take in grounded theory is seen as a reaction to the dominant current in the 1960s that required research to have a theory at the outset (Robson, 2002). Robson goes on to discuss how grounded theory has become particularly popular with research projects about applied and novel subjects that lack pre-existing theory. This is a critical reason for me to adopt grounded theory as research strategy and mode of analysis for my empirical data.

While grounded theory is sometimes described both as a strategy to guide one's research as well as a model of data analysis, Robson (2002) discusses grounded theory as a manual of procedures and techniques rather than a theory in its own right. The core requirement represented in this strategy is probably the insistence for theory to emerge through a collected set of empirical data.

Charmaz (2003) discusses grounded theory as a flexible guideline that indicates procedures for focused data collection and analysis as well as inductive theory building. Grounded theory encourages researchers to stay at little distance to the environment under investigation. Researchers see grounded theory as an appropriate method not only to take synthesising to the point of portraying relationships and causalities within the studied processes, but also to develop theoretical concepts from their empirical data (Flick, 2007).

Robson (2002) discusses how the treatment of information in the grounded theoretical context differs from a classical approach which makes a chronological distinction between the data collection phase first followed by a

second step, the analysis of data. Instead, grounded theory sees data collection and analysis as a parallel and interrelated process. One is meant to inform, guide, adjust and focus the other in the course of the entire empirical phase of the study (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). In grounded theory the analysis commences early on in the information collection process which helps to increasingly focus the data selection exercise. Thus the analysis can draw on data that gradually becomes more and more focused. As the empirical phase progresses grounded theory anticipates that more abstract ideas will emerge out of the meaning that is identified in interviewees' responses. These will prompt grounded researchers to turn their attention to new data, to fill in and add to an emergent set of ideas which in turn may grow into a theoretical model. For this to happen subjective and collective views and experiences are aggregated and transformed into broader structures whose internal processes and actions I seek to explain (Clarke, 2003). In other words, the researcher is expected firstly to re-construct the reality interviewees describe and secondly to identify and analyse relationships between individuals and causalities to account for processes. The analysis is hoped to make sense of respondents' behaviour, provide abstract interpretations of causalities and correlations between participants and finally to indicate the likely theoretical implications of research findings (Flick, 2007).

Charmaz (2005) discusses grounded theory's role as a guideline for researchers which renders explicit research procedure that previously had been followed implicitly. It added to researchers' work a sense of procedural rigour and the impression of objectivity. Locke (1996) emphasised this very function by pointing out that researchers tend to use grounded theory to justify their approach to collecting and analysing data. Charmaz (2005) specifies this process by pointing out that the grounded researchers' insights emerge from what she calls wrestling with the data. It is a process that is not detached from the real world, yet in part the outcome of interactions between researchers and their objects of enquiry. Holstein writing in the 90s took the same stance when he explained that grounded theory did not conceive of researchers as passive observers of the individual, groups or institutions they are exploring in

the course of their study. Instead investigator and subject are expected to interact with each other (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995).

It is accepted therefore that analysis in a grounded theory context cannot be expected to be neutral both because of the researcher's active engagement in the finding of data and creation of meaning but also for a reason pointed out by Denzin (1994) and Morse (1999) who insist that researchers tend to be driven by prior experiences and attitudes when they initiate a research project. Charmaz (2005) clarifies that whilst preconceptions may not determine outcomes they probably have their share in shaping them.

In short, grounded theory prescribes in a first step the gathering of rich empirical data which subsequently is systematically recorded. This comparative data leads to the generation of contextual conditions and concepts which prompts the next wave of data collection. In line with standard grounded theory each of my interviews was followed by a phase of data analysis. This procedure continued until new data ceased to produce new insights or failed to produce new information for existing data categories.

The following sections will be detailing the coding process. The process of categorising data and synthesising it at increasingly abstract levels is divided in three phases which are referred to as open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Flick, 2007).

The definition of coding is "the naming and categorising of phenomena through close examination of data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.62). Gray (2009) regards comparison of information and asking of questions as the two analytical activities that are deployed to organise data along categories and concepts. In other words, researchers are looking in the data collected for patterns and similarities which they then group together, organise under specific headings or – if we use the technical term – code (May, 1997). Studies that originate from a hypothesis derive codes from this pre-existing theory. A process referred to as coding-down. By contrast the inductive

approach of our study allows codes to emerge from the interview responses, which is called coding-up (Gilbert, 1993).

### **3.16.1. Open Coding**

Open coding is an on-going process that requires researchers to make constant comparisons between instances they come across in the course of their investigation. This allows them to decide if a new instance belongs into an existing category, or alternatively, if the definition of a category needs to be changed to accommodate the new instance or thirdly if a new category has to be established that fits the new information. Categories are developed over time and specified to make them applicable for further data and analysis (Gray, 2009). This is achieved through defining and specifying a category's properties (characteristics) and dimensions (the location of this property along a continuum).

### **3.16.2. Axial Coding**

As we have just seen open coding leaves us with categories. The next step in the analysis one refers to as axial coding, which is the process of bringing back together the categories in an effort to understand how they are linked and related to each other (Gray 2009). Mertens (1998, p.352) explains:

*“During this phase, you build a model of the phenomena that includes the conditions under which it occurs (or does not occur), the context in which it occurs, the action and interactional strategies that describe the phenomena, and the consequences of these actions. You continue to ask questions of the data; however, now the questions focus on relationships between the categories.”*

Gray (2009) specifies that axial coding emphasises the conditions that give rise to particular categories (phenomena). It also tries to see the context

within which a category arises as well as the actions and interactions that result from a category. Axial coding is concerned with the consequences of a category. Strauss and Corbin (1998) caution against simplistic assumptions that a condition in a linear process leads to action or interaction. They discuss circumstances in which actions are caused by a multitude of conditions, some of which may have happened in the past, whilst others occur at present or may even only be anticipated at some point of time in the future.

This illustrates the nature of grounded theory as a method of theory building that through the analysis of action and interaction tries to establish how individuals in a specific environment or under particular circumstances deal with and respond to phenomena. Gray (2009) contends that people interpret phenomena in different ways and shape their behaviour in line with these interpretations. These interpretations, actions or indeed in-actions result in consequences that at times are predictable and in other occasions come as a surprise. Axial coding assists in making sense of and accounting for these relationships. In a third and final step within the grounded theory procedure we will be looking at how selective coding helps in integrating categories and building theory.

### **3.16.3. Selective coding and identifying the story**

Similar to axial coding, selective coding requires the researcher to identify the core categories. At this stage of the analytical process however, a higher level of abstraction is expected (Flick, 2007). Whilst previously properties and dimensions of categories had to be determined it is now for the researcher to select a critical category that is central to the findings and allows to serve as story line into which other categories can be integrated. Gray (2009) illuminates the four central stages of selective coding:

- Identifying a story line that links together core categories.
- Connecting sub categories to these core categories.
- Going back to the data to ascertain that these relationships between

categories are grounded in the information gathered.

- Collecting and adding additional data to further develop and refine categories.

Theoretical sampling is understood to be a key feature in grounded theory in as far as it helps guarantee some degree of generalisability of findings. This is achieved through the selection of core categories whose properties either display more similarities or differences. Similarity would help build confidence and trust in the validity of findings, whilst differences may encourage the researcher to re-evaluate data and look at phenomena from a different perspective (Gray, 2009).

Next, Gray (2009) recommends the researcher to spell out the story line that guides the further selection and structuring of categories. This serves to render explicit key features and fundamental issues that warrant scrutiny. Upon reflection of these questions it may be necessary to re-examine categories drawn up in the axial phase of the analysis in order to find a core category that best encapsulates the central message of the story line (Flick, 2007). Here the researcher may have to decide between two relevant categories or create a new one if no appropriate one had been generated so far. In a subsequent step sub-categories and the core category have to be related to render the emerging theory specific. Strauss and Corbin (1994) believe this relationship helps aid understanding of which phenomena happen under particular circumstances and how a change in conditions may affect a core phenomenon.

Once an appreciation emerges of how sub categories are linked to and aligned with the core category – or story line – grounded researchers seek the validation of their findings by returning to their data. This analytical phase is described as the grounding of the theory by revisiting the original information in order to see if it corresponds in its entirety to the proposed story line. If variations to the story line are discovered the researcher will have to go through the data looking for a condition that accounts for a deviant case. This process of filling in gaps (conceptual density) and accounting for

inconsistencies (conceptual specificity) is ongoing and may stretch right into the writing-up of the findings. This would not even be regarded as surprising, since the process of writing stirs up questions and alerts to problems of logic that otherwise might hitherto not have received due consideration. As Strauss et al. (1998) note, these questions may seek to clarify how phenomena change, but should also lead to considerations as to why they change. The ordering of data in the framework of selective coding may subsequently allow for the creation of specific theory and ultimately permit predictions of what might happen if certain variables applied.

### **3.17. Concluding grounded research and considerations of theoretical sensitivity**

Theoretical sensitivity according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) is essential in the process of grounded theory as it helps to ensure an appropriate handling of data. Sensitivity in this context calls for an appreciation of the subtleties of meaning. Strauss and Corbin (1998) expect researchers to show appropriate sensitivity when attributing meaning to data and consequently when distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information. Glaser (1992) interprets sensitivity in grounded theory research in slightly broader terms and instead emphasises the ability to generate concepts out of data and relate them to existing theory. In his view the sensitivity needed to do this originates from an appreciation of the literature that indicates critical aspects of the subject and differentiates between relevant and irrelevant concepts.

Arguably, professional researchers who are familiar with the work carried out in their field are perhaps in a position to explore and portray pertinent issues more clearly and more comprehensibly. Professional and research experience would allow the researcher to compare between data and make sense of available information.

In order to maintain procedural quality, theoretical sensitivity serves as a guarantor for the creativity in the analytical process to be reigned in by the

requirements of science. Against this backdrop Gray (2009) encourages the researcher to remain critical throughout the process. This critical distance may be exemplified through re-visiting the key elements of the study, ranging from the initial assumption, concepts, questions and eventually the theoretical model that results from the process. At the heart of this reflective questioning is the consideration as to whether and to what degree the collected data relates to the initial assumption. In essence, the sensitive researcher is aware of the provisional status even key elements of a study can reasonably claim and will therefore be alert to signs that suggest changing these elements. The most appropriate way to manage this approach in the view of Strauss et al. (1998) is the alternation of analysis and further data collection. This iteration allows emerging questions to impact on and specify the collection of further data and the verification of the initial assumption.

Grounded theory research is concluded once no new relevant data is found that could help broaden or specify the understanding of key categories and the story line that has been developed. When the researcher feels assured that an appropriate theory has been developed and neither key categories nor sub categories could benefit any more from further data the analysis is concluded (Flick, 2007). Glaser and Strauss (1967) call this moment in time theoretical saturation which in this study I would argue was reached once I had conducted and analysed 20 expert interviews.

### **3.18. Validity, generalisation and limitations of interview data**

Aarebrot and Bakka (2003) remind us that complex fields of research tend to raise problems of validity. I am aware of this limitation and would admit that my research results may not necessarily be universally applicable or replicable. However, throughout this study I sought to meet standards of good research practice as defined by King et al. (1994) who expect researchers to explicitly present and explain their methodology in order to permit peers and the wider public to gauge the validity of findings fairly. This has been done at length in this chapter. King also asks for the use of uniform, standardised and retraceable methods to turn the body of gathered knowledge into conclusions.



For this reason I adhered to the prescribed framework of coding when treating and analysing my data. Where findings are inconclusive the researcher should not try to draw definite conclusions but instead give tentative judgements and carefully alert the reader of possible limitations (King et al., 1994). This advice informs the final part of this study that is dedicated to a discussion of findings.

Positivist criteria of reliability and validity may only to a limited degree be applicable to this research design. We need to remind ourselves that an identical replication of this study by another researcher will probably not be feasible. This has primarily to do with the diversity of professional practice in this discipline and the very individual approaches and views taken by the practitioners involved. New political protagonists, technological innovation, organisational reform and the views towards political presentational issues may arguably before long alter political communications management processes out of recognition. But even short term minor changes in the field may impact on data and conclusions which subsequent researchers are likely to draw. Yet qualitative studies may still meet quality criteria which guarantee the validity of analysis and conclusions and help peers retrace how research was conducted. The communicative validation will be ensured through transparency of procedures and the precision of transcripts.

## **4. Findings**

### **4.1. Recognising the relevance of reputation management**

The starting point of and justification for this study was the recognition of and need for the management of reputation in politics. It therefore appeared critical to see if practitioners agreed with this study's underlying assumption that "government is all about reputation management, reputation creation, reputation development. I mean, it is all about reputation, everything's all about reputation" (Hill, 5). Hill's is probably the most explicit acknowledgement of this view. Lance Price cautions that the concern with reputation is a

comparatively recent phenomenon, or at least its prominence on politicians' mind has become more manifest in recent decades.

It emerged that political communicators are aware of the power reputation has in the making and breaking of a politician's career. While nobody tried to argue that a party leader's or minister's reputation could tip the outcome of a general election, it was made clear that for a politician's career path it was of significance how candidates and incumbents were seen and judged by the party's rank and file, members of parliament or other key stakeholders. Jones believes this recognition propelled Tony Blair's career when after the sudden death of John Smith the party had to decide who to pick as new leader. The opportunity to align Blair with values and features that would add up to popular images and eventually match a public persona the stakeholders wanted to see at the helm of the Labour Party may have tipped the balance in his favour. While Gordon Brown's prospects at the time and even more so in subsequent years were handicapped by allegations of his obsession as well as widely reported examples of his very own terminology of political gobbledygook. Gordon Brown's political fortune was also thought to have been hampered by his apparent lack of a genuine compassion and feeling – evidenced through the conspicuous absence of a spouse or girlfriend in the initial years of his Westminster career. This latter shortcoming became even more encumbering when Blair was echoing familiar and popular imagery as the beaming family man and caring husband (Jones).

It seems that these considerations of reputation among influential and senior party circles are by no means a feature only of the late 1990s. Richards (9) purports that 25 years ago Neil Kinnock was going through a dramatic image transformation to the point where "there is nothing left" of the individual who as a consequence couldn't find his "own voice anymore." The advice that was given to him regarded demeanour as well as looks and it was thought that these were the instruments to construct a public persona artificially.

In the view of Jones the resurrection of Michael Howard in the Conservative Party prior to the 2005 election, likewise hinged on a necessity to control his

reputation. The images Howard was believed to conjure up among voters were reminiscent of what party officials understood to be a safe pair of hands who would put up a solid performance, assuage traditional Tory voters, organise a formidable campaign, hold his own at the dispatch box against Blair and look thoroughly respectable. After the disappointment with the Hague leadership and the disastrous performance of Iain Duncan Smith, the reputation Howard had acquired over years as cabinet minister in Thatcher's and Major's cabinets bore just the credentials that matched expectations among key stakeholders. Jones (12) contends that in the Conservative Party there was at the time a strongly felt longing for "that person, they feel comfortable and secure with and who could be trusted." It is this reputational profile which in the view of Jones propelled Howard into the leader's office.

A more recent case is recounted by Damian McBride who reminds us that the selection of Gordon Brown's deputy as Labour leader was preceded by extensive opinion polling of potential contenders. The purpose of this exercise was to gauge how each candidate was judged among the electorate and how these views matched the ideal profile the public hoped to find in a future deputy leader. The bottom line of this leadership selection was "how popular they would be with the public" (McBride, 3). At the time the preference was for Harriet Harman as it was found that Gordon Brown had a problem with women which she may have been able to address.

It appears so far that thoughts about the creation and safeguarding of reputation takes centre stage in political communication management activities, however, communicators appear not to spend much time pondering the strategic implications. Some of their reasoning is at a rather incipient stage. Shane Greer for instance is admitting that while reputation makes and breaks careers there is little clarity as to how some politicians' careers are boosted by reputation while others suffer from reputational challenges. He compares Boris Johnson and Ed Miliband in order to highlight the enigma that still awaits an answer: While Johnson may choose to insult entire groups or parts of the country without incurring lasting damage to his public persona, Miliband is prone to draw criticism even though his public announcements and

appearances are more carefully calibrated. Hill claims that neither political decisions nor specific policies, but the way the electorate views politicians provides a key to understand why distinct sections of the electorate with distinct interests and aspirations may all agree to support a particular party leader.

Another feature that accounts for the central role of reputation management in politics is related to the media's aggressiveness (Jones, Eustice). It has been observed by communicators – and journalists appear to agree broadly – that the British media is not only the tool through which reputation can be generated. At the same time it is the gravest threat for a politician's public persona and powerful enough to shatter painstakingly constructed images. Eustice (5) ascribes to the media both the power and propensity to “puff people up and tear them down.” Jones concurs and points out the British media's tendency to personalise politics and to subject contenders to personal scrutiny. The media, he contends, is interested in the public persona and hence this needs careful planning and construction. Therefore, the communicator as reputation manager is widely seen as a key figure on whose contribution the politician's professional survival and success hinges (Eustice).

While reputation's centrality is recognised by former political communicators and journalists, those who are currently advising politicians are not unanimously subscribing to this centrality of reputation. In particular Henry Macrory's view diverges from the predominant opinion as he points out that specifically in the case of David Cameron reputation management is not being practiced nor sought (Macrory, 1). He did admit though that taking advice on presentational issues and media training that prepares for TV appearances is popular in Westminster circles. If Macrory adamantly refuses to accept the term “reputation management” in the context of individual candidates or government members this may be seen as an effort to disassociate his current party from notions of spin which did so much harm to the preceding Labour administration. The line between media training and communications advice on the one hand and reputation management on the other is arguably

so fine and flexible that it eludes definition. A case in hand is Macrory's account of David Cameron accepting coaching when preparing for conference speeches. While he would concede that members of staff discuss and share advice with Cameron on how the speech is best delivered, Macrory insists that communicators would not interfere with how Cameron wears his hair or how he dresses. Arguably, Macrory's unwillingness to accept the centrality of image making and management in the Conservative Party's public relations department may be due to a phenomenon Jones too observed: Cameron's natural skills in self-presentation as well as his genuinely appealing image as a young, caring family father who was visibly afflicted by his child's serious illness quite naturally allowed him to bond with relevant stakeholders.

Jones recalls the 2005 leadership contest when David Davies had been tipped as frontrunner and Kenneth Clarke as likely alternative contender. Jones recalls comments which described Davies as a prickly political loner with a wife who hated media attention. Clarke was seen as an essentially lazy layabout with a penchant for drink and jazz and finally Cameron as endowed with a range of affable traits described above. This may have allowed Cameron's PR advisors then and in subsequent years to pursue a soft-touch approach to what otherwise was a suitable reputation. Perhaps this self-imposed limitation to the kind of advice Conservative Party Headquarters applied to Cameron may not indicate a diminished overarching role of reputation in political communications. It is perhaps more a reflection of the Conservative Party's dismal past experiences when media advisors tried to restyle the then party leader William Hague. At the time it was thought that by making him wear baseball caps, blue jeans and have him drink out of a coconut while he attended the Notting Hill Carnival would mould favourably the views people held of him. All my respondents agreed that this mechanical approach to creating images and building reputation backfired and should be avoided.

The case of Hague is not in anyone's opinion a verdict that questions the desirability of a managed reputation in the least. However, communicators make it quite clear that authenticity is a core consideration in their planning.

Jones puts this into perspective by pointing out that a politician's public persona at best vaguely resembles the individual's identity and that the images of a politician are essentially a confection. He reminds us that this "concoction" is what communicators are expected to fabricate as part of their brief to further the politician's career (Jones, 5).

It appears that the relevance of an individual politician's reputation is a given due to what almost amounts to connivance between communicators and journalists who both treat issues of public persona with great attention. As we shall see in subsequent sections of this chapter, the centrality of reputation in communication processes encourages communicators and politicians alike to think early on in their careers about issues such as positioning and long term communication planning (Jones). A question that is probably lingering throughout the discourse about reputation explores the balance between presentation and policies. Therefore, later on in this chapter I will also address if and to what degree policies are being instrumentalised to project reputation.

#### **4. 2. Using research in reputation management**

The bottom line of my conversations with communicators illustrated that on the whole the resources invested in researching communications issues, environments and stakeholders were meagre. While research is being conducted regularly it falls far short of the sophisticated polling operation some media at times suggest government broadly engages in (Greer).

10 Downing Street or party headquarters provide at their discretion politicians and communicators throughout government and opposition respectively with public opinion data to guide action and help devise tailor-made communication techniques. It is interesting to note that even though these polling results may be available, the data may not actually be acted upon. In fact when asked about the party's means to gauge the electorate's expectations towards a party leader Macrory makes it clear that the judgement on who would have the credentials to make a convincing party

leader and Prime Minister hinges on the “mood” among the parliamentary party and MPs sense of what their constituency want to see (Macrory, 3). The decision in 2005 to make Cameron leader instead of David Davies was arguably of dramatic consequence for the Conservatives. Research findings about popular images of politicians were allegedly not meant to be used as a strategic instrument to guide communication campaigns or build reputation. Instead they merely served as material to confront the political opponent (Macrory).

In stark contrast to Macrory, McBride reveals evidence to suggest that political communicators that rely on their hunch and their anecdotal understanding of key publics are ill advised and unable to judge situations appropriately. This approach undermines the effectiveness and efficiency of any campaign message. As evidence McBride cites polling data about the then Labour cabinet minister Alan Johnson who considered standing for his party’s deputy leadership. While Johnson was believed by senior party officials to be popular with the electorate, formal research indicated that Johnson had little credibility with voters who made it quite clear they did not trust him. Data related the reason for these critical attitudes to Johnson’s habit to wear shiny suits and sunglasses which focus groups identified with the image of a used car dealer. At the same time the party leadership had rightly predicted that focus groups would pick up on Harriet Harman’s lack of support among male voters, while it may have come as a surprise to the leadership when research results revealed that Hilary Benn who had been considered a rising star in the party was entirely written off by focus groups.

Perhaps most interestingly, for a long time not even the Chancellor’s office commissioned polls. This was allegedly the reason as to why Gordon Brown’s staff were largely unaware of the Chancellor’s deep running unpopularity with the electorate. This only changed when data commissioned by the Prime Minister’s office was passed on to No. 11 to remind the Prime Minister’s rival of his seriously flawed image (McBride). McBride points out that “this was the first we really know about sort of some of the image issues that Gordon carried with him” (McBride, 3, 4).

It is somewhat surprising to see how communication strategies and tactics are pursued without a clear idea of how they may resonate with the electorate. Eventually Brown's team identified how dramatic the discrepancy between their communicative approach on the one hand and public reaction on the other hand were. McBride recounts how in one instance Brown's team was surprised to learn how a focus group thoroughly disapproved of Brown talking publicly about his feelings surrounding the loss of his child. Brown's media team had failed to keep this issue off an interview agenda as they had apparently not been fully aware of the type of negative response they were about to incur.

Interestingly even at No. 10 where resources for formal research are available anecdotal information gathered at the side lines of a rugby pitch on a Saturday afternoon is taken seriously and fed back into Downing Street discussions about policy and communication campaigns (Kelly). Tony Blair, who as Prime Minister had at his disposal polling expertise would usually be driven by his instincts which only in a subsequent phase was corroborated or altered by research findings (Price). At the same time it is the case that Blair decided to intensify polling for highly relevant policy issues as for instance when the introduction of the Euro was being discussed. However, Price affirms that politicians would ultimately not be able to function effectively unless they had a gut feeling for issues, stakeholders and developments to rely on. This view is shared by Richards and asserts that political communicators are endowed with what he calls "an alarm bell" or "an instinctive sort of reaction" (Richards, 2) that helps them to understand the environment and stakeholders' reactions. This intuition blends in with a tendency to rely on anecdotal evidence.

Hill tries to define what research can offer and what it should not be used for. In his view qualitative stakeholder research should be confined to identifying how relevant publics perceive a policy and not which policy the publics want to see pursued. Eustice concurs in that whichever research tools are used in political communication, the purpose is to improve the communicator's



understanding of audiences and to be able to gauge their reaction. While this may be the defining explanation for research used in politics there appears to be some temptation to push the line further and use research findings as a means to fine tune policies. Eustice himself is emphasising how research was used by the Conservative opposition to understand public perceptions of Blairism. Findings were fed into a discussion about how Conservative policies should integrate these criticisms of the then government and offer an alternative to Labour's agenda. Still Eustice insists the policy content the Conservative Party had to offer was devised independently from any research findings which were only allowed to help communicators find the right tone and terminology. Eustice highlights Cameron's rhetoric on welfare reform as a case in point. The arguments were being informed by research findings. So instead of speaking of welfare cuts for scroungers he would emphasise the need to help people who are currently stuck in the welfare system (Eustice; Davies).

I have come across consistent evidence that outside party headquarters and the Prime Minister's office at No. 10, systematic opinion polling is not being conducted by any government department. The only exception is the Chancellor's office which may actually have engaged in regular polling in preparation of Brown's take-over of the leadership (McBride, Livermore). McBride is summarising the rationale in No. 11 for taking up systematic research and opinion polling: "So, yes, that's something that we did, um, consistently because almost the assumption was, you should be doing that, um, if that's what the leader is expected to do because Tony Blair has been doing it all these years and why not"( McBride, 5).

All other cabinet ministers who are keen to find out what their stakeholders have in mind and expect are usually reliant on polling conducted by the news media (Davies). This source lacked answers to questions a department or incumbent might have wanted to ask in a specific political context and is therefore of very limited value only. However, they had little alternative. Davies made it quite clear that special advisors who direct cabinet ministers' media relations lack the financial resources and the time it takes to conduct

systematic research whose findings could then be used to draw up and pursue communication objectives. Richards reminds us that in 20 years in politics and a decade of work for cabinet ministers he never had at his disposal the budget needed to conduct an opinion poll.

To deal with this Katie Waring reminds us that she relies on an assortment of random information, titbits and gossip that reaches her, complaints and hints that someone in the business community was not happy with a decision. This does provide a wealth of information on the department's and the Business Secretary's performance. However, none of it is even vaguely representative of the mood or the expectations in specific key publics.

The speechwriter Neather illustrates how much he relied on a hunch of what the audience might want to hear when planning and drawing up speeches for ministers in the Home Office. "Expectations of the audience are fairly straightforward", he claimed (Neather, 2). While he may be right in thinking so his judgement is not grounded in any kind of formal research. Lacking this he assumed audiences of Home Office ministers liked to "get some sort of feel for the politician, as a politician as a person" (Neather, 2). Neather would use this approach for all of the 100 or so speeches he wrote for the Home Office in the course of a year. He points out that the only formal research that was conducted had been commissioned by party headquarters and various media. However, it emerges that the kind of data made available by either would not lend itself to gaining a good understanding of specific audiences nor would they help gauge how politicians are being perceived among specific publics and which attributes are ascribed to them.

In conclusion I found that interviewees find it easier to talk critically of past political eras and protagonists who have since retired. It is therefore not entirely surprising to see Eustice mention Michael Howard as an example for a politician who fell for the temptation to allow the public mood as identified in research findings to guide the party manifesto. In this specific case Howard found that concerns about immigration his pollsters had raised should be a core theme in the election campaign. It is not the purpose of this research to

judge if this approach is ethically acceptable or not. Instead one needs to acknowledge that Howard apparently allowed the thrust of research results to steer both content and style of his campaign much more than Cameron was allegedly prepared to do. Without offering any further examples Eustice believes that a considerable number of politicians concede research findings a pivotal strategic role commensurate with the view taken by Howard. Lance Price made the same observation with Tony Blair who instinctively supported research for and use of genetically modified food in the UK, but was prepared to change his stance once it emerged that the majority of consumers were much more sceptical and wished not to see it on the supermarket shelves.

In the following section (4.3.) we will be looking into how communicators define the ideal public persona and try to establish how this notion is reflected in political public relations processes and the defining of communication objectives. From what we have learned so far, the understanding of what stakeholders consider an ideal reputation may be vague at best and based to some extent on anecdotal evidence. Apart from the Prime Minister most leading politicians in the country arguably have only limited interest in and no resources for systematic research and subsequently are unlikely to know what their intended public persona should be, let alone what their current reputation is like.

### **4.3. Understanding the ideal public persona**

Apparently, both journalists and communication advisors are aware of the importance of a public persona. It is not the purpose of this project to establish what features this public persona should represent. Of much more interest should be a recognition that in line with current concepts of reputation management, communication processes need to aim at generating, maintaining and safeguarding a politician's public images that ultimately create or guarantee a public persona which corresponds with expectations specific publics seem to entertain.

It would seem that there is some confusion as to what in the minds of the electorate constitutes the features of the ideal politician. Price claims that some politicians display the looks, rhetoric and gestures as one would expect them in a leading politician and arguably Blair did so at least in his early years. Yet, the public also appeared to have given unusual support and sympathy to Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary and Clare Short. These were two politicians whose demeanour was much less in line with the stereotypical description of a serious, strategically thinking and acting politician. Price points out this discrepancy and concludes that there is a range of different and at times conflicting personalities and images that seem to be attractive to the electorate and deemed fit to govern the country.

Price clarifies that businesses' public opinion research is difficult to compare with politics as in the latter issues come up at a high frequency and immediate responses are needed. This state of affairs leaves in his view little time for systematic data gathering and analysis which explains perhaps in part the lack of survey or interview data into what constitutes the ideal images of a politician. Moreover, distinct groups may have different expectations. Particularly, party activists may hope for traits in their representatives that arguably diverge from what the electorate at large asks for. Jones refers to this when he calls William Hague unelectable but "appealing to the party faithful" (Jones, 12).

A more anecdotal route to identifying and describing a politician's ideal reputation is taken by Davies (1) whose experience as advisor to Jack Straw made him conclude that publics tend to like politicians that speak their mind and appear to be upfront and honest. This however, is grounded entirely in anecdotal evidence as is the notion that voters want a "big personality" (Beattie, 6). Or so insists Beattie (6) when commenting on London mayor Boris Johnson's apparent ease to retain public popularity regardless of the policy outcomes he produces and perceived benefits he secures for Londoners. Beattie suspects an appetite for "big personalities" (6).

In the view of Livermore being respected was all that was needed for a Prime Minister and there was no good reason for attempts to generate popularity artificially. Ignoring this counsel, Brown was given advice that a smile on his face when on television would be appreciated by his audiences. Apparently, Brown agreed as he himself was unhappy with his lack of popularity and thus strove for activities and behaviour that endeared himself to publics. This led to a trade-off between being liked on the one hand and being respected on the other (Livermore). This internal controversy and luckless attempt to temper with a politician's perceived personality reveals something about the quality and randomness of political communications in pursuit of an ideal public persona.

Similarly arbitrary – though perhaps with some truth in it - is Kettle's speculation that advanced age in party leaders and senior politicians is either actually considered a weakness by the electorate or alternatively party leadership thinks that youth is electorally more viable. However, the nominations of party leaders in all three major parties suggests that a successful leader is of a comparatively young age set against the backdrop of potential alternative contenders for the leadership. Parties that in the past did choose older leaders saw them ridiculed in the media. Kettle mentions Menzies Campbell, but could also have talked about Michael Foot's case who admittedly was also handicapped by his idiosyncratic ideological positions at the time.

Having said this it appears that while the leader strives to appear youthful the leadership team as a whole may well need one older personality to reflect the widest possible range of the electorate (Kettle). Kettle mentions the Conservative's Ken Clarke, the Justice Secretary, and the Business Secretary Vince Cable for the Lib Dems who through an extended professional experience add "gravitas" (Kettle, 5) to the perceived credibility and competence of government or party leadership. He goes on to make the point that Jim Callaghan was apparently the last politician who in the 1970s made advanced age ("you can trust old Jim") a positive trademark in his campaign.

The definition of an ideal public persona is arguably not absolute, but instead relative to a politician's brief. While as defence secretary particular qualities may be considered useful and expected by key publics, we may want a leader of the opposition to speak and act differently. Cabinet Ministers may perhaps revel in the management of day to day politics, whilst a prime ministerial personality can afford to and should be above the daily fray and address the nation as a whole rather than his close-knit political supporters (Stacey). Stacey concludes from this that perhaps Gordon Brown's public persona was well suited to run the Exchequer, while his style was not adequate for a head of government. By the same token one can argue that David Cameron's hands off approach to managing daily politics may be considered a liability if adopted by a cabinet minister, while it is perfectly acceptable for someone who considers him or herself a chairperson in an almost presidential position. Stevenson (1) concurs by saying that Gordon Brown reflected "a sober and prudent aspect in relation both to policy and person" which for his job at the Exchequer may have been just what the party and the electorate wanted. Stevenson (1) goes on to question if perhaps "those are not the same characteristics" that are needed as head of government.

Brown may have had an awkward personality and his communication style was somewhat deficient. Still he was regarded a numbers person and solid administrator who had an impressive track record as chancellor. Livermore (4) takes this up and categorises politicians in one group that is being liked by publics and the other group that is being respected, "almost feared." Greer suggests this might have been Brown's selling point as prime minister regardless to the sympathy people felt for him. The advice shared by Greer acknowledges however, that the qualities ascribed to the Chancellor Brown may not have helped him in the job of prime minister. Livermore (2) concedes this point when he emphasises that "the image that he (Brown) sought to create for himself and we sought to reinforce as Chancellor was particularly well suited to him as Chancellor", which implies that it was an image that perhaps was not best suited for a different portfolio.

Perhaps Alan Johnson's perceived poor performance as Shadow Chancellor can be understood in this context too. As Secretary of State Johnson was said to have been "extraordinarily successful", while perhaps he never should have been picked as Shadow Chancellor (Beattie, 6). Davies agrees that publics may want to see qualities in a government politician that are different from traits people accept in a shadow-minister. For instance, the Home Secretary should be trusted to lock away whoever deserves to go to prison and to ensure that no major errors happen in the management of public security. By contrast, in Foreign Secretaries trust is perhaps a less prominent issue. Instead they need to be predominantly visible and "being seen to be part of the big picture" (Davies, 2).

#### **4.4. Linking personality and reputation management objectives**

It seems apparent that in communicators' minds the public persona and the politician's identity are related and that one hinges on the other. McBride remembers meeting politicians who he thought would lend themselves to being portrayed in one particular way only, whilst others were endowed with a different set of qualities and would more likely be able to have different images projected on to them. Richards (1) finds that due to media exposure personal traits are being "magnified". This would suggest that communication advisors would at least have to control the kind of characteristics and the intensity to which they become exposed over time. Richards seems to be making this point when he talks about Hazel Blears who as a "down to earth, plain spoken, working class" politician would by her communication advisors be presented in an environment and with audiences that appreciate these traits.

McBride stresses that the attempt to fabricate images that are unrelated to a person's genuine personality do not work as audiences are unlikely to accept an entirely artificial public persona. McBride (6) points out even more explicitly that "I never, ever saw any attempt to change an image if there was anything remotely inauthentic about it, I never saw that work and it was always totally

destructive in the other way.” It appears that the electorate is reacting with considerable aversion in the face of what they consider as manipulation.

The efforts to shape Gordon Brown’s image in the words of McBride were designed not to remodel the Prime Minister’s personality, but instead to help publics access Gordon Brown’s actual identity. The campaigning to present Brown as “not flash, just Gordon” was therefore appreciated both among Labour followers and the opposition as a skilful attempt to shape the Prime Minister’s images within the limits of his actual identity (Eustice, 4). Both Macrory and Thorogood make it quite clear that a complete make-over of the personality would not work and it is not intended to make politicians behave or talk in a way that does not reflect their personality.

However, it is understood that in the case of William Hague Conservative communicators had diverged from this more modest stance and instead ambitiously sought to model his public persona in a way that did not do justice to his identity (Macrory, Eustice). Michael Portillo too appears to have been a politician whose reputation was for a while the result of a skilful makeover that intended to present him as a Conservative political hardliner: A public persona that did not match his personality (Jones). Portillo appears to have been unhappy with this rift between who he was and the artificially generated perception. The case of Portillo eventually seems to confirm what we have established so far: In the long run identity and reputation need to be aligned.

Beattie sees a communicator’s room to manoeuvre therefore reduced to emphasising politicians’ strengths and hiding their weaknesses (Beattie). This minimalistic approach to reputation management seems to be widely accepted. It precludes notions that communicators may be able to turn a politician like Iain Duncan Smith into “the most sparkling, dynamic leader like person” (Stacey, 8). In the view of Stacey this is beyond the abilities of communication advisors and is therefore “just never going to happen” (Stacey, 8).

With regard to this call for authenticity Waring points out that Business Secretary Vince Cable genuinely wanted to take part in the entertainment programme *Strictly Come Dancing* which in her view was an authentic



engagement which presented him as a person with hinterland and interests that transcend politics. As another example for a politician that is genuinely appealing to the public Stacey cites Boris Johnson whose self-effacing humour and ability not to take himself too seriously allows him to get away with controversial actions or remarks that might come back to haunt other politicians. Both cases touch upon an argument Stacey raised by pointing out that audiences find it easy to relate to a politician's positive public persona if it appears to be grounded in charismatic traits that were pre-dating any communications advice.

Hill concurs with McBride in that the public at some point manages to see through a constructed public persona if it is intended to cover up a personality that is entirely different from the images created. However, he concedes that it is the legitimate responsibility of communicators to emphasise strengths and to ensure that weaknesses are removed from public focus. This however does not signify that one can pull "wool over the eyes of the general public in the modern media war for very long" (Hill, 11). Therefore, Hill and Livermore argue that substance and spin go together and presentational tools can only work if they are based on the substance that is meant to be communicated. Stevenson concludes that both substance and presentation are relevant for a politician's public persona. This broadly is in line with a claim made by McBride who argues that individuals in public life can count on PR to present the complexity of their personalities and their strengths to specific publics.

What in the view of Hill cannot be done with hope to succeed is the entire fabrication of a public persona that does not in the least resemble the politicians' themselves. This is presumably a recipe the Conservatives followed when drawing up a communications strategy for Michael Howard in the run-up to the 2005 elections. Eustice remarks that the truth needs to be at the heart of all messages that are associated with a politician and should also shape the public persona that is being generated. This is why the Conservatives portrayed Michael Howard as a politician who got things done. However, this would also explain why they did perhaps not try and fight an uphill battle against the widely spread notion that Howard was anything but charming (Eustice). Jones (19) reminds us that Howard in run up to the

general election in 2005 could have needed an overhaul of this aspect of his public perception. However, his long standing reputation as being “shifty, untrustworthy, rather unpleasant character” was limiting communicators’ options (Jones, 19).

Eustice concludes that any attempts to present an individual in any way that diverges from their personality harbours considerable risks. The communicative failure of the Hague leadership is a case in point that illustrates the consequences if the actual personality of the then Conservative leader does not guide the communication programme. At the time communicators strove to portray the party as young and stylish which was probably a reason for taking Hague not only to the Notting Hill Carnival, but also to a theme park where he was asked to go on a water slide. Eustice (4) argues that the image management of Hague might have worked, if the communications had played to his strengths and emphasised that he was a serious man who “wasn’t flash but was sensible.” Hague was then as now a serious personality and books he has published in the meantime reveal in the eyes of Beattie his intellectual prowess. Wood’s advice to the then party leader William Hague was at the time to play to his ordinary comprehensive school upbringing. It is thought to have been wrong to ignore these features of his personality when his public perception was being shaped in the late 1990s (Beattie).

A lack of authenticity may also have been the cause of adverse responses to a brief broadcast by Gordon Brown who on *You Tube* was talking about government expenses. During his talk Brown made a forced effort to smile in between words and sentences. Richards (8) calls this presentational exercise “completely idiotic and out of character” and comparable to Hague’s decision to wear a baseball cap. Kelly (3) advises not to generate an artificial personality or “bubble” – as he calls it - around the political leader which is likely to burst. Wood (2) concurs and claims that “most attempts to change it (personality) just don’t work or backfire.”

The public persona in the view of Eustice must be “consistent with what they actually are”, which is something good advisors should ideally have an

understanding of (Eustice, 2). In a similar vein Gordon Brown felt uncomfortable to have his family used to presentational ends. This is why his communications policy did not envisage roles for his children and indeed the only time he presented himself as a family man for a photo opportunity was on the day he moved out of Downing Street surrounded by his wife and children (Stevenson).

The risk involved with fabricating an entirely artificial public persona that bears little resemblance with the actual personality is also described by Stacey, who insists political correspondents are perfectly able to see and spot these discrepancies. He goes on to argue that “you just can’t keep up the façade (Stacey, 5). Waring agrees by adding that Whitehall correspondents are “completely immersed in Westminster, and they pick up all the gossip and they see everybody” (Waring, 9). This closeness ensures there is little opportunity to develop a public persona that diverges substantially from what an individual really is like.

It has been claimed that a politician’s public exposure that staunchly contradicts his established public persona, is particularly damaging for the individual concerned (McBride). Discrepancies between the public image and what is thought to be a politician’s personality are damaging but do occur, particularly if an individual’s professed values and beliefs turn out to be not in line with their actual behaviour (Greer). These cases may involve politicians who as part of their public persona have taken a particular stance on illegal drugs or family values which they at some point do not live up to in their respective private lives.

Richards cites John Prescott, the former deputy Prime Minister as an example of a politician whose personality as “a bruiser” could never be hidden or re-interpreted to satisfy publics that may have wished to see different traits in a leading government member (Richards, 6). While Prescott had a tendency to abrasive behaviour and language, former Labour leader Kinnock had an image as someone who after a few drinks and a meal could start a row with the restaurant owner (Jones). Jones notes that Kinnock “found it very very difficult to counter that image” (Jones, 3).

Gordon Brown's communication team helped over years to frame his bouts of bad temper and abrasiveness and portray the Chancellor instead as a strong personality in the face of adversity (Livermore). The idea was to generate respect for Brown even among those who did not particularly like him (Greer). However, once the public discovered that Brown as Prime Minister lacked this trait of strength and determination that they had for long respected in him, his reputation cracked (Livermore).

The cases above arguably constitute a good reason for George Osborne to keep a low media profile as he is aware that it would be difficult to hide what Stacey calls his Machiavellian personality and his inclinations to scheme (Stacey). Likewise, Gordon Brown's public persona could not be reformed at will since journalists sensed and at times knew what was going on behind closed doors in Downing Street where Brown allegedly threw mobile phones at people and called staff at three o'clock in the morning. This and similar behaviour was difficult to hide which is why politicians arguably "tend to end up being perceived in the way that they are" (Richards, 6). This is why Richards finds it hard to think of a politician whose' public persona at any point was completely altered.

Whilst Kelly too subscribes to this notion that the public persona cannot be altered at will as it is anchored in an individual's identity, there seems to be evidence for a change of identity over time which is mirrored in an evolving public persona. By way of example he reminds us of how Tony Blair while fundamentally the same person throughout his tenure in Downing Street, did change in as far as he was increasingly prepared and willing to take on hostile public opinion if he believed his course of action was right. This seems to be a feature in his personality which allegedly was less apparent during his first term.

#### **4.5. Identifying distinct audiences**

My interviewees on the whole are fully aware of the existence of distinct publics. Yet their tools to identify these groups and their methods to address them vary considerably. Stevenson's answer was typical for the responses that emerged. He recognises the relevance of publics and expects political leaders to engage with them lest their power base becomes eroded (Stevenson). Hill relates the existence of diverse publics to reputation management by describing the sheer range of interests and expectations as a challenge that renders reputation management more difficult. Colleagues in the cabinet or the shadow cabinet, party members and activists, different political currents within the parliamentary party - all of which are seeing the politician in a distinct way and may presumably nurture different expectations.

Redfern (8) elaborates on this by suggesting that the political leader's attention to the electorate and the party activists as key publics is largely sequential. He reminds us that initially aspiring leaders need to play to their respective party's galleries. Once he or she earned their backing it is the country at large one needs to address. While doing so, style and selection of content need to be calibrated in a way that ensures the electorate's support while party activists aren't aggravated. In party politics the default position in discussions about market segments and the focusing of limited resources is to direct attention to the marginal seats (Hill). They are geographically easily identifiable and may be pivotal in upcoming elections. More broadly, Hill concurs that the message as well as the approach of party political and government communications is skewed to meet expectations of the electorate even though this diverged from what party activists asked for.

An added challenge is faced by the Secretaries for Scotland and Wales who represent distinct geographical interests of their respective nations which at times are ill aligned with policies pursued by the central government in London. Hazlewood recognises this and strives to interpret the Secretary's statements and decisions as being reflective both of Welsh interests and central government policies.

Davies points out how different target audiences may have conflicting stakes in and contrasting interpretations of specific policies. He cites the currents in

the on-going debate over the wisdom of prison sentences for petty offenders. Politicians may take on board what various publics expect and echo this in their behaviour or style. Likewise, once it had transpired from polling data that Alan Johnson had an image problem, he markedly changed his attire, developed a preference for navy blue suits and made sure he would not be seen in public wearing sunglasses any more (McBride, 4).

While some politicians make an effort to try and reconcile their public persona with diverse strands of demands and expectations, others decide either for strategic reasons or intuitively not to accommodate a specific public. John Prescott for instance was on various occasions mandated by the party convention – a public in its own right - to pursue a specific policy with regard to council house building. Instead of reconciling his personal stance and policy with this demand he habitually ignored the request raised by his party (Davies).

Internal deliberations about the socioeconomic group, gender and the notion of the average – but aspirational – citizen bear testimony that audience segmentations are not only paid lip service to by political parties and candidates but may play a part in communication strategies. Even though funding to research these publics is limited there appears to be a basic understanding at party headquarters of how to categorise the electorate (Wood).

The level and sophistication of segmentation is limited by the lack of resources. Therefore for data MPs tap into the anecdotal evidence they come across in their constituencies. This casual research informs their understanding of what the diverse electorate might need and how groups and interests are distinct. Waring (4) calls it a “microcosm of society” and details how politicians’ visits to their constituent’s doorsteps produce “anecdotal evidence.” This is a strong rationale for community visits. Waring maintains that the Business Secretary’s political behaviour also echoes discussions he is having with his staff about the diversity of his stakeholders, ranging from traders in the City of London to deprived citizens in his constituency. Attempts

to keep the balance between these two extremes exemplify awareness of distinct publics and an understanding that they need to be accommodated.

McBride clarifies that neither as Chancellor nor as Prime Minister did Gordon Brown invest in intense audience research that would have allowed him to gauge the different publics and give him directions as to how their expectations overlapped or conflicted and in particular how his own perception diverged from their respective views. Views and suggestions among communication advisors about the most appropriate channels of communications were not grounded in reliable data. Yet Stevenson insists the tools of communication with key publics are selected in accordance with the targeted audience. Women's magazines, to name an example, were considered an appropriate communication channel for Gordon Brown to address female voters that appeared to be even more sceptical about him than the electorate at large (McBride). McBride also mentions Lord Stevenson's idea to publish a book to portray Brown the way he really is. This suggestion was cautioned against by colleagues who felt that the relevant audience of young and not particularly politicised voters may arguably not be too excited by the idea of a book authored by the Prime Minister (McBride). A practical rather than research based approach to selecting communications tools and channels was taken in Conservative Central Office too. With specific segments of the electorate in mind Cameron was advised for instance to agree to an interview with *GQ magazine* and to appear on the *Jonathan Ross Show* (Macrory).

Newspapers likewise offer themselves as a distinct channel and Beattie is explaining how pivotal the role of the *Daily Mirror* can be for communications between the Labour leadership and its supporters many of whom read the *Daily Mirror*. Communicators also need to show awareness of how a political pundit's attention span and level of interest differs from the average newspaper or TV audience's patterns of media consumption. Beattie subscribes to Alastair Campbell's view that once the political activist gets tired of a piece of news the media consuming public just about starts to notice something has been said. In this respect the people who make the media and

those who consume them are quite distinct audiences for any political communicator to deal with.

Redfern observed a tangible difference between corporate and political communications with regard to the amount and intensity of stakeholder research. He details that business clients would organise data on their supposed stakeholders in diagrams, survey them and plan communication strategy according to their findings. By contrast, to compensate for a lack of audience data political communicators make use of generic polling results that is commissioned by publishers and broadcasters (McBride). This publicly accessible data helped understand for instance how Brown was seen in his native Scotland and how his alleged attempts to act more English were being perceived and interpreted north of the border.

Redfern suggests that another reason for a lack of market segmentation and opinion research into the electorate may be communicators' deep running familiarity with the audiences. Redfern refers to the Labour leadership contest in 2010. He clarifies that in the campaign team that was organising David Miliband's bid for the party leadership there was a good understanding of the distinct publics that would sway the result. Particular attention was dedicated to party constituencies with an intention to favour the right of the party as opposed to the left. Specific union chapters were being targeted and so were individual MPs. The strategy deployed envisaged wins with specific moderate and conservative publics and anticipated comparatively poor showing with others: MPs, Unions and party activists at the same time were aware of who their favourite candidates were and what they stood for. In the view of Redfern there were no doubts about what David Miliband represented.

In this array of media consuming and generating audiences Kelly accepts that the electorate is the ultimate target audience for any politician. However he contends that newspapers are both an important channel and a critical audience that cannot be bypassed – neither through television nor social media. He particularly advises communicators not to challenge the print media because “there was only one winner in that” (Kelly, 4).



Beattie is implicitly pointing at the discrepancy in judgement that separates the electorate from journalists by detailing the cases of Alex Salmond and Boris Johnson. Beattie contends that the public is prepared to forgive and accept individuals and their failings. Journalists he would argue are more critical individuals who tend to get bored and as a consequence cover a politician or a policy less favourably. In their dual role as target audience and as channel newspapers play a central role in political communications which seems to be echoed in the way communicators treat reporters, editors and entire news desks. Messages are being passed on selectively to specific papers and their correspondents. This allows communicators to build up working relationships with sympathetic media and cut out adverse papers that would potentially have used information against the source (Beattie).

Another tool of communication with distinct publics, the leader's conference speech, is undertaken with a similar awareness of the distinct audiences it will be addressed to. Neather details that the party faithful nurture interests and expectations that may be different from those of television audiences. Jones adds that particularly the tabloid newspapers traditionally were on the mind of the politician who was about to face the conference. McBride details how Gordon Brown at party conferences used to direct chunks of his speech at the party members who he needed to reassure that their concerns were being listened to and that their apprehension about Tony Blair's previous policies were being responded to. This in the view of McBride was only of limited relevance to the media in the room or the audience that followed events on the evening news channels. In years preceding Brown, Tony Blair had inserted into his scripts at party conferences passages that were exclusively aimed at the TV audience and other elements which had been integrated to satisfy party members (McBride).

This ability to engage the public at large and not just his own party activists constituted in the view of Hill the recipe of Tony Blair's success over many years. Even though Blair and his staff were aware that distinct publics entertained distinct interests and expectations, Blair is reported not to have bent his messages to respond to different demands in the audience (Hill, Price). Price maintains that instead he would adapt his style and it was

allegedly his “emotional intelligence” that allowed Blair to be in tune with the mood of the conference (Price, 2). It is not the purpose of this investigation to corroborate the actual quality of leaders or their respective leadership speeches at conferences. In the context of this study I take the above narrative about conference speeches as an indicator to suggest that audience segmentation is at least being considered and acted upon even though perhaps not very systematically.

#### **4.6. Positioning politicians**

In this section interviewees are addressing the notion that politicians are being perceived by their publics in a specific way that is relative to the standing of their peers. In other words an individual’s perceived strengths and weaknesses may amount to qualities that are teased out, hidden or emphasised as publics compare politicians. It is the purpose of this section to understand if this process is systematically guided and influenced by communicators.

In the view of Price Prime Minister Blair was fortunate in as far as the successive leaders of the opposition he was being challenged by took tactical approaches to attacking the government. Rather than presenting themselves as alternatives to the government they tried to criticise details in the daily management and implementation of politics. This allowed the Prime Minister to claim that he was the only politician around who acted in the nation’s long term interest. Price reminds us that the positioning of politicians in the public perception and associating them with a particular narrative that is distinct from those their political competitors subscribe to is critical both in times of government and opposition. The opposition is in his view disadvantaged since they cannot create associations with the same ease as incumbents do who align themselves with values due to actions and decisions they take. Instead a challenger’s tool to claim and defend a position in the field of competing political issues and contenders is largely symbolic.

John Reid for instance was driven by his advisors to pick rows with Gordon Brown just for the sake of the confrontation itself. His advisors allegedly wanted to present Reid in public as a politician influential enough to challenge Blair's presumptive successor. Apparently, the gravitas of his adversaries – or so they are believed to have reasoned – may have added to Reid's own standing (McBride). Waring made the same observation during the campaign for electoral reform when fights were picked as an instrument that aimed at clarifying one's position and making it visible to a wider public. Apart from using conflict with colleagues or even the head of government to make one's own position known and distinct from anyone else's, there may be alternative and smoother ways that allow cabinet members to conform with government policy and the Prime Minister's directives while at the same time using the little flexibility left them to develop their respective images and shape the perceptions the public entertains of them. Price names David Blunkett as Education and later Home Secretary as a politician who managed to carve out his own position while still towing the government line.

When identifying and consolidating public perceptions of a politician, advisors may take into account how the respective individual is being seen and what their strengths and weaknesses are perceived to be. Richards who at different times advised cabinet ministers Patricia Hewitt and Hazel Blears remembers how Blears due to her working class background felt patronised and underestimated by her cabinet peers in some situation, whilst in meetings with trade unionists she gained confidence and could demonstrate her good rapport with the audience. Richards' understanding of her abilities allowed him to arrange public engagements with the intention to position Blears favourably. By the same token Hewitt was known to be a highly intellectual personality who would be able to make a mark in interviews that required one to develop and pursue complex trains of thought (Richards). If politics requires different talents and abilities in different situations and if politicians are being seen and judged by their respective publics in different ways, political advisors thus may make use of this diversity of expectations and situations and position their clients accordingly.

Gordon Brown's long wait to succeed Tony Blair at the helm of government was interspersed with questions about his suitability for the top job. Clearly, his abilities and personal traits were being discussed in the context and compared to the qualities of other potential contenders. Price points out that Brown's strength was considered to be his management of the economy which supported his claim to the premiership and gave him an edge over other cabinet ministers who could not necessarily as confidently command authority in their respective department or claim competence in their subject area. However, both the fact that Brown was Scottish and his arguably difficult personality may also have fed into the overall perception and raised doubts about the wisdom of the impending promotion. Price claims that these issues which affected Brown's public positioning vis a vis his cabinet colleagues were being dealt with systematically by his communication staff.

One may want to speculate for instance if Brown's mantra of Britishness in his public statements was a rhetorical device to associate him with national values that he by birth and nature lacked – very much to the detriment of his political ambitions. Before Gordon Brown became Prime Minister he went on a tour across the country and agreed to be interviewed by local radio stations who in the words of McBride saw this as an opportunity to present the man to their listeners who was expected to become the next Prime Minister. In these settings Brown talked about local issues and themes beyond his normal remit of the economy and public finances. This set him apart from the incumbent at 10 Downing Street Tony Blair, who in the words of McBride at the time had lost his rapport with the public and appeared to be caring more about his legacy and his standing as an international statesman. This opened up a niche in the political arena for someone who was “down to earth and listening to ordinary people” (McBride, 6).

Livermore (5) suggests that positioning Brown for a while was reasonably successful as he was seen by the public as the “antidote” of Blair, whose alleged interest in presentational issues damaged his image and undermined his popular appeal. Brown was taking a different stance which placed him in a position apart from his predecessor.

Once Brown had taken over the premiership occasions were seized by him and his staff to portray the new incumbent as different from the predecessor who stood accused of having a hands-off approach to a number of issues and to delegating challenges instead of dealing with them personally. (McBride). To demonstrate this re-positioning of the Prime Minister a major visible task was needed that could focus public attention on Brown's qualities. The second outbreak of foot and mouth disease among cattle in only a few years afforded this opportunity as it allowed Brown to demonstrate how firmly he was in control of crisis management and through detailed attention and active problem-solving strategies avoided mistakes and oversights Blair had become engulfed in when the epidemic struck the first time. Brown was positioned as hard working and serious – two features Tony Blair never considered his core-disciplines (McBride).

Greer believes Brown's public perception deteriorated once his advisors began to steer him away from the initial claim that whilst the Prime Minister may not be the most popular politician, he was at least a safe pair of hands with the economy. To present Brown as friendly and smiling was evidently an attempt to re-shape the position he held in people's perception, though arguably not a very successful one.

At about the same time re-positioning the Conservative Party was one of Cameron's main activities since he had taken over the leadership in 2005. This entailed in particular the selection of themes and the advocacy of issues that reflected values the Conservatives intended to be associated with. Amongst others was Cameron's engagement with environmental issues which Greer calls an act of positioning, but nothing the Conservatives genuinely cared about.

Positioning oneself and attacking or questioning the position the political opponent claims, are flip sides of the same coin. Richards (7) points out how the Labour Party tried to undermine Cameron's core claim of being firmly positioned in the centre of the political spectrum. They argued instead the Conservative's reformed agenda was not genuine and no proof that the Tories had seriously undergone a political transformation. It was argued by Labour

that at the heart their Conservative adversaries were still the followers of Thatcher and her ideas. It was this train of thought in the Labour Party that sought to position Cameron unfavourably by describing him as a chameleon (Richards).

#### **4.7. Reputation management and the planning process**

Redfern asserts that leading politicians who are visible in the media do not leave public perception to luck and therefore plan for it. The intensity of questioning and the frequency of media contact as well as the range of issues journalists might want to scrutinise, may tempt public relations staff and politicians alike to satisfy the journalists' curiosity without ensuring that answers are aligned with the strategic objectives that should be the guiding rod for any communicator. Eustice is conscious that media relations managers to a considerable degree are reactive only and in so being lose sight of communication and policy objectives. This may limit their effectiveness and reduces their value for the political party or politician they serve.

Price in his days with Tony Blair recognised this challenge and cites the planning grid as the response first introduced by the Blair government and since then kept by two successive Prime Ministers. The grid is a planning chart which is used as a tool to organise and orchestrate Prime Ministerial public appearances and announcements independently from events and crisis situations that crop up and threaten to dilute the messages and lead the focus away from the initially agreed objectives. The grid's strength is to visualise the narrative and to coordinate, calibrate and forecast the Westminster calendar of policy decisions and announcements, publicity, events and the public resonance as best as possible. The grid perhaps reflects actions and decisions that can reasonably be planned, while it is arguably a less useful tool to deal with external issues that are beyond the control of communicators.

To illustrate this, Jones reminds us that the frequent public appearances of the respective party leaders' wives in the course of the 2010 campaign were

considered a planned activity which in his view is probably laid down in a planning diary. Likewise themed visits that evolve around one subject area may be nicely and easily planned and laid down in a grid as Hazlewood detailed with respect to the planning process for the Welsh Secretary.

Price points out that strategic planning of media relations and images may happen intuitively. He cites Tony Blair who allegedly spent considerable time thinking about the right public perception of his party and government. This centrality of image planning is underpinned by the observation that Blair considered issues of perception “all the time” (Price, 1). To which degree these considerations are enshrined in a written plan is difficult to establish.

Richards claims that on policy and communicative issues cabinet ministers receive written memoranda from their advisors which are instrumental within departments in guiding ministers’ views and helping them to plan ahead. However, there is little evidence from interviewees that communication plans are usually written down. This practice seems to be rare at best, which is not due to the fact that communicative issues are not being considered. Instead there is a constant fear that written material could be leaked to the media. Jones has been dealing with reputation management for many years but not yet come across a written plan to detail how a politician is ideally presented and how this should be achieved. He assumes that the Labour pollster Philip Gould may have had in his days a clear cut plan on how to present Labour and its leader. Though not even in the case of this prominent Labour advisor is it known if a written physical plan existed or if the leadership avoided written evidence for the reasons mentioned above. Livermore on the other hand is adamant that a plan on issues of reputation management existed and was explicitly known among advisors and the politician in question. In his view the main arguments had been discussed with everyone involved and agreed and only fear of leaks to the press was the reason for it not to be formally typed up.

Hill concurs with Livermore’s observation that planning does exist in the form of a broadly considered and agreed process that however may not require a written document. He argues that advisors to a politician need to be imbued

with the direction policies and communications should take. This alignment in views would facilitate the brainstorming in the communications department and assist the development and optimisation of planning. In other words, planning processes that are well integrated into the communicators' mind sets and activities are seen as essential for effective communications as would be a written plan. Hill's remarks read as if in his view the effectiveness of communication tools to achieve desired objectives depended in part on staff's awareness of and support for the plan. Price concurs by saying that the alignment of political decisions and the integration of policy statements in the Blair governments required communicators that were thoroughly familiar with the policy and communication plan. From this perspective planning has been pivotal in the management of day to day communications. However, Price cautions and clarifies that even a comprehensive and systematic approach to planning would need to make allowance for some events which at short notice would be accommodated in the general narrative of a politician or party.

Eighty per cent is the figure Davies gives to quantify the share of unplanned, reactive media relations, compared to a mere 20 per cent planned communications activity. To illustrate this in an example, Davies talks about appointments he scheduled regularly with editors to give them an opportunity to talk to Justice Secretary Jack Straw in an attempt to present the minister in a specific, more rounded way. These meetings also were an opportunity for discussing and advocating forthcoming policy initiatives. However, many of these pre-arranged informal meetings were cancelled as more urgent commitments had to be dealt with which had not been envisaged. Richards (3) concludes that communicative work at cabinet level gives only limited opportunities to plan ahead and stick to an agreed plan: "Most of it is reactive." Kelly in this context talks about the humility communicators need to show as they recognise that their communication objectives cannot usually be achieved directly.

Beyond 10 Downing Street— at cabinet level - ministers may to different degrees engage in forward planning of policy announcements and public appearances. Waring disclosed that apart from the ministerial diary she keeps her own tally of talks Vince Cable has had with specific journalists. This is how



she tries to keep track of who is missing out and who needs to be contacted and talked to next. The success of these planning tools hinges on a number of variables. Apparently, the politician's personality and readiness to espouse a formal planning structure appears to be not insignificant in this. Davies and colleagues sought to align Straw's public appearances with stakeholder interests. However, this careful planning was not always adhered to by the minister. Davies mentions that Jack Straw agreed to meetings and engagements quite in spite of other commitments and the advice he may have received from his communication staff.

Davies (12) emphasises another limiting factor in the planning process which is related to what he refers to as "official engagements". While official engagements are counted among events that can very well be organised with a long term perspective, their presence in the diary on occasions seems to be owed to objectives that are unrelated to communication goals. It would appear that the diary only to a limited extent is in the control of communicators who try to use it as an instrument to meet reputational concerns. Other parts of the civil service insist that a substantial share of ministerial time is taken up for commitments unrelated to key publics.

Another limitation to planning at a ministerial level is Downing Street interference. Davies experienced how some policy initiatives were claimed by the Prime Minister. While this does not limit the planning process itself it curbs the areas and issues any politician at cabinet level is in command of. Davies also cautions us against assuming that newly appointed cabinet ministers are free to direct and steer policies in their department as they think best. Decisions that had been taken by previous ministers of the same party may be less easily altered than initiatives that come up for consideration for the first time. In other words, policy planning is much less comprehensive and often limited by variables outside a cabinet minister's control.

Eustice is considering the need for planning in opposition. He refers to communications management operations for David Cameron as leader of the opposition. A meeting of communicators discussed and agreed policies and turned them into a grid that detailed which message would be sent out, how

and when. This strategic plan was passed on to media relations staff and speech writers who were in charge of implementing the plan on a day to day basis, overseeing activities and offering technical support. The meetings and the updating of communication plans for Cameron before 2010 were scheduled on a weekly basis. This level of frequency may suggest that even technical support staff within the opposition's media department were expected to work within the planning framework.

A final point emerged in the course of interviews that is worth taking note of. One may want to keep in mind that actions taken or statements made by a politician may be random or ill-advised, even though expertise and a planned course of action had been available. At times interviews and encounters with stakeholders may be planned and aligned with the policy and communications objectives politicians had previously agreed to. Yet they may choose not to adhere to the intended advice. This resistance to planning may be owed to a politician's personality or a poor briefing beforehand which perhaps lacked in clarity or comprehensiveness. While this may be a criticism of internal communications, it is no evidence for a lack of planning.

#### **4.8. Recognition of strategic options**

How a politician's intended reputation can be constructed, is a question related to the selection of an appropriate strategy. The evidence collected suggests that regardless of strategic considerations raised by communicators, politicians themselves have not always been keen to espouse long term, strategic reputation planning. In the view of Price (9) both Gordon Brown and John Major never had a vision for their premierships which translated into a strategic deficit in their communications. As both heads of government found it hard to explain the purpose of their respective political vision it was an uphill struggle for communicators to generate a narrative as a means to prepare, explain and justify policy decisions.

Price argues that the need to think ahead is not always understood by incumbents. In Price's view Blair considered long term projects and

implications, whilst his successor Brown was too much preoccupied with short term tactical ramifications. This illustrates that in part a commitment to strategy in communications hinges on an individual's personality or professional background. In part, however, strategy may also be dependent on issues that emerge on the agenda which in turn condition the very approach politicians and communicators choose as a response (Price). He observed that government is more likely to integrate big issues such as budget and foreign affairs statements into a communicative strategy. A range of other themes would not leave time to be widely discussed and options of response could not be fully weighed. Price cites the hours following the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales, as a case in point. In this instance polling data and focus group research that would otherwise be necessary to create a balanced response was not forthcoming in the shortness of time (Price). This reflects another of Price's observations which questions if a strategic underpinning is conceivable at all for at least a number of instantaneous decisions and scenarios. In his view therefore, politics is as he puts it "an imprecise science" (Price, 4). It is probably more than just a well-informed speculation to surmise that this applies not just to the substance of policy decisions, but also to the communication both of policies and policy makers.

Davies specifically details the case of former cabinet minister Jack Straw who would never get round to planning ahead his communication engagements and statements for more than two weeks. And even the content of columns he wrote as minister were more often than not written at the spur of the moment and therefore did not constitute part of a grand design or strategy of perception management. The selection process for a theme was anything but strategic as Davies (11) details how Straw described his own working style: "I'd better write my column. What shall I write about? Oh, that's been annoying me. Yeah, I'll write that."

Jack Straw is said to have agreed to or turned down requests for interviews almost instinctively (Davies). Davies goes on to describe Straw as a person who rather uncharacteristically for a leading politician would allow having himself interviewed even if he dreaded the questioning and may not have been comfortable with a particular subject area. His justification for what from

some distance amounts to a somewhat erratic and a not particularly strategic relationship with the media was grounded in his understanding that responsiveness to public questioning was part of what the democratic process required of him. On the other hand there seems to have been what Davies calls a systematic quality control in the sense that Straw and his media staff would not agree to appear on shows and turn down interview requests if the format, the style and content were not commensurate with Straw's role as a senior cabinet member. The BBC *Five Live Programme* would be a case in hand that Straw systematically shunned (Davies).

Likewise, other politicians try to stay clear of any type of public appearance that places them in an awkward or disadvantageous position. They are conscious of their attributes and how any kind of public engagement pays into their perceived qualities. Patricia Hewitt impersonates this approach that is not tactical or responsive, but instead well considered and planned. Richards (1) confirms that Hewitt was known to be – as he puts it – “a very cerebral and academic woman”, who sought to strengthen this public perception by making set piece public appearances that gave her an opportunity to play to her strengths and present big ideas to a sophisticated audience.

Neather explains how Alastair Darling's approach to media relations was carefully considered and guided by a long term strategy. Essentially he tried to avoid media contact as best he could during his time as a cabinet member. In the meantime he cultivated a perception as being competent and efficient both as Work and Pensions Secretary as well as Transport Secretary. This low media profile effectively helped to disassociate the minister to some degree from negative stories that might otherwise have caught up with him. Consistent and time bound attempts to shun public attention count as a communications strategy in its own right, which PR staff are apparently aware of. The same communication strategy Darling's successor at the Treasury George Osborne is pursuing stringently ever since his appointment to No 11. Osborne tries to avoid public statements, press meetings and the like (Neather).

Communicators seek not to be tempted by media requests to diverge from longer term strategic messages (Waring). Waring is very much aware that a constant concern with day to day story handling distracts from the narrative that in the long run is expected to contribute to a politician's reputation. She therefore considers the need to adopt the marketers' strategic view that is more committed to reputational objectives that reach far beyond the life time of tomorrow's headline. Kelly (2) talks of zig zaging when he tries to define the relationship between reactive tactics and planned strategy in government communications: "You zig zag between the typical day to day events and your strategic message." He warns that communicators who try to stick to strategic outlines slavishly will lose the connection with relevant publics (Kelly, Hazlewood). Waring too concedes that even though she plans with a long term perspective in mind, much of her communication work is event driven.

McBride makes the point that the politician's seniority and position in the party or government is taken into consideration when drawing up a strategy to guide style and content of media relations. He explains that the leading politicians such as the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and their respective shadow portfolios in opposition are being covered by news media to a degree that risky media gimmicks or outrageous statements are not needed to catch headlines. A strategy of aggressiveness and exaggerating statements may be needed for less prominent political figures to secure public attention (McBride).

McBride is reflecting on the different approaches to media relations and their respective effects on a politician's reputation. He doubts if the mere attempt to grab headlines and media attention does not feed into the build-up of a specific public perception. To the contrary: He appears to argue that the objective to secure media coverage requires behaviour and statements that may go counter to the values and features one would like to base one's reputation on in the long run and thus harm the foundations of reputation. Eustice agrees with this diagnosis and points out that some politicians are tempted by daily media headlines. This does not echo the long term nature of

the political process and arguably does little to contribute to the long term evolution of perceptions and ultimately reputation.

It appears that in many cases the advice given and the approach taken in media relations transcends the narrow tactical view and takes strategic features on board. Kelly suggests that at different stages in the life time of a government different approaches are taken to media relations. He concedes that at least initially the Blair government was eager to act in a way that would shape the subsequent day's headlines, while at a later stage Blair's communications were pursuing objectives that weren't committed to the immediate headline. In order to ensure that government communications were not only coordinated, but also served an overarching goal, Blair had decided to set up a strategic communication unit at 10 Downing Street, which his successors kept in place as they recognised the need to organise communication tactics strategically (Price).

McBride sees the politicians' communicators as the resource for strategic advice. We may infer from this that the decisions politicians take in their public relations may be contingent on the quality and kind of advice they receive. Eustice makes an interesting distinction between communicators with either a background in journalism or a training in marketing. It is argued that journalists tend to take a more tactical view of communications. They are also more inclined to have their actions guided by what is needed to satisfy journalists' requests. By contrast, marketing staff have a tendency to plan ahead and align their actions to corporate and communication objectives. His cases in point are the former tabloid journalists and erstwhile directors of government communications Alastair Campbell and Andy Coulson, both of whom were by intuition reactive and only after a while came round to projecting strategic messages (Eustice). By contrast Peter Mandelson is seen as the stereotypical strategic communicator who in the view of Kettle was the first advisor in the Labour Party who in the 1980s spoke of communications strategy. In the view of Eustice (11) a successful political communicator would have to give up being a journalist and assume a marketers' mind set.

It has been argued that the objectives strategic advice is meant to help achieve, are at times not fully known and agreed among politicians and their respective advisors. To illustrate this McBride cites the case of Alan Johnson. While he may not have been sufficiently ambitious to covet the prime ministerial job, his advisors allegedly worked towards this target. This case illustrates that the internal communication between politician and advisors may not always be fully functional. In this case it may be difficult for the politician and his team to jointly work towards aligned communication objectives as the strategic advice will be blurred at best, ineffective at worst. McBride clarifies that good strategic advice is contingent on staff's ability to place the politician's personality and interests at the centre of considerations and above their respective personal ambitions.

While Jones is emphasising that government politicians are taking a long term and systematic view of their public perception and their respective positioning in the political spectrum, he implicitly agrees that the quality of advice is not necessarily grounded in research or guided towards serving a politician's best interests. Michael Portillo's image as a hard line Thatcherite hopeful throughout the early and mid 1990s draws attention to Jones' point. Portillo's media advisor apparently sought to manoeuvre Portillo into an ideological right wing position which he allegedly was not happy with (Jones).

Richards stresses a closely related point. Advice tends to be more intuitive than research led which makes claims to a strategic underpinning appear shaky. Richards for instance suggests that government advisor's ground their advice in their personal experiences with and backgrounds in particular sections of society. Likewise, Kelly from Northern Ireland would defend the quality of his advice to the Prime Minister in connection with the Good Friday agreement in 1998 with his personal roots in the Province (Kelly). He advocated that based on his intuition of the public opinion in the Province and the conversations he overheard among the audiences of local rugby matches, government policy on Northern Ireland had to be adapted and decommissioning needed to be emphasised.

Eustice, a former media advisor to Cameron, is placing strategic communications planning in a broader context and explains how research and a good understanding of the politician's personality and aims, as well as the immediate political environment are indispensable in the forming of a strategic plan. Eustice implies that it is in the nature of communication strategy to recognise and address the discrepancy between what people think about an individual and the person's actual qualities. To illustrate this Eustice highlights how in his view the public perception of Michael Howard as having "something of the dark" (Eustice, 2) about him would not match the decent and kind personality Howard allegedly displayed with his staff. Eustice contrasts this analysis with his experience as part of Cameron's communication team. They had to deal with a politician whose actual personality and perceived character were not as far apart as in the case of Howard. This strategic insight would help understand which messages were to be communicated.

In other words the person that needed to be presented on the one hand and the audience's existing perceptions on the other are the strategic variables that guide the selection of appropriate communication tactics. Only one of these variables appears to have been considered when following the 1997 election William Hague succeeded as leader of the Conservative Party. While advisors focussed on what they understood to be public expectations, they largely neglected a thorough analysis of Hague's actual strengths and qualities. Wood agrees that relevant publics expected the Conservatives to present themselves as a reformed, modern and outward-looking party. These qualities the new leader and his wife were expected to espouse and their media advisors skewed their public engagements in a way that would demonstrate this. Hence William Hague was for instance seen visiting the Notting Hill Carnival in the expectation this unconventional setting may reflect on Hague's own brand. This strategy reputedly failed since the second relevant variable was being ignored in this design: Hague's personality did not match with the intended images. This tangible mismatch had detrimental effects on his public perception (Wood).

By contrast New Labour demonstrate how policies and communications were blended in a unified strategic approach to reform the perception of the party.



Hill reminds us that this strategic design only became feasible once it gained backing among key groups in the party. Eventually, this strategy was sustained and followed up by members and officials once it had become evident that it was a recipe to re-establish Labour's electoral fortunes. It is probably critical to point out that in Hill's view reputation is linked to behaviour in general and political decisions in particular. Strategic communication would generate and add to the narrative that helps explain and justify decisions. Eustice agrees and suggests that a strategic perspective requires presentational aspects to be considered in combination with the policies, since from an audience's perspective behaviour and messages are by necessity associated. In his answers he deals with Cameron's efforts to take the Conservative Party out of its "comfort zone" (Eustice, 7) by advocating both new policies that were aligned with new messages. Blair in his days and Cameron years later recognised that a change in communications was not sufficient as long as the product brand of their respective parties stayed the same (Greer). Since change in the party was instigated in both cases by the leader, implications for their respective personal reputation are conceivable (Greer).

Davies reminds us that at a smaller scale a politician's personal behaviour is translated into messages as well. He identified honesty and his insistence not to over-promise as features that defined Jack Straw's values which were expected to add to his public persona. Davies reminds us how poorly devised or over ambitious policies may immediately lead to problematic media relations which have a tangible knock on effect on the politician's reputation. He mentions pledges made by Gordon Brown as Prime Minister to reduce incidents of violent crime by banning the carrying of knives and to introduce a mandatory sentence for all who still did. While the Department of Justice and the judiciary thought these arrangements were impracticable and would not work, Brown went ahead announcing them only to see this policy backfire shortly afterwards when the independent judiciary refused to pass mandatory sentences government had pledged itself to.

In this context Kelly warns us of the risks incurred as a result of inconsistent policy pledges and over ambitious promises. He raised the point in response

to a question about adapting messages to match them with expectations held by specific audiences. In his view the head of communications has to ensure consistency or take up the point with the politician in charge. According to Kelly's opinion mixed and contradicting messages are picked up by audiences and what initially may perhaps just have been a routine policy statement may develop into a crisis situation, if it emerged that the policy or pledge do not echo each other.

#### **4.9. Considerations of timing**

There appears to be a view of time as a resource in strategic communications. The need to transcend day to day tactical considerations and plan for a longer period of time is stressed by Thorogood. Waring even defines success in reputation management as being contingent on good timing. In her view to do or say the right thing in the right moment is critical to constructing reputation. Timing is pivotal as the environment changes. In other words, public opinion is volatile and for a politician to resonate with the public an accurate understanding of expectations linked to a good sense of timing are in the view of Waring instrumental in shaping public perceptions. Waring is illustrating her view by detailing the timeline of Business Secretary Vince Cable's announcements about the economic downturn. Apparently Cable had predicted the slump in the economy years before it actually occurred. He also identified the housing bubble as a key factor that would later trigger the economic turmoil. Since at the time the housing market was profitable the media was not eager to pick up Cable's warning which at the time was anything but popular among investors. This only changed when the market crashed and the media was in search of causes, culprits and answers. It then became obvious that Cable's foresight perhaps revealed a thing or two about his competence as an economist and suggested he may have the qualities one would wish to see represented in government. In brief, not only the content of policy statements and decisions are relevant: But to time them when it is most likely they will find broad approval is a strategic function which

arguably not just in the case of Vince Cable can make a difference in a politician's public perception.

From government's perspective time is a factor that decides if actions and communications are tactical or alternatively planned and forward looking. With time available government can fine tune policies and present them in a way that key publics may consider acceptable (Macrory). Secretary Spelman's bill to privatise the forests which eventually had to be withdrawn amidst widespread opposition may arguably have stood a better chance to win hearts and minds had – with a more generous time budget - it been better prepared and alliances been built beforehand (Macrory).

Livermore takes this even further: While for Macrory time is instrumental in implementing policies, Livermore considers both policies and timing tools in the communicator's weaponry. While he insists that politicians may usually have limited flexibility with the kind of political objectives they pursue, the timing would still be flexible and allow the communicator to organise the sequence and emphasis of policies to achieve the highest effect with key publics.

Stevenson is more specifically pointing out that a number of senior government politicians can make better use of the time factor as the role of their departmental brief allows them to control actions and communications. By contrast, politicians in opposition are said to find it harder to set and time the agenda and instead end up reacting to policy decisions and announcements the timing of which had been set by government (Livermore). Waring cautions against this conclusion by arguing that while previous governments did have control over the timing of policy initiatives, in the era of the spending review and considerable budgetary austerity, the departmental privilege to take political initiative is diminished.

#### **4.10. Linking policies and reputation**

What to policy advisors seems a reasonable decision from a communicator's perspective may appear detrimental to a politician's reputation (Price).

Stevenson acknowledges that communication shapes both the perceptions of politicians as well as public opinions about the very policies they are pursuing. The line between presentation and policy becomes even more blurred by the fact that special advisors are tasked to deal both with policies and media relations (Richards).

Thorogood is reminding us that the whole range of communication activities is planned with policies in mind. She claims that media relations in particular are pivotal in preparing stakeholders for policies that may subsequently be introduced. The intention is to send out messages that help publics understand and view sympathetically specific policy announcements and decisions (Thorogood).

Livermore considers the implications of these considerations and reflects the relationship between policy and reputation. In his view, reputation in politics is the driving force. Once the intended reputation is agreed communications strategies and policies are drawn up in support. However, in the course of the interview Livermore is clarifying his position by arguing that the sequence and timing of policies as well as their presentation were instrumental in moulding reputation.

The close link between public relations activities on the one hand and policy issues on the other is illustrated by Eustice who explains how David Cameron's identity and intended public persona were being defined immediately after his election as Conservative Party leader in 1995. From then on policy initiatives and statements were being aligned with what Eustice calls Cameron's "Character type issues." This was deemed necessary in order to bring structure and direction into the media relations whose effectiveness hinged on consistency.

Such a close link between political decisions and the public persona may also have damaging effects as McBride is pointing out by reminding us of Prime Minister Brown's decision not to call an election shortly after he took over from Tony Blair. In the words of McBride (2) Brown subsequently was accused of

“being a bottler”. He details how a politician who over years had acquired a reputation for being single minded and even “stubborn” was now described as being indecisive (McBride, 2). Jones concurs and explains that the politically motivated decision not to call an election revealed that Brown did not have “the killer instinct” (Jones, 15).

Politicians who newly emerge on the political radar and who both the media and the electorate seek to understand and categorise need to associate themselves with events or policies. Stacey believes for a politician who only recently became visible on the public stage a joke, a particularly good speech, a youthful and dynamic appearance or similar features would “distil a lot of things and kind of set somebody’s reputation” (Stacey, 2). To illustrate this he mentions Cameron’s visit to the Arctic which helped portray his green credentials.

More interesting than an analysis of media stunts is perhaps to see if policies are drawn up with the explicit intention to help design a public persona and ultimately to establish a politician’s reputation. Price (4) takes up this question by pointing out that some politicians manage to combine their notion of what is the right policy for their country with an understanding of what can further their own public persona. He argues that in political communication politicians need to make use of big decisions and harness their symbolic value to feed into their reputation. He cites for instance Tony Blair’s reaction to the death of Lady Diana or decisions taken in response to terrorist threats (Price). Price seems to be thinking of politicians who interpret events and decisions in a way that vindicates or praises their respective behaviour.

Politicians in some instances seem to re-invent themselves which specifically requires a re-consideration and re-positioning of their policies and political objectives. Iain Duncan Smith seems to be a case in hand which Macrory mentions. In his view this radical shift in political emphasis and personal political agenda was a long term engagement that could not have been advised or orchestrated by communication staff. He argues that in the case of Duncan Smith it is a function of his genuine interest and passion for welfare

reform which he became more aware of once his career at the helm of the party was over. Wood insists that Iain Duncan Smith considered policy change as the most effective approach to image change. Here the difficulty in pinpointing the motivation behind policy decisions becomes clear, particularly as Iain Duncan Smith's interest in social welfare reform was allegedly not a deliberate attempt to redesign his reputation.

Stacey contrasts this case with the challenge faced by Labour leader and hopeful for the next general election Ed Miliband, who spent the first months trying to rid himself of the pejorative categorisation "Red Ed" which the media came up with to describe his policies. His advisors seemed to recognise early on that a left wing opposition leader may not be electable. Henceforth Miliband refused to endorse public service union strikes against government cutbacks and turned down invitations to speak at their demonstrations. Indeed his public statements about the protests were judged as critical rather than encouraging (Stacey). Stacey is adamant that this behaviour and the policy statements were closely tied into strategic efforts to reposition Miliband as a mainstream politician who is seen as a potential national leader rather than a union protester (Stacey). Richards made a similar observation. He found that initially Ed Miliband was portrayed as indecisive which required him to take stances on policy issues that appeared bold, courageous and direct. The choice of his leadership team afforded him an opportunity to appear single-minded, which is the kind of message that would impress itself on the minds of people and in the long run alter his public persona (Richards).

Jones is expanding on this point by stressing that policy issues tend to be ignored if it is difficult to communicate them. He lists the renewal of the energy infrastructure by building new power stations as well as problems with benefit fraud and the extension of Heathrow airport as examples of issues the Labour government was unwilling to tackle as communicators were not sure how to connect them to public sentiment. From this one may want to extrapolate that individual politicians make a careful choice as to which policies they like to be personally associated with while bearing in mind that this selection may have an impact on their public persona. Jones and Greer summarise that politicians

tend to bear in mind that a policy they advocate needs to be marketable and saleable.

The ability of ministers to select, advocate and shape policies that match or boost their reputation is limited by variables they cannot control. I mentioned the impact of unpredictable events elsewhere in this chapter. Here it is worth mentioning the government's own agenda directed by the Prime Minister who tasks cabinet members with policies they are expected to implement regardless of consequences to their public persona. Richards reminds us of Caroline Spelman who as minister in Cameron's cabinet had been tasked with introducing a bill that envisaged the sale of forests. She encountered heavy opposition and was forced to withdraw her bill which she might never have wanted to support and see associated with her name in the first place (Richards). In a similar case Patricia Hewitt did a disservice to her public persona when years earlier Prime Minister Blair tasked her with reforming the NHS, which earned her strong protests from nurses (Richards).

Richards points out that ministerial freedom to act is not only limited by prime ministerial interference, but also by the party manifesto and at times by a coalition agreement: "So they are often projecting an image that is not really of their own making" (Richards, 4). Admittedly, prominent politicians with a high public profile who represent a coalition party other than the Prime Minister's may stand a chance to exert more freedom to manoeuvre and to some degree pursue their own agenda (Waring).

Davies seemed to suggest this when he explained the focus of British foreign policy during the last Blair years. Since the Prime Minister claimed responsibility for the Iraq policy, the Foreign Secretary needed to find niches where to assert his own effectiveness. Davies recalled that Straw decided to focus his attention on Iran instead and helped defuse a conflict between Pakistan and India. Also Britain's efforts to push Turkey towards EU membership is a policy which in the view of Davies (7) "probably wouldn't have happened" without Straw's initiative. These initiatives may have aided public perception of Straw.

Richards raises the point that in the absence of appropriate actions and policies as a tool to differentiate and position a politician's public persona, conflicts – real and fabricated – may be used to communicate messages. He mentions Tony Blair in particular who deliberately picked fights in the media with members of his own party in an effort to position himself. Richards appears to suggest that it is important to select adversaries carefully. This would be a way of distinguishing oneself from either the right or the left of their own movement. Arguably, it is easier for former advisors to concede that policies or controversies may be pursued as a means to build up a politician's reputation. This cautioning, one should perhaps bear in mind when reading the claim made by Vince Cable's current media advisor that policies in government are predominantly advocated in pursuit of a principle and not in an effort to build an image ( Waring).

When decisions and policies are drawn up that impact on a politician's reputation, we need to explore if communicators have a say and are involved. Since decisions appear to have repercussions that affect public perception it is worth asking if communicators therefore consider policy design as part of their brief. The divide between policy and presentational issues can apparently be bridged through close collaboration. Stevenson suggests a disconnect between decision makers at a higher hierarchical level and communicators lower down in the organisational chart did not exist in the years of the Labour government. Eustice concedes that communicators make judgements and recommendations about the timing of policies. This in reverse implies that they may suggest if certain policies should stay on or off the agenda for strategic communicative reasons. For instance it was agreed that Cameron as leader of the opposition would continue to talk about immigration. The rationale for this was the notion that if immigration resurfaced in the national debate Cameron could claim that he had been taking this issue seriously long before it resurfaced in the popular media (Eustice).

Both Jones and Hill detail that for Tony Blair communicators pointed out the media relations implications of policy options and tried to make predictions as



to how the media are most likely to react. However, Hill makes it plain that after these considerations it would be upon the politician to decide the policy. He is aware of the fine line between getting involved in the policy making and the media advising and defines this line as follows:

*“I know what my job is, and my job is to support what you are trying to achieve, but it is also to advise very firmly in terms of developing your success in this field and your reputation. If you do it, you do it like this, if you do it now you will cause more harm than good. So do it later and do it like this are certainly things that you can be involved in. But, but, but saying that, I’m sorry you can’t ... that policy is wrong, I think you should introduce that policy, that goes ... that’s a step farther, a step too far, that, and you don’t really do that” (Hill, 13).*

The Conservative Party director of communications is credited by Macrory with a similarly powerful role. He is said to influence which politician is to represent the party on a specific news programme. The rationale for this selection is grounded in the agenda directors of communication wish to promote and the issues they wish to take off the media agenda by refusing to provide senior members to talk about these subjects (Macrory). To what degree special advisors consider it their responsibility to stop or alter a policy that may have detrimental effects on the minister’s reputation is hard to define. Davies (7) confirms:

*“Yes, I am sure that went on a lot, absolutely. (...) They would definitely, try and keep their minister away from something that they felt was going to look bad for them publicly, media wise, parliamentary wise, whatever, absolutely. I mean without a shadow of a doubt.”*

One may take this speculation somewhat further as Jones does and imagine how communicators have been involved in the most central decisions a political party has to take: The selection of the party leader. Jones however, does not provide any more evidence to back up this speculation. His notion of the communicator’s role in the process leading to the selection of a party

leader is based on anecdotal evidence gathered throughout his career in political journalism.

#### **4.11. Comparing communicative styles**

Communicative style varies from politician to politician. Abilities and techniques of communication hinge on personality traits and training. Also the willingness to consider communication as a management function that requires objectives, strategy and planning is not universally espoused by politicians. Yet Eustice (5) makes the point that today leading politicians cannot afford to ignore communication advice: "They would not last very long in politics." He is arguing that the breed of politician, who would happily concentrate on the politics of the job and leave the presentational matters to others, has become inconceivable. Jones has observed during past years how politicians have recognised the necessity to hone their skills as celebrity performers. It seems to be evident for Jones that the media solicits celebrity status from individuals in exchange for publicity. Jones calls Cameron's readiness to open up his private life to journalists as well as his decision to allow the media to share in his family life unprecedented and evidence that he "plays the media very very well" (Jones, 7). Redfern adds that Blair should be credited with blending content, forcefulness and personality in his personal communications.

Though Jones concedes that the level of interest in personal presentations varies between politicians and some are more prepared to engage with media opportunities than others. Personal presentation of candidates and incumbents in the view of Jones depends in part on the politician's desire to engage in it. Arguably the technical know how and strategic advice for party leaders tends to be good due to the financial resources earmarked for recruiting experts who are readily available since working for party headquarters comes with professional prestige.

Having said this there appear to be tangible differences in the quality of personal communications. Some leading politicians seem to outperform others regardless of the strategic management support they can dispose of. Jones mentions how due to a candidate's or incumbent's personality both tactical and strategic efforts in perception management may fail. William Hague's image as a "freak" (Jones, 1) as well as Brown's perception as "mad" (Jones, 1) were characteristics that throughout their respective leadership tenures would never go away regardless of considerable efforts by media advisors, who for instance encouraged Brown be seen with a girlfriend in public in order to appear as normal and human (Jones, 1).

Tony Blair by contrast is said to have had a natural talent to take up media advice and deal both with the media and the public more comfortably. Jones reminds us of Blair's visit to Moscow in the 1990s where by invitation of the British embassy he travelled on the metro and naturally posed to photographers as a man on his way to work. This scene not only made it to the front pages of the papers but also reiterated the feeling of Blair as being a normal citizen – a tag highly coveted by leading politicians who are constantly afraid of being portrayed as aloof (Jones).

Beattie specifies that an individual's lack of presentational talent may cut across efforts to manage images strategically. He acknowledges that the impact of communication advisors on the quality of a leading politician's public perception may be tangible. However, he cautions anyone to think that expertise and staff resources are the communicative panacea for a struggling politician. Instead Beattie argues that an otherwise gifted contender can be helped to improve their performance in public, while someone who is lacking looks and confidence with audiences is bound to fail no matter what kind of support is available. He mentions as an example the Labour leader Ed Miliband to illustrate his point. In the view of Jones, Miliband is "the most uncomfortable person with the media" (Jones, 7). Jones believes Ed Miliband does not understand the media and how it operates. Richards adds a different example to the argument by pointing out that Gordon Brown had never been popular with the electorate, and as time went on he even repelled people. His communicative skills and his ability to take on and use

communication advice are perhaps best characterised by a joking remark attributed to Lord Mandelson, who was frustrated with Gordon Brown's inept presentational style. Mandelson allegedly claimed Brown would not even manage to keep his tie straight (Richards).

Livermore believes that in part Brown's poor personal communications were related to his decision making style. He is known to take a considerable amount of time to make up his mind. This time to reflect he may have had as Chancellor, while in the Prime Minister's office external and internal events had to be faced and responded to at a high frequency which pushed Brown on to a back foot and in a position that never allowed him to gain the initiative again. This frustration with Brown was shared by other advisors. When it became evident that Brown could not deliver as a public performer, many decided they better leave Downing Street (Redfern).

Jones suggests that Brown's lack of presentational talent may have been matched by his unwillingness to take on board communication advice (Jones, Redfern). In fact, as Jones (1) points out, even intense efforts by his media handlers and strategic advisors eventually did not manage to hide Brown's personality as a man who to those close to him appeared to be "mad" and "politically obsessive." Likewise Neil Kinnock as Labour leader in the 1980s and early 1990s was known for his emotional outbursts. This temper reporters would be waiting for and draw into the centre of their reporting regardless of the messages and the style media advisors tried to push on the agenda (Jones, 3). While Kinnock found himself framed as a man who is lacking self-control, Duncan Smith, who was unable to collaborate with journalists, found himself to be described in the media as "peculiar" - a judgement which was similarly damaging to his image (Jones, 7).

Neather illustrates a specific difference in communication styles by comparing Gordon Brown's and Tony Blair's respective approaches to public speaking. He outlines how both Blair's ability to structure a speech as well as his talent in delivering it outclassed Gordon Brown who limited himself at Party Conferences largely to delivering a laundry list of achievements and future aspirations. While speech writers appear to have polished specific sections in

Brown's speeches, his statements still tended to be confused and confusing and contained a somewhat random collection of past and future policy initiatives. Neither ability nor training allowed Brown to put the draft of a speech to good use and thrill his audience.

By contrast, Kettle describes meetings with Tony Blair as fascinating as he would give journalists the beguiling sensation he was about to share "the run of his mind (Kettle, 2)." He describes the ways of Blair's personal communication as almost subliminal. The way he portrayed himself as normal and reasonable and used language and gestures to communicate differentiated him markedly from Gordon Brown who was deemed in the view of Kettle a thoroughly ineffective communicator.

Gordon Brown would in discussions with his staff not openly admit to his rhetorical shortcomings and instead blame his deficient style on his long stint as Chancellor which he thought forced him over the years to adopt a rather twisted way of setting out his ideas (McBride). Kettle argues that the reason for his poor communicative skills can at least in part be explained by his use of an old fashioned terminology and syntax which he (Kettle, 2) calls "private language" that meant one thing to Brown and his closest staff and something else to the country. If Kettle's analysis is right, this would make us wonder if and to what degree the communicative strategy that seeks to align audiences, objectives as well as message style and content can be upset and rendered irrelevant by a politician's ineptitudes.

The former Conservative leader Iain Duncan Smith is a case in point whose 2003 party conference speech was deemed of poorest quality not for reasons of content, but because of how it was delivered. Neather stresses that the quality in political speech making is defined only in part by the actual content, but also by the confidence of delivery. At least on the latter account Duncan Smith failed comprehensively. Neather reminds us that if a speech does not convey the factual or psychological message intended, strategic considerations may be upset and objectives not achieved. This problem may have been exacerbated by Duncan Smith's unwillingness to accept and implement media relations advice (Jones).

The role of expertise and resources to ensure high quality communications remains contentious. If resources, the quality of advice and preparation could not substantially improve the public performance of a politician who by nature tends to feel uncomfortable in public and hence struggles, the lack of this support may by implication not preclude the possibility that a media and audience savvy contender makes a mark and gains support among audiences. Stevenson refers to John Prescott, the former deputy Labour Leader who was an individual that for many years commanded considerable public support, even though he had little or no interest in systematic media relations and intense media training.

Apart from polling data, intuition and gut feeling are believed to help politicians find the right tone to address diverse audiences. On this account too, some politicians have an edge over others. The reactions to the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales, are being cited to show how political leaders' ability to sense and reflect public opinion made a difference to the quality of their personal presentation and their public perceptions (Price). Both Blair and Hague had to appear and issue condolences. The wording of which could due to the time pressure not be grounded in focus group feedback and had therefore be drawn up and calibrated by the party leaders themselves. And while Blair received much acclaim for the words he found, Hague's remarks are far less memorable. Even though he had prepared under the same circumstances, he had "got it wrong" (Price, 4).

#### **4.12. Journalists, communicators and the shaping of narratives**

In this section I will be asking who actually drafts the story line that is encapsulating politicians' images and answers fundamental questions about their personality, ambitions, policies and abilities, in short: Who shapes the narrative of a candidate or incumbent? Hill characterises a narrative as essential in all political or corporate communications as it helps to establish a message and stick to it consistently in the course of time. The narrative is meant to be "a clear set of values and ideas and aims (...) against which

everything is measured” (Hill, 4). The narrative is used as a benchmark and means to organise messages, public engagements and events in a way that echos the values encapsulated in the narrative. In other words the narrative is the storyline that has been defined through the strategy and whilst it may at times not match easily, any event or message should be presented or interpreted to fit and support the narrative.

Hill acknowledges that the day to day political communications need to be aligned with a long term perspective. If this is not achieved audiences may not comprehend the rationale for a candidate’s or party’s actions, nor do they see how what is being done is consistent with overall objectives. Hill expects communicators “to convert an event into something which either helps the narrative or doesn’t hinder it” (Hill, 4). Other events and actions are not only interpreted but explicitly planned and orchestrated to play into the larger narrative. Kelly finds the reduction of the EU budget and Blair’s diplomatic activity leading to it in line with and supportive of the narrative of Blair as an internationally recognised champion of British interests.

For Hill the narrative takes a much more pivotal role than just that of guiding the day to day media relations. It is a focus point that all communications staff and the politician are committed to. This would probably facilitate internal communications as it offers shared ground to participants in strategy discussions and allows for reflections about content and style of policy and presentational issues. To build this narrative as a tool to shape reputation and to ensure its consistency is seen as the communication advisor’s core responsibility (Hill).

In the view of Hill the narrative is apparently set by the politician in collaboration with advisors who spend considerable time thinking through this part of the strategy. He also acknowledges that Prime Minister Blair occasionally would get involved in this discussion to ensure that strategy and narrative were effective. McBride differs in his analysis about the genesis of the narrative. He argues that in reality the narrative emerges and appears to be a negotiated process which is being driven both by journalists as well as

politicians and their communication staff. McBride recognises that Prime Minister Brown's decision not to call a general election early on in his premiership despite signs of pondering the option was widely interpreted as indecisiveness. McBride points out that communicators tried to control the situation and rationalise Brown's behaviour. On the other hand journalists and their audiences found it hard to believe any of the defensive messages that came from the Brown team. Communication advisors' assurance Brown had not been tempted by the polls and never really intended to call an election, only rekindled the suspicion that he was essentially dithering and consequently tried to blame others for decisions he should or should not have taken (McBride). In the context of this research project it is perhaps most interesting how McBride portrays this incident as a defining moment for Brown's reputation which was to stay and might only been remoulded with great difficulty.

It appears that the public's interpretation of a politician's aims, records, actions, successes and failures contribute to what McBride terms a narrative. In other words it is the interpretation that makes sense of what a politician stands for. Clearly, each side of the political divide would like to control this process as Eustice implies when he recapitulates the 2005 election campaign. At the time he was spinning a narrative which suggested that Labour's Prime Minister would make pledges he never delivered on, whilst the Conservative challenger was credibly promising action. Disregarding the factual evidence for this claim, Eustice's attempt was understandable: A narrative if controlled by the candidate and accepted by the public can be a defining theme no matter how distant from reality.

Not mentioned by Eustice, but implied by McBride is the media's role in shaping a politician's narrative which Beattie insists is in turn heavily influenced by the print media and much less by television which in the UK is committed to party political neutrality. The notion of what politicians stand for and what can be expected from them in the view of Beattie takes time to shape. Stacey cites as a case in point the initial label stuck to the then new Labour leader Ed Miliband who by a number of right wing and centre right



papers was dubbed “Red Ed” for his alleged political leanings. This label in the view of Stacey might have stuck, had Miliband not immediately tried to challenge it by re-positioning his stances on issues such as domestic policies which allowed him to re-take control and counter the notions that he was believed to represent. Arguably this label was later replaced by the image of a dithering Miliband who finds it hard to take firm and clear decisions. Stacey seems to suggest that this insinuation if it goes unchecked could turn over time into the narrative that clings to the Labour leader.

Beattie (1, 2) talks about “accumulation of coverage” which is judgemental, at times thoroughly critical, and which amounts to a build-up of opinion and sentiment. If unchecked the notion that emerges of specific politicians may be thoroughly derogative and have them end up as the object of sketch writers or the butt of jokes in TV programme such as “*Have I got news for you*” (Richards, 2). *The Guardian* for instance presented Cameron’s head in a male contraceptive to illustrate a critical narrative that appeared to take shape in the print media.

This case however, reminds us that narratives can change over time which Jones is illustrating in more detail. He is touching upon the implicit collaboration between the opposition and the media in maintaining or changing the government’s and Cameron’s narrative which at the time of interviewing in February 2011 was grounded in support for the coalition, its economic policy and the Prime Minister. Jones points out that the media may well want to change the interpretation of one or all three of these claims. This change in attitudes may be facilitated if the leading opposition party gained credibility on economic issues. In Jones’ view this is conditional or Labour will not succeed in making voters forget its own narrative which in the preceding months had been tainted by the economic downturn and attacks by the conservative media that linked Labour to overspending and financial deregulation which caused the economic trouble the country had slid into. Jones cautions that it is hard or impossible to predict if and when the narrative of Cameron’s government was likely to change.

#### **4.13. News reporting and its consequences for the public persona**

Personality, personalisation and an individual's public persona appear to be features that journalists' attention is directed to in political news reporting. Neather suggests the focus on individuals and their respective reputation is by no means a new phenomenon. However, he adds that political communicators have intensified their efforts to manage images just as the news outlets have reached unprecedented levels of competitiveness with the advent of 24 hour TV news, increasing numbers of broadcasters and the incremental growth of internet news services. In other words these developments have led reputation management for individual politicians to be practiced on "a much more comprehensive and continuous basis" (Neather, 1) than before. Jones identified the same issue and describes politician's opportunities to present themselves to mass audiences as a function of relentless competition between a growing number of media.

This relevance of projecting a politician's public persona in the media subsequently leads to more careful media relations (Stevenson). Clearly, the reason why politicians would want to gauge and predict how the media treats an issue is understood through journalists' presumptive role as gatekeepers who present politicians and their policies to key stakeholders. McBride takes up this point and looks at a scenario that illustrates the media's power to develop a public persona. The case he refers to quite drastically highlights how Prime Minister Brown in a number of media exposures was expected to play by the media's rules. With regard to media coverage there seems to be considerable power residing with the journalist who dictates issues of content and style even though this may not allow politicians to emphasise their strengths, features and core messages that may otherwise have helped to expose their personality more authentically.

The specific case mentioned by McBride also evidences how media may over-interpret statements in a way that is outside the communicators' control. The case given here refers to a reluctant statement on a radio show of his vague preference for a music group Gordon Brown agreed to give for the

sake of the presenter whose questioning he was displeased with but found impossible to evade. Newswires took Brown's quote out of context, and overstated it to add effect: "Gordon Brown says he wakes up every morning to the Arctic Monkeys." (McBride, 15).

Politicians at times seem to be concerned that media's rationale leads to some extent to the misinterpretation and distortion of policy content to a point where the politicians' initial intentions are not recognisable any more. George Eustice reminds us of headlines that suggested the Conservative leader David Cameron was soft on crime when he appealed to the public to "hug a hoodie" (Eustice, 1). In Eustice's view Cameron's intentions had been to encourage society to take responsibility for their children and thus to prevent them from turning into criminals.

The level of interest demonstrated among journalists is beyond the communicators' control too. This lack of control over news reporting may not always go to a politician's detriment as Katie Waring points out with regard to the Business Secretary Vince Cable. His professional record as an economic expert who prior to the recession had pointed to flaws in the economy met with the media's interest only once the economic downturn had hit. At this point journalists were keen to present a witness in support of their reporting who was to testify the government's poor economic judgements. Yet the same issues raised about likely economic troubles ahead had hardly made an inroad into mainstream news reporting in the time leading up to 2008. In other words Cable's on-going media relations were not nearly as successful in positioning him as a publicly visible economic expert, as was a change of emphasis in news reporting. In this case a shifting media agenda worked in favour of Cable.

McBride goes on to argue that the framework and rules of engagement in media appearances have been established by the media and both communicators and politicians at times are talked into accepting arrangements for collaboration that are not necessarily in their favour. Often the politician is expected to accept the style and arrangements of a broadcast:

“Um, but you almost were saying to him (the politician) you have to do that, that’s part of doing this” (McBride, 14).

Hill argues that a communicator’s leverage in dealing with journalists hinges in part on the public perception of politicians and their media advisors. Hill sees his profession defamed and explicitly refers to news stories that framed political communicators as practitioners of the “dark arts” and “fiendish spinners...who were sprinkling dust on stories so that they could change themes” (Hill, 2). In the view of Hill the irony is that the practice of reputation management hinges on the media that is willing to listen and to engage with arguments. He contends that particularly towards the end of the Blair period the media had decided they were unwilling to take up and consider No. 10’s messages. Indirectly they discouraged the public to listen to the government’s and its communicators’ explanations any more. In brief, once the public standing of politicians and communicators is undermined, their leverage with journalists and messages loses power to achieve objectives.

From the communicator’s perspective the situation is not helped by the media’s fickleness when interpreting the politician’s reputation. This shiftiness explains in part changes in a politician’s public perception. This encapsulates Eustice’s portrayal of news reporting. In his view journalists’ reporting follows a cycle. While initially they may be happy to support editorially an aspiring candidate, at one point they would have to reverse direction and attack the same person. The rationale for this alteration in loyalty may be rooted in the media audience’s longing for entertainment.

Part of this entertainment in political news reporting seems to be writing up rising celebrities and dragging them down again in an expectation the audience might enjoy the spectacle (Eustice). What Eustice is saying here amounts to a claim that news reporting is perhaps the strongest factor in the shaping of reputation. He talks of downward and upward spirals of news reporting but what he probably is trying to say has more to do with framing a public persona rather than reporting per se. The power of news reporting in the process of moulding the public persona is nicely captured in a detail

Eustice mentions only in passing. He claims that even members of the parliamentary party have their views of their own government guided by judgements generated through the news media. Perhaps we may not agree with Eustice's view of arbitrary news cycles that causes a government negative headlines when perhaps a cabinet minister's actual performance is impeccable. However, what we may want to take seriously - as it draws on Eustice's long standing experience as a PR manager - is his acknowledgement that news reporters' framing of a politician's public persona is grounded in a rationale beyond the communicator's control.

Jones fully concurs with this analysis. He reminds us that in 1997 journalists agreed to advocate change for reasons that were not necessarily linked to the quality of government performance but instead to the rationale of media production: "Well, we'd have a new government, we'd have new ministers, everything would be thrown up and down, it would be great for the media" (Jones, 15). Jones goes on to argue that in the run up to and in between general elections the media holds a distinct agenda of its own which leads to politicians and their policies being framed regardless of their strategies in political communication management. Jones echoes Eustice's sentiment of the media's tendency of writing up and down a politician as it suits them. He admits frankly that "we love to build somebody up and, you know, when the pack turns, when the dogs turn, you know, we go after them" (Jones, 13).

Apparently, the media's tendencies to turn against a politician at some point can be found in the cases of Thatcher, Blair and most recently Brown. While Jones is describing the phenomenon his analysis falls short of explaining how and under which circumstances the media starts attacking a politician's reputation. While they provide abundant evidence to support and clarify the point, none of my interviewees could have confidently identified the trigger of or the indicator for a fundamental change in the narrative.

The pivotal role news reporting appears to take in the shaping of reputation is indirectly confirmed by Price (10) who mentioned in our interview how the Blair government at least initially judged its success by the amount of "good

headlines and applause” it received. One reason as to why this crude system of public opinion measurement was in place is arguably found in the media’s actual power to shape reputation. An alternative explanation as to why communicators allow their judgements to be guided this heavily by news headlines may be related to the professional background of leading communicators who often are firmly rooted in journalism and whose mind set was generated in the process of this experience. This may explain why Alastair Campbell may have been reluctant to recognise that generating headlines may not be the only criterion of success in political communication (Price).

While admittedly the media is undergoing rapid changes, in the period leading up to and covered by my interviews the opinion makers may arguably still have been largely newspapers and television news programmes. Jones insists that the personalisation is not just reflective of TV’s style of reporting. Instead, the emphasis on personality may well be in the nature of British newspaper reporting. This news culture attributes to editors of print publications a central role in opinion forming that is being picked up by other media. It is important to keep this balance of media power in mind when considering what may trigger a swing in media coverage to the detriment of a politician. In the view of Jones the print media is pivotal in providing interpretation and thus it is leading the opinion shaping process. Yet he concedes that the framing of specific events such as the leadership debates is complemented and sometimes led by television coverage and increasingly influenced by social networking activities (Jones).

Both Price and Eustice recommend not to “let the media do whatever they want” and allow the politician to “take all the criticism” (Price, 10). This statement does not only imply that the media have their own agenda which is critical in creating a narrative about government and politicians. Even more importantly, it suggests that communicators consider media relations an instrument that potentially allows them to reign in and alter the media’s agenda to some extent and to take ownership of reputation management

processes. Jones considers this competitive relationship between communicators and the media an incentive to professionalise media relations.

#### **4.14. Events and their consequences for reputation management**

David Kelly shares what is perhaps the most powerful illustration of how events upset planned communication management. On September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 Prime Minister Blair visited Brighton to deliver a speech to the Trade Union Congress about the need of reform in public services. With this selection of topic Blair could be sure to capture his audience's attention. Concurrently, in New York the World Trade Centre was hit by two hijacked passenger aircraft. This event instantaneously rendered irrelevant all communication objectives that had been intended and planned for the day. The agenda was upset and Blair's audiences were looking not only for different answers, but for a different theme altogether. The reason why events are a concern to politicians, their communicators and hence this investigation is nicely encapsulated by Richards who reminds us that reputations are built in a slow step by step process, whilst an adverse event may be all it takes to crack this painstakingly developed public persona.

Anything unforeseen threatens to derail the planned communications process. Events stand for what strategic communicators appreciate least: They are hard to control and difficult to plan for. Andrew Neather therefore credits what he refers to as "spin" - or the interpretation of events - only with a limited effect (Neather, 2) on the communications outcome. Katie Waring, the head of communications to the Business Secretary estimates that 95 percent of her daily routine is determined by unexpected events, a meagre 5 percent had been planned beforehand. In her view the 24 hour news cycle and global news reporting have led to the agenda being driven by events. George Eustice adds that in opposition also communicators predominantly spend their time doing what he refers to as "fire fighting" (Eustice, 8). Issues he would have to deal with range from problematic remarks by backbench MPs to allegations of fraud against councillors.

Neather acknowledges therefore that both politicians and communicators find events awkward to address and therefore try to minimise both their occurrence and impact. To this effect cabinet ministers and particularly the Prime Minister's office keep a grid which is a tool that allows to plan ahead and integrate events and policies as much as they are foreseeable to suit the politician's agenda. This is an attempt to anticipate events, to frame them in support of one's respective agenda and to align their interpretation with planned speeches, budget forecasts or policy announcements. What this grid is derailed by time and again are events that are difficult or impossible to integrate into the politician's narrative such as for instance the announcement of new job redundancies. Beattie adds talk of sex scandals and question marks over the leader's calibre to this list of unforeseen incidents that easily overshadow all planned messages (Beattie, Macrory).

Livermore differentiates the degree by which politicians need to deal with unpredictable incidents. In his view the Chancellor – as indeed other cabinet ministers - is less affected by adverse events that emerge in day to day politics than is the Prime Minister. This is because a Chancellor is not directly associated with any specific policy area one would expect him to respond to publicly. At the same time he is not endowed with an overarching responsibility such as the Prime Minister who would be in the focus of any event that turns into a major public debate. Livermore makes it quite clear that the Prime Minister is ultimately not free to select at will the themes he engages with and to stage manage all his appearances. His diary is arguably more driven by events than the Chancellor's. These multitudes of variables that are to be considered during a Prime Minister's day constitute a risk in its own right. Specific unforeseen events may cause the Prime Minister to seem responsive rather than active, apologetic rather than confident. This may affect their reputation tangibly. The government of David Cameron was apparently aware of this risk the Prime Minister encountered. Therefore, task and issues were systematically devolved to the individual department to save the Prime Minister from involvement with concerns he may not want to be associated with. Kelly found that this approach has failed within the first 12 months of Cameron's government.



An alternative way to conceptualise events is to think of them in terms of a self-inflicted scandal. Richards mentions particularly John Prescott whose idiosyncratic behaviour engulfed his career with issues which were neither planned nor intended. Richards mentions the episode that saw Prescott punch a voter and reminds us of reports that detailed the former Deputy Prime Minister's affair with his secretary. Apparently, none of these incidents have ruptured his career, even though other politicians may arguably have resigned over lesser offences. In other words events may in part be self-inflicted while the consequences for the individual politician involved may be unpredictable.

Events may also be engendered by deficient planning. Neather illustrates this category of events by relating an incident dating back to his time as the Prime Minister's speech writer. At the time he had drawn up a speech about education whose thrust would resonate negatively with the Treasury who Neather had passed the draft on to shortly before it was due to be delivered. The recipient at the Treasury department seemed to have leaked the text to the media that immediately started framing the intended messages critically before they were even made public by the Prime Minister. In other words, events may be generated by individuals within the same office, party or government who likewise are beyond the communicator's full control.

Greer concurs and reminds us that politicians may allow adverse media coverage if they fail to predict future developments or fail to act on a predictable scenario. Greer contends that politicians may occasionally have the information to forecast events and still fail to do considered responses. To illustrate this Greer refers to the failure of public bodies to prepare for and deal with heavy snow fall in winter, which has led to resignations in the Scottish government.

At times responses to adverse events would not have required long term and comprehensive research and planning. It may be that attention to detail in day to day media relations is missing, which may generate comments and images that in the view of Stacey accumulate and feed adversely into a politician's

reputation. He cites a picture taken of the former Lib Dem leader Sir Menzies Campbell as he was looking at a toilet or David Miliband who was photographed when he was munching a banana. Stacey argues that a streak of these and similar minor anecdotal blunders and embarrassments over time inadvertently shape a politician's public persona.

Those politicians who try to predict events and anticipate responses, in the view of Jason Beattie, may stand a chance to use them in their favour (Beattie). Davies details opportunities events can afford a politician and suggests how they may be framed in line with public expectations and sentiments. More specifically, he points out that "you sometimes can't do anything about the event but you can do something about how you handle it" (Davies, 17). In Davies' view the electorate expects politicians to demonstrate clarity and confidence in difficult situations. To illustrate this, he refers a widely reported case of a murderer who was being hunted by the police. Prime Minister Cameron at the time commented that crime was part of life and while the police tried their best to get hold of the culprits one could not guarantee that similar cases won't occur in future. In Davies' view this was a skilful and wise response. A guarantee to rule out these crimes once and for all, would probably be ill advised as this pledge in all likelihood could not be kept. In the view of Davies events appear to be an opportunity for politicians to demonstrate how they deal with unpredictable, difficult challenges. If the handling of a challenge is applauded by the public, the incident may even pay into the politician's reputation.

McBride recounts a similar strategy applied during the food and mouth epidemic among cows when Prime Minister Brown gave his impromptu media statements in the poorly lit corridors in Downing Street with visible lack of attention to his hair and attire. On ending his statements he abruptly turned away from the journalists to return to work while the cameras were still running. These appearances carried the message of the committed, hands-on and hard working politician who was dedicated only to his country's good and patently paid little or no attention to sophisticated presentational concerns. While the foot and mouth epidemic certainly was an undesired and unplanned

event that brought inconveniences or even material loss to many families in farming communities, Gordon Brown used this situation to portray himself as the no nonsense manager type who gets things done.

Likewise, Gordon Brown's decision at the height of the epidemic to drive down from his Scottish constituency to London at 3 am in order to be in time to chair a morning meeting of his crisis management team was a skilful ploy. He used the emergency situation to create a feeling of urgency. This gave him an opportunity to respond in a way that conjured up images of a professional crisis manager – an association that eventually helped build his reputation. However, it should be added that what appeared to be a strategic approach to dealing with the situation had arguably not been developed by communicators. Instead it was a decision Gordon Brown at the time thought was necessary (McBride). This detail does not diminish its communicative value but cautions against the conclusion that this scenario had been managed exclusively with Brown's public persona in mind. This case may even draw into question the special advisor's function and ability to offer and pursue strategic communication advice. McBride in this situation at least was happy to follow the Prime Minister's lead.

#### **4.15. Contingency planning and protecting perceptions**

While there appears to be agreement that events can potentially make and break a politician's career and certainly impact heavily on public perception, there is astonishingly little attention placed on long term contingency planning (Greer). The reason for this lack of planning may be to do with the breadth of items a politician or government department would need to prepare for (Neather).

The Home Office for example is responsible for a variety of issues – ranging from prison to courts and asylum seekers - and is therefore perhaps not entirely representative of other government departments that deal with a more

limited portfolio. Neather claims that adverse events “essentially come out of nowhere” (Neather, 6) and estimates that the Home Office might have to include 100 potential incidents into a contingency plan.

It is being pointed out that government departments such as the Home Office do have memos and statements ready in response to eventualities that illustrate what measures the department is taking and has taken to deal with the situation. However, in Neather’s view this does not amount to a comprehensive and in any way effective contingency planning activity as the consequences of policy flaws, technical mistakes or private scandals are hard to contain regardless of memos anticipating them. Neather (6) concludes therefore “I don’t think you can plan for it.”. His acknowledgement that a concurrent catastrophe elsewhere in the world may deflect media attention from domestic adverse events may be a valuable strategic consideration. A concurrent news story as a means of diversion appears to be what communicators hope for in response to a contingency situation on their respective turf. In other words this is suggesting that communicators may place their hope in a coincidence if contingency planning is not forthcoming (Neather).

McBride illustrates how little forward planning exists in anticipation of a contingency situation when media pressure mounts and a guideline on what to say, where and how to respond may be of help. McBride contends that while a communication crisis is being dealt with, public expectations and reactions would ideally have to be gauged in order to calibrate responses and decide on next steps. These different activities that lead to an adaptation of strategy and action and may thus be instrumental in saving reputation are not planned for in government communications. Instead when media pressure is at an apex, communicators hurriedly research options, decide on strategy and respond simultaneously. Arguably, the team responsible for this response is made up of the same people upon whom the protection of reputation hinges, regardless of the intensity of public pressure and media interest.

McBride indirectly also clarifies that the usual time constraints do arguably not always allow for staff to have their mind on the ultimate and long term communication objectives and potential obstacles on the way to achieving them. We may therefore be sceptical and question if ever or under which circumstances communicators are sufficiently committed to planning and the consideration of contingencies.

While long term contingency planning seems to gain little attention, at a more short term and technical level, an attempt is being made to control and avoid crisis situations. Interestingly, politicians both in government and opposition at times engage in detailed management of their day to day media relations to ensure that style and content are on message and cannot be misconstrued. To achieve this technical tools are being used. Apart from the provision of technical support, politicians are trained to demonstrate a considerable level of self-discipline to stay on message. While none of this amounts to long term or even medium term forward planning it does account for the reduction of adverse incidents and political gaffes. Hill stresses this point by reminding us how a lack of attention to detail in presentation and rhetoric may upset media relations.

Another reason why attention to the details of content and presentation is perhaps accepted to be the only viable tool that helps with contingency planning is given by Eustice. He refers to policy gaffes that have occurred during Cameron's first 12 months in office and particularly points out plans to privatise forests and school sports funding. Eustice claims that the Prime Minister's eagerness to get decisions taken was the cause for these contingency situations that caused the government embarrassment and forced it to withdraw policies. Eustice mentions that these issues may initially not "have had the attention of the top team, but were burning away and suddenly exploded that people hadn't quite predicted" (Eustice, 6). Successful contingency management and avoidance may therefore be a function of detailed planning, even though this case does not allow us to judge whether an initiative's success is perhaps at least as dependent on the quality of the policy itself. In other words, incidents with a tangibly negative effect on

reputation may be managed, attenuated or even avoided by the way day to day issues are being handled by communicators. Frameworks to predict risks and adverse issues long term may be desirable but do not seem to be widely in use or considered practicable in political communication management.

#### **4.16. Managing a politician's communications**

If we assume that reputation management requires third party media endorsement McBride makes a relevant observation. He is pointing out that Gordon Brown at least initially did entertain solid relationships with editors. Tony Blair could solicit support and endorsement from individual columnists even towards the end of his premiership when the media had become critical of him and his policies (McBride). This emphasis on close working relationships with the media is probably justified as both editors and columnists are a pivotal tool for anyone who seeks to shape images.

McBride raises an interesting point by asking if a distinction needs to be made between politicians who gain popular support on the one hand and those who may not be particularly popular with key audiences but who at the same time entertain very good relations with the media. As a case in point he mentions Tessa Jowell. As cabinet minister she was supported by sympathetic journalists who would even ring 10 Downing Street to make it clear on the eve of a cabinet reshuffle that the media would react adversely to a demotion of Jowell (McBride).

These cases suggest that a solid relationship with journalists may generate desired media coverage and facilitate dealings with editors and correspondents behind the scenes. This section is dedicated to communicators' and journalists' thoughts about skills, qualities and strategies deployed to assure effective media relations and communications management. It is being highlighted how attention to detail and technical aspects impact on the quality of strategic communication management.

Once target audiences are identified and their core expectations taken note of, an ideal image considered and a plan drawn up, the success of strategic reputation management hinges on the practicalities of communication activities. Stevenson (2) lists some of what he calls the “bread and butter” issues of media presentation, which range from appearances on live television, engagements with social network sites and short messaging tools such as Twitter. This also includes speechwriting and conventional media relations as well as practical and quite minutiae media advice that was offered to Gordon Brown for instance to help with photo opportunities that were directed in a way to keep his disabled eye in the background.

One of the pivotal technical media relations tasks in political communication was the preparation of the TV debates in the run up to the 2010 elections as well as the briefing of candidates. It has been argued that one reason for Cameron’s disappointing performance in the first debate and Clegg’s unexpectedly strong showing was the difference of quality in the candidates’ briefing about the arrangements that had been made in the run up to the debates (Jones).

While it is probably critical to emphasise media training and coaching for party leaders, the public image of an individual Member of Parliament by contrast is arguably not the crucial concern of the party’s communications unit. Macrory interestingly does not downplay the importance of reputation in politicians. However, he insists that in opposition perception management is an issue the individual MP will have to deal with and it is not seen as part of the brief the party’s media staff are being tasked with (Macrory). The Conservative Party’s media office is arranging and managing TV appearances for MPs. Macrory (1) quite explicitly talks about “using” MPs to respond to media requests. Rather than work on and build up a backbencher’s presentational skills and position a politician, they merely select MPs who it is believed will perform effectively in front of a camera. Those individual MPs party headquarters have no confidence in have no interview arrangements made for them.

Davies describes the demands the party's media department places on popular and media savvy members in the party leadership, parliamentary party or government. Party headquarters' objective at times was to satisfy media requests. For this purpose they recruited cabinet ministers to agree to a considerable number of interviews and broadcast appearances. Davies (16) was wary to agree to these requests as he feared it would put too much pressure on Straw. Davies (16) concedes that some of the media management decisions he made or advice he offered was motivated not exclusively by communication objectives and audience expectations, but by the consideration of "protecting him (the minister) as a human being" (Davies, 16). More strategically Davies also queried particularly if the interviews with less prestigious media and limited audiences were appropriate for one of the most senior cabinet members to accept. Both the party's media department and Davies as special advisor pursued what appeared to them as reasonable communication strategies, albeit with different objectives. Even though party spokespeople and special advisors see media as a resource that needs to be addressed professionally, this does not always assure an alignment of strategy and objectives.

Davies talks about his frustration with the discrepancy between Straw's personality and the public perception. The positive qualities the people who worked closest with him observed, at times became submerged in the mediated persona. To counter this Davies made use of specific media outlets such as *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mail* to instigate coverage that afforded Straw with the opportunity to emphasise publicly characteristics and ideas that echoed his personality more closely. Likewise, changes in the politician's job description or environment may require a readjustment in communication behaviour. McBride is reminding us how Gordon Brown's communication practice during visits in Brussels changed once he was tipped to be the next Prime Minister. Whilst as Chancellor he cared to meet only British correspondents informally in Brussels, he later on asked to have press conferences for the European media organised which had all the formal and official trappings a head of government would usually be associated with (McBride).



Effective media relations hinge only in part on a well considered media selection policy. In the past we were reminded on several occasions that attention to technical detail can make or break any otherwise reasonable communication plan. A case in point is what became known as Bigot-gate in the last general election campaign when Gordon Brown was overheard ridiculing a voter in a conversation with his driver on his return journey from a market square gathering. Brown's staff had failed to remove a microphone and transmitter the broadcaster had previously clipped to Brown's jacket to record his public conversation with voters. Greer (4) suggests that Tony Blair would have been equipped with a microphone his own team had provided. This level of detail may at first glance appear as a technical matter only. However, it is worth remembering that the fallout of this mishap cut into Brown's already shaky reputation.

Attention to technical detail appears relevant not only in preventing presentational hiccups. It is seen as being critical in any exercise of reputation building (Beattie). As an example Beattie cites a leading politician who is seen by journalists walk up stairs alone without any entourage. In his view this image failed to conjure up the desired associations of relevance and power. Attention to details that if overlooked or deliberately ignored could backfire or cause embarrassing situations is implicitly mentioned by many interviewees. Redfern looks at it in the context of social media and in particular tweeting. For the online community authenticity is important and it is perhaps for this reason that Redfern details which politicians are answering their tweets personally. If a politician who pretended to keep a personal blog or tweet him or herself, was caught out tasking staff members to generate messages, this would most likely incur criticisms from the web community. It is understood that due to lax approaches to these technical details reputations had to take flack (Redfern).

Price argues that regardless of the intensity of public opposition and media criticism a politician needs to keep communicating. Allegedly, Bill Clinton gave this advice to Tony Blair (Price). One may interpret this suggestion as

recognition that communication often is the only opportunity for a politician to overcome opposition and achieve objectives. A politician's reputation is contingent on their communicators' ability to persevere and keep channels of communication open. Price reminds us that both Thatcher and Blair at no point in their often controversial careers gave up communicating and arguing their case. What has changed in terms of media management in the past two decades is identified by Stevenson. He found that with the onset of the 24 hour news cycle communicators have more micromanagement to do to fine tune, add to and direct messages as they make their way through a plethora of media channels (Stevenson). This is believed to be a basic rule of effective political communication (Hill).

Hill takes this notion further when he talks about the concept of "discipline" (Hill, 7), which he uses when describing the transmission of information from the party or government to the media which he thinks needs to be controlled – or disciplined - by the communicator. However, he makes it clear that in government apparently a considerable number of individuals breach this discipline and engage with their autonomous and at times clandestine media contacts which results in a constant haemorrhaging of information that eventually minimises the effectiveness one could expect if media relations were tightly and centrally managed. Also a lack of central control in communications is detrimental to consistency and effectiveness as Eustice reminds us. All messages that diverge from the projected image are distracting the audience and fail to deliver on objectives. Interestingly, Stacey compares corporate to political communication and concludes that whilst media staff in business keep a tighter grip on the distribution of information, in politics similarly rigid control is not known. Instead, it appears to be usual practice to keep a "more matey kind of atmosphere" which allows "more gossip" to be "traded back and forth" (Stacey, 3).

This however does not imply that communicators are willing to wait until the media establish issues, judgements and narratives. Instead communicators try to identify and guide issues in the expectation they can control and frame stories and commentary (Jones). Jones insists that the high competition

between media in the UK even heightened the need for politicians to communicate pre-emptively and establish control both of the message and – as mentioned above – sources.

As mentioned before it is a key quality in practical communications management to envisage events and gauge media stories (Hill). If staff and politicians successfully distinguish between issues they need to take care of and those that will evaporate without further ado, they stand a chance to communicate effectively (Hill). Hill recognises a connection between the skill to predict and communicate on the one hand and the ability to manage politics and pursue policies on the other. Perhaps this had been the case for quite some time and only the 24 hour news cycle made the link between the two even more obvious (Hill).

Therefore, the ability to predict media behaviour and anticipate issues and more specifically questions the media is about to raise, appears to be an essential tool in a political communicator's tool kit which is critical for the implementation of planned message strategies (Hill). Hill describes how towards the end of official meetings Blair's media staff briefed about subsequent media engagements. This exercise helped anticipate questions and thus eliminate surprises which at their worst could upset a communication plan and the policy itself (Hill).

These technical arrangements to pre-empt news and predict issues is related to communicators' concern with agenda setting and framing of news stories. The Conservative opposition in their time tried to vie for the power to set the media agenda and not allow the government to define which issues should be discussed (Eustice). To this purpose on Mondays or Tuesdays the party leader was scheduled to give a speech that introduced a theme (Eustice). On Thursdays a second smaller issue was presented in the expectation the media took it up. Taking the initiative is pivotal in daily media management and through a selection of issues a politician's personality is being projected (Richards). Richards cautions against the view that this strategy could easily be implemented in day to day media management. Instead, he shows

awareness that “most of your time is spent being battered about by external forces and reacting to things or crisis management when things go wrong” (Richards, 3).

Stevenson disagrees as in his view media management and agenda setting becomes easier for politicians in opposition rather than for those in government. Livermore (6) concurs and adds that in opposition one is “not forced to keep responding” and therefore one can escape the news agenda or set an alternative one. Stevenson (7) believes opposition opens a politician “more chances to attack and to deploy your points”.

#### **4.17. Controlling the news agenda**

It was my intention to try and establish to what degree and under which circumstances communicators attempt to frame stories that are being picked up and developed in the media. Neather reminds us that Gordon Brown’s staff sought to control access to government information as a means to deal with journalists and to steer news reporting. This implies an endeavour to arrange trade-offs and provide information in return for specific coverage and commentary.

Beattie (2, 3) acknowledges that communicators can potentially use major set piece events – he refers to as road-stops - and statements of “extraordinary” importance to steer the agenda. Livermore refines the argument and suggests that in the days after an election victory or the days following and leading up to budget day or a Queen’s Speech the government communicators stood a chance to control items on the news agenda, unless a major unexpected event such as a terrorist attack were to occur. Livermore concludes that whilst for governments the power to control the news agenda is limited, in opposition there are even fewer occasions that would allow an opposition politician to predict, determine or frame what the media will be picking up and running prominently.

In particular foreign trips are apparently used to structure media coverage and entice journalists to follow a particular story line. However, McBride remains less than sanguine as “you could never sort of predict what you’d be talking about in a particular week” (McBride, 8). Therefore foreign trips were according to McBride not an opportunity to set the news agenda. One might want to speculate that a trip is a set event that news reporting may have to pay attention to and which potentially can squeeze other events off the news agenda. McBride does not fully subscribe to this view. He argues that foreign trips felt more like “wild escapes” (McBride, 7). Interestingly he felt that stories in the British media were even harder to control while the Prime Minister was engaged abroad: “You didn’t know what would happen back home while you were on them and it was all about sort of rolling with the punches and being able to react” (McBride, 7).

Stacey reminds us that news reporting in the periods in between the major road-stops mentioned above is difficult to control which makes them potentially more critical for the politician’s reputation. In Stacey’s experience Westminster correspondents are largely reactive and allow themselves to be guided by the debates in the chamber, particular speeches that are given as well as the key stages of the legislative process. In addition to this the Labour government organised daily media briefings which according to Hill would usually only provide context and help journalists to interpret current events. One day out of five was earmarked to emphasise a government story or departmental initiative with a clear eye on the impact this may have on subsequent news reporting.

Stacey argues that the planning grid helped plan and control the news agenda to some extent. However, he also refers to the Labour government’s skilful use of announcements which may be repeated on subsequent occasions as audiences seem to forget specific policies that had already been announced. Stacey calls this approach to media relations and agenda management “absolutely fantastic” (Stacey, 6, 7). He concludes that government communicators’ work is instrumental in managing news reporters’ agendas. By writing politicians’ speeches and including statements which are likely to make it into the headlines, communication staff can in his view help steer the

debate in the news media. He cautions against thinking that political journalists generate daily coverage out of their own initiative. Instead they heavily rely on cues which may either be generated through media relations activities or unexpected events that may distract from the politician's intended news agenda or even replace it.

It appears that Beatty's and Stacey's experience with government communicators is related to their position as Westminster correspondents who are physically based on the premises of parliament and whose brief it is to keep track of day to day political business. The selection of issues, their interpretation and more generically the shaping of a news agenda is different from the case of political columnists such as Martin Kettle from *The Guardian*, who keeps his distance to day to day politics. Kettle clarifies that the variables that make him take up and pursue an issue are of a different nature and not the result of current political announcements and press briefings. Instead he dedicates himself to concerns that are by some standards of consequence to society in a broader context. Often this choice is conditioned by his personal preferences and limited only by his colleagues' selection of columns. This does not mean however that communicators do not try to stay in touch with columnists and offer themselves as interpreters of policies. Arguably, some of these suggestions are being taken up by columnists (Kettle).

Beattie outlines how communicators from the major parties would not only be available for the Westminster based correspondents, they actively seek them out and help journalists understand and accept their respective party's interpretation of an issue. Jones explains that policy announcements are trailed hours or days before the actual announcement. This is an arrangement that was pioneered by successive Chancellors ahead of budget day and is seen by journalists as an attempt to manage the agenda (Jones).

Particularly in the hours and days following policy announcements or events, communicators are seen to be contacting correspondents with the intention to influence how a story is being interpreted and commented on. Stacey illustrated how through the amount of information they dispense and the kind of background they add in one to one discussions with journalists,

communicators can influence the news reporting. Jones provides as a case in point the recurrent debate about benefit abuse which is taken up by a range of media outlets. He assumes that the information, the cues and the interpretation is being provided from within political parties. In his view the rationale for stirring these stories is to do with politicians' and parties' interests in rallying public support. Jones therefore suspects that Cameron feels comfortable with the immigration debate in the media which allegedly is spurred with the help of data provided by Conservative communicators. Stacey did not challenge my suggestion that in some cases political communicators in an attempt to influence the news agenda may even threaten to cut out specific media from the flow of information. Instead he maintains that his newspaper would not change reporting for the sake of a good relationship with a politician.

When considering the leverage communicators have with journalists, the decision on which journalist is granted an interview and background information is critical. (McBride). By placing a story with a carefully selected journalist the messages could be framed. Beattie talks about the difficulty both journalists and communicators have with controlling a message once it is published. Statements do migrate from one medium to the next as they are picked up, shared and recycled by journalists. Beattie cites a remark he made about Ed Miliband in the *Daily Mail* which on the subsequent day was quoted on Sky News during an interview with Miliband. This highlights how the course information takes is unpredictable and therefore hard for communicators to keep track of, let alone guide or curtail.

When targeting specific media communicators are allegedly still keen to get their message across to newspaper editors rather than journalists from any other media. This perspective may be contentious but this seems to be the view shared by Beattie, Kettle and Jones that time and manpower among party communicators is mainly being invested to explain issues to journalists from the print media. This allegedly is due to the recognition that stories are being presented and framed in the print media to be later taken up by broadcasters and online publications. Even video material on occasions is leaked to newspapers as they, through their commentary act as opinion

leaders while electronic media limits its role in political communication to broadcasting the material. Jones appreciates the print media's power to frame news when he concludes that "the media, you know, are driving the agenda in many ways but equally one has to accept that the strategists had a strategy" (Jones, 6).

#### **4.18. Past record – opportunity and burden**

Politicians in the UK arguably are visible to the public and particularly the media long before they attain more senior positions in cabinet or the opposition front bench. In a country the size of the UK it is unlikely that a politician is rising the ranks without drawing the attention of the national media (Neather). This in turn implies that leading politicians in all parties leave in the course of the years publicly visible traces through statements, actions and policies which constitute what we may refer to as "past record".

A politician's past election campaigns probably add a considerable amount of detail to the narrative that defines the individual. This suggests that by the time politicians are being elected to Parliament or appointed to a cabinet post they have generated a public persona which according to Thorogood is at this point "very difficult to actually change" (Thorogood, 7). The more familiar publics are with politicians, the more their willingness and ability to re-think images and re-shape their perceptions of politicians is limited.

What makes up this baggage that defines the current and future reputation may consist of set policies, personality features, decisions taken and actions publics may have interpreted one way or another. Price points out that the "room for manoeuvre was greatly reduced because of the mistake you have made in the past" (Price, 10). Even inaction or silence at some point in the past may be interpreted by audiences and come to haunt a politician years later. Redfern comes up with the particular case of how inaction may be construed to the detriment of an individual. He talks about David Miliband who as Foreign Secretary in the Brown government decided at more than one



occasion not to challenge the incumbent party leader. While at the time this inaction may have met with tacit approval, with the knowledge of hindsight views are being voiced that criticise Miliband for not having stood and thus forgone the opportunity to save the fortunes of the Labour Party. Interestingly, what at the time seemed like thoroughly justifiable and reasonable caution is now framed as evidence for dithering and serves to discredit David Miliband's personality (Redfern).

Yet, at the same time a past record may be "incredibly valuable" (Livermore, 11). Livermore refers to Gordon Brown as one of the most striking examples to illustrate this point. When he took over the leadership he had a very strong record as the person who handled the country's economy very well over almost a decade. This initially supported his credibility in any statement the new Prime Minister made about the state of the economy. Likewise Vince Cable was actively sought and framed as opposition expert on the economy when in 2008 the banking crises commenced as for years he had been on record with predictions of an imminent economic downturn (Waring). Cable's warnings had contributed to a record that on the one hand limited his public persona to that of an economic expert, on the other hand it established features which in subsequent years appeared to be positive and popular with his key audiences.

Stevenson speaks of the "human hinterland" (Stevenson, 6) that differentiates a politician from a product which may be introduced to consumers on a blank canvass. He continues to make the point that politicians of a certain age must have accrued a life history that precludes the option to reposition their personality and policies. Thus over time a narrative emerges which deprive communicators of the opportunity to alter their candidate's or incumbent's public persona. Redfern takes up this point and reminds us of his work for David Miliband who at the time of the Labour leadership contest had already been well known both within the party and among the electorate. A complete repositioning of the contender was therefore never a possibility. Rather it was sought "to nuance it and sort of tease it out and get people more aware of the person" (Redfern, 4). This implies fine tuning messages with regard to his

policies and record as well as his credentials as a good speaker, family person and politician with international standing. While much of this may have been known it would be necessary in the view of Redfern to emphasise and explain some of these features and thus adjust the public persona.

Price reminds us that the mood in the country may change and a politician's past decisions that may have been applauded at the time could at a later stage be viewed more critically. A response to changing expectations among key publics may be for politicians to adapt their public persona and align it with demands. However, Beattie cautions against the belief that a politician's reputation can be reinvented as a means to restart or redirect a faltering career. He mentions Michael Portillo as an example for a politician who only managed to re-create his public persona once he had left parliament for good. We may speculate at this point that his re-orientation only became credible once he directed himself towards an entirely new career path. In Portillo's case it was a transition from a Conservative politician to journalist. This eventually did succeed and turn into what Beattie calls the "renaissance and resurrection of Portillo (Beattie, 6)." However, we need to keep in mind that he succeeded at the price of leaving politics.

Iain Duncan Smith according to Beattie has not completely changed the perceptions the public had of him when he was leader of the Conservative Party. However, it should be acknowledged that unlike Portillo, Duncan Smith decided to stay in politics and pursue social welfare policies within the parliamentary party which eventually led to his appointment to a cabinet post. To what degree Duncan Smith managed to use his current concern for social welfare as a means to make publics forget about his dismal record as party leader, is questionable.

Wood insists that when William Hague was leading the Conservative Party in the late 1990s, his public persona was still marred by the images of the 16 year old Hague lecturing a Conservative Party conference in the late 1970s. This appearance according to Wood was still in the public folk memory and

framed the perception of Hague as a far too clever schoolboy who was not up to the job.

However, there seems to be evidence to suggest that some politicians have quite successfully disassociated themselves from past decisions and behaviour which would have clashed with images they at present consider more desirable. Richards recounts how the radical politics he was associated with in the 1970s do not seem to have been a liability for Jack Straw's career as a cabinet minister with New Labour. Richards calls Straw and individuals with similar track records "survivors in politics...who are very fleet of foot and can move quickly and be very tactical and flexible and nothing really sticks to them as they make their progress" (Richards, 5). Other than this somewhat metaphorical explanation we get very little information that helps us understand how Straw manages to develop his public persona in accordance with evolving expectations and regardless of his past policy stances.

For the purposes of this research however, it is entirely satisfactory to conclude that past baggage may be but is not always a hindrance which at times limits communicators' options to shape reputation – with some notable exceptions. Another politician apart from Straw who overcame a record that would in other cases have terminated a career and certainly precluded easy cohabitation with New Labour is Margaret Beckett, who played a critical role in writing the notorious 1983 party manifesto.

The cases of Beckett and Straw illustrate a phenomenon which is perhaps best explained by Waring who reminds us that politicians in opposition and candidates in the early phase of their careers need to take risks in order to be noticed and draw attention to their arguments. This may require them to make statements and voice criticisms they feel awkward about or out of place with when at a later point they find themselves on the government benches. Waring may have had a number of policy commitments in mind the Lib Dems gave during their years in opposition which once in government they had to go back on due to financial circumstances and the compromises forced upon them in coalition government. Arguably this phenomenon is a challenge that a

number of politicians had to deal with who have been around for a long time and started out their parliamentary career in oppositions as did Beckett and Straw.

How past baggage associated with a specific government job burdens the current incumbent is recounted by Hazlewood who arranged for the Welsh Secretary to go on radio and sing the Welsh National Anthem. Admittedly, there was no reason to do so, had it not been to quiet nationalist voices that criticised the minister for having pursued her political career outside the Welsh borders. This past record suggested she did not sufficiently identify with Wales. These suspicions among the Welsh peaked in 1992 when the then English Welsh Secretary John Redwood failed to remember the lyrics of the Welsh national anthem. To ensure they did not inherit someone else's embarrassing track record by association, Redwood's successors as Welsh Secretaries had to be heard singing the anthem.

#### **4.19. Reputation management over time**

Admittedly, the Conservative Party press office insists that reputation management for individual politicians is not being done and that David Cameron since his election as party leader has not engaged in systematic activities to shape his public persona in order to meet specific expectations. This should be acknowledged and put into context. Henry Macrory in the Conservative Party press office is very much aware of the bad press New Labour earned itself when journalists speculated about Labour communicators' spin doctoring and their attempts to fabricate the images of their party leaders.

Apart from Macrory all respondents from the three major parties agreed that politicians' reputations are managed over extended periods of time. This view is shared by Eustice, Cameron's former communications officer, who suggests that reputation can be changed and reinvented over time. Labour's Lord Stevenson clarifies that persuading people that a politician is likeable

and can be trusted is an on-going process. This section therefore is looking at the time scale communicators have in mind when they deal with a politician's reputation. Some reputational change over time is obvious to the observer. Tony Blair's fall from public grace is a well-publicised example for this phenomenon.

Neather is drawing our attention to the initial success of Brown's reputation management. His remarks help us remember that in some way Brown's team for years must have managed to emphasise some positive personality traits, while keeping others off the media's radar. This is in line with Livermore's assertion that a communications team worked hard on Brown's public persona over years both while he was Chancellor and Prime Minister: "We worked incredibly hard on Gordon Brown's reputation" (Livermore, 1). Neather asserts that already in an early phase Brown was seen as dull, dour and stoic, which by anyone's standards may have been just the attributes a Chancellor of the Exchequer would want to be associated with.

McBride is pointing out that reputation management can be considered in the context of a timeline with a starting point when a politician and communicator are discussing and agreeing how the politician is best being projected to their publics. McBride is particularly referring to individuals whose public persona is not yet existent and whose publicly visible traits may yet be shaped. Interestingly, this exercise is not limited to public statements and the style of public appearances. Instead, McBride is talking about the emphasis and thrust of policies that are associated with a person's identity. The two may be integrated to shape the public persona. McBride is categorising the options communicators may have at a politician's early career stage. They may decide to position a politician alternatively as straight talker, theorist or what he calls "a safe pair of hands" (McBride 2, 3).

Eustice reminds us that David Cameron prior to the 2005 party conference was largely unknown to the electorate and most observers who were not intimately familiar with the Conservative Party. This was perceived by Cameron's media advisors as both a challenge and an opportunity. Eustice claims that the week of the conference was being used to acquaint the public

with the presumptive new leader. In an intense media campaign the recognition level is said to have rocketed from 4 per cent to 80 per cent thanks to images that were being used to present the new Conservative leader (Eustice). This case would suggest that within the briefest imaginable period of time a politician who was hitherto virtually unknown can be given an identifiable public persona.

Eustice contends that in the case of Michael Howard the time available for positioning and to associate him with key values of the 2005 general election campaign seem not to have been sufficient to make the electorate forget the less endearing statements he was known for during his tenure as Home Secretary during the 1990s. In his case past perceptions militated against the new agenda and the single defining event was missing, which for Cameron in 2005 was the party convention that catapulted him out of obscurity into the leadership. The reminiscence of the previous Conservative government was still in people's minds and the intervening time period arguably not long enough to make them forget (Eustice).

Stacey mentions William Hague as a third case in point to demonstrate how over time reputation can be altered and built up. Hague's tenure as party leader he calls "a disaster", while he admits that as Foreign Secretary Hague is respected (Stacey 9, 10). In his view the period of time available to make over the public persona is crucial. According to Stacey's counting it took Hague a decade to turn around what at the time may have been considered an image flawed by cheap media stunts. Wood details how over years the way the electorate perceived Hague changed dramatically. He refers to a slapstick comedy on TV which initially ridiculed Hague as a precocious schoolboy. By contrast, years later a comedy show depicted him as a "skinhead driving a taxi" (Wood, 3). While at the time neither image appeared intensely desirable the case demonstrates how "not by any conscious sort of image making but through adjusting, changing the content of what Hague was about" public perceptions could be shifted. Wood reminds us that over the years Hague's communicators had to deal with the ingrained impressions created by Hague's party conference speech in the late 1970s which associated him with a schoolboy's bravado. An image that still stuck when

years later he took over the party leadership. Wood concedes that Hague at the time of his accession to the leadership may have been seen like “a child come to do a man’s job” (Wood, 4).

To communicate reputation or a change of reputation to publics Eustice reckons what he calls a “cathartic moment” is needed “where public perceptions are directly challenged” (Eustice, 11). Alternatively, politicians over time can rehabilitate their image if they “go away for a bit and come back” (Stacey, 9, 10). This analysis chimes with a more general observation made by Redfern, who contends that while communications for commercial products sometimes require designing and building up a reputation from scratch, in politics a leading politician already has got a reputation and the communicators are limited to nuancing it over time.

This point is illustrated by Oliver Letwin’s history who acquired a reputation for being gaff prone due to a number of unwise statements and interviews. Eustice insists that the media at some point was poised to look for evidence that confirmed publicly held thoughts about Letwin. In this case Letwin’s advisors agreed not to challenge already entrenched perceptions. Instead, the strategy was to avoid specific situations that might tempt Letwin to ill-considered responses. In other words Letwin focused on doing his job and kept a low media profile.

In the long run a low public profile alone may do little to change public perceptions (McBride). McBride points out that over time reputation does not build up automatically but requires media management. In his view Ed Miliband’s initial problem when ascending to the party leadership was rooted in his neglect of the media and the advice he received. While Miliband’s performance and public persona may still change for the better, former Labour leader Kinnock lost much of his charismatic power and persuasiveness as a public speaker because as party leader he allowed himself to become entangled in prescriptive communications advice that sapped his spontaneity and authenticity (Richards).

It appears that changes in the public persona over time are not just inevitable but desirable. Hill raises the question if the intended reputation needs to be

adapted over time in order to match the politician's specific job or the office they are aspiring to. Hill believes that a public persona needs to echo some core qualities that publics would expect politicians to possess, while some other traits may have to be developed to reflect a politician's current job description.

Michael Portillo started out in the 1980s and early 1990s as a provocatively right wing politician who in the course of time re-positioned himself. This change came about when it appeared that a Thatcherite Conservatism would hinder rather than help the opposition's return to power. Kettle asserts that Portillo is known to be a highly able political brain who perceives his environment politically. This may have helped him anticipate and emulate changes both within the party and in the electorate. Likewise a change of office or political role would require a reputational re-assessment and potentially a readjustment. To put this crudely, we may for instance expect a leader of the opposition to act and react differently from the Prime Minister who seeks to communicate with different publics and whose stakeholders expect a specific set of qualities a politician in opposition may not have to display (Hill).

A politician that has been visible in the public for a long period of time such as Tony Blair or Gordon Brown needs to adapt the narrative that explains their role in politics and to integrate a changing environment and altered expectations. Price explains how a politician at the beginning of their tenure in office tends to be supported by an alliance of publics who over time incrementally become dissatisfied with issues of content or style and as a consequence revoke their support. By adapting their narrative politicians try and ensure that this erosion of support is slowed down or reversed. Price is stressing the point that the management of policies and reputation over time is more effective in holding together the coalition if it is being guided by an awareness of objectives and a strategic approach to achieve them. Livermore agrees and describes the advantages of making reputation management a planned exercise that deserves attention early on in order to concur on an understanding of what the ideal reputation is. He argues that this should be clear at the outset of any term in office as subsequently pressures and



distractions mount and time for communicators and politicians to fine tune communications strategy may not always be available.

In the course of a decade Blair worked his way through a changing narrative (Hill). Towards the end of his tenure his message became a new one yet again, now emphasising his intention not to leave important work unfinished. According to Hill, Blair even decided to give his narrative a new twist by adding a degree of self-criticism when he admitted that some of the projects he had promised to address should have been tackled quicker than had been the case. Stacey takes up this point and reiterates it from the journalists' perspective. In his view journalists are keen to find and process different and changing story lines. This would require political parties, governments and individual politicians to progress over time. Stacey puts very bluntly the pressure the media places on individuals to adapt and develop their features and messages. Over time "the public want a change of tune, change of story. Like you say it gets boring" (Stacey, 7). At this point the question may be raised how often politicians can reasonably expect to change their story line and re-arrange public perceptions. Price argues that a make-over may be successfully attempted once or twice but would most likely not prove successful if ventured more often. Blair is the example Price refers to. People apparently thought differently about him towards the end of his tenure.

Beattie is looking at this argument from a different perspective and asks if over time the true personality is bound to become more visible to the public. He speculates that in the course of time politicians may become comfortable and confident in their jobs and thus more easily persuaded to let down their guard which initially media relations staff have held up to protect their true nature. At some point keeping up a manufactured public persona allegedly becomes dispensable (Beattie). Another aspect advanced by Beattie relates to actual changes in personality which too may lead to an altered public perception. Beattie reminds us of the view that politicians in high office undergo changes in their personality as a result of their job and the responsibility, the privileges, pressures and roles that come with it. He makes

the point that specifically Prime Ministers' personalities are known to have shown the pressure over time. While this happens inadvertently it is nevertheless a tangible phenomenon that may account for changes in the reputation of party leaders and Prime Ministers. Kettle concurs and asks if perhaps the changing public perceptions of politicians over time are in fact not the function of communications management tactics but the result of a genuine change of personality. To highlight this argument he summarises how Tony Blair started out as a young and articulate party hopeful who could communicate with the middle classes and ended up as "an idiosyncratic, rather defiant, self-righteous and unpopular" Prime Minister (Kettle, 1).

In all fairness it should be added that personality change and alterations in the public persona are not always for the worse. Kettle clarifies that Iain Duncan Smith may have changed genuinely since he lost the party leadership in 2005. His dedication to social welfare reform appears not to be the result of strategic advice but a genuine interest he has nurtured over time, as Kettle, Wood and Macrory confirm.

#### **4.20. Professional advice – quality and implementation**

In the view of Hill the effectiveness of political communication advice depends to a large degree on whether politicians do recognise its value and understand it to make use of it. The kind of advice and support politicians solicit from communicators can be quite diverse. Whilst some ask for specific support with preparing statements and speeches, others might discuss strategy or use the advisor as sounding board to give feedback after public appearances (Davies). Stevenson (15) explains that "most modern politicians are absolutely up to speed" on image management. He argues that this recognition is reflected not by the "number of people working on this issue" but also by the amount of time dedicated to it (Stevenson, 15).

Hill mentions the former Labour leader John Smith whose interest in presentational issues was somewhat limited. In a way, communication staff found this attitude almost liberating due to lack of interest Smith tended not to

interfere with their work. Tony Blair by contrast made time available to advisors to discuss current and upcoming matters and reflect if approach and tactics were right or needed to be adjusted (Hill). Hill explains that Blair was prepared to discuss issues his advisors thought needed to be put on the Prime Minister's agenda. If we contrast Smith and Blair we find that the role and effectiveness of political communication advice on reputation management hinges to a large degree on the politicians and whether they are willing to engage with this issue and their advisors (Hill).

Tony Blair used to consult a number of external experts and confidants on major policy issues before he made up his mind and took a decision. This limited the influence of his Downing Street communication staff whose advice remained only one out of many (Hill). Eustice counters the assumption that in the team of advisors surrounding Prime Minister Cameron there are rows going on between rival camps about which policy and style to adopt. In his view discussions within the core team of six to eight staff are at times "healthy" and "very robust" (Eustice, 10), which he portrays as being constructive. Clearly, this view reflects his experience in Cameron's team and may not reflect other cases where internal and external staff perhaps do not agree and collaborate that easily.

Much less open debate existed at the same time among the members of Prime Minister Brown's team. McBride speaks of communication staff who in conversations with Gordon Brown "were careful with him" (McBride, 12). What made them cautious was his reaction to personal feedback or critical comments on his behaviour and his personality. McBride clarifies that Brown would "get embarrassed about being told" (McBride, 12). Perhaps this reluctance to discuss problems openly is the reason why a number of communication tools deployed by Brown were misguided: Perhaps it was difficult to make it clear to him that "his speeches were awful" (Richards, 8). Richards imagines that anyone who did voice frank views with him may not have been heeded: "There were people saying those things but they didn't get anywhere" (Richards, 8). This scenario suggests that communication problems arise and continue to harm as the organisational culture lacks frank internal communications. Other politicians by contrast expected their advisor

to be “brutally honest” and understood this open and frank critique as an asset that vindicated the special advisor’s position (Richards, 1). Richards argues that the value of communication expertise offered by special advisors hinges on their ability to be critical and to be honest about their views.

Kelly is explicit about the need for communications advisors to be frank and honest with the politician. He defines this as the core of the advisory role and values it higher than other functions and services:

*“I think the one thing I would say is that the personal relationship matters, right. You don’t have to be ... It’s quite often advantageous not to be the leader’s best friend. You don’t have to be a soul mate. You don’t have to have the same political instincts as the leader. You do have to have the ability to tell that person the truth and not to be afraid to tell that person the truth because if you pull your punches in saying how things are going to be perceived then the leader is not going to know how to present things in a way ... the leader has to think “I’m going to say this in such and such a way, and I’m being told the reaction is going to be such.” If the leader is under an illusion about what the reaction is going to be, you haven’t done your job. So however uncomfortable it is, however much the leader doesn’t want to hear it, you’ve got to be able to give the message. And at the end of the day, that becomes the truth teller role, the strategic counsellor role, and I do increasingly think of communications advisors as strategic counsellors rather than just communications. And that means you have to have the relationship where you can look the person in the eye and say “Look, whether we like it or not, this is how it’s seen.” So that’s what you’re ... that’s the context. You’ve got to understand that context. That’s it”*

(Kelly, 8).

Hazlewood concurs fully and argues that advisors who regularly agree with the politician are not in a position to give guidance and steer away from risks and issues.

Whether advice is taken up depends on whether politicians and their communicators build up a relationship of trust (Hill, Waring, 4). For this to happen special advisors need to learn to understand intuitively the personality and values of the politicians they work for (Eustice). It is essential for them to be familiar with how the politicians they work for react, mimic, speak and respond to adverse events. This insight helps communication staff tune advice to the politician's character. Price concurs and adds that advisors should not set up their own communication strategy but always link it to the politician's inclinations, aspirations and personality.

Davies (1) notes that Jack Straw who he worked for "basically wants to be as up front and as open as possible". This understanding of Straw's personality helped Davies plan communications and develop a public relations plan that suited Straw and gave him a chance to appear authentic. Jack Straw for instance in his final years as a cabinet minister may have been less keen for media opportunities and career advancement as some of his younger colleagues. This was an important feature in his personality that a communication advisor needed to consider in his work for Straw (Davies, 14).

Likewise Davies knew which kind of public appearances would match Straw's personality and hence tried to turn down any invitations that the minister would think were not appropriate to do. This ranged from interviews about popular music to appearances on comedy shows such as *Have I got news for you*. None of these options would have done justice to Straw's personality (Davies, 8). Advisors can best manage and consult if they are aware of the basics that shape a politician's communications behaviour and the signposts politicians set out to define what their does and don'ts in communications practice are. At the same time Davies (8, 9) tried to take Jack Straw out of his comfort zone and suggested he should overcome his aversion against an interview about his modest upbringing on council estate. Davies (8, 9) encouraged Straw to share this story with people as it was interesting and promised insights into the politician's personality.

In the view of Eustice good advisors must not be too much concerned with pushing the politician into the media's attention. He argues that successful

and effective media relations are not just about looking good and appearing in *GQ magazine*, but instead the objective should be to identify a politician's personality and present it to the environment. Even if the advisor succeeds in getting access to the politician and have their advice taken into serious consideration, the final decision may still be taken by the politician, regardless of the quality or range of advice offered (Waring). Macrory (3) clarifies that the politician "is his own man" and the ultimate decision is his or hers. David Cameron is said to turn down communications advice if he is not perfectly comfortable with it (Eustice). This too regards technical issues such as the right pitch of voice when giving a speech. Eustice maintains Cameron would also reject policy advice and strategic advice as he did in the run up to the Conservative leadership contest in 2005 when his advisors suggested he should launch a robust attack on his opponent David Davies. A piece of advice Cameron thought was wrong and did not match with his personality and values. He therefore chose to ignore it (Eustice). This decisiveness in presentational issues and his willingness to override expertise may be explained by Cameron's professional past when he worked as a communications consultant himself (Stacey). In other words he had views on strategic communication that he integrated into advice he received (Stacey).

Richardson believes the quality of advice is an important variable to gauge and predict if it is taken up and pursued by a politician or not. Davies maintains that his advice was taken almost in every instance by Jack Straw. That is a remarkable feat as cabinet ministers find it difficult to imagine that at this advanced point in their careers they should still have to defer to someone else's suggestions and adapt their style and content accordingly (Richardson).

Price finds that politicians of a single-minded disposition find it difficult to follow advice and instead pursue their own agenda. In his view this was one of the reasons that accounts for Mrs Thatcher's downfall in 1990. On the other hand there are politicians whose lack of intuition and emotional intelligence makes them more reliant on communications advisors' support (Price). If the politician finds it difficult to connect with publics and to gauge their interests or envisage their reactions, internal or external advice becomes pivotal (Price).

In this context one should mention that poorly researched and tested policies may also originate from advisors and result in a politician's flawed reputation. Greer (10, 11) vividly illustrates how Steve Hilton pressed the idea of a "Big Society" on the Conservatives and only subsequent testing revealed this policy to be extremely unpopular among focus groups. One may want to speculate about the repercussions this or similar cases may have on a politician's willingness to take up external or special advisor's communication advice in future cases.

#### **4.21. Internal communications and management structures**

In Gordon Brown's office at No. 10 Downing Street McBride encountered a disconnection between the operational and strategic level. In discussions with the Prime Minister policy staff would consider and decide upon issues that were of relevance for media relations. At some point this information was passed on to those staff who on a day to day basis were involved with tactical media relations. McBride regards this lack of direct communication between tactical media handlers and the politician problematic. He senses that behind closed doors there was a power game being played about access to the Prime Minister that never resulted in improved access for communication staff and a more horizontal structure within the media unit which may have been beneficial to the communications task.

This struggle for access to the politician and competing advice offered from internal and external experts makes systematic and strategic communications difficult as McBride explains. He points out that once in 10 Downing Street Brown received considerably more advice from a larger range of individuals. As a consequence, for staff who were in charge of the day to day media handling it was not clear what the messages and the communication objectives were meant to be. Also, McBride makes the valuable point that this kind of arrangement reduced the opportunities for media relations officers to influence policy and presentational decisions.

To illustrate this McBride refers to the Al Megrahi case which caused outrage among publics in the country and the USA as soon as it transpired that a Libyan citizen convicted for his part in the terrorist attack on an American passenger aircraft near the Scottish town of Lockerbie was released from prison and sent home to his native Libya. McBride is concerned that in this case decisions were taken in line with what foreign affairs staff thought appropriate and with no apparent reflection on what implications this move would have from a public relations perspective. It is not clear if the internal communications always ensured that the party leader or minister would be given a public relations view, particularly if this data ran counter to current policy objectives. Likewise, McBride questions whether Tony Blair was told by his pollsters how unpopular his pledge had become to support the war the Americans fought in Iraq.

McBride is suggesting that staff numbers and training as well as the dimension of a government body may all constitute a variable the quality of internal communications hinges upon. He points out that at the Treasury media advice on relevant policy issues was being sought and discussed, while in the Megrahi case a major decision was being prepared and taken at No. 10 while he as media advisor to the Prime Minister was left completely in the dark. McBride acknowledges that at the Treasury under the stewardship of Brown decisions may have been taken that went counter to media advice. However, this would usually have happened after a consideration of media and image implications.

Eustice made the same observation. He is concerned that due to the considerable number of staff and both internal and external expertise it is difficult for politicians in government to arrive at a decision. Wood points out that already in opposition advisors are competing with each other to have their respective and conflicting policy agendas espoused by the leader (Wood). This problem of competing advice as well as coordination seems to aggravate in line with increased resources when in government. Responsibilities aren't as clearly allocated as they may be in a smaller team and delegation of tasks may lead to errors being made. While in opposition a handful of relevant



advisors would easily come together via a conference call and decide what needed to be done, the same level of swiftness is missing in government (Eustice).

Due to time constraints and competing engagements communication advisors arguably find it difficult to approach and talk to the Prime Minister and decisions therefore may get delayed in the tussle for access. There is competition for the limited source of the Prime Minister's time when government business eats into the diary. Contact time with Brown was often used up by civil servants whose concern was much less with media and presentational issues (McBride). McBride mentions foreign policy commitments, international phone calls and liaising with international heads of government as well as increased prominence in the UK which made Brown the most popular visiting speaker on a wide range of political, economic and cultural bodies. Stevenson calls the job of Prime Minister extremely demanding as it requires the presence and commitment of the individual 24 hours day for 7 days a week. He suspects that the civil service could organise it better, but even if it did the nation's international commitments worldwide and the need to stay in touch with heads of governments and events in different time zones gives the incumbent little respite (Stevenson). Kelly warns of this gruelling schedule and insists that leaders in politics need thinking time to reflect on what their role is and what publics and the media expect.

McBride believes that this intensity did not allow Brown or his media advisors to discuss and agree on what was important and what activity he should focus his resources on. It was apparently not reflected comprehensively which commitment would aide his public perception and resonate with the media and the electorate. As Brown was only sporadically available for his communications staff, they had to be familiar with Brown's views to a degree that allowed them to second guess which stance he may have taken on specific questions and which response he might approve of (Stevenson).

If issues were left undecided and decisions open at No. 10 for too long, the communicator could take the initiative and force the hierarchies to come out in

favour or against (Kelly). Both in the mornings and afternoons at set times the media expected to be briefed by a Downing Street spokesperson. Kelly used this timing as a leverage to ask for clear directions. He made it known that on some issues delay to decide or declare would result in a loss in credibility (Kelly).

Admittedly, this exercise in exerting pressure on the deciders may not have been an option for a number of lower ranked media advisors who are in charge of the day to day communications handling. They were made to wait for up to two days at times until they got a decision from the Prime Minister on statements or media engagements. McBride believes this is too long a time and did not allow him to operate effectively. Stevenson details how communications advisors tried to make up for this lack of direct deliberations with Brown by arranging to meet among themselves from time to time to discuss if the presentation of Brown was as desired or could be changed and fine-tuned (Stevenson).

By contrast, in many departments special advisors for communications have direct and virtually unlimited access to their Minister's policy meetings. Richard (4) recalls how in hour long discussions about Health Care Reform the minister responsible, Alan Milburn, granted continued access to his media advisors. This in the view of Richards is necessary in order to consider the media ramifications as the policy emerges. Alternatively, the advisors would have to limit their role to fire fighting afterwards.

Greer gives a pertinent example which illustrates why all communication experts I have talked to judge the quality of political communications by the degree to which advisors have access to the politician they work for:

*"I have a very good example, um, an individual, um at CCHQ when, um, when Andy Coulson was brought on and Steve Hilton obviously was the big brains. So they had this big meeting one day with... a lot of the staff was there. So you've got, right at the top, you've got, you know, Andy Coulson, Steve Hilton and then all these other staff who weren't*

*anywhere near that senior. And they were talking about this new idea that Steve really wanted to push which was about, you know, equal pay for men and women and how it was important to ensure that this was enshrined in the workplace and promoted and so on. And of course everyone was really on board with this idea, absolutely, we should do it, bring it on, a really good idea. And Andy Coulson hadn't said anything at this point in the meeting and he stopped them and he said, "Well can you guarantee me that we live this at CCHQ?" And the room fell silent because they couldn't and that was a classic example of where you have policy was being discussed and a policy formation in a sense and then you had the communications guy who was then going, "Well it might be a great idea but if we go with this now and someone comes back at us and says, "Well look at CCHQ there's inequality and pay there" you're going to be in trouble." So I think that was a good example of how the comms built." (Greer 5, 6)*

Greer, concludes that politicians who did not grant their communications advisors access would be "very, very very silly" (Greer, 6). Though he makes it clear the communicators' participation may not have to extend to shaping policies, it would be sufficient to involve them in its presentation early on. By contrast Kelly (5, 6) questions if the communicator's role as a reminder of presentational concerns early on in the process is sufficient. He recommends the communicator should be involved from an incipient stage in the "production line" (Kelly, 6).

Hill and Kelly agree about the importance for communicators of direct access to the Prime Minister. This view is based on their experience with the Tony Blair, whose daily 8 am morning meetings they used to attend along with the head of strategy in order to plan the day ahead. These meetings covered policy as well as presentational issues. It also included a clarification of emphasis to identify which stories would need attention in the course of the day and which may not (Price, Kelly, Hill). Kelly (5, 6) understood his role in the Prime Minister's meetings to be the "voice of common sense" who would listen to discussions and occasionally remind the participants of his concerns.

Access in Hill's view had to be organised efficiently for two reasons. First of all it was critical for the communicator to know what the politician intended and had on his mind. This would help focus communications and achieve objectives. However, he also reminds us of a second crucial reason as to why close and on-going contact between advisor and politician was essential for the success of political communications management. Journalists would try and test if the communicator was in the loop and privy to what the politician was doing. If this was the case the communicator would be taken seriously and their word carried weight (Hill). Gravitas would be undermined once the media doubted if the spokesperson was well briefed. The consequence is the loss of trust and interest in the spokesperson that would cease to operate effectively. Related to this is Davies' (6) notion of the ministerial spokesperson as the "hub" of information and point of contact for all attempts to get in touch and arrange interview with the minister. He considers it important that communications decisions are centralised within the department and that the ministers refer requests for interviews back to their respective spokesperson to ensure coherent answers and allow them to use their position as ministerial gatekeeper as a bargaining tool in their dealings with the media.

A variable that complicated efficient communication processes within the departmental context was interference from Downing Street. The Prime Minister's communication team to different degrees tried to direct and streamline departmental communications activities. Blair and his head of communication Alastair Campbell apparently insisted on all statements in government departments to be orchestrated centrally. This was meant to ensure all messages "fit into the big picture" of government strategy (Price, 3). Price reminds us of Blair's and Campbell's heavy handed methods used to make all departments toe the line and adhere to centrally stipulated messages. Price claims some ministers were sacked over time if they repeatedly failed to recognise and adhere to shared communication objectives. Price points out that these arrangements were in place in order to coordinate the government's image and demonstrate support for the Prime Minister. A similar centralisation in government communication has been

observed in the Labour Party, which Kettle finds has become post-ideological and less democratic. This may suggest that internal organisational structures are not grounded in democratic principles but may be chosen for managerial reasons. This is arguably an attempt to make the party's image more manageable and the annual conference more controllable (Kettle).

#### **4.22. Scrutinising the communicators and their expertise**

“Understanding the strategy, helping with the language, understanding how to develop the stories, but also (...) having people there who are particularly good at presentation”, this is how Hill (9) describes a communication manager's brief. At this point I seek to explore if this view is agreed, what skills might be required and which educational and professional background communicators should ideally possess in order to make an effective contribution to political reputation management. Hill suggests implicitly that one manager may not possess the whole range of skills and that therefore communication teams try to bring complementary skills to bear.

Eustice insists that in political communication one finds two types of manager. On the one hand there are communicators with a background in journalism. In his view they are keen on collaborating with the mass media and generally try to help journalists find the information they need in order to get their stories produced. This is contrasted by what Eustice calls campaigners who take a more strategic and message-oriented perspective. By contrast their objective is to communicate a message which may or may not match the news agenda journalists were working on.

In the light of Eustice's remarks it does not come as a surprise if the journalist Beattie insists that communicators with a background in journalism were more to his liking “because they understand what we want and how it works” (Beattie, 4). He likens the journalists' job to “trading in stories” and it was therefore critical to collaborate with a political communicator who is familiar with how news stories are selected and written. Stacey (4) concurs and prefers to work with journalists in a party press office “because they get the

idea of a story and they know what you want as a journalist.” By contrast: “The marketing people want to sell you a product” (Stacey, 4). Stacey goes on to outline what the interests of a news reporter are in politics: *Exclusive* and *new* are the attributes reporters are looking for while marketing strategists appear to be led by neither of these considerations and instead fabricate messages about policies and candidates that transports specific images and are rife with spin (Stacey).

Davies acknowledges that journalists are predominantly interested in a good story that sells and the intuition for what constitutes a good story is probably the strength of communication managers who used to work in journalism. As a former journalist himself Davies’ concept of communication management is somewhat skewed towards media relations and so is the picture he generates of the communicator’s responsibilities: As special advisor to the Justice Secretary he needed to assure the liberal media that Jack Straw was no authoritarian, whilst the conservative media needed to be told that who deserved to go to prison would be sent there and that the institution of prison would not be turned into an carefree “holiday camp” (Davies, 5).

More specifically, communicators with experience in local media may be argued to bring particular value to bear as advisors to a politician. Apart from the understanding of journalists and their way to deal with stories, former local reporters may be endowed with a sense of how people in local communities think about politics. This helps develop public relations activities and gauge the public mind set. Davies goes on to argue that perhaps media relations advisors who joined their respective parties straight after graduating from University (he mentions Oxbridge and indeed about half the special advisors in the last and current governments graduated from either university) may not have had that same experience needed to appreciate expectations raised in their respective local constituencies.

A politician’s connection with tabloid journalists is in the view of Jones instrumental in reconnecting politicians to the populist cause. He illustrates this by citing campaigns for “Our boys in Iraq” or advocacy “to expose benefit scroungers” (Jones, 4). This grounding in what the public is concerned with

appears to be an asset just as the knowledge of what drives journalists is. Jones adds to this another desideratum: A particular robustness in their dealings with the public and journalists in particular is a critical requirement for leading managers in political communication. He recalls a quote from an interview with *The Daily Telegraph's* commentator Bill Deeds who allegedly said "every British Prime Minister needs a thug sitting beside them who understands the British media" (17). Redfern (6) too judges the services of what he calls "an attack dog" essential in a politician's media team and blames the lack of success in David Miliband's bid for the leadership in part on his failure to recruit a "vicious" operator who will "pull no punches" (Redfern, 6). Wood (8) too sees a need for someone trained in "hand to hand fighting" who can survive "the day to day battles that need to be fought."

Hill reflects on the advantages and disadvantages of having former journalists on the communication staff's payroll. He is suspicious of their inclination to disseminate information as one would expect from a journalist. In his view, this goes counter to a communication manager's job description that is skewed to control information. Yet he recognises a journalist's ability to sense how the media deals with stories and to anticipate the following day's headlines and potential problems that are waiting in the wings. These skills make journalists an asset in any communication team (Hill 7; Jones, 19; Hazlewood, 10). This view is countered by Waring (7) who warns that communicators' with a journalist's mind set are tempted to get bogged down by day to day media handling and lose sight of the long term objectives. To stay focused on the long term goals would in her view be the role of staff with what she calls the "marketing frame of mind" who are not constantly following leads to secure subsequent headlines (Waring, 7).

In contrast, Neather is sceptical of marketing approaches in government communications. His experience at Downing Street's strategic communication unit did a lot to question the belief that marketing and brand experts have an impact on the perception of policies and public service. In his view popular support for public services and policies' does not hinge on marketing communication's ability to generate a brand. Instead he finds the marketing planning and implementing process cumbersome and time consuming. He

explicitly refers to the NHS which in his view gained popularity and increased satisfaction levels as a concomitant of the extra money the Labour government spent on it. The contribution made by marketing communication strategy Neather (6) considers negligible.

Neather thinks marketers in politics work on the false assumption that the messages they devise will be picked up and communicated by their audiences just as they had intended. This in his view disregards the journalists' role as gatekeepers who select the chunks of information they consider relevant and may choose to ignore in part or entirely the marketer's message.

Stacey expects political communicators to sense which statements stand a chance to make it into the news headlines. In his view this is a critical skill for anyone who does not want to be wrong footed by public feedback. He cites as an example Ed Balls pledge to cut VAT once Labour is returned to office. Stacey was in disbelief when he learned that the Labour leadership had not anticipated at the time that this announcement would make it into the top of the news agenda. Clearly, the strategy and resources available for media relations in the aftermath of a headline catching statement need to be calibrated which is not likely to happen if the kind and intensity of public reaction takes the party leadership by surprise as happened in this case (Stacey).

To be able to anticipate media reactions and comments, half of his working time Macrory (4) spends on talking to journalists. This in his view is evidence of the pivotal role media relations experts play in political communications. To him therefore it appears obvious why political parties should entrust their communications operations to individuals who have extensive professional experience in journalism and "understand the media very well" as did David Cameron's former spokesperson Andy Coulson (Macrory, 4). Coulson just like Macrory had a background as a news reporter.

In the discussion about journalists' and marketers' contribution to political communication Wood takes a balanced view. He agrees that journalists have a somewhat short term perspective and tend to be concentrating more on



creating tomorrow's headline. On the other hand he sees a weakness in the marketing approach and cautions that long term strategic plans drawn up by marketers are more often than not of little or no interest to journalists. He therefore believes good communication teams need a balance of both sets of knowledge and skills.

Richards suggests the Conservatives view communications in a broader sense than Labour. Since Thatcher the party relied on individuals with a broad marketing communications perspective and made use of a range of communication tools. In contrast Labour's communication efforts were more grounded in the media relations expertise accrued from former journalists (Richards). In Richards' view this limited the communications armoury and emphasised newspaper coverage out of proportion which evidences Labour's failure to recognise "the broader marketing and communications challenges" (Richards, 9).

Macrory takes the discussion beyond the dichotomy of marketing versus a journalism orientation. He reminds us that regardless of individuals' respective professional background, the quality of communications experts and the level of their specialisation has increased due to financial resources the civil service can dispose of. While Wood agrees that government departments have got considerable numbers of communication staff at their disposal he is critical of civil servants with a communications brief. Usually civil servants limit their remit to the "transmission of factual data", whilst the political communications are left to special advisors (Wood, 10).

Staff recruitment in opposition is limited by financial resources. Wood (10) clarifies that he used to pay in the range of £21,000 - £22,000 a year for a press officer and concedes that this kind of money would only allow to recruit beginners on the job which led to a number of complaints by members of the shadow cabinet who were unhappy about the performance of their respective communication officers.

Price adds a new argument to the discussion with regard to the recruitment of skilled communications staff. Depending on a politician's perceived career chances, the kind and quality of advisory staff may vary. Jones explains this

as bandwagon effect which favours opposition parties that are expected to take over power in the subsequent general elections. He details that for many journalists this is a calculated decision to join a party that is tipped to gain a majority and swop a job at the news desk for a career in Westminster. "If it is possible that you are going to win or it is likely you are going to win and then you get a lot of support and a lot of feet, arms and legs on the ground", Redfern (8) points out and reminds us of the Labour Party conference in 1997 which attracted a number of "beautiful women and (...) very good looking boys" he didn't recollect having seen at party conferences during Labour's long years in opposition. Hill acknowledges that the quality of staff may be more of an issue towards the end of a politician's tenure. Governments and individuals who are tipped to be on their way out may lose out on good staff who are trying to use their networks and expertise in political communications to find work in the private sector. This he personally observed towards the end of Blair's premiership when it appeared that chances for staff to stay on under Gordon Brown were slim. Both Blair and Brown appear to have had their best communications advisors in the beginning of their terms in office (Livermore, 6). However, Livermore is not sure if this can be explained by the bandwagon effect discussed in this paragraph.

#### **4.23. Resources as quality factor in reputation management**

By comparison to the size of communication departments in large corporations, the manpower in government communication offices appears modest. Stacey points out that cabinet ministers usually are being supported by one special advisor in charge of media relations who collaborates with the respective departmental communications unit made up of ten to fifteen civil servants. Downing Street does not have a much larger number of media relations staff at their disposal. Apart from the civil servants, two party political special advisors are in charge of Prime Minister Cameron's media relations and the amount of support available to the deputy Prime Minister is largely similar. "A very impoverished system" Richards (2) calls the communication resources available to cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister. He compares

the arrangements with communication staff numbers at a politician's disposal in the USA and finds that two ministerial political appointees to deal with media, policy and speech writing are meagre at best. In terms of this research project Richards' conclusion is significant. He considers the staff numbers against a backdrop of an excessive workload and concludes that staff arrangements as they are leave communicators little chance to pursue proactive communication strategies. Similarly explicit on this point is Hazlewood (8) who asserts that with more staff there "is always things you could do more". Due to a lack of experienced personnel, pressure is mounting on advisors who at the same time need to comment on policy issues and react to media questions and public criticism which leaves little chance to spend a few hours to be "looking ahead" (Redfern, 12).

Waring's experience in the Department of Trade and Industry is similar. She is asking if a department that is overseeing a budget of 16 billion pounds should perhaps be allocated more than two political advisors.

The complexity and demands of political communications management are such that the number of staff appears to make a difference to the effectiveness of messages. Macrory is giving an outline of the functions that are needed to help prepare and support the media relations for a prime ministerial key note speech. In brief, organisational matters and the need to build alliances in advance and support of the message both require staff with expertise.

Some of the personnel involved are civil servants in press offices that are at the government's disposal. However, in Waring's view the comparatively large numbers of civil servants in the departmental communications unit do not pull their weight, react slowly and try to go into hiding when the news coverage turns critical. She thinks that the reason for this is related to the civil service status. They do not share the current minister's political agenda and tend not to consider it their role to engage in controversial or party political advocacy media relations. This apparently minimises the effectiveness of political communications. It also puts into perspective Wood's claim that government departments have in the range of 50 to 100 civil service press officers while

by contrast the Conservative party in the 2001 campaign enlisted 40 or 50 permanent media relations staff including researchers.

A vivid case to relate staff numbers to the quality of communications involves an article David Miliband in his days as Foreign Secretary wrote for *The Guardian* about the future of the Labour Party. In this text he failed to mention among the group of individuals who he thought would be important for the party's future, the then leader Gordon Brown. This caused a massive stir in the media and coverage to a degree that Miliband and his media advisor could not handle. The media fallout was critical and reactions from within the Labour Party negative. This example suggests that due to a lack of qualified communications personnel, the media discourse may get out of hand with repercussions on the reputation of those involved. (Redfern).

While Greer agrees that the resources available to communication management are critical, he places into context the role of money in a campaign. In the run up to the 2010 general elections the Conservatives may have had the most generous funding, yet this advantage was partially offset by Labour's experienced staff that had many years of government communications experience they could draw on.

In this context it is worth discussing if the quality of communications hinges more on the quality of staff or staff numbers. Beattie believes that the failure by Miliband's staff to handle the media stir ensuing the publication of his article in *The Guardian*, is not related to a lack of staff, even though he acknowledges that cabinet ministers can only draw on a single special advisor in charge of the media. He directs our attention to Health Secretary Andrew Lansley and argues that much of the flak Lansley is taking for his policies on health care reform is caused by the lacklustre approach of his media advisors and not by an apparent shortage of media staff on Lansley's ministerial pay roll.

Price questions therefore if extra numbers in communications staff are the recipe needed to secure a politician's successful communications. Price sees at the root of poor communications not a lack of personnel, but instead a

failure to conceptualise communications strategically and to define objectives (Price).

## **5. Discussion, implications and looking ahead**

### **5.1. Findings and discussion**

For the sake of clarity and to outline the purpose of this chapter I would like to remind the reader of my initial research objectives and progress made so far.

- The literature review (chapter 2) had helped to explore and identify features that distinguish a planned, strategic communications approach in political reputation management from a reactive, tactical one.
- The following paragraphs in chapter 5.1. are a consideration of the resources and circumstances that enable or militate against a strategic approach in political reputation management.
- In chapter 5.2. (Theoretical and Managerial Implications) I seek to understand if, to what degree and under which circumstances we may expect a politician's reputation to be managed strategically.
- This reflection will ultimately feed into a predictive theoretical framework of strategic personal reputation management in British politics which too is outlined in chapter 5.2.

The initial assumption of this study about the centrality of reputation in political communication practice was corroborated by respondents who broadly recognised its power to make and break politicians' careers.<sup>40</sup> In as far as journalists tend to personalise their news reporting they are on common ground with communicators who are keen to present images of politicians in

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<sup>40</sup> See chapter 4.1

an effort to manage and protect their respective public persona.<sup>41</sup> Macrory is the exception in this phalanx of agreement as he strenuously tries to talk down his party's concern with personal reputation management. This almost amounts to David Cameron's personal narrative and the Conservatives' identity that lays claim to substance in stark contrast to their Labour predecessors who they seek to taint as the masters of spin.<sup>42</sup> Macrory's perspective appears less credible when compared to other responses and against the backdrop of current research about political communications practice in the Conservative Party.<sup>43</sup> We may therefore find our initial assumption confirmed and infer that throughout the political communication industry a politician's reputation is credited with attention and is at the focus of managerial activity.

In this context it is somewhat astonishing to find evidence to suggest communication managers in this country may never commission opinion research to gauge external perceptions of a senior politician's public persona. Personalised data about public perceptions appears to be conducted systematically for the Prime Minister and party leaders only – though it appears that on occasions Chancellors too have comparable research commissioned. Some political leaders allow their reflections about popular opinion and public perceptions to be informed by mere intuition which some interviewees think to be a critical – if not sufficient – tool to guide a leading politician's public relations activities.<sup>44</sup> While party leaders and Prime Ministers may for reasons of personal preference on occasions be inclined to rely on their hunch rather than corroborated data, politicians at cabinet rank and below do not have the luxury of choice. As they lack the resources needed for polling, they base their judgements on anecdotal evidence or broadly accessible secondary data instead.

Richards insists that in the course of his career as special advisor to several cabinet Ministers he has never had the resources to commission a piece of

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<sup>41</sup> See chapters 2.4., 4.4., 4.6

<sup>42</sup> See chapter 4.1

<sup>43</sup> See chapter 2.3

<sup>44</sup> See chapter 4.2

opinion research.<sup>45</sup> There is full agreement among interviewees that financial limitations would not allow cabinet ministers to commission polls and one may even suspect that Chancellor Brown only became alert of the need for researching publics, once data commissioned by 10 Downing Street indicated that his popularity was much less pronounced than had been expected. Even though this is being contradicted by Spencer Livermore who talks of data on Brown's personality being collected and analysed throughout his incumbency of No. 11, starting in 1997. This, however, would only affirm that if need be the Chancellor's office does stand out among ministries in as much as funding for opinion research was available.<sup>46</sup>

In this context I particularly noted a remark made by Henry Macrory about David Cameron who he claims had been recognised while still a backbench MP as a potential future leader in possession of the traits and credentials deemed necessary to win a general election.<sup>47</sup> As the Conservative Party claims it does not conduct opinion research to identify personal image issues, one may only speculate if the first and in this case perhaps decisive impression of leadership credentials seem to be originating from a hunch.

This scenario would be somewhat dramatic and leaves us to wonder whether Macrory's hunch about Cameron's qualities is echoing the feelings nurtured by those party members who decided Cameron's eventual nomination. In other words, the pivotal decision in personal reputation management – the selection of the leader – is arguably not a researched response to popular demand and expectations. Instead it may hinge on subjective feelings contenders stir among party officials early on in their careers. This would marginalise strategic public relations advice and impact on the relevance of a subsequent communicative strategy.

This approach questions text book concepts of political communication management. Political communication literature does give the impression research is not only needed and universally available, but also widely

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<sup>45</sup> See chapter 4.2

<sup>46</sup> See chapters 4.2, 4.5., 4.6

<sup>47</sup> See chapters 4.2

practiced.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, my observation emphasises the centrality of personal judgement as well as the human relations character that eludes the strategic research based approaches in political PR. My findings also cast a light on how limitations in resources may upset intentions to conduct research based strategic communications management plans. More broadly, this evidence questions notions of professionalisation that have conditioned the academic discourse about political communication management in recent decades.<sup>49</sup>

If due to a lack of systematic data a communicative approach hinges on anecdotal evidence, it is probably fair to say that subsequent communication techniques will likewise have to be designed with only a sketchy understanding of audiences and their respective expectations. Therefore, the availability of opinion research about public perceptions may have implications on communicators' efficiency and effectiveness to operate. Those who dispose of data about the consequences of potential political decisions and the repercussions for personal public perceptions would be in a position not just to consult on presentational concerns but to help draw up policies that bring about the public feedback intended.<sup>50</sup>

This connection between communications and performance is illustrated in frameworks of strategic communication management. It has been discussed that effective reputation management hinges both on action and presentation.<sup>51</sup> It would therefore be a temptation for any communicator who is intent on managing a politician's public persona to have a say in the design and implementation of policies and not only in their subsequent communications. Interviewees from the major political parties draw the fine line between research as a tool to guide communication campaigns and research as a means to define policy objectives. In light of this distinction they insist that the latter does not echo the practice they engage in. Even though unanimously professed by communicators it is hard to go by this confirmation as arguably a party communicator may not be keen to admit that their respective leader allows pollsters to dictate the party manifesto. It is difficult to

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<sup>48</sup> See chapter 2.2.1

<sup>49</sup> See chapter 2.10.1

<sup>50</sup> See chapter 4.10

<sup>51</sup> See chapter 2.7.5



establish if advisors do not want to give the impression that unelected officials shaped government or party policies or, alternatively, they actually were not in the room when decisions were discussed and taken. Equally, one might surmise that communicators for reasons of professional pride and in an attempt to manipulate the historical record do not like to admit how they were side-lined in crucial moments by decision takers or intra-departmental rivals. As it is, the question whether communicators' expertise is drawn upon to inform the agenda in an expectation that it subsequently resonates with important stakeholders, is beyond the brief of this investigation and would need to be picked up and verified in further research projects.

Given the dearth of research and systematic data analysis it is perhaps not surprising that among communicators there is little understanding of the features that render a public persona ideal and align them with messages that engage with specific publics. Though there is some presumption that publics expect different qualities from politicians in different situations.<sup>52</sup> My interviewees recognised that politicians and their publics needed to connect, which in the academic discourse about best practice in PR is considered a critical prerequisite.<sup>53</sup> Evidence that communicators and politicians make good use of their hunches when positioning a leader and steering public perceptions is provided by Kettle. In this context he supposes that a politician's age generate inferences that advisors seek to control. In response communicators and politicians take age into account when framing narratives in an effort to establish associations of experience and youthfulness. Kettle names the Liberal Democrat leader Clegg who may have benefitted from the seniority of his second in command Vince Cable. Likewise the youthful opposition leader Cameron recruited the seasoned veteran Tory Kenneth Clarke into the shadow cabinet and one may want to speculate how, to what degree and why this may have reflected on his own reputation.<sup>54</sup>

We can tentatively conclude that judgements on a candidate's popular support, advice on the policies that can expect public backing and reflections

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<sup>52</sup> See chapter 4.2

<sup>53</sup> See chapter 4.3., 2.8.1

<sup>54</sup> See chapters 4.3

on the popularity of decisions among the electorate are largely not based on research and instead echo advisors' and politicians' intuition. Where one would have expected research led action, personal anecdotal experience in a constituency is at times the only factual evidence communications advisors can muster in support for policy advice and reputational recommendations.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps in contrast with our initial assumption the researched definition of an ideal image for a political leader is of less relevance for practical reasons. Communicators agree that ideal politicians cannot be fabricated in part because their respective space to manoeuvre and position themselves publicly is limited. It is recognised that the public persona has to be closely linked to a politician's actual identity. Discrepancies are picked up by journalists and disillusion the electorate.<sup>56</sup>

Attempts to make over a politician's public persona and model individuals on putatively more appealing competitors seem to fail invariably – Gordon Brown and Michael Portillo were mentioned in this context.<sup>57</sup> In neither case did these designs materialise. Instead they were being detected and derided as lacking in authenticity and subsequently scorned upon by the electorate. Communicators therefore reiterate that authenticity seems to be a core prerequisite for anyone who sets out to practice reputation management. Instead of re-modelling a politician's public persona from scratch, communicators can at best highlight strengths and minimise visible weaknesses. This in effect is more about tinkering with technical details than strategically modelling a candidate that chimes with public expectations. Instead of pursuing a grand design communicators are limited to tactical media relations. These restrictions to manoeuvre raise the question as to whether and to what degree reputation management can be a process led by objectives. However, even if reasons of personal authenticity were not an issue and the respective persona could be re-positioned at will, communicators could not make good use of this freedom since – as we have seen above – due to a lack of personalised research, the understanding of

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<sup>55</sup> See chapter 4.8

<sup>56</sup> See chapters 4.4

<sup>57</sup> See chapter 4.4

what a distinct audience would expect a politician to be like hinges at best on anecdotal evidence.

However, at a more technical level there were some open remarks about the communicative actions deployed to position politicians and control their public perception. With the intention to position a public persona political views are developed and voiced to impact on public perception. In keeping with Boorstin's (1992) concept of pseudo-events, politicians engage in political rows to highlight their respective stance and distinguish themselves from their competitors. These stage managed conflicts for the benefit of the audience had previously been internally discussed, agreed and aligned with the politician's identity and intended public persona.<sup>58</sup>

These tactical stratagems confirm communicators' commitment to planning and a certain amount of strategic perspective that transcends day to day media relations. Indeed, staff at No. 10's communications unit claim that strategic plans with respect to the Prime Minister's public persona are being collectively discussed. They concede, however, that this hardly ever happens in writing for fear of leaks. Therefore, it is all but impossible for a wider circle of political communications staff to base their operations on a written plan or written objectives and strategic instructions as these papers – where they exist – are not circulated.<sup>59</sup> This raises questions about the relevance of plans whose purpose it could have been to align actions and synchronise messages. If strategic outlines of how to manage and control a politician's reputation are kept under lock and key, even to those whose work they should guide and support, the question as to whether or not they do exist at all becomes obsolete.

If we assumed a written plan to guide personal reputation management strategies existed and was known and adhered to by the communication team, serious doubts remain as to the practicability of such a roadmap in a volatile environment. It is acknowledged that a plethora of events emerge and

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<sup>58</sup> See chapters 2.9., 4.6

<sup>59</sup> See chapter 4.7

cannot be predicted and taken account of ahead of time.<sup>60</sup> While not a communication strategy in its own right, the planning grid that is kept in the Prime Minister's office is an attempt to coordinate public appearances and align messages. Some cabinet ministers use similar devices, others value spontaneity and do not like their weeks and months ahead to be subjected to rigorous planning. Apart from unpredictable external events it appears to be politicians themselves who militate against a more planned approach that takes reputational designs and communicative goals into account.<sup>61</sup> It has been noted that politicians in their actions and statements value their unbound flexibility to a degree that does not allow a more strategic and coordinated approach to personal reputation management.

A long term, planned strategy or the absence of it depend in part on the politician, whose PR actions may by nature be poorly thought out and somewhat intuitive. The strategic element also seems to hinge on the individual's position and seniority: When media attention is needed to increase name recognition, tomorrow's headline appears to become more relevant than long term strategic considerations. Not just for the politicians, but also staff's professional ambitions and vested interests are deemed to impact significantly on which communication style is adopted. This is related to the implications that a professional background in journalism may have on communicators who as ex-journalists are found to be more responsive and accommodating to news media's needs and arguably allow themselves to be guided by what reporters like to know. By contrast marketers tend to stick to a plan even though this may not correspond with the stories journalist are seeking to generate.<sup>62</sup>

The intention to plan would require a consideration of timing, which among communicators is understood to be a core tool in the management of the political and the news agenda. Timing is seen as a means to match public expectations with political actions. Timing and selection of policies are used to set the news agenda in a way that helps politicians to associate with

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<sup>60</sup> See chapters 2.6.2., 2.8.6., 4.1.4

<sup>61</sup> See chapters 4.2., 4.11., 4.7., 4.8

<sup>62</sup> See chapters 4.8., 4.22

objectives and values that help shape their public persona.<sup>63</sup> It is by no means clear where a communicator's influence ends and whether or not it encompasses the timing only or expands into the policy making process. The interviewees seemed to agree that the communicator advises on implications of political decisions but does not design policies.<sup>64</sup>

It is thought that timing tends to come in favour of government politicians who find it easier to select policies and issues and determine when and how they are pursued. By contrast, politicians in opposition are at the receiving end of someone else's timing and thus may struggle to respond.<sup>65</sup>

Similarly indispensable for the effective implementation of a personal communications plan is the politician's presentational prowess. In other words, the feasibility of strategic communication hinges on the politician's talent to communicate. Good advice and media management staff may not be able to compensate for a politician who is either not able or not willing to act on advice and relate to the media. In some sense this notion of personality is even reminiscent of charisma and Livermore when prompted agrees to this choice of concept. He believes that how a politician engages with the public can be managed only to a degree. To excel beyond this point the individual needs to be imbued with communicative talent. Jones too conceptualises good communications as a function of personality and intuition and Kettle describes Blair as a communicator who relies both on his presentational skill and his charismatic power.<sup>66</sup>

It is this communicative ability that informs the narrative a politician's public persona is defined by. A narrative is seen by communicators and journalists as the function of a politician's behaviour and communications that is moulded over time by journalists, politicians and their communicators who seek to control it.<sup>67</sup> It appears that the perceived need to generate a politician's narrative serves communicators as a communication objective that informs a strategy which in turn aligns a politician's messages and actions. These

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<sup>63</sup> See chapter 4.9

<sup>64</sup> See chapter 4.10

<sup>65</sup> See chapter 4.9

<sup>66</sup> See chapters 4.4., 4.11

<sup>67</sup> See chapter 4.12

objectives and strategies appear not to be the result of planning. Instead these are in Mintzberg's (1987) sense emergent strategies that result from on-going competing attempts by journalists and communicators to frame a politician's behaviour, values, experiences and aspirations.<sup>68</sup>

The notion that a politician's narrative is shaped in both a collaborative and competitive effort by communicators and journalists blends in with the proposition that political reporting is a strongly personalised activity in which journalists take a commanding role in the framing of a politician's public persona.<sup>69</sup> What transpired in interviews is that journalists do follow their own agenda and exert their power in writing politicians up and down as they please. These findings confirm a phenomenon that features prominently in political communications writing, but tends to be marginalised in political marketing literature.<sup>70</sup> This omission is arguably related to marketers' focus on the manageability of communication programmes and their tendency to pay little attention to the news media. Subsequently, political marketer's concepts do not appreciate the centrality of journalism and the autonomy of journalists to pursue their respective agendas. The rationale of news reporting tends to be grounded in a need for highly personalised coverage of politics and a tendency both to boost and to undermine a politician's career in an effort to generate news that appeals to audiences.<sup>71</sup> Communicators by contrast struggle to influence the narrative, particularly if their own role as spin doctors is being drawn into disrepute and viewed with suspicion by a hostile public.<sup>72</sup> We may therefore conclude, that in their relationship with journalists politicians have only limited means to respond if they find they are being presented, interpreted or criticised inappropriately in the news media. The interpretative frame is to a considerable degree developed by journalists.

Another factor that cuts across any attempts to plan for communication objectives are both external and internal events which politicians need to reckon with. Findings blend with existing literature that conceptualises events

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<sup>68</sup> See chapter 2.8.6

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 2.4

<sup>70</sup> See chapters 2.3

<sup>71</sup> See chapters 4.1., 4.13

<sup>72</sup> See chapter 4.13

either as unpredictable occurrences or alternatively brought about by poor planning and insufficient attention to detail. Politicians may try and use incidents in order to present themselves as effective crisis managers which in turn may even strengthen their reputation. If the adverse incident cannot be averted, at least it may be framed.<sup>73</sup>

While skills in crisis communications appear to be in high demand, the resolve to predict and plan for events appears not to be particularly strong in government departments and political parties. Contingency planning is not comprehensively developed among government communicators or individual politicians' staff. The range of issues is broad and work pressure is described to be so gruelling that communicators insist there is no time to plan ahead. Not even among the Chancellor's communicators did I find evidence for a strategically minded unit that is specifically tasked to analyse environments, identify potential issues and address them before they cause damage to the Chancellor's reputation. While departments do prepare answers for specific situations what they generate appears not to be a comprehensive plan. Instead of scanning the environment and predicting upcoming developments, detailed technical day to day media relations are hoped upon to avoid gaffes.<sup>74</sup>

While it is being conceded that in media relations the view ahead is lacking, at a more technical and immediate level media management efforts are intense to avoid adverse images and to safeguard media support. Interviewees agree that attention to detail at a technical level is critical lest communication intentions become derailed by negative coverage about gaffes and poor implementation. Nevertheless, the news agenda remains difficult to control.

While they are trying to keep mishaps off the agenda, communicators seek to instrumentalise major events such as the Queen's Speech to direct and focus media and public interest. However, the debate as to whether government trips abroad and state visitors in the UK concentrate media attention and drive

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<sup>73</sup> See chapters 2.9.1., 4.13., 4.16

<sup>74</sup> See chapters 4.9., 4.15., 4.16.

undesirable stories off the agenda is contested.<sup>75</sup> Communicators try to pressure messages onto journalists and particularly the lobby correspondents appear to be happy to accept information and use it as cues for their stories. By contrast, political commentators whose columns are intended to shape public opinion appear to be less willing to accept cues churned out by communicators. Commentators seek to arrive at their judgements autonomously and therefore would not want to be seen as being spun by any vested interest.

On balance, it appears that a claim to partially drive the agenda setting process can be made not only by journalists but also by government. By contrast opposition communicators appear to have less bargaining power in terms of exclusive information. A threat therefore, to cut journalists out of the information loop is a comparatively weak bargaining tool and may not help achieve communication objectives, unless the source of the information channel has access to government or senior party circles and thus becomes indispensable for the media.

The evidence may reiterate two insights: Firstly, depending on their respective brief and task, journalists are by degrees approachable for communicators who seek to guide the agenda. Secondly, the level of interaction between party political communicators on the one hand and journalists on the other varies. In the view of Beattie and Kettle this may be due to the journalist's party political orientation or the ideological preferences a specific media is aligned with.<sup>76</sup> This leaning decides in part if a journalist is targeted by communicators in the first place. Furthermore, the intensity of media relations activities and the comprehensiveness of networking between communicators and journalists may be explained by the quality and the amount of resources at the disposal of the media relations team.<sup>77</sup> As discussed in the literature review, the availability of resources appears to be a tangible limiting factor

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<sup>75</sup> See chapter 4.17

<sup>76</sup> See chapter 4.17

<sup>77</sup> See chapters 2.9.1., 4.17



throughout the strategic communication process that may undermine the opportunities to identify and achieve objectives.<sup>78</sup>

Concepts of reputation suggest that communicators' scope of action and options to position and re-position a politician is not just limited by the availability of resources and unpredictable external events, but also by the politician's past record.<sup>79</sup> It is agreed among interviewees that previous experiences with a politician condition the current public persona. The implications work both ways: Previously shown expertise may now strengthen a politician's authority, past failures and questionable actions (or in-action) may undermine it. It is because of this potential baggage that the re-invention or overhaul of a public persona is at times of questionable success. For it to succeed Michael Portillo had to leave politics altogether and Iain Duncan Smith still struggles to persuade observers that he is a changed person since his unhappy stint as party leader.<sup>80</sup>

This however does not signify that the challenges to reputation management over time are insurmountable. The cases of Portillo, Blair as well as Duncan Smith testify to this. Some New Labour politicians even changed their ideological position from the radical left to the pragmatic centre – without alienating relevant publics.<sup>81</sup> However, high profile public personae are difficult to alter and it has been argued that a “cathartic moment” or alternatively a long term absence from media attention were needed until a remodelled public persona could be re-introduced into the public sphere. While it is not clarified if altered reputation over time is due to actual changes in a politician's personality or the result of media advice, there appears to be agreement that the narrative of a politician needs to be refreshed over time if only to provide journalists with new story lines. This requires communicators to engage in considerations that transcend day to day tactical media relations and to re-think – if not rewrite – a politician's reputational profile.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> See chapter 2.10.2

<sup>79</sup> See chapter 2.7.1., 2.7.5

<sup>80</sup> See chapter 4.1.8

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<sup>82</sup> See chapter 4.19

A make-over of a politician's public persona requires a reliable working relationship between communicator and politician. This implies the question as to why and under which circumstances advice is taken up and acted on. On occasions advice is being followed up, whilst on other occasions it is being overlooked.<sup>83</sup> In brief, the power of advisors to cut through with their suggestions varies. However, if politicians trust their communication staff and the advice given, the chances are that the communicator exerts decisive influence.<sup>84</sup> By implication a flawed personal relationship or a working relationship that is not imbued with reciprocal trust would constitute a barrier for the exchange both of technical and strategic support.

The findings squarely concur with the thrust of the literature discussed which suggested that mutual trust facilitates the exchange of information and that, at a more technical level, access to the politician is critical for the communicator to operate and advise effectively.<sup>85</sup> To anticipate – if not influence - policies early on in the process and to be seen by journalists as the legitimate source of information and gatekeeper, close and regular involvement of advisors would appear indispensable. If this access is not granted, communicators risk their pivotal role and leverage with journalists. As a consequence communicators may lose their ability to operate as a sounding board for policies and strategic advisor to the politician.

Demands from the civil service, public engagements, foreign leaders, international politics all exert pressure on a leading politician who requires sophisticated management to organise access and workload. This essentially managerial discourse is not pursued in political communication literature even though it directly impacts on the working relationship between politicians and their communicators.

Other than access communicators' effectiveness to achieve objectives may hinge on their professional background as well as their training. On the basis of the evidence reviewed above we may even surmise that the selection of communication objectives, strategies and tactics varies in accordance with a

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<sup>83</sup> See chapter 4.7

<sup>84</sup> See chapter 4.20

<sup>85</sup> See chapter 2.10.3

communicator's respective professional credentials. The approach taken may emphasise planning and be grounded in research. Alternatively, a communicator's activities may be conditioned by short term fickle media interests. Interviewees agreed that the former behaviour tends to be found among marketing professionals whilst communicators with a record in journalism lean towards short term responsiveness. The journalists would add that marketing experts at times devise messages in line with their objectives which are of little relevance to a mass media audience. In contrast, communicators with a journalism background are said to understand better how media stories emerge which makes them more savvy in predicting headlines and anticipating reactions. In response, marketing led communicators point out that their colleagues from journalism are striving to satisfy journalists' information needs which may be irrelevant to or may even run counter to the politician's reputation objectives.<sup>86</sup>

Regardless of training and professional background, it may not be a surprise that the ability of communicators to affect processes and outcomes is also a question of staff numbers. Both in political parties and government departments this is an issue interviewees thought worth emphasising.<sup>87</sup> Literature about the subject tends to describe how professional communications could be designed and implemented but is largely oblivious to the resources in terms of the quantity of money and staff party and ministerial departments need to have at their disposal to pursue their objectives and strategies.<sup>88</sup> Quality and intensity of communication activities are said to suffer as a result of a shortage of qualified personnel.<sup>89</sup> Departmental civil servants tasked with communications narrowly define their role as disseminators of information which is of limited use in the reputation building exercise. Still, communication resources available in government are more generous than in opposition parties.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> See chapters 4.8., 4.22

<sup>87</sup> See chaptrs 4.22

<sup>88</sup> See chapters 2.9.1., 2.9.2.

<sup>89</sup> See chapter 4.23

<sup>90</sup> See chapter 4.22., 4.23

Throughout this discourse it has transpired that reality is somewhat more complex than reflected in any model that portrays political communication as a mono dimensional planned process. This level of complexity would have to be taken account of in a model that appreciates the variables that condition a politician's personal reputation management practice.

## **5.2. Theoretical and managerial Implications: A new perspective in political communication management**

The findings of this research were intended to appreciate the correlations between specific variables and the likelihood of a politician's reputation being planned and directed strategically. Variables have been identified that allow us to predict if activities communicators engage in can be expected to be predominantly tactical and reactive in nature.

The practitioner interviews covered broad areas of communication practice. This is in the nature of an explorative study that was planned as an iterative process whose course was adjusted as themes and patterns emerged. As may have perhaps been expected, the answer to the research question is neither mono dimensional nor is it conditioned by a single and decisive causality. We may conclude that personal reputation management is planned and strategic by degrees. I am reluctant to interpret my data more forthrightly as it provides only a limited snapshot of a phenomenon and relied heavily on information furnished by the very practitioners whose work practice I investigated.

As discussed above, my methodology was inspired by a grounded theoretical research approach which required me to survey, identify, compare and link phenomena and establish correlations between activities, consider implications and draw conclusions which may feed into emergent theory. This methodological design generated insights which allow me now at this point to present my conclusions in the form of an incipient theoretical model that may

be used to make predictions about presumed strategic activities in the context of personal reputation management in politics.

In the following paragraphs I intend to categorise the variables (in grounded theory also referred to as *concepts*) that allow us to forecast if and to what degree processes are likely to become more strategic or alternatively more tactical. A prediction hinges on the features of each specific case: External and internal circumstances, intentions, resources available, professional background and a number of other variables I have picked up and corroborated in the course of the interviews I conducted with communicators and journalists. These themes were identified, structured and organised in chapter 4 and have been discussed and critiqued in chapter 5.1. against the backdrop of current academic discourse in communication management research.

As recommended for grounded theoretical research design I concentrated attention on phenomena and correlations that emerged in the course of data collection.<sup>91</sup> Themes that stand out in as far as they contradict or diverge from current academic discourse have been discussed earlier on in this chapter and won't be specifically flagged up at this point. I won't take the reader through the entire range of individual variables we already established and discussed in chapters 4 and 5.1. Instead, I have organised the most prevalent variables into categories which I expect can be used as an analytical framework and applied as predictive tools to analyse communication behaviour. This constitutes a model that in the future can help with the analysis of specific politicians and their respective communicative behaviour to understand if and to what degree the management of their personal reputation is likely to be strategic and planned. The categories of variables are:

**Personal relationship** between the politician on the one hand and the communicator or the communications team on the other is a condition both for close collaboration, but also for communicative and political input and access. This relationship hinges on mutual trust and understanding. A good personal

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<sup>91</sup> See chapter 3

relationship does not guarantee that advice is strategic, it does not even ensure that strategic advice is accepted. But a poor personal relationship makes the exchange of any kind of advice appear unlikely.

**Financial means** are needed to research, plan, implement, measure and readjust. While the availability of money may not guarantee access, trained personal, expert advice and professional implementation, it is understood that the lack of financial resources is the reason why research may not be conducted. In as far as this results in a failure to understand audiences, a politician cannot be effectively positioned and presented. Randomness and guesswork are the consequence at the expense of focus and strategic perspective.

**Training and professional background** are intended to mean communication staff's skills and training which inform the distinct approaches taken by politicians and their communicators to plan and implement political communications activities. To alter or safeguard a public persona, technical and strategic skills are needed. Training in marketing will make communicators understand the value, range and implications of strategies available. Arguably, this approach does not make persuasive communication any more effective per se, but it suggests that the operators appreciate how planning and strategic decision taking may contribute to increasing effectiveness and efficiency. By the same token, if due to a different professional background a communicator was oblivious to the value of planning and disregarded the reflection of strategic objectives, this may have repercussions on how communication activities are conducted

**Time** is recognised as a variable that conditions opportunities to alter public perception. This includes an awareness of how a politician's past record is leverage to generate a public persona but at the same time it may limit the range of messages and images that can be credibly presented. Bearing this in mind, a strategic approach would require communication management to be conceptualised as an on-going, long term process rather than as a one off, technical intervention.

**Management** comprises a cluster of activities and approaches that can be equated with the quality of media management and techniques to set and control the news agenda. Accurate media management is pivotal in generating and shaping the narrative that evolves and determines a politician's public persona. The effectiveness of communications management is linked to the efficiency of internal organisation and structures to facilitate the communication between politicians and their media experts. These internal processes allow communication expertise to impact both on the creation of messages, but also potentially on the generation, timing and implementation of policies.

What also appears to have been corroborated in this study is the conditioning power of what writers in communications refer to as "noise" and which for practicable reasons in the empirical part of this study I conceptualised as actions outside the communication manager's control that impact on the reputation management process. By degrees, a dynamic political setting and volatile media environment militate against a politician's or a political party's efforts of strategic and planned reputation management. A lack of stability tends to engender short-term, reactive and tactical patterns of behaviour. Conversely, the more stable relations with key stakeholders – such as the media, voters and opponents – are, the more likely it is for strategic and long term communication objectives to be drafted and systematically followed up on.

Objective	Predictive Categories	Availability of Predictive resources impacts on Practice	Type of Communication Management Process	Unpredictable action beyond the communicator's control
<b>Managing a politician's Reputation</b>	Personal Relationship →	Likely to be available • May lead to ...	...strategic (researched, planned, objective led) activities	Low intensity of unpredictable external action likely to contribute to... ←
	Financial means →			High intensity of unpredictable external action likely to contribute to... ←
	Training & Professional Background →	Likely to be unavailable • May lead to...	...tactical (reactive, short-term) activities	High intensity of unpredictable external action likely to contribute to... ←
	Time available →			High intensity of unpredictable external action likely to contribute to... ←
	Management & Skills →			High intensity of unpredictable external action likely to contribute to... ←

(Chart 5.4./1.)

This above visualisation (Chart 5.4./1.) relates the main variables that have been identified in this study to their effects on the practice of reputation management. While the categories of variables listed in the column on the left are all positively correlated with the presence of a strategic approach, the occurrence of an unpredictable action beyond the communicator's control (indicated in the table's right column) correlates negatively - depending on frequency and intensity. When applied to a specific politician in the context of a given scenario this model may help us predict the kind (strategic or tactical) of personal reputation management that is likely to be practiced. Boiled down to its critical essence this predictive tool could translate as follows:

*Personal reputation management in politics is most likely to be strategic and planned as opposed to tactical and reactive if the following applies: Appropriately trained communicators who enjoy a relationship of trust with their respective politicians are equipped with sufficient financial means to*



*engage in efficient and professional communication management processes over a period of time long enough to allow public perceptions to evolve.*

### **5.3. Limitations**

It should go without saying that these conclusions are valid with reservation. The profession of political communication practitioners is heterogeneous and the fluctuation of personnel is considerable. The interviews were conducted between February and June 2011 and thus reflect what individuals thought, knew, remembered or predicted at this time.

I realise that what interviewees' professed to be unbiased and frank views on the issues raised deserve to be treated with caution. Whilst some of them are still in business and may therefore have loyalties towards colleagues and clients, others may be retired and still retain reservations about exploring and revealing past procedures, decisions and events. I therefore tried to talk to a considerable range of experts from different political parties, distinct professional backgrounds and perspectives, while I remain sensitive to the quality of the data available.

Jacque L'Etang (2008) specifically reminds us that public relations practitioners' business is to frame messages or even to manipulate their audiences. It is therefore problematic for scholars to engage in a research interview with the very people whose job description it is to generate a reality that matches their respective purposes. My experience in this study would corroborate this suspicion. Respondents did have a vested interest and it is probably fair to say that each of them was very much aware of how they positioned themselves. Interviewees who are currently in the job took great care not to be quoted with critical comments on the politician they worked for at the time.<sup>92</sup> While former advisors were portraying their respective party and colleagues more charitably than their opponents. Journalists I interviewed tended to claim responsibility for the agenda setting process against communicators who sought to reclaim it. Current heads of PR agencies

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<sup>92</sup> See chapter 4.1

attempted to talk up their past contribution to a politician's success, whilst experts who still work for cabinet ministers were happy to talk down their input and praise their respective bosses for their natural communicative prowess.

The selection of interviewees was designed to balance these interests and interpretations, to aggregate and integrate them, look for patterns they all had in common and identify which ones deserved to be fed into my conclusions. Rather than asking specific questions, I allowed for and even prompted broad discussions that encouraged respondents to talk about cases, politicians, and events or to give factual information about their personal record. I clarified to my interviewees that I did not expect them to come up with cases they had been personally involved in, as I thought it might be easier to speak openly about a scenario they had not had a vested interest in. Some phenomena we talked about such as the relevance of mutual trust and direct access to a politician, the role of resources and the centrality of personal talent in political communications could be discussed without reference to an interviewee's previous job and personal professional record. This arguably allowed for a more open exchange of views.

The focus of this study was limited to the relationship between politicians and communicators on the one hand and traditional print and broadcast journalists on the other. When I started this project in 2005 internet communications were already hotly debated, but the notion of the citizen journalist and social websites as sources of political commentary was of somewhat limited relevance. As this changed over the past 8 years I needed to clarify the focus of my study and deliberately limited my research to the interaction between conventional print and broadcast journalism on the one hand and politicians on the other. This helped limit the number of variables that define media management which through a consideration of user generated content and social media would have grown in complexity. However, for a study that were to be planned now and conducted in the coming years, a broadening of the focus would need to be considered to grant online media the role it has attained as a source of commentary and information in the public discourse that reverberates into the offline media coverage as well.

## 5.4. Conclusion

The findings in this study diverge considerably from assumptions about political communication management in academic writing across the disciplines of marketing, PR and political communication whose emphasis is broadly on researched and planned campaign processes in the run up to election day. By contrast, my findings illustrate that the long term build-up of a political contender's reputation usually is far from systematic and certainly not grounded in comprehensive research. A dynamic environment that is conditioned by organised interests, parliamentary adversaries and political news reporting does not allow for advanced planning and requires flexible frameworks to be altered and adapted on a daily if not an hourly basis.

Generating images and the building and management of reputation have been identified as core activities political communicators are expected to engage in. In the course of the literature review we have discussed the notion that political marketing and PR offer politicians and their staff frameworks to guide strategic communications management. It has been suggested that research is the starting point and prerequisite any communication objectives should be grounded in which in turn define and inform both communication strategy and day to day communication tactics. The ultimate goal is to help shape and implement the vision of ideal images and reputation for a party and its politicians.

More specifically, this study looked into how communication managers orchestrated the reputation of politicians. It was attempted to explore if and to what degree communication practice reflects our understanding of strategic planned reputation management processes as portrayed in marketing, PR and political communication literature.

The situation I encountered through the interviews is defined by a tangible lack of financial means and staff who often are not familiar with notions of strategic planning or doubt its effectiveness. Little evidence was found for a

thorough discussion of what the ideal candidate or incumbent should be like. Instead tactical moves and short term victories appear to take up the time and attention of communicators. If energy is used up by the daily political slogging match and protagonists find no respite to focus activities on a long term reputational perspective, the blame for this short-termism may be passed on to journalists whose resolute agenda setting forces communicators on the defensive.

While comprehensive planning is largely absent or deficient, the outcome of communication management activities at times appears to hinge on a politician's talent in media relations and natural communicative prowess which is a variable that is difficult to plan for. A lack of intuition when dealing with the media does not bode well for political protagonists. And what is worse: Shaky communicative skills are difficult to compensate for even if financial means and expertise are abundant and readily available to the politician. No less relevant and therefore well within the remit of communication strategists is the politician's personality which has the potential to make or break processes of systematic communication management. Politicians who are unwilling or unable to take or act upon their communicator's advice, put an end to or severely hamper planned communication activities.

My observations come as a surprise in as far as they do not square with the emphasis I found in the current academic discourse about political communication practice. Both in political science, PR and marketing communications the omnipresence of strategic management processes in politics are taken for granted. While I do not intend to question or challenge this claim, I contend that with regard to an individual candidate's reputation management, evidence suggests that the perceptible public persona is perhaps more the result of haphazard action than the current literature suggests. The reason for this misconception is arguably a lack of empirical research into personal reputation management which serves to highlight how communicators work to shape a politician's reputation. This gap in knowledge has been addressed in this study whose purpose it was to collect and analyse data, reflect on our understanding of current political communication

management practice and define if and to what degree reputation management of individual politicians is a strategic and planned operation.

The data reviewed suggested that the practice of political communication is multi-faceted and grounded both in managerial issues as well as functional interpersonal communications. Personal relationships, concepts of trust between politicians and their staff, shared values and a mutual understanding are conditional in securing communication experts' access to the politician, whose acceptance of and support for systematic media management advice is critical if communications are to be managed strategically. It is partly this interpersonal theme that is marginalised in current political communications research. Thorough empirical analysis of political communication management would have helped identify and define how individual talents and preferences, personal backgrounds, trust and mutual understanding shape political communication practice.

More broadly, public relations research in the UK has largely forsaken the opportunity to engage with political communications management. Instead, research in this discipline is predominantly concerned with the corporate setting.<sup>93</sup> As pointed out in the literature review, political public relations is an incipient subject. The theoretical concepts of PR have yet to be comprehensively applied in the ambit of political communication and, more specifically, reputation management. This does come as a surprise as PR claims to be the discipline that deals with the build-up and the management of reputation.<sup>94</sup> This study helped pioneer the application of a public relations perspective in a political setting. Perhaps more specific to this study are questions raised by personality PR which so far is overshadowed by research that focuses on corporate PR. Work in personality PR during the past decade has not extended to empirical investigations of political communication management.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> See chapter 2.2.2.

<sup>94</sup> See chapters 2.2.2., 2.2.3.

<sup>95</sup> See chapter 2.2.2., 2.4.

The discipline that dedicates itself most decisively to the analysis of communication processes in politics is marketing. However, writers in marketing avail themselves of models that fail to do justice to the dynamic and adversarial environment that political communicators operate in. Academic political marketing writing is familiar with management models and planned processes but not always fully acquainted with how political staff struggle to gain and keep the initiative in a slogging match with journalists and political opponents. This is why the supposition that a politician's reputation may be the result of planned processes has little plausibility.<sup>96</sup> The 24 hour news cycle, the intensity of media coverage as well as the intensity of competition between and within political parties arguably adds a degree of volatility and surprise to the political debate that needs to be integrated into existing models of communication management.

Current models of political marketing management tend to focus on a final date, which the campaign is geared to. In marketing this may equate to the launch date for a product which writers on political marketing translate into election day. By the same token, the time period conventional marketing communication plans are designed for stretches over a few weeks or months, which reflect the period of an election campaign. In contrast PR would understand reputation building as an on-going process in the course of which information is added on and moulded over an unlimited period of time that transcends election cycles. An individual's past record and actions add to the current reputation as a benefit or a burden. Against this backdrop the safeguarding of reputation is conceptualised as an on-going concern that requires recurrent readjustments and is better visualised in a loop than in a time scale as marketers suggest

In a nutshell, the problem identified in discussions about personal reputation in politics is that the approaches taken by distinct disciplines are too limited and therefore fail to do justice to the distinct conditions political communicators operate under. While marketing models tend not to take the volatility of media relations into account, public relations literature has

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<sup>96</sup> See chapters 2.2.1., 2.8

traditionally – and until very recently - neglected the political context. Therefore, my findings add to existing models by grounding them in empirical evidence of communication management practice. A fundamental discrepancy between existing models of communication management and my findings relates to the practice of research in communication management. Most senior politicians do not have financial means at their disposal that would allow them to conduct opinion polls, let alone systematically gather data to gauge attitudes toward their respective public persona. Without this research data there is no guiding rod for communicators to design strategies and appropriate techniques. Without research one can only speculate about public expectations and make random assumptions about features that define an ideal reputation. Therefore, any attempt to design strategy and tactics becomes arbitrary guesswork.

When reviewing these findings against the backdrop of current literature on political public relations (2.2.3.) the following theoretical implication imposes itself: In politics the concept of *strategic PR* is viable under certain circumstances only. These are encountered when specific resources are available which I described throughout chapter 5 and defined more specifically in the categories that feature in chart (5.4./1.). Even if communications managers can count on the resources I deemed critical for a planned approach led by objectives, a strategic pathway may still not fully be pursued and practiced, unless the volatility and dynamism that characterises the environment in a political scenario is attenuated. We may therefore as a result of my empirical findings want to distinguish in future PR writing between a predominantly *tactical variant of political PR* on the one hand and a *resource based political PR* on the other. Only the latter possesses the potential to be strategic in the sense outlined in 2.8. as it draws on resources that help PR managers operate. Hence the current academic debate on whether political PR tends to be persuasive or dialogic in nature may thus become secondary to a more immediate need to clarify if the communication operators and politicians they are associated with are in a position to pursue a communications agenda which is guided by research based objectives. Any subsequent debate on political PR in general and personality PR in a political

setting more specifically, will need to distinguish if the resources variant or the tactical variant of political PR is focused on. In other words theory building and theory testing cannot be conducted in political communication management, unless the two PR variants are acknowledged and it is recognised how they differ from each other.

Thus the central theoretical inference we may draw from my findings is the understanding that political PR as a unified concept does not exist. Indeed, any attempt to encapsulate the practice in a single comprehensive definition may not do justice to the discipline. Instead, insights gained from analysing empirical data demand a profile that mirrors variations of a strategic and a tactical approach – depending on the resources available and the level of external volatility. Variants of political PR as defined in line with the categories introduced in chart 5.4.1. may be of consequence to practitioners' professional profiles and thus directly affect communication management practice. Of similar importance: The notion of two variants in political PR also requires a redefinition of theoretical discourse - agenda setting, symmetrical and a-symmetrical communications and not least notions about the power exerted by spin represent but a few concepts whose application in political PR may need reconsideration. In other words theoretical and empirical research that assists in explaining and interpreting communications activities in politics may arrive at conclusions that are contingent on the PR variant – resource based or tactical – the researcher chooses to explore. This places onus on the academic to clarify and justify which PR variant – or variation thereof - is investigated. In brief: Political PR managers' modus operandi hinges on which of the two variants the case under investigation is leaning towards. A similar distinction is not entirely new in PR and scholarly texts do juxtapose practitioners as technicians and managers. However, these terms are reflective of an undisputed differentiation in job specifications that is linked to hierarchy levels and seniority in an organisation with managers in charge of strategy and technicians responsible for operating tools and implementing ideas. The distinction I am proposing to make in political PR is pointing at a phenomenon that is more covert, not accounted for by levels of hierarchy, not generally admitted by practitioners and overlooked by academic writers. While



resource based political PR and tactical political PR are both found across the industry, the two variants I identified fundamentally define practice in different ways and thus affect outcomes. If academic writers strive to increase their understanding of reality and managerial practice and provide explanations for the phenomena they encounter, the concept of resource based political PR and tactical political PR may prove to be a useful interpretative model.

This study's empirical focus was limited to the UK. Yet, it is reasonable to ask if and to what degree the findings cast a light on political reputation management in other party systems. As my work generated two distinct sets of results, the answer to this question is also twofold.

On the one hand I came up with a predictive model whose categories derive from insight into the practice of reputation management. This model is applicable to diverse political settings and institutional arrangements. What will obviously change is the categories' empirical content which is to reflect the respective political environment and culture the model is used within.

On the other hand there is the empirical data generated in a series of interviews in the course of this study which led me to infer that reputation management practice in the UK is not in line with mainstream theoretical perspectives of strategic communication management. Clearly, this is a conclusion that can and should not be generalised across political, institutional and cultural boundaries. A range of factors impinges on communications practice and may thus significantly alter findings: The financial resources available to communicators in the USA for instance would pay for more comprehensive research into audiences. Arguably, it could also attract a broader range of highly qualified staff. Those two factors alone may impact on input and outcome both of agenda setting and issue management processes. In Germany, to provide just one more example, where elected political party officials traditionally have a stronger say on policy and strategy issues than either in the UK or the USA, the room for external political advisors to manoeuvre and position the politician is potentially more limited. In brief, variables that permit, foster or hinder strategic planning are bound to be different from what one encounters in the UK. These distinctions between

party systems, political culture and institutional arrangements constitute variables future research will need to take account of when replicating or expanding this study. Some of these points are taken up in the following discussion on suggested further research.

### **5.5. Further research**

In terms of approaches, professionalism and quality, considerable differences in political communication management activities have become evident. Data gathered in this study allows us to speculate that these distinctions are mainly but perhaps not exclusively due to the different level of resources available to the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, other cabinet ministers as well as members of the opposition. The design and methodology of this study does not permit to contrast communications practice engaged in by individual members of government with that pursued in opposition. A further study would need to look into these cases separately and explore correlations more systematically.

It transpired in the course of this study that resources are at the heart of effective communications. It may therefore be worth quantifying the impact of finances and staff numbers on the quality of personal reputation management. As the availability of resources may vary between different political systems a comparative study would be required to look into funding levels and relate them to communication results. Such an investigation may contrast phenomena of communications practice on the one hand and financial as well as personnel resources provided by the state and through private donors on the other. Thus my supposition that funding and staffing have direct repercussions on communications management quality and the strategic approach taken may either be confirmed or falsified. In other words, a comparative quantitative study would be an opportunity to apply and test the model of personal reputation management I have introduced above.

A point I did not touch upon in this study is the party political and ideological backdrop that ties politicians to certain convictions and a collective record

which in turn may limit their scope of action and affect the positioning of their public persona. A prominent role for the political party may be a constraint on politicians' choice of messages and the range of policies they can be expected to pursue. Yet political cultures vary from country to country and a political party's function as an ideological sounding board for candidates and incumbents is developed to different degrees depending on a political system's traditions and conventions. It would arguably be a limiting factor for a politician's public persona if policies, timing and messages were less conditioned by managerial processes and instead be more tightly handled by party officials. One may wonder how much freedom this leaves to the expert communicator to design images and work on a politician's public perception.

When in American presidential election campaigns the concept of a war room as an operative centre outside the traditional party structure was pioneered and copied by the German Social Democrats in their 1998 general elections, questions were raised as to who took strategic and managerial decisions in an election campaign. These examples suggest that the balance of power between elected party officials and outside experts is not stable, but dynamic and subject to variations from election to election and in between countries.

It would therefore be worth applying the model of personal reputation management in a comparison between distinct national and therefore cultural settings as an opportunity to explore how changes at the macro level of political culture impact on the micro level of political and communication management.

Since the variables I have developed and used in my model of personal reputation management are the result of an exploration, they are tentative and subject to debate. The qualitative and quantitative studies suggested above would help corroborate and develop this tentative model by adding new categories, prioritising the existing ones and taking off those whose relevance cannot be confirmed.

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<b>7. Appendix</b>	<b>01</b>
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## 7.1. List of Interviewees

Below the interviewee's name I list the date, time as well as the duration of the interview. Rather than providing a biographical summary I indicate the respondents' professional position held either at the time of the interview or at some point in the past to justify their expert status. The interviewee's professional position on the day of the interview is given as this may have affected responses given.

Jason Beattie

When the interview took place Beattie held a position as deputy political editor for *The Daily Mirror*. The interview took place on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 and ran for 45 minutes.

Mark Davies

Davies served Justice Secretary Jack Straw as special advisor for media relations. Since he left politics he has taken up a job with the charity *Rethink*. We met for a 55 minute interview on March 16<sup>th</sup> 2011.

George Eustice

Eustice was the Conservative Party's Head of Press under Michael Howard's and David Cameron's leaderships until in 2008 he took over an Associate Directorship at the PR agency *Portland Communications*. When we met for a 40 minute interview on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2011 Eustice was a Member of Parliament.

Shane Greer

I interviewed Shane Greer for 45 minutes on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2011. At the time he was Executive Editor for the magazine *Total Politics*.

Richard Hazlewood

At the time of the interview the former journalist and BBC correspondent Hazlewood served as special advisor for media relations to the Secretary of State for Wales. Previously, he had been in charge of media relations for the Conservative Party in Wales. We met on August 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 for a 36 minute interview.

David Hill

Hill was Prime Minister Blair's last director of communications, a position previously held by Alastair Campbell. When I interviewed him for 50 minutes on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2011 he worked as communication manager for the London based *Bell Pottinger Group*.

Nicholas Jones

Jones is an author and retired former journalist and Westminster correspondent for the BBC, who I met for a 95 minute interview on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

Tom Kelly

Kelly was employed as a civil servant and official spokesperson of Prime Minister Tony Blair until the hand-over of office to Gordon Brown. When I met Kelly on May 19<sup>th</sup> 2011 for a 38 minute interview he worked for the Financial Services Authority as head of communications.

Martin Kettle

I met Martin Kettle in his role as associate editor of *The Guardian* newspaper. On June 15<sup>th</sup> 2011 he agreed to an interview that lasted 51 minutes.

Spencer Livermore

Livermore worked as special advisor to Prime Minister Gordon Brown both on policy and communication related subjects. At the time of his resignation 2008 he was the Prime Minister's Director of Strategy. When I met him on February 21<sup>st</sup> 2011 for a 45 minute interview he held a post as director of strategy with the communications consultancy *Blue Rubicon* in London.

Henry Macrory

I interviewed Macrory in his function as Head of Press at Conservative Party headquarters. He had previously been media relations officer at 10 Downing Street. He met me for 30 minutes on February 17<sup>th</sup> 2011.

Damian McBride

McBride at the time of our interview worked as teacher at a school in the London suburb Finchley. Previously he had served as special advisor for media relations to Gordon Brown both as Chancellor and Prime Minister. We met on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011 and talked for an hour.

Andrew Neather

Neather works as a journalist for the *Evening Standard*. Formerly he had been staff on the Strategic Communications Unit in the Prime Minister's office and previous to that speechwriter at the Home Office. We met on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2011 for a 46 minute interview.

Lance Price

When I met Lance Price he had retired from politics and worked as a free-lance author and columnist. In 1998 he had been appointed the Prime Minister's deputy director of communications. Between 2000 and 2001 he headed the Labour Party's office of communications. I met him on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 for a 50 minute interview.

Paul Richards

Richards is a former special advisor to Labour Cabinet Ministers Hazel Blears and Patricia Hewitt. He now works as a political consultant and agreed to a 40 minute interview on February 17<sup>th</sup>. 2011.

Simon Redfern

Redfern was instrumental as social media strategist in David Miliband's Labour Party leadership contest. He now manages the PR consultancy *Pagefield* and agreed to meet me on June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011 for an interview which lasted 33 minutes.

Kiran Stacey

Stacey is a political correspondent for the *Financial Times*. We met on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 for a 33 minute interview.

Lord Wilfrid Stevenson of Balmacara

Lord Stevenson is a Member of the House of Lords. He previously worked as Director of the Smith Institute as well as advisor and speechwriter to Prime Minister Gordon Brown. We met on March, 9<sup>th</sup> 2011 for a 25 minute interview.

Zoë Thorogood

At the time of our conversation Ms Thorogood was about to leave her position as head of broadcasting at Conservative Party headquarters. We talked on February 17<sup>th</sup> for 10 minutes.

Katie Waring

When I met Katie Waring on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2011 for a 28 minute interview she held a position as special advisor for media relations to Business Secretary Vince Cable.

Nick Wood

Wood is a former press secretary to the Conservative Party leaders Ian Duncan Smith and William Hague. At the time of our 45 minute interview on July 29<sup>th</sup> 2011 he was Chief Executive at the PR company *Media Intelligence Partners*.

## **7.2. Discussion guide**

This discussion guide provided me with suggestions for themes I could take up during the conversation. The questions listed are indicative only and I was aware that any attempt on my part to lead and direct the conversation would have affected the research results. The patterns of argument and relationships between concepts I was looking for were to originate from respondents' professional experience. Given this premise I prepared a guideline of themed question categories which reflect issues that in the course of the literature review were identified as relevant in the context of reputation management in politics. As some areas of interest were satisfactorily clarified in the earlier interviews while other aspects and angles opened up in the course of the interview series, the discussion guide evolved over time in recognition of respondents' views and suggestions. To illustrate this evolutionary process I provide the initial version and a subsequent updated draft.

### **7.2.1. Initial discussion guide (January 28<sup>th</sup> 2011)**

#### Category 1

Initially it was being attempted to establish a mutual understanding that the issue we were to talk about was regarded relevant by the interviewee. Through this approach I hoped to ascertain if hypothetically management by objectives was feasible. This may not be the case unless the relevance of a politician's reputation is recognised.

- 1. Can you tell me of cases that illustrate if and to what degree reputation may be relevant to the career of individual politicians?*
- 2. In the context of your experience with political communication, how did you learn that reputation can make a difference in a politician's career?*

#### Category 2

This question allowed me to appreciate if the respondent was familiar with the subject area and has been dealing with and thinking about this issue in the past. The answer gives an indication as to the balance of external and internal factors,

events and managerial decisions that in the practitioner's may help shape reputation. These features are largely grounded in theoretical concepts of reputation. However, I expected that the specific perspective held by my sample of respondents may at some point devise new angles to the current definition. In other words, it was likely we would arrive at alternative notions of reputation which the literature review has not been able to evidence.

*3. What makes the reputation of a politician change – grow, alter or decline?*

Category 3

The following six questions address the first stages of a managerial process, namely the research phase. It is explored if, how and to what extent the political communication manager collects data that informs subsequent public relations activities. Implicitly this leads us to understand if practitioners could conceivably be engaged in a planning process at all since communication management literature unanimously is suggesting that research of internal properties (i.e. the candidate's features), external expectations as well as current and anticipated issues are a prerequisite for any formal planning procedure.

- 4. Do communication advisors know their client's (politician's) perceived reputation? If so, how?*
- 5. Are communication advisors aware what the ideal reputation for a politician should be like and which factors this depends on? If so, why? If not, why?*
- 6. How do communications advisors find out about the desired reputation and what guides their judgement?*
- 7. Do communication advisors know what a particular public expect a politician to be like? How? If not, why?*
- 8. Are you aware that communications advisors differentiate between distinct publics/ segments of society and if so how? If not, why?*
- 9. Do communication advisors identify which issues may now or in future affect their client's reputation? If so, how? If not, why not?*

Category 4

This category of questions was intended to establish if reputation change is subject to strategic planning. Whether a management plan is only seen as an abstract notion or a more concrete and tangible guideline for action was to be unearthed through questions 10 and 11. Questions 12 and 14 link back to issues of resources and expertise needed for communication management and circumstances that aid or impede the development of reputation. Both thoughts had been raised in the preceding literature review.

- 10. Once communications advisors have decided that reputation is important and how a politician should be perceived – which subsequent steps are taken?*
- 11. What do communications advisors mean by planned/ strategic communication?*
  - a. (Does a plan exist in writing?)*
- 12. What resources are needed – and which are available - to work effectively on a politician's reputation? In terms of*
  - a. Personnel*
  - b. Expertise (e.g. external support, specialised agencies etc.)*
  - c. Finances*
  - d. Technology*
- 13. Why and in which circumstances are any of those resources available (or not) to communications advisors? (e.g. in government or in opposition)*
- 14. Are their collateral factors you can think of that facilitate or impede the management of a politician's reputation?*

#### Category 5

This category of questions has been drawn up with an expectation to identify the strategic relevance ascribed to planned reputation management. We established in the literature review that public relations advice in order to have a strategic impact – in contrast to being a technical function - has to have access to the highest echelons of an organisation. These questions should reveal how PR advice is integrated within a politician's organisation – office or department that is.

15. *Under which circumstances is the communication advisor's advice on personal reputation and research findings related to it discussed with and by the politician in person?*
16. *Who – in terms of their hierarchical and functional position – discusses and defines the intended reputation and is involved in the planning process? Can you give an example?*
17. *Who – in terms of their hierarchical and functional position - implements PR activities to achieve reputation change? Can you give an example?*

#### Category 6

I now turned to specific themes that may be seen as potentially beneficial or detrimental to the efforts of managing a politician's reputation. This category of questions reflects the suggestion that the management of a politicians' reputation is impacted by their political agenda, current performance and past record and party affiliation.

18. *How is reputation related to the political agenda? How do political advisors deal with conflicts between a politician's political agenda and intended reputation?*
19. *How is reputation related to political performance/ record? Or in other words, do communication advisors take into account the political record of a politician whose reputation they manage?*
20. *How do party affiliation related to an individual's reputation? Or in other words, how do communication advisors deal with the party affiliation of a politician whose reputation they manage? (i.e. if there is a conflict between the two, how does one limit the options for the other)*

#### Category 7

These questions deal with the strategic planning of a communication campaign. Questions were meant to cast light on respondents' understanding of a strategy, unveil arrangements of their approach to planning and how this squares with the long term perspective that the literature review suggests needs to be adopted when reputation change is to be achieved.



21. *Once it is internally agreed what the politician's reputation should be like, what do communications advisors do next?*
22. *Can you think of distinct strategic approaches that have been discussed by communication advisors with an intention to affect reputation? Can you think of examples where advisors specifically decide to take an emotional or rational, text based or visual etc. approach?*
23. *Can you think of examples that illustrate how long it takes to build up or alter a politician's reputation?*

#### Category 8

This category has two themes which both contribute towards understanding the sophistication and flexibility of planned reputation management. It had been suggested in the literature review that unpredictable events were potentially disruptive and had the potential to derail a planned process. In order to gauge not only the quality and flexibility but also the consistency of a planned management process it would be relevant to see how communications advisors appreciate the impact of unpredictable external factors.

Likewise, the literature review reminded us that adverse effects on the agreed reputation management strategy may also be exerted by forces that operate from within the politician's organisation. These may not necessarily be the politician's office or department but for instance the political party and its decision making bodies both at constituent and national level as well as party activists who may pursue an agenda of their own.

24. *How do communication advisors judge the relevance of internal interests (within the bureaucracy, political party, other peer groups and organisations) and their impact on a politician's communications activities and policies? Can you think of an example?*
25. *If you think of reputation management for a politician - to what degree and with which frequency are communications advisors' activities shaped by non-anticipated positive or negative events - leaks, policy failures, resignations, media allegations etc. - rather than their intended long term strategy? Can you give an example?*

*26. When you think of the reputation management for a politician – how do you think a communication advisor's time budget is balanced between pursuing planned communication strategies on the one hand and responding to unexpected issues, events, news on the other? Can you give an example?*

#### Category 9

This last section once again reflects a key element of standard communication management processes. Evaluation should occur both continually to monitor if and how progress is being made and in a final instance in order to ascertain if objectives have been met.

*27. How do communications advisors find out if their reputation management activities are delivering desired results? Can you give an example?*

*28. What do you do if at some stage you find out that key publics' perception of a politician's reputation is not as had been intended?*

*29. What can go wrong in planned communication management and how do communication advisors find out? Can you give an example?*

#### Category 10

This final question is an opportunity for respondents to add any information they believe may be relevant in the context of reputation management.

*30. Could you please think of cases in the past you have dealt with: What makes reputation management for a politician succeed or fail and how do you deal with these challenges? This is an opportunity for respondents to add any information they believe is relevant in the context of reputation management.*

### **7.2.2. Evolved discussion guide (14.3.2011)**

1. Does the image of political communication impact on the effectiveness of communication advisors, i.e. when political communication is defamed as spinning and a dark art, do people become more critical of how political messages are being presented and public appearances are stage managed?

2. How do you describe the relationship between politicians and journalists? Do reporters try and force their agenda on a politician by making it clear that a particular content and style is more likely to gain news coverage? If this does happen, how do communication advisors deal with it?
3. How difficult is it for communication advisors to gain access to the politician they are working for and what are the implications of access for the quality of communication management.
4. I get the impression that identical events may have a ruinous effect on some politicians while they leave the reputation of others untainted. In other words: Why is specific behaviour without consequences for some politicians while deemed unacceptable and career ending for others?
5. Would you agree that the centralised control over the communication management process becomes more difficult to maintain the longer the Prime Minister's tenure lasts?
6. Spencer Livermore talks about the need for communication managers to have the most powerful agenda which implies the control over what is being discussed in the media and the narrative of key events. How do you think communication managers gain a powerful agenda, how do they control (or fail to control) the news agenda of the day?
7. Is policy content an appropriate instrument to shape a politician's perception? How would it, for instance, reflect on Cameron's image as a decisive leader if he decided go ahead with plans of NHS reform?
8. How would cabinet ministers and oppositional candidates find out about their public perception and how they are being seen by specific publics?

9. How do communication advisors keep track of what key publics think of a politician? Have there been occasions when you or colleagues were surprised by data on a politician's public perception that differed markedly from your initial hunch?
10. What kind of distinct features and qualities do voters, party activists, MPs and journalist want to see in a politician? How do these – at times perhaps conflicting – expectations condition your work?
11. Are you aware if the electorate favours different qualities in politicians who serve in different functions (leader of the opposition as opposed to health secretary)?
12. Is there polling evidence that would explicitly suggest which personality traits, qualities and strengths a candidate's public persona should represent?
13. How would communication advisors present different features in a politician's public persona and agenda in line with specific expectations of the audience? Or would you argue that message and demeanour are consistent and don't vary when addressing trade union leaders on one day and bankers on another?
14. Do political leaders invite or accept frank discussions with their media advisors. Are they presented the critical and even negative data from polls, do they genuinely discuss these findings and take findings and suggestions on board?
15. In your view which is the decisive public that makes or breaks a politician's reputation – the disgruntled MPs, grassroots in the party, hostile journalists, opinion leaders in business and the arts, the electorate in marginal seats? Where does the opportunity and threat to your reputation reside and how do you deal with it?

16. How does the increasing intensity of media coverage impact on communication strategy and management?
17. How do you judge the value of publicly portraying a politician's private and family life as a means to present a candidate's or incumbent's strengths? And why do some media advisors resort to this instrument while others don't.
18. What is the rationale for media stunts - appearance on radio shows, quizzes, life style interviews for glossy magazines? Are they an attempt to satisfy journalists' requests, part of a plan to present the politician in a specific way or a mere part to gain and maintain media presence?
19. To what degree do politicians and advisors pick the media they want to communicate with, to what degree can specific media demand access?
20. Assuming the electorate or the media is not too keen for the country to be led by a cerebral intellectual and more fond of a head of government with a street fighter's credentials – do advisors in this case try and change public expectations or do they attempt to alter and adapt the candidate's public perception?
21. To what extent is the politician we get to know in the media an authentic individual rather than an artificial creature designed by advisors and the media? Why does it vary by degrees?
22. How do you know where to draw the line: How much management of the public persona is accepted and approved of by the public, indeed expected, and where is the line beyond which it is seen as cynical and spinning?
23. If the public persona and an individual's identity are not the same, how far can one diverge from the other? And what happens if the gap widens?

24. In which circumstances are an alternation or a complete make-over of the politician's public persona feasible, what militates against it, how is it done and how much time is needed for it to take effect?
25. The popularity of and support for celebrities appears to be unrelated to their abilities, performance, quality or expertise. Can the same be said at times of politicians?
26. If you want a politician to appear determined, decisive...or perhaps compassionate, because you found this is what key publics expect, would you then systematically try and tailor his or her public appearances / public engagements to match this profile? Would you also influence the timing of policies to this end?
27. Are the photo opportunities and public appearances decided on spontaneously with short notice or do they fit into a grid that prescribes the images and associations you like to create in the long run?
28. When do you know or get a sense of what tomorrow's political agenda will be – once you watched today's evening news, read tomorrow's newspapers talked to and asked journalists on the phone? Or, alternatively, can you predict headlines because many of them are the result of your media management and agenda setting work?
29. To what degree is the grid of policy announcements and public appearances that is kept by No. 10 linked to and reflective of the Prime Minister's qualities and values that are meant to be communicated?
30. What changes reputation – skilful media design or unpredictable external events?
31. How much of the public persona is created through strategic advice and how much is due to adroit media handling, e.g. avoidance of gaffes?

32. How closely is the quality of political communication management related to the politician's ability and willingness to accept and act on advice?
33. In a nutshell: What do leaders try to achieve with party conference speeches?
34. The public's judgement of the budget partially makes or breaks the Chancellor's reputation. To what degree can long term, active media relations attenuate reactions and consequences?
35. Do the constraints and demands of foreign policy on the Prime Minister sap the media managers' power of media management or do they offer them an extra tool?
36. What other non-media related constraints are planned communication management activities subjected to in the Prime Minister's office?
37. Journalists a times claim that policies – immigration, energy policy, benefit fraud, euro – would not be tackled if it was hard to explain and win public support for them. In which circumstances would this be the case and in which does this not apply?
38. Do advisors with a marketing background have a different approach to presenting a politician as opposed to advisors with a record in journalism?
39. Is the quality of the communication team and the quality of media advice given better in parties and ministries that are on their way to power or newly in power and still popular, while by contrast this quality is waning in parties and with politicians who are on their way out or whose fortunes look dire?
40. Newly elected politicians are fairly popular, though at some stage this support is waning. What do you do to keep it up?

41. How do you learn about the effectiveness of your reputation management activities? Do journalists tell you informally if a narrative is credible or not?
42. Gordon Brown's economic and financial policy was being applauded for a decade. Yet the public thought so little of him as Prime Minister. Did his advisors understand why?
43. What does the quality of professional practice in political reputation management hinge on: The politician, the political party, the level of party political competitiveness or any other factor?
44. How much space to manoeuvre do Cabinet Ministers have if they want to develop their own narrative and establish their own public persona?
45. Party leaders, minister and even more so the Prime Minister, receive regular advice on a range of issues, from inside and outside the party or ministerial structure. How difficult is it for media managers to keep the steady flow of external advice consistent and in line with a politician's long term communication strategy?
46. Is the potential disconnect between those who in personal discussions with the Prime Minister or party leader define strategy for an intended public perception / public persona on the one hand and those staff who manage the day to day media relations on the other seen as problematic and how is this issue being addressed?
47. When and why would a politician decide to take up advice offered by a media officer? In which cases is it more likely that media advice is ignored or turned down?

### **7.3. Coded Interview Data**

This grid serves to identify, organise and integrate arguments made and themes raised in conversations with respondents. This process refers to the methodological



procedure I describe in section 3.17.1 as open coding. It treats information given by Andrew Neather, Damian McBride, David Hill, George Eustice, Henry Macrory, Jason Beattie, Lance Price, Lord Stevenson, Mark Davies, Martin Kettle, Nicholas Jones, Paul Richards, Shane Greer, Spencer Livermore, Tom Kelly, Simon Redfern, Kiran Stacey, Katie Waring, Nick Wood, Richard Hazlewood, and Zoe Thorogood

Upon request the individual interview transcripts are available from the author.

<b>List of Codes</b>
1. The importance of reputation in politics
2. News Reporting
3. Limited research
4. Events
5. Contingency planning
6. Past record
7. Reputation management over time
8. Controlling the agenda
9. Planning / organisation
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise
12. Ideal reputation
13. Timing and issues
14. Policies and reputation
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken
16. Politician's communicative style
17. Internal structure – organising work
18. Identity and image

19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists	
21. Positioning the public persona	
22. Media and communications management	
23. Staff – resources	
Code: 1. The importance of reputation in politics	
<p><b>Summary of quote:</b> A politicians' party political promotion can be contingent on their reputation</p>	<p><b>Respondent and page number in the original interview transcript:</b> McBride 3</p>
<p><b>Quote as transcribed:</b> Yeah sometimes you can get surprised by this. I mean you'll have the opportunity to check this with Spencer but I remember the sense of surprise that we had inside the Brown camp when, er, not that Brown was going to express any preference for a deputy leadership candidate. You know, the six people running for the deputy leadership when he was sort of going to be the only candidate for the leadership. Um, and... But he asked Spencer to organise some public, um, focus groups on what they thought of the different candidates. And it was partly to know that, you know, if push came to shove and there was sort of little strings that could be pulled in one direction or another well who did we want? You know, who was the public going to support? And also it flowed from that that depending who became the deputy leader how popular would they be with the public? What sort of public role did you want to give them? What role within the Cabinet did you want to give them?</p> <p>(,,)</p> <p>Now there's a tendency to read too much into these and certainly that didn't have any real impact. I think at the time, you know, it was still our vague preference; it was certainly the preference of the Sun Newspaper that they wanted Alan Johnson to win the deputy leadership. Um, but with Spencer certainly it made him think we want Harriet because we are going to have a problem with Gordon and women and we need something to</p>	

counterbalance that. You know, so that made Spencer sort of think, right we want Harriet.

1. The importance of reputation in politics

In government everything is about reputation

Hill, 5

Events can always knock you off course, but the key thing is that you don't look ... You see, you don't look at it in terms of reputation. In government you don't. You, you are ... I mean, government is all about reputation management, reputation creation, reputation development. I mean, it is all about reputation, everything's all about reputation. But, erm, what you are doing, as I say, is constantly saying, on a day to day basis we need to be able to manage this.

1. The importance of reputation in politics

Importance of a politician's reputation

Hill, 11

And it's the thing that explains this extraordinary phenomenon that happens all over the world in elections. When why should a series of people in Newcastle and a series of people in Cornwall vote the same way this time compared to this time. What's happened? They're living in a totally different world ... And that's because the public, there are things that determine the way the public think. And a lot of them are ones that the politicians never even think about. They never even think about what it is that they like about them or they don't like about them. But those are ... these people who are living in Cornwall and Newcastle have a great number of things in common, and one of the things they have in common is probably, when they see a given thing, they will probably respond the same way to it. That's got nothing to do with their politics. That's to do with how they view people.

1. The importance of reputation in politics

Politicians' careers are dependent on communications advice in their relationship with the media	Eustice, 5
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There's a misconception out there that communications is this sort of evil industry that's about distorting and manipulating things, and sure, it can be. But actually, left to their own devices the British media will ... puff people up and tear them down. And there's only two types of story. One is somebody coming from nowhere and being amazing. The other is that everything they touch is a disaster and goes backwards. And I've always had this view, that whereas a journalist, their job is to get tomorrow's headline, to betray confidences, to quite often run stories that are deeply unfair on politicians, and to tear people down because it's a good new story

(...)

The communications advisor, their job is to decide that they really believe this person would be a good prime minister, stick with them through thick and thin and to loyally advance their interests when the chips are down as well as when things are going, er, well. And that's actually a very important ... support role that all, erm, all politicians, and particularly party leaders and prime ministers need.

(...)

So I don't ... I've never come across anyone who would disregard communications, 'cos they know that erm, it's very easy for them to be unfairly misrepresented in the media and that things can go wrong, completely unnecessarily because the media have run like a flock of sheep in a particular direction that nobody had quite foreseen beforehand. Whereas actually, if they'd done a little bit of thought it could have been foreseen and you could have presented a particular announcement differently.

1. The importance of reputation in politics

The conservatives party does not do reputation management	Macrory, 1
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So (do we manage ) an individual politician's personal reputation-, I mean the short answer is I would say no, not from-, not by-, not in this party anyway but feel free to sort of interject whenever you like.

1. The importance of reputation in politics

Cons politicians do media training, but not reputation management	Macrory, 1
<p>There seems to be so much concern about how individual politicians, candidates or the party leader are perceived by the public and, as there is this concern and this preoccupation, I was thinking whether one would try to influence the way an individual is being seen and perceived and understood (personal values and personality and so forth).</p> <p>Well, I'm just trying to think where that kind of thing does happen. A lot of politicians have media training. Now that will-, they will go to a specialist (there are plenty of them around in Westminster) who will sort of tell them how to project themselves better, you know, the usual standard media training in how to do a TV interview but that is a pretty small part of the job. That is something that you might do as you sort of go up the political ladder. By the time you've become a shadow minister or a minister, you might be expected to do a bit of media training. Possibly a new MP might be-, do a bit of media training but it's not something that's sort of particularly personal to him. It's something that a lot of people will be expected to do so they can get the message across better</p>	
1. The importance of reputation management	
The decision not to give image advice to Cameron may have been caused by memories of failed image management in past years (Hague)	Macrory, 2
<p>Well, of course but I mean you see he was himself a modern man. The party recognised that. As far as I know, the sort of advice he would receive would be-, he makes a keynote speech and beforehand he might rehearse that speech in a big hall with about four or five people and they would say, well, why don't you do it this way or why don't you put your hands around this or why don't you do something with your voice but I think that's common to all politicians. I mean I think that always happens with speech training but nobody as far as I know has ever gone to David Cameron and said you should wear these clothes, you should have your hair done like that. I mean he does his hair in all sorts of different ways and it just happens to be what he-, the way he combs it in the morning or if he's in a rush and it's very funny because the press say, oh, he's changed his hairstyle. We've had lots of stories about Cameron changing his hairstyle and it's gone-, the parting's gone to the left,</p>	

it's gone to the right, he's swept it back, there's a bit of a bald patch showing through. It's all random. Nobody is saying to David Cameron this is how you should do your hair. Nobody says to him these are the kinds of clothes you should wear. He's his own man. Nobody says to him you should change your accent a bit. I mean Thatcher of course did have speech training but that wasn't-, that was to sort of-, well, that was-, they got her to lower her voice a bit because she did sound a bit shrill. Hague-, there was an attempt to change his image. That is quite true. He was-, they tried to make him look younger by getting him to wear a baseball cap and going off to the Notting Hill Carnival and drinking drinks out of a coconut or something. That was a disaster. In fact, that's a good point. There was a big-, there was an effort to change Hague's image and to make him to-, make him appeal to younger people and it backfired horribly. He never really recovered from those early attempts to get him to wear jeans and look different from what he really was. So I think probably we learned from that lesson. I can't think of a single instance where anybody would have said to Cameron, you know, let's work on your image. He is what he is. You look puzzled.

(...)

I was saying the last time I could think when we tried to sort of influence someone's image was probably William Hague and the baseball cap and the-, which was a disaster.

#### 1. The importance of reputation management

Interfering with a politician's image is risky and may fail	Macrory, 3
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Cameron was the man who was there already who-, people spotted his potential and I can't think of any way in which he's changed in the way he projects himself and the way he is from eight years ago. He's exactly the same person to me and nobody has tried to interfere with what he is because that would probably be a disaster.

1. The importance of reputation management	
Reputation management for politicians new phenomenon	Price, 1
Erm, I think it's (reputation management) something that relatively recently politicians have started to take a lot more seriously.	
1. The importance of reputation in politics	
Reputation management and image control has been taking place extensively	Richards, 9
Yes, he did the polling for Neil Kinnock. I mean Kinnock is a good example of all the stuff we're talking about. 25 years ago, you know, or 20 years ago (yes, 25 years ago) he was surrounded by people telling him how to behave and how to speak and how to dress in stripy ties and double breasted suits and red roses and all that stuff but I mean Gould is one of the people who Patricia Hewitt interestingly-, and Mandelson famously tried to mould him. I spoke at the beginning about this play called the Absence of War which explores all of those issues around how you package a leader and the idea of the play is that you package him to the point where there's nothing left and they can't then find their own voice anymore. Kinnock walked out of the performance by the way. He didn't like it and he didn't recognise what the playwright had done with him and he didn't think it was fair and he disappeared with a face like thunder I'm told from the National Theatre but, you know, it's an interesting debate to be had, isn't it, what happens if you over-package and if you-	
1. The importance of reputation management	
Communicators are fully aware of the importance of reputation for politicians	Jones, 5
it is it's in the DNA of political strategists in this country that the presentation of the party leader, how that party leader is going to be presented in the media is of critical importance and that you decide early on. I mean I have been and have followed discussions, you know,	



within parties and within trade unions and within the whole sort of machinery in the lifetime that I've spent and it is always this discussion about oh well of course so and so is much better because he's going to appeal meaning that we the strategists think that this is the right man because we can present him in a way which will appeal to people through the media. I accept entirely that it's a media confection-, concoction but that's what they've got to do and they know that that's what they've got to do because if they can't do that they haven't got a hope and it was of course

1. The importance of reputation management

Politicians know that they have to present their public persona through media channels	Jones, 1
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There's no doubt in my mind that because of the intensity of media scrutiny and the sensationalism of the British press and the way it deals with politicians or treats them as personalities that the politicians of Britain have to be aware of their media persona

1. The importance of reputation management

The reputation of a politician is consciously used to achieve communication objectives	4,5
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Well, there's certainly a lot of research on-, well, I mean there's no doubt about it I mean that New Labour had lots of significant pollster people like Philip Gould who undoubtedly were spot on in saying (and of course this is the route of the sort of seismic split in the Labour party) that Blair was the man you could present to the public as a family man who was going to win a general election whereas Brown the prickly, political obsessive who hadn't even got a girlfriend who was a mad, you know, mad mad sort of bachelor man who spoke political gobbledygook, he would never ever win the leadership election so-, and would never win a general election. (is there a specific ideal public persona for each office and position in politics and what are the differences between them?) So I mean there was no doubt about it, you know, they knew-, they meaning the advisors knew who you could successfully present and who you couldn't present and I mean that undoubtedly was the case with Cameron you see. What-, why the Conservatives suddenly allied themselves to Cameron was because in the long build up to the Tory leadership campaign he was the

guy, you know, who was-, I mean he twigged very early on the importance of playing the media (and I use that word) over his disabled son and allowing media access because he knew that that was going to give him public confidence or public acceptance on the question of whether or not he supported the national health service so I mean that was a calculated thing and that happened long before he was even elected party leader and that was one of the reasons why when the chips were down the Tories went for him. He was a young man, a young family man. He had a disabled child. He went along to national

Page 5

Health hospitals. This was part of his image. He's up against David Davies you see who's a very prickly man who doesn't-, whose wife won't even come out and be filmed with him because she hates all this political stuff who's up answering the phone at his-, in his constituency in Yorkshire. You had Kenneth Clarke, who's sort of flamboyant but everybody knows he's a potentially very lazy man who just likes his drink and going to jazz and could you really see him running the country. So you suddenly see how right from the very start people who were backing Cameron knew what they were doing.

1. The importance of reputation

The selection of the party leader is a calculated decision with the intention to retain or regain parliamentary majority

Jones, 12

If you look at the Conservatives and the choice of Cameron that was a very calculated thing. He had the young modernisers in the party backing him. You see Kenneth Clarke was standing. David Davies was standing. David Davies is this sort of prickly man who's been perceived as a bit of a right winger but he was a sort of political loner, you know. He was never seen with his wife. It was all very peculiar. Kenneth Clarke had this reputation for being a bit lazy and a bit of a layabout. And you know, there was no doubt about it that the modernisers all began to, you know, get close to Cameron because they suddenly saw and this is what's so important you see, this tribe who form, they are the tribe that are going to get the power; they're the people who are going to be the political advisors, the people in power and that was what was so significant about the Blair operation and why the journalists jumped ship from the jobs because they thought blimey, we're-, you know, we're going to be in office, we're going to be in power, Labour's going to be back after 18 years

and it was the same with the Tories. They-, all of these young Tories thought my word we can win it with Cameron.

1 The importance of reputation

Sometimes the parties select party leaders in the expectation that they hold together the party, rather than win majorities

Jones, 12

Well, what it is it's the power battle between the traditionalists in the party (I mean if we take the left, it's the traditional left) that they couldn't stomach someone who would present themselves as a moderniser who might be straying from the true path of socialism. So when the party after the 1970-, sorry, after the '79 election when they appoint Foot, I mean the party was on the floor and partly they needed someone to hold the line and the party feels more comfortable even though they know that perhaps they're not going to win an election with that person, they feel more comfortable and secure with someone who is trusted and who is known and there's no doubt in my mind that that is exactly why they choose-, chose Michael Howard.

1. The importance of reputation

The effectiveness of reputation varies from politician to politician

Greer, 1

Very basically to start with, um to what degree does the reputation of an individual politician, um shape and make or break the career? Does it? Or is that...

I think it does, um but I think, you know, it's not as simple as there being a good reputation or a bad reputation. I think the reputation that some politicians have that helps make them successful, if another politician had that reputation, um, they wouldn't necessarily be successful. Or equally some politician's reputations will allow them to get away with things that for other politicians with a different reputation would end up destroying their career. I mean the classic example I think there is probably, um Boris Johnson or indeed say Silvio Berlusconi. But like Boris Johnson versus a David Cameron, versus an Ed Miliband where Boris is able to go off message, he's able to do silly things like insult entire towns or cities, um, indeed one could think of the issue with, um, say extra marital affairs. In some sense where it's kind of expected and it's part of that caricature that, that... their reputation in a

sense. Like who they are and what they are, it can allow them to get away with more.

1. The importance of reputation management

<p>1.To get to the top in politics individuals have to be concerned with their reputation</p> <p>2. some politicians are very policy focused, others are very image focused</p>	<p>Livermore, 8</p>
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So all these discussions then, you know, probably reflect and echo some of what, what we mention now. The ... the politician you talk about is ... would be part of ... it's not decided for him and then advice is given, he says, "Yes" or "No." He's part of these discussions or – Erm –

Or does it ... there's analogy of saying, "Oh, I decide policies do think about all the, you know, how I'm presented the way I'm not" or is that part of –

I think it's the, you know, of the politicians that I've seen, it varies. Erm, someone like ... when I worked directly with Gordon Brown, I'd say he was pretty hands-on on everything, likewise Tony Blair. I mean I ... I worked on a few campaigns in the US where a candidate had absolutely no, erm, involvement at all in, in the image, and that was you know, I suppose it's probably more advisor driven politics in the US, but you know, the advisor has absolutely decided, right, this is going to be your image, this is how we're going to project you. And he would say, "Okay, as long as you get me elected do what you like." Erm, and that's ... I don't think that's quite where the culture in ... in the UK is yet. Erm, but there are some politicians who are very policy focused. There are some politicians who are very image focused. So there's always a mixture but the ones I've worked with have been ... and I guess to get to the top you have to care about it all in a way so, erm.

1. The importance of reputation

<p>More efforts placed on image of party rather than leader's image</p>	<p>Wood, 1</p>
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Um, I mean if you go back into the cuttings files, look back, you'll see there was a... you'll see stories under the heading of project Hague, are you familiar with this?

Mm, well what's been in the news that the Conservatives looked at the image of the nasty Conservatives and they tried to reconnect with the people and the country.

Yeah that's something that Cameron in particular has focused on. Um, that is slightly... that's more the image of the party though than the image of the individual politician.

1. The importance of reputation

More effort into managing the image of the party than the leader's

Wood, 1

What is the base for a cabinet theme park and that is what he referred to all the time when they come up with William Hague. Even Henry Macrory tells me that was wrong, that it tried and it backfired, it didn't work out.

Yes I mean I wasn't there when they did all that, um, they done that in the first sort of two years. I'm not quite sure and I mean I think you have to distinguish though between image of a party and image of an individual. Um, certainly and I would say Cameron has focused a lot, both in opposition and in government on the image of the Conservative Party

2. News reporting

New news outlets and 24 hour news brought about more comprehensive reputation management

Neather, 1

an it's certainly true that there have been efforts to manage politicians' reputations and image for probably hundreds of years. I guess I would locate at least a shift in terms of the way that task was thought about really from the late 90s, with the advent of New Labour. The first time in Britain that this term 'spin doctor' was recognised – it was an American term originally – the first time we heard it here was, I would have said, in the sort of mid 90s and it really came out of... even though... so, you had this sort of generation of spin doctors being led by Alastair Campbell, most obviously. I mean all it meant was [0:02:08.7] press officer, really, and of course there had been quite famous in that role for... I mean, Bernhard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher, Joe Haines, Edward Wilson, you know, progressive

operators. I think something did change, though, which was really more to do with trying to sort of total management of [0:02:32.8] and it coincided obviously with the growth, you know, number of news outlets with the advent of 24 hour TV news, which just hadn't... didn't have to deal with before, with the growth of the Internet – same deal, obviously. So, I mean if you're talking specifically in terms of reputation of politicians, you know, that's... you are trying to spin that on a much more comprehensive and continuous basis than you were before

## 2. News reporting

Sometimes journalists dictate communication advisors how the politician is presented in terms of style and content

McBride, 15

Um, two others which turned out very badly, um, like a magazine interview which Spencer and I were heavily involved in, we probably blame each other for the outcome. Um, but... where he was interviewed, um, and we were told beforehand... well we were given a quick run through of some of the questions they might ask and one of them was, "Do you prefer the Arctic Monkeys or James Blunt?" And when we said that to Gordon, Gordon clearly didn't have a clue who either of them were. Um, and then we explained and then he sort of vaguely knew, James Blunt is that guy that was a soldier and he sings songs that Gordon thought were crap. The Arctic Monkeys got a can't stand listening to them, knew who they were but, you know. And he said, "Well I'm not going to say I like either of them." And they said, "But you've got to say either or these are the kind of questions they're going to ask you." You know, "Y fronts or boxer shorts." And his reaction to that 15 was, when he was asked that question, was totally authentic, totally right which was, um, "I'm not a fan of either of them but if I had to choose I'd chose the loud one because at least it would wake you up in the morning. So I would choose the Arctic Monkeys." Headline becomes, "Gordon Brown says he wakes up every morning to the Arctic Monkeys." Nightmare, big milestone round the neck, it was always being quoted at us as an example of Gordon being inauthentic and this kind of thing.

Um, now at some stage either myself or Spencer should have thought the very fact that he's standing there feeling incredibly uncomfortable about being asked, "Do you wear Y fronts or boxer shorts?" Should mean that actually we say, "We're not doing this." Or we do an interview and we say, "But you're not going to ask silly questions about Y fronts or boxer shorts." Um, but you almost were saying to him you have to do that, that's part of

<p>doing this. You know, Bill Clinton had to do it, you have to do it, it's what politicians have to do. And if there's one big regret I have about that whole period it was sort of, you know, Gordon feeling like he had to do things or he had to say certain things and not just think for himself, not being free to think for himself and that's a big regret of mine. But lots of those mistakes were totally self-inflicted</p>	
<p>2 News reporting</p>	
<p>The more the public is suspicious of communicators, the more difficult the communication</p>	<p>Hill 1</p>
<p>I think that's a very fair question. I mean, the fact of the matter is that the more that the communicators, the more that the communicators are the subject of suspicion, the more that the media use the communicators as a weapon with which to hit the politicians, which they often do, the more difficult the communication process is, for the reasons I think you're pointing at.</p>	
<p>2. News reporting</p>	
<p>At times the communication advisors are having a bad reputation themselves</p>	<p>Hill 2</p>
<p>... And then of course the moment that the bubble burst and that we found ourselves in a position 2 when these great communicators were in fact fiendish spinners who were leading us up the path, who were sprinkling dust on stories so that they could change them and get you to write things that you didn't really want to write but they were practising the dark arts.</p> <p>I mean, this all of course came later, and it came later when it no longer was considered reasonable to be in awe of, or even complimentary of the communications operation.</p>	
<p>2. News reporting</p>	
<p>The effectiveness of communication advisors depends on how political communication is perceived in the media</p>	<p>Hill, 2</p>

Er, so I think a very pertinent question and that's absolutely right. Where you stand in the minds of the media in terms of your communications capacity has a big effect on your capacity to communicate, and so therefore, the media decided that they didn't like Blair, so they didn't want to listen to anything that he said during the last couple of years that he was Prime Minister. And erm ... and it was very, very difficult to break through ... I know cash ... cash for honours created a problem for us on a daily basis, but overarching the fact was that when the media decided they're not interested in being communicated then there's not much you can do about it.

2. News reporting

Politicians communicate messages that are wrongly decoded by the media – with our without intention

Eustice, 1

Erm, I remember with David Cameron, the 'hug a hoody' phrase. That was actually ... he never said 'hug a hoody'. It was simply a speech he was delivering which was focusing on the importance of tackling the causes of crime and it was something that he felt strongly about, that if you want to stop young people becoming offenders, ending up in prison, then you had to show much more sort of love and support to them when they were growing up as children. It's actually a very uncontroversial thing to say. But this was then totally misrepresented in the press as being 'hug a hoody', suggesting that actually he was, he was advocating us being soft on criminals, which he wasn't. What he was actually saying is hug a child before they become a hoody, is really what he was saying

2. News reporting

Journalists follow trends to write a politician up or down

Eustice, 7

one What happens with party members and parliamentary party in particular is that when the chips are down and things go wrong, as they always do in politics, you'll always go through a stage where the, the media get bored of saying the same story over and over again. So they don't want to keep saying that it's ever onwards and upwards for this new Tory leader. At some point they need to have what I would call a down trend, where everything you touch backfires and goes wrong, and the media will always report it that



way.	
2. News reporting	
When journalists start writing the party leader down, internal communication and party management is deployed to keep members and MPs supportive	Eustice, 7
<p>Yes. Now the problem is, when that happens (journalists write the leader down) that has a knock on effect on the polls, your own parliamentary colleagues, because they don't understand how the media works and that this is just a natural cycle, instead will think, 'we are making a mess of things', when actually all that's really happening is you're in a down trend. Erm, and you will have ... you'll have party management issues as a result of that. And sometimes you do have to tack a little bit, you know, in order to keep your own people supportive and onside. And you know there are times ... but it's a question of tacking a bit but not too far, otherwise you don't have any direction left.</p>	
2. News reporting	
Blair and his communicators judged initially their communications success by evaluating media content	Price, 10
<p>You can do that but then I think that is one of the mistakes that we made is that we judged success certainly in the first term, the first four years Blair was Prime Minister, we judged success by good headlines and applause and all the rest of it. Erm, that was a, that was a terrible mistake and I think Blair came to recognise that, I think eventually, somewhat reluctantly, Alistair Campbell came to recognise that.</p>	
2. News reporting	
Initially Blair's communicators believed that good headlines were evidence for right decisions	Price, 10

And he said basically we got it right on policy and strategy, we got it wrong on statement, and we did. Erm, because of course you want good headlines and you want to, erm ... but the idea that today's good headlines, erm, spell-, they are evidence of the right decisions and the right strategic decisions being made for the future is a big mistake, and the idea that you should be chasing approbation and good headlines on a daily basis is manifestly a mistake. But of course you don't just sort of roll over and let the media do whatever they want and take all the criticism, erm, so it's a, it's a very fine balance. Err, but the mistake that people-, the mistaken interpretation of the mistakes that labour made would be to say that communications don't matter at all, that all you have to do is get the policy right...

That is the....

And that communications will follow.

2. News reporting

Predicting media response is always fully considered

Stevenson , 2

How would you ... how would you know, would it be, erm, intuitive feeling, would it be grounded in what you find in newspapers, would you do research to find out how people would ideally want the Prime Minister or Chancellor to be ...

Yes. All of those, yes. Important, you know, part of media management. I mean, as I say, this is ... we live in a media moderated world. You can't ... you couldn't now do this without full consideration of how the press would respond, both particularly and in general to you as a person, how the media will investigate all these things. So ... I don't think you can disentangle them. They're part of everyday activity in politics

2. News reporting

Strong personalisation of politics in British newspapers

Jones, 5

I mean I use the 'real world' but what is the real world, the world through which the newspapers portray British politics and of course what we have to remember you see is you must remember the way in which-, the way that the newspapers personalise politics feeds

through to the rest of the British media in a way that doesn't happen in other countries.	
2. News reporting	
the intensity of personality PR in the UK is cause by the intensity of media coverage	Jones, 1
There's no doubt in my mind and that has been the case for some time that politicians have gone out of their way to find ways of presenting themselves to the public because of course they know that the intensity of the media here is so important because of course, you know, we have massive newspaper sales; television and radio, we've got more, you know, we've got 1,000 television stations here in the UK and Germany's got just 200 so just think of the intensity of the media in Britain	
2. News reporting	
Political communications managers face highly competitive media	Jones,17
I mean they knew what they were doing and that, I think, that to me is the characteristic of political reporting in this country, it is... we are very sharp at it. I'm not saying other countries aren't sharp at it but I'm just saying it's the nest here to a degree that we don't see in other countries because of this highly competitive media environment that we live in.	
2. News reporting	
It is challenging for politicians in the UK to face, deal with and survive the media	Jones, 18
You know, London is a financial centre, it's also a centre for sensationalising news and that's why the politicians look to the British... because of course if you can survive politically in the British press, if you can get your case across in the British press that's worth watching. And I mean that's.... why did the American spin doctors of Clinton were so full of admiration of Blair in the way he could manage, for example, the Kosovo conflict and why of course they wanted British help when it came to Iraq.	

2. News reporting	
The media may favour or oppose a party/leader if they recognise that political change sells better to their customers/audiences	Jones, 15
<p>And the media... you see you've got to look at it from the media's point of view. We, the journalists, in 1997 were voting, I say, C for change. We weren't voting because we wanted a Conservative Government but the media wanted a change of government. Why did we want a change of government? Well we'd have a new government, we'd have new ministers, everything would be thrown up and down, it would be great for the media. So in 1997 when it came to voting in the general election, the media were voting Labour for change because we wanted change. We were willing them to win and the same was the case with Cameron, much of the media was willing. I mean I know we had all sorts of problems with the televised debates but I'm just giving you the general narrative. The general narrative in the run up to the 2010 election was that we wanted change, that we wanted to change. Now those are very, very important narratives once they get going you see and they do build up a momentum. And that's undoubtedly, in my opinion, was the case. I mean if we look back at the election in 2001, 2005 nobody thought they were going to... certainly in 2001 there was going to be any rocking of the boat, I mean it was... Blair was still in a commanding position and it was just to reinstate him</p>	
2 News reporting	
Media's support for an opposition to a party/politician follows a cycle	Jones, 13
<p>You're now getting back to one of the traits of the British media which is that, you know, we love to build somebody up and, you know, when the pack turns, when the dogs turn, you know, we go after them</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Now if you look at Cameron, there's no doubt about it and, if you look at Blair, I mean Blair yes was caricatured but when the chips were down newspapers like the Sun and the whole of the Times (the Murdoch press with 37% of the papers), they didn't rat on Blair. Yes, they</p>	

reported his difficulties but they didn't really put the boot in in the way that they put the boot in finally to Gordon Brown in the final year of his premiership. You just look at the way that Brown was-, took the rap, you know, for the failure to provide equipment for our boys. He was the person who was failing to crack down on MPs' abuses over pay, you know. Brown had the whole lot thrown at him in those final two years in a way that Blair also did at the end of his reign but Blair, look how long, you know, the Blair decade lasted. I mean for most of the Blair decade, it was fine. Now with Thatcher too; for most of the Thatcher decade, it was glory all the way. It wasn't until that final period when she started to overreach herself over Europe, over the poll tax; it wasn't until that final phase that she finally lost it. But once the pack turns you see, once the narrative begins in the media-, it turned against Thatcher, it turned against Blair, it turned against Brown. Once that-

2. News reporting

The media's agenda and attitudes towards a politician is determined by the public opinion they detect and reflect	Jones, 14
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The moment comes when-, I mean the media reflect a lot of public opinion. I mean we reflect the sort of bar room chatter and the-, and again, this is what's so important about the significance of the British newspapers in setting the agenda. They begin to see through Blair.

The loyalties are no longer as strong as they were perhaps with the proprietors. The proprietors, you know, the editors sort of sense that all's not well. They certainly sensed that with Margaret Thatcher, that she'd overreached herself on the poll tax, you know, that imposing it on Scotland had been a mistake. With Blair, I mean it was evident that, you know, he was making and had made mistakes over Iraq because, you know, the whole thing just fell apart at the end. With Brown, it fell apart. So the moment-, I mean the tipping point's hard to determine but the narrative does change at a certain point. I mean it can happen quite dramatically with new leaders in the sense that, you know, you mentioned Ian Duncan Smith. Well, the narrative changed very quickly with him that he was a disaster

2. News reporting

Newspapers make up their mind on which candidate they want to support	Jones, 16
<p>I think mainly the papers were very keen. A lot of the papers were keen to rescue him (Cameron; after the unsuccessful first debate during the 2010) and they got the narrative going, the Mail and the Sun. Hang on a minute, just one thing I've got to check, one second. You alright? Want to use the loo or anything?</p> <p>I'm fine thank you.</p> <p>So who decided? Well I mean there was no doubt about it that a lot of the media were willing Cameron to win, certainly the Tory supporting press.</p>	
2. News reporting	
The newspapers' framing of a politician is contingent upon interaction with other – including online - media	Jones, 16
<p>. So the media were undoubtedly willing, the papers were willing Cameron to win and of course what was so significant about those (leadership) debates which again was very, very significant is the interaction of the different media platforms in Britain.</p>	
2. News reporting	
Social media/user generated content is framing opinion and making inroads on TV's ability to do so.	Jones, 15
<p>But of course, television was, at that moment the (leadership) debates were on, is in control. But of course already the internet, the social networking is being influenced. People are twittering and saying, "Who's doing well? What's happening?"</p>	
2. News reporting	

Newspapers refer to information – opinion polling data – generated online	Jones, 15
<p>The newspapers are simultaneously running instant opinion polls. Now we never, ever had instant opinion polls before in a British general election. But now the pollsters have got, um programmes where they can link people up, people are linked up on the internet, they can balance their sample or their people taking part in the poll to be a representative sample.</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>So you've got instant opinion polls and what was so fantastic, you see, was that on the first one the papers were picking up and the papers of course now refer to what these online polls and what these Twitter and everybody else is saying. I mean that's what the journalists now referred to, "Oh everyone's saying on Twitter this or that" you see because it's an instant form of reaction.</p>	
2. News reporting	
Sometimes the media wants a hero	Waring,1
<p>If you, if you relate it to your boss that's brilliant. If you say in specific circumstances the questions you would like to keep general or relate it to another example you're aware of.</p> <p>I think with Vince, with Vince Cable, he had been saying things that, erm, he thought were very important in the run up to the recession about things that were wrong with the economy that at the time people didn't really want to engage with. They didn't care that there was a housing bubble because everyone was making money out of it, etc., and actually then when we had the recession his body of work meant that he had a sort of, had built a reputation sort of quietly and then he could really point-, and he could really honestly say "I was the only leading politician that was really pointing to this. So his kind of integrity and personal principles had guided him to say things that perhaps weren't popular at the time meant that he had got something to point to, erm, in terms of he'd built his reputation in the shadows, as it were, and then when the light was shined on it everybody was like "Oh yes, of course." And it was useful because people wanted to write somebody into the story that had seen it and to blame other people at the time. So I think that he had to take some of the credit for that, and then the other part would be, you know, the media wanted a hero or they wanted to have a figure like that, so it was kind of a bit of everything I think in that</p>	

example.

### 3. Limited research

For the preparation of most routine speeches only a general understanding of the audience's expectation is available

Neather, 2

You aware, particularly when you prepare a... when you write a speech, the draft for it, when you rewrite it, it is addressed at a specific audience?

Yeah.

To what degree are you aware of what the expectations of that audience is, with regard to that politician?

Well, I mean you...

Is that your gut feeling? You're...

You have to be aware of that and you have to be aware of what people are expecting to hear. I would say that, to be honest, most of the speeches that most politicians give are pretty unglamorous, pretty much work-a-day, week in-week out... you know, the average Junior Minister in a big Whitehall department probably gives on average, I don't know, maybe two speeches a week and the same for Home Office Ministers, alright? So, the Home Office – I calculated it – I was writing about 100 speeches a year, or editing 100 speeches a year, and of those probably 80% were for the Home Secretary. You had five other Ministers there, all doing speeches at the same rate or even more – most of those speeches I didn't have any involvement in. It was more just that they[0:05:19.6] and they were churned out by officials and for specialist professional audiences. You're talking to Police Superintendent or Deputy Prison Governors or Victim Support or any of these dozens and dozens of stakeholders, just in that one policy area. And to a degree the expectations of the audience are fairly straightforward, straight up and down, I mean they know the issue that you're talking about, you know, they expect to get some sort of feel for the politician, as a politician, as a person, or at least for their existing idea of who they are to be reinforced or whatever. I think for the big political... I didn't actually do political speeches as such, I had [0:06:16.2] but in theory I wasn't allowed because I was a Civil Servant. That's a more serious area in terms of image and reputation and...

### 3. Limited research



Only limited research is available for cabinet ministers	Neather, 2
<p>reason why I'm asking this is that over the course of the interviews I have been doing that I've come across what I wasn't as much aware before that as outside Downing Street 10 there are very, very limited or no resources at all to do research into... to do any research into what perception, understanding is there as a politician. I think it was Alan Johnson, when they were very much surprised how he was being seen and...</p> <p>Yeah, yeah. No, there's no polling. Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I mean there's... the only polling of that kind that would be done would be done by the party... well, the party could choose to spend money doing that and then there are the regular polls produced in newspapers and so on by YouGov but they, in terms of the information they give for individual politicians, it's very limited. I mean people are being asked for their sort of confidence level of a politician, or even just a recognition. I mean there's an awful of [0:07:31.7] that nobody's ever heard of, you know, [0:07:35.5] frankly. But... so, no, you can't really gauge it much and I guess ultimately [0:07:48.0] I</p>	
3. Limited research	
Communicators may be surprised when their instinctive judgement of reputation may be at odds with research findings	McBride, 3,4
<p>And what was interesting, er, what was fascinating to me that came back from that, was that we all assume that Alan Johnson would come out incredibly well, be this sort of man of the people, people would really like him. And as Spencer will tell you the focus group reaction to him was terrible, awful and I mean he didn't understand this at all and it came down to very basic things like people didn't like his suits and they thought that his suits because they were sort of... tended to be a bit shiny and grey that made him look like a car salesman. And that as a result of that, um, er, that's the way they perceived his patter. So what seemed to us like being ordinary bloke, you know, talks people's language, um, er, you know, even just his accent being a bit... sounded like a born and bred Londoner. Um, because of this image that people had of him, you know, occasionally wearing sunglasses, shiny suits, that sort of patter became, you know, "This is a guy I wouldn't buy a used car from" to use the famous phrase. Um, and that was really, really fascinating.</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Now at the same time you got that same focus group saying, "Harriet Harmon is very</p>	

popular with women.” People liked the fact that you've got a strong, confident woman who, um, speaks to their needs, er and speaks up for their views. At the same time she is very unpopular with, er, men and, you know, and intuitively we could have guessed that, you could have guessed that.

(...)

With Alan Johnson you wouldn't have necessarily guessed the thing that we found out about him. Um, and then it was interesting with some of the others that, um, they were just written off. You know, people like Hilary Benn that were regarded as really strong, up and coming people were just written off by these focus groups.

(...)

Um, and Philip Gould used to also poll attitudes about Gordon. Now he didn't do that at our request, um, he didn't do it, um...

Um, so now our view was the Philip- Gould used to do that because, um he wanted something to wave in our faces, so in Gordon's face in particular.

Um, so our view was that Gordon used to... Philip Gould used to do this and pass it on to Tony Blair and Alistair Campbell and others so they had something to wave at Gordon saying, you know, “You think you're going to come in and be this sort of great big breath of fresh air and, um, that it's going to be easy for you to take over from Tony. Actually look what the public actually think about you.” and, er that was quite eye opening for us and in some ways that was the first that we really knew about sort of some of the image issues that Gordon carried with him.

### 3. Limited research

As part of Brown's preparation to become party leader and PM his staff started conducting polls to find out about public perception

McBride, 5

Now that prompted, um, Spencer will be able to tell you more about this, but it prompted Gordon to open a side of his own polling operation which was done by the Labour Party, but, you know, it was all part of preparation for him becoming leader. But he would start getting Spencer and, um, Deborah Mattinson, er, to do polling which was related to him and his person and his image and, um, it's a bit chicken and egg but that coincided with him then starting to consult lots more people about, “Well what should I do about some of these image problems that I have?” And you know, “Are there things that I should be doing that I'm not doing at the moment?” He started listen to a much wider range of people.

3. Limited research	
Polling to gauge public perception was done because it was “What the leader does”	McBride, 5
So, yes, that's something that we did, um, consistently because almost the assumption was, you should be doing that, um, if that's what the leader is expected to do because Tony Blair has been doing it all these years and why not.	
3. Limited research	
For lack of own opinion polling operations Brown’s staff at No 11 was keen to use newspapers’ polling material	McBride, 5
At the same time, you know we were always fascinated by, um, er... newspapers would do polls and occasionally wouldn’t use all the material they got off them if they didn't find it particularly interesting and would then send them to us. Um, so when they do these things like sort of, “What kind of dog do you think about when you think of Gordon Brown? What kind of car do you think about?” And we’d always just find those things interesting. I don't think it ever, certainly from my point of view, it didn't ever change much but maybe that's the next stage of the process we’ll go onto.	
3. Limited research	
Normal cabinet ministers don’t do opinion polling for lack of finances	McBride 5
Um, but certainly yes those things were consistently, um measured when it came to it. I’d never heard of any Cabinet Minister at low level doing sort of testing about their reputation or image because who would... where would the funding come from to do that?	
3. Limited research	

Chancellor Brown's staff only had anecdotal notion of what the public persona most favoured by publics might be	McBride, 6
<p>Do you think there is, in the view of staff and advisors, there is the benchmark of the absolutely ideal image for a politician? Or does that vary in specific circumstances?</p> <p>Well, um, I think there probably is an ideal. Um, and you know, at different times you'd go about sort of plucking bits from people and saying, "If only we had... if only they were as good on the couch as so and so." good on the couch, good on the sofa meaning, you know, good on the GMTV when they're in people's sort of lounges, living rooms in the morning. And you would go around sort of thinking oh so and so is really good and if only we had this, this and this. Um, and you know, there never being a politician that seemed to have all those things all at once. Um, and you know, part of that would be things that the public don't see like personal integrity, are they going to get themselves into trouble at some point? Are they the sort of person that will, um, you know, make sure that you don't wake up with a scandal one morning?</p>	
3. Limited research	
Financial resources are critical for audience research	McBride, 11
financial resources as you say do come into it to some degree in that, you know, as I say there were only certain people that were able to know what the public really thought about them	
3. Limited research	
Public responses to Brown's statements and behaviour were tracked by his communications advisors in order to learn and guide future action	McBride 12, 13
<p>Now she had her eye on a headline which was, "He opens up for the first time about the loss of his child." I was in constant negotiations where I was saying, "Kay, he will not do that, he doesn't want to do it, please don't put us in that position." Um, she eventually got to the end of a long day and saw an opening where he talked about charity work that kind of</p>	

thing and she said, "But you do a lot of charity work for, um, you know, a lot of your charity work is related to the charities of Jennifer." And I think she... and I was giving her a look and she was almost giving me a look back like hold on I haven't said anything, I haven't said anything, I'm just talking about charity work. And Gordon himself sort of opened up, just did it himself, did it quite naturally, got a tear in the eye and that became the story, "Gordon Brown cries as he talks about his... the baby that he lost."

Now that was Gordon opening up, I was quite surprised because I thought, well I knew he wouldn't want to speak about that and he could have got out of that. You know, he could have just sort of said... he said to me afterwards, "Why did she ask about that? So I said, "Well she didn't, you know, you sort of lent into it a bit." And whatever the reason was for that, you know, there might have just been end of a long day he talks about it or it might have been that he thought well maybe this is something I need to talk about at some stage. Um, whatever the reason for it, er that went out, big headlines, it was the, um, splash in the Sun the next day and sort of all across Sky. And Spencer came to me two days later and said, "We must never, ever do anything like that ever again." And I said, "Why?" and he said, "The focus groups, I've never seen them more negative about Gordon, they absolutely hated it." Um, and I was astonished because I thought apart from anything else it was just sort of... you couldn't sort of fault it as a very authentic, him speaking honestly about the situation and he said, "It flew totally in the face of everything they think about Gordon, they didn't know why he was doing it, they didn't know why he was suddenly talking about this issue and they just hated it." And I said, "What was the..." And he said, "You know, we can't put any sort of gloss on this, they hated it, he must never do that again and we must always make sure there's never any opportunity for him to do that again."

### 3. Limited research

Brown's communications advisors tried to link research findings to communications techniques and communications content

McBride 15,16

At the time... this goes back to the feedback we were getting at the time from Spencer and Deborah's focus groups were things like people don't even know he's got children, you know. Er, large numbers of women don't think that he understands women at all. Um, you know, people not realising that... people when they were being asked what, um, interests

do you think he has outside of, er politics? Would say he probably enjoys reading history books, you know and that's all people thought about him. Um, and so there was this desire in some ways to show the real Gordon and to show that this is a guy that sort of, you know, he's quite an ordinary guy and he likes football and he likes X Factor and that kind of thing. Because that was the reality, the trouble is that presenting that in any sort of coherent, authentic way is very difficult.

3. Limited research

Resources needed for successful communications management – polling	Hill, 8
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You do, I mean, you do. You need ... as you say, you've got to have the polling, you've got to know what's going on, you've got to know whether anybody's listening to you, so that you do need to have. Erm, you need to have a good, effective policy unit of people. This isn't just a Prime Minister, you can put this into anybody who's running a big department. They've got to know whether anyone's listening to what you're saying.

3. Limited research

Importance of research	Hill, 9
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But it's ... it's ... and then the other thing ... and then, of course, the other thing is always with ... with the interviews, and that's not ... that's not necessarily different people, but ... but you have to have good research, which is different from policy. You've got to have good research, because what you've actually got to do is to be in a situation where at any given moment you have people upon whom you rely who can say ... the key things you need to remember about this. Because you know that what the journalists will be doing, the journalists will have this whole array of material, and they have quotes that you did about twenty-five years ago, and that's their stock in trade. So you have to be able to match that. So you've got to have the research and you've got to have the policy people.

3. Limited research	
Limited role of communications research	Hill, 12
. And ... this also leads you to that ... all those questions about ... about ... about pressure ... about, erm, focus groups, because the perception of focus groups is that a focus group is there to decide what your policy should be. Whereas in fact, a focus group is to find out if anybody understands what your policy is. That's your ... that's the real purpose of running a focus group	
3. Limited research	
What publics think of a politician is systematically researched	Eustice, 1
Well, when it comes to what the public actually think about them, erm, that's researched. You do focus group work, you would do some polling, and from that you would gauge an understanding of what the public think they are, think they stand for. And that's got to be done very objectively and scientifically. That's not a gut feeling thing, that's something that you have to do the research so you understand it.	
3. Limited research	
In the case of Cameron as opposition leader the communications strategy was preceded by a situation analysis	Eustice, 3
So what we did with David Cameron was exhaustively work out what it is that he really stood for, what it is that was really needed to come after Blairism, so where had Blairism and New Labour gone wrong, what had been their failures and shortcomings, and how did we identify an agenda that rang true and was consistent with David Cameron's personality, but which also went beyond where Labour were.	
3. Limited research	

Communications research for politicians is based on the individual's intentions and through research adapted to fit specific audiences	Eustice, 3,4
<p>It was actually much more ... I'm a great believer ... we did stick to this very early on. I'm a great believer that you should decide what it is you're trying to do and communicate and then the research you do is to work out how you communicate it and how you get people to understand what you're trying to achieve. Where things go wrong is if you do focus groups to see what people want to hear and then tell them what they want to hear.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Michael Howard allowed his policies to be shaped by focus groups results	Eustice, 4
<p>And erm, lots of politicians have got this wrong, so if you do a focus group and they say they care most about immigration and they're worried about immigration, there's a lot of temptation to say right, well, let's just talk about immigration. That's what Michael Howard did, and if you do that, the problem is that when people hear you talk about immigration they don't like it so much, because they don't like ... they feel that you're telling them what you want to hear, and it doesn't always work.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Cameron as leader of the opposition defined his policies and then allowed research to adapt the presentational issues	Eustice, 4
<p>Whereas if you're trying ... if you work out what you're trying to say and then identify the right language, approach, the right way to depict that, you're in much, much stronger territory. And I think erm ... I think David Cameron did it quite well on a number of fronts, where he just approached issues slightly differently. He was able to say on, on immigration, erm, you know, that there was a legitimate issue here around the pressure that it puts on public services. And it was something ... he was able to do that because, erm, he wasn't against immigrants per se. He was able to communicate a very different way on Welfare reform. Rather than saying we're going to cut benefits to scroungers, he would always communicate it as saying, it's a waste of life potential to have these people stuck in Welfare dependency, it keeps them trapped in poverty and we need to move on from that.</p>	



So he found a different way, counterintuitive way of articulating conservative messages, particularly I think on Welfare, so that it wasn't about getting scroungers. Instead it was about helping those people that are unfairly caricatured as scroungers, helping them get free from the poverty trap.

3. Limited research

Communicators intuitively know who is going to be successful in politics and who is likely to fail	Macrory, 2,3
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Well, I mean I'm a great believer that, you know, at the right time a good political party will suddenly pop out the right leader. I mean I spotted Cameron. I've worked for the party for about ten years and I was working here when-, I started working here when Ian Duncan Smith was page 3 the leader and I mean I have to say even on the tape recorded I think a lot of us realised that it was unlikely he was ever going to lead the Conservative Party into a victory at a general election and then about eight years ago when I used to work for Oliver Letwin who was then the Shadow Home Secretary, I met a young man called David Cameron who was a young back bencher aged about 35 and he turned up at one of Oliver Letwin's meetings. He was a very junior member of the team. I'd never met him and my first thought was he's the guy; this is the guy who's going to do it. He had humour. He was good looking. He was very-, obviously very intelligent, very sharp, absolutely on the ball. He looked modern and I thought he's got it.

3. Limited research

Selection of leading politicians in the Cons Party is contingent on MP's intuitive understanding of constituency preferences	Macrory, 3
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How would you find out? You have a feeling probably for what the party wants because you're embedded in it but how you do you find out about-

Well, I mean you see because it's not the party machine that will create the leader. It is-, it's-, in our party it is MPs who presumably know something about what their constituents

want. So-, and of course the Labour Party has an even wider base from which to get their leader but with us it is just MPs and we have to rely on MPs to know roughly sort of what the mood is and of course with Cameron in fact initially MPs wanted David Davies but that changed over the months and I suspect a lot of MPs picked up a mood that it was time to-, for a change and to skip a generation which was something that Michael Howard had previously obviously spotted. He'd-, he set up the sort of machinery for Cameron and Osborne to suddenly come to the forefront and I think gradually that-, MPs picked up a mood that the party leader needed to skip a generation and have a more modern person but that-, but Cameron wasn't created for that.

### 3. Limited research

Focus groups commissioned by the Cons party may explore politicians' reputation	Macrory, 6
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Well, I've never been to one of these focus groups but I've seen the results of the focus groups and to me it is possibly-, there might be instances (I'm just not aware of any) where they might sort of hone in on somebody's personality and say-, I mean there are things done where you compare politicians to a make of car and that's been done so you say what kind of car do you think Gordon Brown is, what kind of car do you think-, and then-, but that would then be used not to sort of say to David Cameron you came out as a Jaguar and the party would prefer it if you were a Rover or something. It would just-, we would use it for own propaganda purposes to sort of say the public thinks David Cameron is a-, whereas they think Gordon Brown or Miliband is just a ploddy old Morris Minor. Do you know what I mean?

(...)

Yes, that's right and focus groups seem to find out what people do think about certain things so you have a rough idea. I mean I imagine the forest sell-off possibly was focus groups. It's the sort of thing we would have done but it wouldn't have been about personality. So I'm not-, sorry, I'm not giving you an inch on this, am I? Let me just see-, I'll get Zoë in to see if she disagrees.

### 3. Limited research

Limited research	Stacey, 3,4
<p>With regard to the resources I talked to someone who worked for Jack Straw and they said, "We never knew what people were, there were journalists who did polls and they would give us some data they wouldn't publish and we were grateful to get this because we never had the resources, the money to do any of that."</p> <p>Well they should be doing that through party head office. I mean I've always thought they were constantly polling.</p> <p>Not individuals.</p> <p>No the party would, not the individuals. The individuals wouldn't carry out their own polling I wouldn't have thought. I mean in Number 10 for example they have Andrew Cooper who used to be at Populous so he's doing all their polling, he's constantly polling.</p>	
3. Limited research	
The images he presented were shaped by Blair's gut feeling for what is right for the people	Price, 2
<p>Mm. Was it ... Was that led by you understanding of what the electorate, or core [0:04:49.8], or key groups in society expected in terms of image, and, and, and that's both content and presentational style? Was that based on a gut feeling on intuition? Was it ... what was it led by?</p> <p>Erm, it was, it was based on a gut feeling, yes, erm, which was his instinct of where the broad mass of British people were going.</p>	
3. Limited research	
The image of Blair was shaped by a gut feeling but needed then be confirmed through research	Price, 2
<p>. And so although it was based on a gut feeling and it was, erm, err, it was calculating, it was also informed in that he then made a great deal of use of focus groups and, err, was very keen to find out what people like Philip Gould, who might want to speak to, could tell him about what the public was thinking. So although he had a gut sense of where the</p>	

country was, he wanted to have that confirmed.	
3. Limited research	
Research may be allowed to change images that had been shaped by a gut feeling	Price, 2
<p>Erm, so although he (Blair) did have very strong gut feelings (about his public persona) he was willing to be dissuaded from them.</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Erm, and on another example that I was there, genetically modified foods. I mean I think his gut instinct on that was right and he was very committed to it, but all the polling evidence, everything told him that the British public were somewhere else on that, and they were scared of it and they didn't think it was right, so he changed his position.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Views of Important policy decisions Blair had tested through research	Price, 2
<p>If he was thinking of going out on a limb somewhere, if he was thinking of trying to push the boundaries, for example, over the European Union and the Euro, which he did, he would do a lot of polling to see how that might go down.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Success needs a well-researched environment and goals based on instincts	Price, 4
<p>But good politics has to be instinctive as well as researched and it has to be a mixture of erm well informed, err, good information about what the public wants and also your own instincts about where you want to go.</p>	
3. Limited research	

In day to day communications research cannot make up for a lack of intuition.	Price, 5
<p>Erm, and up to a point that worked. But that showed the limits of how research based, erm, communications, how effective it can be. It can only take you so far, but if you don't get it yourself when you are [0.17.58.7] when you are suddenly in a live interview, when something happens, you don't instinctively have a sense of how you can translate what you have been told into an immediate response to something, it won't work.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Reputation management is improved by learning from historical examples	Price, 9
<p>But, well, you can learn from history and you can see what has worked and what hasn't worked. And Blair feared Portillo becoming leader of the conservative party because he could see that Portillo understood those things in the same way that Blair understood them. And Blair recognised the qualities in Cameron when he became leader because again he could see ... and there was a little bit of flattery of course because both of those politicians, conservative politicians, were emulating a lot of what Blair had done. So he liked to see that it sort of confirmed his own self-belief to see these people doing kind of what he had done. But they were doing it because he had shown how successful it could be and how it could be translated into electoral success on a massive scale</p>	
3. Limited research	
Intuition rather than research to understand publics' expectation	Davies, 3
<p>h. I'm more interested in, in what you're doing on the communications side.  Right. So how did I deal with ... how did I deal with defending his reputation or with, with the wider policy [0:06:48.4].  How did you get a sense of what your key public expected him to be like?  Okay.  Is it what journalists told you on the phone? Is it what, you know, friends and family told you? Is it proper research?</p>	

Yeah, I think it's very instinctive, err, very instinctive. I don't think ... I mean you don't have time to do, err ... It would be great to be able to do a load of research when you're doing those jobs, but you don't have the time to do it. I mean I think, I think a lot of that is about instinct. I think it's about having a sense of what, you know, the ... I mean it's always a bit dangerous to sort of characterise how a group of people [0:07:31.8] the popular sort of view, but I think it is about that sort of having an instinct for what people, err, err want and, and, not just what they want but what, what is, you know ... Well, it is I suppose what they want but it's ... that's not for sort of ... It's not just about adapting the message in order to answer what they want, but it's about how to speak to them I suppose. So when, when there is a difficult message, working out a kind of language that is going to work for a sort of broad reach. And I suppose that means always looking beyond Westminster, and I'm sure I'm not the only person who's said that, err, and trying to sort of remain focused on, on, you know, the broader public beyond the Westminster Village

3. Limited research

Research about image and public perceptions for cabinet ministers is anecdotal

Richards, 1,2

and you page 2 know what the negatives are because you read the papers and you talk to people and everyone-, the thing in politics is there's no shortage of advice; people will always come and tell you what they think about you.

3. Limited research

Ministerial communications staff's media advise is guided by instincts

Richards, 2

. So you know, it's not scientific; it's more-, often it's operating at the level of instinct but you know-, and 2) you know there's an alarm bell in your head that will go off if something that-, a politician says something stupid or that will jar and annoy an awful lot of people. You can just-, you can sense it; it's almost an instinctive sort of reaction and part of it is avoiding those as well so clangers which politicians of course occasionally make.

3. Limited research

Communications advisors to cabinet ministers may not have the resources to commission research / polling at all	Richards, 2
<p>I mean there is no money; a special advisor has no access to any budgets at all so you don't-, you can't put polls in the field and see empirically how people are viewing a politician in the UK system. I mean in all-, I've been 20 years in politics and I've never been able to commission a poll on behalf of a politician despite working for the head office and as a special advisor and so on. So that's not unfortunately in our system something that happens. It is more sort of down-, more amateurish methods really of just listening and reading and talking to lots of people and sort of-</p>	
3. Limited research	
Opinion polls play an increasing role in framing party leaders during election campaigns	Jones, 15
<p>And of course their (newspapers) power is instant opinion polls, now we never had instant opinion polls done on the day (of a leadership debate), for the next day. We've never had them before and we said in the book we had something like, you know, several hundred, five hundred opinion polls where we only had fifty in the whole of an election before.</p>	
3. Limited research	
The research of perceptions and publics depends on the resources available in local and national politics	Greer, 3
<p>How do they know? Is it a gut feeling, an intuition that makes them understand what they're... how they're being perceived right now? Or...?</p> <p>The politician?</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>I think, I think it's a mix. I think for... there are levels to this, so you could think of your local councillor and there I think it would very much have to be a mix of that kind of gut instinct and sort of self-perception mixed against sort of anecdotal feedback that they may get from colleagues or people on the doorstep or other individuals. And obviously that depends on</p>	

how frank people are prepared to be with them. and then you go right up to the top end, sort of the Prime Minister, the leader of the opposition where there you would expect serious kind of polling and focus grouping and all of that going on to actually determine, you know, what do people think about this individual? Um, what do they think about this individual when they talk about this issue? What do they think about this individual when they're in this kind of scenario? Um, and even down to the sort of the physical image side of things of, you know, what do they think about this individual, you know, when they're wearing X, Y or Z? What does that communicate? What kind of emotion does that evoke in you? So I think it goes right from the bottom level of politician where it really is a case of your gut instinct, your intuition mixed with direct anecdotal feedback to politicians at the top who have this kind of, you know, they do and should have this kind of very, um developed feedback that's much more scientific. Then equally you could say that that has a tendency to, to, um, create, to generate less authenticity if people start to see through that and they start to believe that it is an image rather than the genuine article.

### 3. Limited research

While there is formal research into the electorate's perception, politicians seem to be obsessed with how journalists judge	Greer, 2,3
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I was trying to figure out there seem to be journalists involved in that as advisors who base their judgment, the advice they give on the impression on how something is perceived by journalists. Which may be very different from how the public understands and perceives and what their expectations are. And I'm trying to find out to what degree it is led by, um, proper formal research on what public expectations are. Or by headlines, there was a big issue before about the Prime Minister in the newspapers that I read. I didn't talk to anyone here in the country but I did read that newspaper. So were they led by the negative portrayal of the person?

I think there's... I mean I talked about sort of research there. I think you do have quite developed research on policy, on the candidates and individuals and what people think of them and those kind of things. But actually when it comes to taking those decisions about how the candidate is presented, I do get the very strong impression that a lot of times there's more obsession on how journalists will receive it and then report it than there is on



how that reporting will be received by the electorate. You know, it's that classic thing of sort of, you know, communication only sort of means what it's received to be. So you can intend for it to mean this but if I say, you know if I say something like, um "Christian I really like you" but I say it in a really aggressive tone, you're going to perceive it as a negative thing and me perhaps being sarcastic while I may intend for you to receive it in a nice way. In terms of communication what really matters is how you receive it and what you think about it.

### 3. Limited research

Reputation management for Gordon Brown as chancellor and PM was led by research which suggested he can be trust on the economy.

Livermore, 4

Yes. As an advisor, how would you know? How would you find out, erm, if the public or the key publics that are relevant to you, they want to like that politician or they want to respect him, or they want to know they keep the budget in order, or they want to – how they want to engage and how they want to see him. How would you ... Is that your gut feeling?

Well, all of our, all of our, erm, strategy work around his reputation was based on research. Mm-hm.

So I mean it's, it's, on the same basis as I would do here now with kind of a brand or whatever, you know, huge amounts of focus group research was done into where his strengths were, where his weaknesses were and what the kind of existing perceptions were, what the boundaries of potential were for his perception, perception of him. Erm, and absolutely, you know, I mean the thing about, the thing about Gordon Brown in particular but also I think in politics in general is kind of how little changes, that right back from kind of '97 onwards people saw him as strong, decisive, erm, you know, a steady hand, you know, and everything that was then done building out of that was to reinforce those perceptions. So we really were working with – we were going with the grain, as it were, of opinion, erm, but equally it was very clear that he wasn't – there wasn't a great sense of ... Erm, it's not that they liked him particularly or wanted, you know ... as I say, he wouldn't do particularly well on this concept of wanting to spend time with him, but absolutely was he someone they would trust. You know, you saw this in 2005 in particular. Who would you trust on the economy or big decisions, etc? Absolutely, he would have massive scores on that. So, you

know, it was no ... it wasn't, it wasn't kind of finger in the air. It was absolutely built out of, you know, years of research.

### 3. Limited research

1. Prime Minister Brown received conflicting advice on critical issue

Livermore, 5

2. Some presentational decisions were not based on research findings

But if you've got this, this years of research and the suggestions that come out of it, did then the advice he was given, did that match that research or was that ... We think people want to trust you and keep the economy in order but still you'd better smile. So how, how did that link?

I don't think he was ... this is ... this is the kind of point about erm, there is a strategy that says 'play to your strengths and be Thatcher' as it were erm, and er, you know, coming after the ... a period in which the public have sort of grown sick of, you know, Blair's great strength at the beginning was his brilliant communication skills, towards the end that strength had been turned into a weakness and it was seen as thin and slightly artificial. So plus you had someone who ... as a leader of the Tory Party in David Cameron who was basically trying to imitate those elements of Blair. So Brown was perfectly positioned to be the antidote to erm –

Er, you know Brown was perfectly positioned with the antidote both to Blair and also a very striking contrast to ... to Cameron, so there was a clear strategy there, you know be the Thatcher type of figure, be strong, be ... be slightly, erm, distant, erm, potentially. But of course, as I say, Gordon, er, perhaps because he's human wanted also to be liked. Erm, and of course there were other outside influences who were saying to him, "Oh, you've got to smile more, you've got to –" You know, so there's the ... I'm sure as you ... you'll hear from lots of people, there's the constant dynamic of, you know, compet- ... competing advisors offering competing advice.

Erm, and I've got no doubt at all in my mind as to which was the right advice. Erm, but of course you've got people saying to him, "Oh, you should smile" you know and ... and it totally ... not only he's not very good at smiling, you know, and always would smile in the wrong place, totally conflicts with the, the core positioning that, that we were seeking to, to

try and find as it were.	
3. Limited research	
Resources to conduct research reside with government, less so with the party	Livermore, 6
<p>So ... so I think that has got much more to do with the quality of the ... you know of course you know there are some very, very talented people in, in politics. Erm, so that matters but not nearly as much as the, the circumstances being favourable or unfavourable to creating positive reputation. Erm, so in terms of the resources that exist, er, you know, there's nothing like the money that you might find in the private sector. But clearly, you know, you've got budgets for polling, you've got budgets for focus groups, you've got budgets for events. In government a lot of that is managed through, erm, government budgets rather than Party budgets.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Money for research is available to Nr. 10 and the Exchequer while Brown was Chancellor – not to Cabinet Ministers	Livermore, 6
<p>I've ... I've been told elsewhere that as far as opinion research is concerned that the resources are more concentrated in Number 10 Downing Street and that a Cabinet Minister would not, unless they're told by Number 10, they wouldn't know what people think about them or read the newspapers because they wouldn't have the, the money and the staff that would do opinion polling for them.</p> <p>That's correct, with the exception of Gordon Brown, as I say, not the normal Cabinet Minister.</p>	
3. Limited research	
Communications research for the PM: instincts and formal research	Kelly, 6

You said this with your background, communicators background [0:24:47.1] journalists, you have the ability and intuition to predict in many occasions how a story will develop.

Mm.

Is it more than intuition or is it more facts, figures and the research numbers you're being handed on a weekly basis and that informs your advice, or do you balance the two?

You ... Let me give you an example. In Northern Ireland, I was saying earlier that I saw part of my job to feedback into the policy machine how I thought public opinion was developing. I did that on a daily/weekly basis through knowledge of the situation, through instinct developed over years of experience and so on, but also from time to time I organised focus groups and surveys because you need to know that your instincts are still in tune with where people actually are, so in a way you use focus groups and surveys to test whether your perception is the real perception or it's changing at a faster rate and in a certain direction than you thought, or there are factors you hadn't taken account of. So I do think that the most important thing for communicators is that, yes, they have a view of where perception is going. They test that view in lots of different ways. One of the things about living in Northern Ireland, you know, even when I was in Downing Street I was able to go home to Northern Ireland at the weekends. I was able to go out and watch my kids play rugby. I was able to listen to the conversations on the touchline. You got a sense of that reality and you've got to constantly have that reality check because it's very easy to believe your own communications and it's very easy to convince the leader that what they're saying is right. Sometimes you need that reality check to say, hold on, there's a misalignment here. It's not working.

### 3. Limited research

Anecdotal evidence rather than systematic opinion surveys

Waring, 2

How do you do that now? You don't leave it to chance, clearly, what people think about one of the leading politicians of a party.

No.

You wouldn't leave it to chance.

Well, part of it's responding. So every day, you know, you read the newspapers, you watch

the television, you speak to journalists, and they express their opinions about your boss and then you respond to that. So you'd say "That person said to me that they don't think you're that committed to, you know, that tax change." And you would think, mm, well that's not quite good because that's very popular with business. You're the business secretary. That's not actually what you think. You've obviously not been enthusiastic about it. So when you do an interview next time, let's make sure you mention that because you're constantly, you're looking at what stakeholders think and you make sure that you say things to please them or you highlight the bits, the things that you're doing that would please them and you play down the things that would annoy them.

3. Limited research

Anecdotal research

Waring, 4

Coming back to what I asked before, how are you aware of what the key stakeholders [0:08:10.0] think and what ... Is that your hunch? Is it gut feeling? Is that experience? Is that you're more grounded than them?

It's contact with them directly. It's feedback from when stakeholders have direct, erm, contact with officials and then officials tell us what they've said like "Oh, so and so's grumpy, and I went to this meeting and everybody there said they were particularly pleased with this." And then I read the papers and I speak to stakeholders directly and so does Vince, and so do the other advisors, so it's kind of directly and then also kind of what the media is kind of interpreting it is as well, and, you know. Listening to the radio and watching television. I'm a big fan of radio phone ins.

Okay.

Because I think they're very useful.

That's only the people who phone. Other people may be grumpy and say "I'm not ..."

Yes, you're getting yourself a selecting sample, erm, but I think they're very good. I think they're very good. You usually get quite a balanced discussion.

3. Limited research

research	Hazlewood, 11
<p>Do you know what the people of Wales, if they were asked, you mentioned earlier about people who meet the secretary of state think she was very different from what we thought or she was nicer than we thought, do you know now what they think? Do you have a way of finding out what the attitudes and the views are of not just your policies but the individual who writes the...</p> <p>In terms of opinion polling and things like that?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Oh we don't do any within the department when the party does this polling. Erm usually in the run up to elections and we'll obviously have sight of that but the department doesn't. We have a five million pound budget and....</p> <p>No, no I am not surprised to hear that, I was surprised at how little opinion polling is being done outside number ten, even number eleven didn't do it, I had this... Spencer Littlemore was telling me that they did opinion polling in number ten about Gordon Brown, who didn't have the money in number eleven to do that, just to tell him how unpopular he was when every time he said I want the job, he was being given the data to show how unpopular he was, so I was surprised how little is being erm done.</p> <p>There is very little opinion polling in Wales full stop. ITV Wales as you probably know do the monthly tracker poll, I haven't seen one for a little while, I suppose because we are a way off from an election, but BBC don't do party opinion polls they just do an issue, they did one before the referendum in March for instance and those sorts of things, erm I think that is one thing that Wales lacks actually is more opinion polling. It would help, not just parties but I think...</p> <p>It is a money issue isn't it?</p> <p>It is, yes they are not cheap. I mean you can ask five questions in about [0:32:50:1]</p>	
4. Events	
Events derail management of public persona	Neather, 2

mean, if you like, your thesis you sort of advance to the start, that ultimately spin doesn't make a lot of difference, I would agree with because I mean number one, you can't control events, obviously, I mean there are the famous Macmillan events, [0:08:05.0] events but also you can't... in a sense, the real person will out, okay, and it may be that in America you can manufacture a politician a bit more than you can here but...

Events

Good policy or booming economy shapes the reputation of the politician deemed responsible positively

Neather, 4

been told... an obvious point... that, had he been... one criticism was that he's dithering, not decisive. Now, at that point policy and contact reflects on your personality or the public persona, so had he taken a decision to call a general election or had he taken the decision that he then didn't decide... pondering for weeks. So, if policy decisions make a difference and impact on your personality, are you aware of any...? Then, obviously that difference can be made. If advisors will tell you, "Well, this is the policy, we cannot explain therefore we just ignore it." So, it's much more than just how you appear on public stage, it is... the public persona is shaped by the policy you pursue.

Yeah. It is, yeah, sure. And I mean... but ultimately it's...

Is that too cynical?

No, no. I think... not cynical, I think it's... obviously policy has a real impact on what you do but in... the impact isn't as precise as sort of policy wants would like you to think. I mean one of the reasons why Gordon Brown got away with it for so long was because...the economy was actually in very good shape, or pretty good shape, during the boom years. Not quite as good shape as he'd hoped but you know... The bottom line with economy is that most people don't understand it well enough and aren't interested enough in the intricacies to argue with Brown that much. And the bottom line figures were pretty good. He would consistently predict higher growth, higher tax revenues, round the City, and he would be right.

4 Events

A bad economy is blamed on the chancellor

Neather, 4

When you get the economy wrong, regardless of what you're doing, your reputation suffers a lot more. It hasn't yet for Osborne, but we're only a year in.

#### 4 Events

Whilst communicators try to plan ahead, not anticipated events come up and derail the planning

Neather, 5,6

Who puts issues, themes on the agenda? Spencer Livermore told me that there are certain events – and again, not [0:22:29.1] – certain events in the year – there's election, there's Budget Day, if the Prime Minister meets Putin or the American President – where you can almost predict what will be the theme, the issues tomorrow and the day thereafter. Inbetween they wouldn't know. To what degree is what happens the next week decided by you and colleagues and to what degree is government guiding the agenda?

Well, an awful lot of it is just various events that you can't plan. There was No.10 – well, Labour in power generally – put an enormous amount of effort in trying to plan things. I'm sure you've heard talk about the grid, one of my closest friends was in charge of the grid at No.10 for a couple of years. I guess it make sense, from any sort of communications point of view, trying to manage what you put out, but I was often struck by how ineffective it was because all sorts of other things would break. To a degree there were... I mean obviously there were the big set piece speeches – you know when that's going to happen. There are things like release of key economic figures, quarterly GDP figures, or whatever, you know when those are going to be. But there's an awful lot in between. Just say, yesterday for instance, we've had news that three medium to large-sized companies were going out of business with 10,000 redundancies in total. Depending on the news day, on a slow news day that could snowball into the big story of the day. How do you deal with... and if that comes after a run of a couple, three, other difficult economic stories in the preceding week, then you start to get stories saying, you know, sense a crisis around economic policy. In terms of actually planning how you do that is very difficult. This is why I ultimately thing spin doctors – the whole New Labour spin doctor thing – that they were ultimately responsible for a lot of their own hype, they almost believed their own hype in the end – when, in fact [0:25:00.0]. Take, for instance, legal cases – all sorts of legal cases out there. There are particular crime cases where there's a particular thing, like last week the Milly Dowler conviction, but there's issues like, for instance, yesterday this Palestinian alleged



extremist banned from the country. That's the kind of thing which just blows up from nowhere.

4. Events

Leaks and suspicion / opposition from colleagues may derail planned personal presentation activities

Neather, 10

Well, I don't think... look, I don't think it makes any difference. I'll give you an example. It's possible to way over-interpret these things. When I was working for Blair I did an education speech, which he was going to deliver in Manchester. There was extreme sensitivity in relations with No.11 and because of that I was given instructions not to send any draft of any speech to No.11 until the last possible moment, so they couldn't object. With this particular speech, I sort of hit 'send' on my computer and I sent it to somebody in education – two people in education – and one person in the Treasury and literally walked out to get in the convoy to get on the plane. When I got off the plane at the other end, in the car on the way to the hotel, I get a call from my boss – Peter Heinrich – saying, "Who did you send that speech to, because I've just had George Pascoe-Watson on the phone and he's saying there's no mention at all of Blunkett in it and this is a deliberate snub?" I was just like... the funny thing was it had so obviously come from the Treasury. In the course of two hours it had bounced over to The Sun and then they were... But, you know, lobby journalists over-interpret things to that degree because you're trying to find this angle and that was the angle they'd been spun by the Treasury.

4. Events

Politicians could plan for events that may affect their reputation better than they often do

Greer, 4

So if you look at Northern Ireland Water for example and there we're not dealing with politicians but we're dealing with essentially a public body, they had the risk register, on the risk register was snow definitely going to happen but they took no action about it in their board meeting at the beginning of December, they didn't even discuss it. I think politicians can fall foul of that as well. where they, they have all of this information available to them or the capacity to have that information available to them but they don't act on that capacity and as a result they are working a lot of times, I think, more on guess work than they are on

well certainty	
4.Events	
As chancellor you are in control of events	Livermore, 2
<p>So, for example, err, as chancellor it's easy to remain hidden for quite a lot of the time and to make, err, appearances that suit you and that you can shape. You're very much in control of how you project yourself as chancellor and how you decide to enter the debate. Erm, therefore it's quite easy. It's ... You can keep a lot of control over your own reputation as a result.</p>	
4.Events	
The PM has less control over his public engagements and is more at the mercy of events	Livermore, 2
<p>Erm, as Prime Minister, clearly you are at the mercy of events. You have to be much more visible. Communication skills become much more important, a different type of communication skill, erm, and you have to ... you can't choose when you enter the debate or, or [0:04:47.8] visible. You're at the mercy of, as I said, the mercy of external events, and therefore it's much harder to keep control. It's much harder to pick things that reinforce the reputation that you're seeking to create, and, erm, you can't always ... You know, sometimes you, you can't always be strong. And if that is your overarching kind of image that you're seeking to create, you're not lucky enough always to win, as it were, win every, every encounter or every engagement.</p>	
4. Events	
Events upset planned messages	Kelly, 1

Well, let me take the example of 9/11. Prime Minister has won an election shortly beforehand in May/June. I've come to Downing Street as his new spokesman. He's down in Brighton to address the Trade Union Congress. The speech is going to be a fairly tough one but need to reform public services and that means new ways of working. That's what he's focused on. Suddenly you see the planes go into the twin towers and suddenly all that becomes totally irrelevant.

#### 4. Events

Political communicators' job is event driven

Waring, 7

To what degree is your job event driven? To what degree do you think you can plan what happens tomorrow?

Oh, well my specific job is about 95% event driven and it's the most frustrating thing in the world, and it's not what you imagine at all. And I think the Secretary of State's job is probably 60% event driven. I think it's very ... I think that's, erm, it is one of the most challenging things in politics with 24 hour media and just globalisation, and, you know, the sort of pace of things of actually being able to have driving at your own agenda rather than have it dictated to you by events.

#### 4 events

Some of Brown's public appearances and decision weren't consciously planned, but afterwards interpreted to fit his intended public persona

McBride , 8 / 8,9

#### 4. Events

Media relations in opposition are often reactive and responding to unpredictable events

Eustice, 8

The rest of the week is very much day to day, fire fighting the agenda. But the key thing is that you maintain strategy, even though you accept that there's going to be lots of fire fighting along the way. That could be back bench MPs have said something stupid, erm, it

could be a councillor who's been, you know, accused of fraud and is in court, it could be you've had to suspend a councillor for making homophobic remarks. It could be all sorts of things, which are entirely unpredictable and you just have to fire fight and deal with it. Erm, but the main thing is that you, you ... alongside that fire fighting you've got your own agenda that you're trying to project.

4. Events

The written event plan intended to manage media relations is regularly upset by unforeseen events

Macrory, 5

but then the grid gets blown off course and every day there'll be changes because events take over and, you know, suddenly-, or something's not ready or somebody will say I'm sorry that thing for the grid on Monday-, we've just-, we've hit a problem we can't sort out (there's an argument going round about something to do with one of the policies) so that gets changed. So a million things conspire to make the grid a movable feast and it will change all the time. There're foreign trips that have to be built into it. They tend not to change because they take such a lot of time to set up.

4. Events

Good politicians integrate unforeseen events into their planned media relations

Beattie, 4

But do they respond to what you write about on a day to day ... they can't say "This is our agenda. We don't care what you're writing about or what your questions are today" because our message today, tomorrow and the next five days is that ... can that [0:19:38.9] totally apart one from the other? Is there a big gap between the two? This is what I really want to talk about.

The problem is they can have a best laid plan but [0:19:54.4] a degree of flexibility [0:20:00.9] even news breaking elsewhere, or the fact that we decide we have a different agenda, it doesn't work. So if your idea is "I want to do this, this and this this week" and the something else turns up, whether it's a sex scandal or a question mark over the leadership's calibre, or a revolt within the party, or a complete mess on another policy, that

will completely upset your agenda. And actually the best politicians are really good at handling it because they usually find a way. Blair was [0:20:47.8] of this going on. I've said what I've got to say. Move on, acknowledge it and move on. [0:21:03.1].

4. Events

Events and reputation

Stacey, 9

.. actually I'll tell you another one, you can be very badly advised. So even if the public quite likes you... I think it was Ming Campbell who got photographed looking at a toilet. It was just disastrous. The other one, David Miliband, very charming, people really liked him and the banana, photographed with a banana outside.... I guess that was what I was saying at the beginning about just little events, snapshots will just change somebody's reputation. I thought these events give you... you link their personality and their behaviour and their policy to these snapshots but they don't make the reputation. It's just a sensation that exists anyway, an underlying and you link it to that event or that photo. Yeah obviously it's a bit of both but as journalists anyway if it us we who are making reputations, a few of those anecdotes are definitely enough to make a reputation because we just write them. We've only got 500 ways to do it in, free anecdotes that'll do it point proven in the public's mind. But if they're in the spotlight for a long time obviously if they're just going to come across that

4. Events

Crucial in pol communications is how one deals with an unexpected event

Davies, 17

Is it something bad comes up that undermines, or is it the way you deal with it, or is it both or ...

I think it's the way you ... I think, I think the great test ... one of the great tests of a politician is how you deal with an event, a reactive event. I mean that's the thing which people are going to be, you know, depending on how big it is, that's where people sort of want to I think get their greatest sense of what a politician is like and whether they're competent or, you

know, or not, I think. And I think you get most respect from dealing with-, for gripping an issue and dealing with it head on than you do from sort of weasel words and staying clear and all that, so I think it's probably big events that people ... and the way you react that people tend to take as ... What have other people said to that? (...)

It's how you deal with events rather than the event itself because that's the bit you can control, if at all.

Exactly, because you sometimes can't do anything about the event but you can do something about how you handle it. I mean he was always, you know, if there was a ... particularly in justice where a lot of the time you literally can't ... it's usually something bloody terrible happens and that's because somebody is a bad person or does something wrong, and you can't stop bad things happening. How you then react is critical, and I think ... I was always really struck how Cameron reacted when that guy, err, Derek Bird I think he was called, killed a load of people in Cumbria shortly after Cameron became Prime Minister. And he came on the radio and he said "Look, sometimes things happen that you can't do anything about" and I thought that was an incredibly mature thing for a politician to say and a really refreshing thing for a politician to say.

Rather than say we have a new policy.

Rather than say we're going to ban all, you know, anything that looks like a gun we're going to ban it immediately.

#### 4. Events

Reputation management is a long term process and based on behaviour rather than particular events

Richards, 4

The problem with all of this is that it's a very slow process; reputation management isn't an easy thing. Good reputations are built brick by brick. They're destroyed very quickly but they're built up very slowly so you have to display a pattern of behaviour rather than a one-off event to disprove a particular thesis around something negative.

#### 4. Events

It is not clear why certain events or particular behaviour have particular effects on reputation and others don't.	Richards 9, 10
<p>Well, Prescott is an example. He managed to survive for all kinds of reasons but I mean he wasn't a very-, particularly effective minister and he did all kind of things that you would think would be career ending including hitting that voter, you know, that you would think would be career ending and yet somehow, you know, John is John, kind of loveable, that's just what he's like and he managed to survive all those years and including having an affair with his secretary, you know, and other things that others would have been destroyed by and here-, there he is; they're keeping him going so there's no explanation for that. I don't think you can put a-, there's no political science answer to it. It's just one of those weird things and maybe someone cleverer than me has worked it out but I can't and by the same token, you know, effective ministers can be utterly reduced by events and destroyed by events that aren't-, you know, that seemingly are actually quite mild and some of the resignations over the sort of years of Labour were very-, you know, people didn't resign for the same offence basically. So people can do things and get away with it and others do things and don't get away with it and there's no reason why not. I mean Mandelson's second sacking in retrospect was for a crime far less than others dealing-, I don't mean a literal crime; I mean, you know, a political crime far less than others survived. So it's just not fair I suppose is the possible-, it's an unfair system.</p>	
4. Events	
Chancellor has fewer pressures to handle the public on a day to day basis – the Prime Minister is much more exposed to events	Kelly, 4
<p>Is there a ... the Brown people told me when, when he was still Chancellor there was occasionally time to sit down and to think how do we think we perhaps ought to present him. How do we want to be seen? Are we in safe hands or do we smile? At least what is the right way to do? Once he was prime minister there was, there was no time. There were so many commitments, and demands, and pressures there was no time to plan ahead and step back and think "How shall we do the next couple of months?" Was there any time to do that? And was it done, and how was it done with Blair?</p> <p>Look, the reality is, if you're chancellor you've got about three or four big occasions in the</p>	

year. You can plan for those, err, and alright you do have to from time to time respond to events but ... particularly during a financial crisis, but it's the pressure on the day to day basis, err, is much less. If you're in Downing Street, as this government has found out, everything comes back to Downing Street. Err, this government set out with the idea it could devolve issues to departments. I don't think they're saying that now. You know, this government set out with the idea that they didn't need a policy unit. Well, it's got a policy unit now. And that's because everything comes back to Downing Street through the front door, through the back door.

#### 5. Contingency planning

The contingency planning for crisis communications is limited

Neather, 6

Take something like, for instance, the scandal over Charles Clarke, the deportation of foreign prisoners and [0:25:40.2] Home Office were screwing it up. That's actually the format for most Whitehall crises. They essentially come out of nowhere and you could in theory get every department to draw up a list of the ten most worrying things that could break and all that...

Do you think they do?

I don't think they do, no. Because all you'd do then, at a governmental level, you'd have a list of – God knows – at least 100... I mean the Home Office is scarier than most because of the kind of things it deals with, but within the Home Office the number of potential kind of – not disaster – but very embarrassing scenarios, I mean you could come up with 20 off the top of your head, I should think. You know, think prisons, courts, asylum – at least courts when I was there – the health service. I don't think you can plan for it.

Any company or big corporation that, for good reasons, claims they do a strategic communications plan, they do crisis audits, they go through the scenario and have prepared answers for it, but then Ministers don't.

I just think honestly it would be... I mean on any one of these given issues the Press Office works out lines to take, as I know. But say, for example, it's revealed that there are 2,000 convicted foreign criminals let back out into England as a result of various fuck-ups at the Home Office, well I mean there'll be some line to take in the system about what the government's working towards on deportation of foreigners and this, that and the other.



The bottom line is, if you screw it up, it's very hard to contain. Okay, in terms of spin, you can announce something else and try and hope it goes away or even just hope that there's some Japanese tsunami or something – it can happen.

5. Contingency planning

Brown's staff dealt in crises scenario simultaneously with the issues and the public perception

McBride, 7 , 8

So where the, if you like the answer to your question, where the almost short term as it happens planning was, was thinking about, um, on an issue like the outbreak of the foot and mouth crisis, it was simultaneously him having to deal with the issue, deal with the problem, and the likes of me in my role thinking what are the public thinking about how he's dealing with this? You know, what are the public seeing of how he's dealing with this? And so there's always a parallel process going on where we were making... you know, you've almost got a confluence of decisions like, you know, he decides I need to go back to London and chair a meeting of the emergency committee, er convene a meeting of the emergency committee on foot and mouth, um, and I need to, you know, do that, I need to leave at 3 o'clock in the morning from his holiday.

5. Contingency planning

Attention to detail when implementing strategy/tactics

Hill, 8, 9

Then I think you do need, in this modern age, a very important element of communication is presentation. I think ... you ... erm, if you don't think about the difference between the way Obama looks when he's using the autocue and when he's not, I mean, it comes down to that. But in ... if you're the general public and you've got this guy in your living room, which is essentially what he is, he's in your living room and he's talking to you and he's going like this [breathing] or he's talking like this and ... and the autocue's functioning, I mean, it makes a world of difference. And these things are ... are often ignored, but they are ... they're essential to poli- ... same with Cameron, sometimes he does it, sometimes he doesn't.

5. Contingency planning	
Attention to detail when implementing strategy-tactics	Hill, 9
<p>Yes, well, they will have different interests, but the problem is, you also know what your headline is. I remember ... this is a clear ... this has got nothing to do with research, this is just the way in which these things happen. David Frost, then ... [0:35:36] Aljazeera, interviews Roy Hattersley on a long Aljazeera interview, which was very good. Towards the end, erm ... he asked him a question ... and ... Blair says, yes, I mean ... and then proceeds to actually say he doesn't really agree, but he's used the word, 'yes'.</p> <p>Right.</p> <p>And he comes off, and me and the guy, Tom Kelly who's the ... who was the ... Civil Servant chief spokesperson for the party, who you may talk to ... Tom and I both said, well, that's the headline, isn't it. Now, it's ludicrous, it's absurd. But it shows you the discipline that you have to keep reminding the person who's doing the interviews on, that because you've used the word 'yes', when 'yes' was the way which we might normally be sort of getting ourselves through a couple of seconds when we're getting our thoughts collected. So because he said 'yes', that was the story</p>	
5. Contingency planning	
All communications advice needs to be guided by objective	Hill, 10
<p>Erm, but are always, and it's back to your original question, what it's about, who always have the reputation of the individual and the office and what they're trying to achieve, in mind when they're giving the advice.</p>	
5. Contingency planning	

Attention to presentational detail in reputation management is essential	Hill, 11
<p>Particularly probably in 2012 [?] you found out what people thought was wrong or they didn't like about the Prime Minister and that was [0:40:21] the election campaign. I was wondering ... how big can ... I've been told by colleagues of you that what you do in PR is you highlight the strength and you try not to talk about the weaknesses, but you have to somehow ... you can't create a persona that doesn't exist. You can't create ... Absolutely.</p> <p>How big can this gap be until the public picks up, or the journalists do? How big can ... you know, you don't create an individual that doesn't exist. You can only use the person you have ...</p> <p>There's only one answer to that question. The fact of the matter is that it's ... you know, the ... it's the little things that ... find them out. It's the little things, both what they do and say on television and radio, or the little things where they ... people read a thing about them that they didn't ... And people are very shrewd. They might ... the way in which they judge whether the person is, is, is, erm, is the real deal or whether they're a bit of a fraud, erm, is based often on a lot of minor things.</p>	
5. Contingency planning	
Major communications problems arise if communicators fail to pay attention to detail	Eustice, 6
<p>Yes. Oh, I see, the pressure ... Well, I think, erm, I mean David C- ... you know, nine months in it's worth looking at how ... how they've done, and I think it's fair to say that ... one of the things that was clear about David Cameron, and this is consistent with Michael Howard, he wanted to get things done, roll his sleeves up and implement things. He didn't want to be like Tony Blair, endlessly talking about things, getting good headlines but not actually delivering. And he's done that. But the ... the one side effect of that has been a few unnecessary accidents in terms of smaller announcements that blew up into quite large rows. And the forestry sell off is an example. I think to a lesser extent the school sports issue is another. And these were minor issues that wouldn't have had the attention of the top team, but which were burning away and suddenly exploded in a way that people hadn't quite predicted.</p>	

5. Contingency planning	
Policies need communications attention early on or they cannot be controlled	Eustice, 6
<p>Because the example of the forest is one ... actually what the government was heading towards was saying that the National Trust and the Woodland Trust should maybe take over some of these forests. That was what was actually going on, but because of the way it was communicated, what the public heard was 'forests being sold off, access rights denied, chain saws at the ready to chop it all down'. And that was a ... obviously a disaster. But probably if they had actually got the communication right at the start it might have actually been a perfectly sensible policy that could have gone through and it would have been a minor policy rather than a big controversial issue.</p>	
5. Contingency planning	
Government has got a day to day plan for events and announcements to help coordinate media relations.	Macrory, 5
<p>A minute ago you were saying there are issues you want to have on the agenda, others you don't want to have on the agenda this particular day or week. To what-, I know you can't quantify it but to what degree can you plan what is on the agenda that day/that week and plan ahead? To what degree is this decided by the environment that you cannot control?</p> <p>Well, there is a government grid which is planned weeks in advance and it's literally like a calendar each day and it's got what you know is going to happen (there'll be sort of unemployment or employment statistics coming out; you know that's going to be once a month and inflation or whatever) so it'll have those basics and then around that you build what you want to do so keynote speech by-, on health by Andrew Lansley Monday, Tuesday Prime Minister, Wednesday you know it's going to be Prime Minister's Questions and then so on and so on and you try and-, so you try and work it so that there's something happening every day and you try and time things to a certain extent</p>	

5. Contingency planning

Politicians / communicators do not audit risks to their reputation or devise plans to deal with it

Greer, 4

I suppose you can't... no one could quantify it but if you had to find a balance, to what degree is it organised and managed? And what is, um the share of events in that and things you cannot... outside your control? Your Minister of Transport when it snows in Scotland and all of a sudden people say you're incompetent. There's really very little you did.

I think there there's an interesting thing. Say for example if you look at something like snow and people saying they're caught on the wires, well any large organisation will run... will have risk registers. So, you know, they'll be looking at sort of events that could take place and it goes on that kind of access from likelihood of event or likelihood of event taking place to impact of event from unlikely and not much impact to it's only going to happen and if it does it'll be catastrophic. You know, and something like snow is pretty predictable, you know that you're going to get snow at some point. So likelihood right up there, damage, it could be anywhere down here but you know it's going to happen. So, you know, in that sense I think politicians can be more aware of what's going on and more prepared for it than Joe Blogs on the street might expect them to be. But I think often times actually despite the fact that they could be like that they're not like that.

6. Past record

In the UK politicians that reach the top are already known and therefore it is hard to fabricate a new public persona for them

Neather, 2,3

Why would Journalists there be less attentive than here? You see there's a discrepancy between what the real person is or... would you?

I just think the whole media circus is that much bigger in the US. You know, it's a bigger country, whereas in this... it's possible for somebody in the usual process for somebody to come out of state level politics in the US and maybe become Senator and at a national level be potentially unknown. I mean known to specialist Journalists... but in this country it's not really like that. I mean to get to the upper echelons of politics you work your way up

through Whitehall, the whole of the press corps basically knows who you are. I mean, it's not to say there aren't many people who, in the US, perceptive Journalists who think politicians are... and, you know, someone like Sarah Palin, for instance, to be extreme, is this complete idiot and incompetent... you know, she's tried very hard to manufacture a particular [0:09:29.0] really worked and I suspect that ultimately the people who vote for her or support her would have done so anyway because that's just their political views and people who don't, wouldn't.

6. Past record

Once a politician is known and has an established narrative it is difficult to change the image

Thorogood, 7

*I'd say by the time they get to us in terms of they're already elected as MPs and particularly before the election when we were working with the shadow cabinet, it's very difficult to actually change somebody's image because they've already got a kind of-, they've already got their own sort of narrative and their own personality which has come through during their campaigning and-,*

6. Past record

Sceptical if politicians can reinvent their public persona

Beattie, 6

There seem to be some who find out at what point their strategy [0:35:23.6], the policies wouldn't work anymore. They tried within their own lifetime, their political lifespan, try to reform and change. The example struck me when I was a student. I followed that more. Michael Portillo was a Thatcherite [0:35:42.0] than he was a passionate Conservative. 10 years later when he realised Thatcherism is not what will win the leadership of the election [0:35:52.9].

Michael Portillo didn't really reinvent himself until after he left parliament. He started that journey here but he failed on that journey while he was still within Westminster. The renaissance and resurrection of Portillo was [0:36:12.0]. Ian Duncan-Smith is another example of somebody who probably has slightly reinvented himself. I don't think completely [0:36:22.0]. Can you do it? Yes you can. But I don't know that many cases of people who have are failed politicians once and come back and be successful again. [0:36:38.3] a

certain longevity. There is a book to be written on how to resuscitate political careers. I mean ... and whether it's entirely possible. There was an interesting question with Ian Burns who messed up this [0:37:08.8] and did himself damage, did the party extraordinary damage as a result [0:37:17.6] a very intelligent man, and [0:37:23.3] look around and say "Look, how do I come back from this?" And I don't think he's entirely done it yet. What would we want from our side? Probably a bit of [0:37:44.8].

6. Past record

Past mistakes and duration of incumbency reduces scope to manoeuvre communications

Price, 10

Erm and even during that phase you didn't take your eye off the media communications. Your room for manoeuvre was greatly reduced because of the mistakes you have made in the past, and because you have been around for so long, and because the mood in the country had changed.

6. Past record

Most recent images are most critical for reputation

Stevenson, 5

It's (public perception) like ... you know, an actor is only as good as his last role and erm ... you know, the public will see what that is and respond to that.

6. Past record

It is hard to invent the public persona of a politician because of their past record

Stevenson, 6

Is it easier to present ... to present individual or to talk about the person and to shape perceptions and understanding if that person has been around for many years, or is it ... if that individual is in the spot light now for the first time?

Well ... I don't quite know what the question is trying to say, but I think politics is different from product. You know, you can have a new product and it can genuinely be marketed and packaged in a particular way, but politics is about living people and they have histories and they have engagements with various sectors of society from which they come, and

therefore it's very hard, I think, to invent a new politician.

(...)... I don't think it's ... I don't think you can take politicians as products, I think you have to, erm, recognise a fairly extensive human hinterland which they've got to have a convincing narrative about. And that always gives you something that ... You can't just suddenly arrive and say, hi, I'm the new Prime Minister. It doesn't work. People need to know where you've come from and that gives you a lot of interrogation and questions to answer, and those would vitiate against a repackage.

6. Past record

Past record / baggage damages current and future efforts to manage reputation – though there are exceptions

Richards, 5

If you-, if you've been in politics for a number of years, then the cameras and the limelight and the attention has been on you for the baggage of decisions in the past, the failures and successes in the past. How does-, how do you deal with that?

Well, it's-, I think it's astonishing how some people manage to float above all of their past decisions. I mean Jack Straw-, I was talking to somebody about Jack Straw the other day. He's been in politics since the 70s and nothing has stuck as-, you know, he's sort of just been a great survivor and never really gets held to account for any of the things that he's done. Somehow it just sort of slides off him whereas others will have, you know, decisions or baggage hung round their necks for ever and be associated with certain things but the survivors in politics seem to be the ones who are very fleet of foot and they can move quickly and be very tactical and flexible and nothing really sticks to them as they make their progress. David Blunkett's another one. He's managed to go a long-, since the 80s in politics, you know. So there are survivors. Margaret Beckett, I mean Margaret Beckett was somebody who was on the hard left of the Labour Party and has somehow transmuted into an elder statesperson, you know, in the mainstream. Nobody blames her for the 1983 manifesto even though she was integral to it, you know. So survivors can just get past it and move on and not be associated with particular decisions it seems to me.

6. Past record



Rather than establishing a new reputation an already known politician may try to draw public attention to individual traits	Redfern, 4
<p>Yeah, it's not—yeah, sorry, I was ranting on that. It's not going to work. I can bore for England on that stuff. I mean I think it's different to what I do in my day job and it's interesting in that sense in that I quite often take clients who don't have any profile and get them profile, whereas with this political stuff you take someone who's got massive profile and you try and nuance it and shape it but you don't—</p> <p>[00:14:12].</p> <p>Yeah, so you're trying to nuance it and sort of tease it out and get people more aware of the person. I mean I think the—for me, the biggest thing was—the biggest thing with that campaign was people need to know who David is and then they need to know what he stands for, but they need to know that he's a great speaker, family guy, really committed, internationalist politician who has their best interests at heart, wants to take the Labour Party into an amazing place.</p>	
6. Past record	
Track record, baggage that shapes a politician's reputation	Redfern, 5
<p>So the track record as a cabinet minister and a senior member of the party was there more baggage or more [over speaking].</p> <p>Yeah, well I mean I think the biggest piece of baggage for him was the two non-attempts [00:16:54], you know, the first one was not his fault, to be fair. When the Gordon leadership election, I think people retrofitted a narrative around David to say why didn't he stand at the time? Why didn't he challenge Gordon at the time?</p> <p>So the dithering was what people weren't happy, not that he might have attempted to finish off the incumbent Prime Minister?</p> <p>Yeah, I think yeah, I think it was—I think there's a lot of people—you see the problem is, with the Labour Party, is that in the moment everyone's saying, "Well of course you can't challenge Gordon, it's his right, it's his right and he's got to have it" and everything else. It's only in retrospect people say, "Well why didn't David finish him off," you know, when they're feeling sore about having lost elections or they're feeling like they can't win and that's the internal problem for the Labour Party,</p>	

6. Past record	
Baggage, past record limits ability to create an image	Livermore, 11
<p>it is a problem because it limits the scope of activities you can do, if you go beyond that scope of what has been done in the past, it, it may not look credible? It's hugely important, erm, because the media and the opposition have a, an interest in constantly reminding you of that. Erm, I mean positive baggage as it were, erm, is incredibly valuable so having a track record, having a success to your name. So you know, Gordon Brown's, you know, when he became prime minister his track record as chancellor was you know, a huge asset to him. Erm, but absolutely politicians who have, you know, said something in the past that could become embarrassing, or made a mistake in the past or whatever, you know, that constantly haunts you and er, as you say, constantly erm, can limit your credibility in certain areas. So if you, if you were particularly poor at something in the past and you are now trying to appear kind of competent on that issue that will constantly limit the ability to create an, an image of competence. It's, it's, it's there kind of, it's there forever and will always be. You will always be reminded of it.</p>	
6. Past record	
Politicians who have built themselves a name in the past tend to find it easier to get media attention	Waring,1,2
<p>Is that by accident/chance that the media picks you as the hero, the person with expertise in the discipline of business and finance. They may have picked someone else. They could have done. Did you want them to pick you?</p> <p>They could have done but it also coincided with, erm, it also coincided with Vince being the acting leader of the Liberal Democrats for a few months where he got the chance to do Prime Minister's questions and so he was instantly catapulted into kind of half an hour's limelight every week. Erm, but I think it is, I think they just what's easiest. And when you've got a lot of political agendas that all sit in the same offices in parliament they're going to go for the ... It's, you know, it's a 24 hour news cycle and what's the least path of</p>	

resistance, searching out some random investor that nobody in the British public that has known about has been saying it or picking a leading politician that people already kind of know that's going to get air time, you know. It's kind of what's the path of least resistance.

6. Past record

Reputation is built on past achievement and prominence in a discipline

Waring, 2

Martin Kettle from the Guardian talked about age, age of politicians.

Yes.

Erm, now there seems to be some tendency to elect extremely young leaders, erm, and here they could have, they could have decided while you were in a position Mr Osborne is as the man who explains society business and, and the future of the economy and they didn't really do that.

No.

They picked someone who looked like a statesman even though he wasn't.

Yes, but I think that was because George Osborne hadn't got the record on the economy that Vince had, so he couldn't point back. He hadn't built his own reputation on it. You know, they just hadn't done it. They ... and that was more down to the substance rather than the image or the brand, but certainly when we realised with the Liberal Democrats that Vince had got that body of work behind in the lead up to the recession we capitalised on it and we marketed him as that.

6. Past record

Lifetime experience and the build-up of reputation

Waring, 10

The last one. Someone who's around for decades, many years in politics, all this past record, all this package, is it-, do you see the way that you present him as being limited by the past, the past record, what he stood for, what he fought for, what he also gains?

No, I think it's ... I think it's, erm, liberating and helpful. I think it's much better to have some, to have a politician that's got a hinterland and experience to refer to than people that have got very little experience to refer to actually. But that's not to say I don't think they're really good politicians because I don't buy this thing of a career politician is not a good thing for their constituency. I don't think that at all because I think that government has got so

complicated and, erm, you know, the problems you face today are so much kind of-, there are so many more special interest groups. And all interest groups are so much better organised, and they get better and better organised the further you go on, so I think people that have done a special advisor's job, for example, in the recent past, probably makes them a good person to take over the department, but I enjoy working with somebody that's got different points of reference. I personally find that I have got a lot of respect for Vince because he's done lots of different things in his life and he's got a wealth of experience personally. In his personal life as well, you know, I identify with somebody that's had personal loss, that's moved around, that's faced difficult things in their life personally as well. I think ... I-I sometimes think people that have had the most charmed of lives, I wonder if, erm, they really understand what it is when they see some-, when they see ... whether they really empathise with people not as well off as themselves.

6. Past record

Past political record and public perception

Waring, 10

And policy-wise, while in opposition you can stand for policies that, erm, perhaps now are more difficult to pursue as, as you intended [0:27:45.6] politicians realised over the years that they had to turn their public persona around. Ian Duncan Smith and Michael Portillo over the years said we're not what you thought we were five, six, eight years ago.

Ian Duncan Smith is unbelievable, his sort of image transformation. I don't know if you spoke to his media special advisor but she's very good at her job. She's very nice. Erm, she's a really interesting person to talk to. But, erm, I think the thing that characterises a very good opposition politician is somebody that's willing to take risks, and sometimes they come back to bite you when you're in government but you probably wouldn't be in government if you hadn't taken the risks in the first place, so it's taking the right risks, isn't it?

6. Past record

Past record, baggage that limits reputation management options	Wood, 4
<p>If you look at the progress that both Iain Duncan Smith and William Hague have done since then, would you see their past record as a baggage that would limit the options that politicians have now?</p> <p>There's no doubt that at the time, I mean I'm particularly talking about William, there's no doubt that that precocious conference performance from the 1970s cast a very long shadow. Er, and even when he was leader of the party 20 years after that speech it sort of was there at the folk memory of what he was and that summed up the problem, you know. He was the school swat or the far too clever boy but he was a boy not a man and you know the images of him lecturing in the Conservative Party Conference Hall in that northern accent of his back in the '70s it made people feel this guy's not really ready for the job. He's not a big enough personality, he's not got a strong enough character, he's immature, he's a child come to do a man's job.</p>	
6. Past record	
Past record	Hazlewood, 3
<p>How do you do that? That's your message. How do you do that by trying to avoid or having visible engagements in England or by ... she probably knew the National Anthem before she was appointed.</p> <p>She was, she actually sang it on national radio. She was, erm, she used to be a member of the parliamentary choir for the Children in Need telephone. She was asked if she would go on the radio and sing the national anthem, which she did and she raised £700. Now, you know, the Conservative party has historically suffered from the image of John Redwood not singing the national anthem.</p> <p>That's what I'm asking, yes.</p> <p>Yes, as you know. But the fact that Cheryl was able to go onto a live radio programme and sing it note perfect I think did her a lot of favours.</p> <p>A lot of people probably don't know that she did that, but, erm, it stopped the media from</p>	

sticking a camera up her nose or a microphone up her nose every time you get a conference of the Welsh National Assembly because they know she can sing it, so why are we trying to catch her out? I don't think now the issue of Cheryl representing an English seat is a problem. It occasionally comes back.

Yeah.

But because we dismissed it out of hand from very early stages, even when she was a Shadow, the press and our reporters soon got tired of it.

## 6. Past record

Past record

Hazlewood, 4,5

If you work for a politician who has been around for many years I think your boss was [0:10:18:1] in 1992, then it is the past record, is that an asset that you can use or does that limit the room to manoeuvre?

I suppose it depends what you have done, I mean....

For instance, clearly at one point you opposed the idea of the revolution at the other point in the job, you say that is a good idea, that is just one random example.

It is a good example, I think, I mean I didn't work in Wales in '97 when we had the referendum on devolution and the party took a stance. Erm, but quite rightly as soon as the result was known, took the view devolution is now here, it is going to become part of Welsh life, we have to work with it and I think the party that has come the furthest since the referendum of all the four main parties in Wales is the conservative party. You have got people openly talking about further powers for the assembly, you had the assembly leader joining a cross party campaign for a yes vote in the 5 referendum in March. Erm, so I think the image of the Welsh conservative party now is one that is much more in tune with Wales than it ever was. They always had a problem, the party always had a problem about appearing to be too English and too anglocentric a view of Wales. I don't think that exists to the same extent now, erm and you only have to look at the records over the last few years in a series of elections. We have gone forward at every election, at every level of government since '99, there has got to be a reason for that and I think that as in some parties is about its attitudes towards Wales, decisions it makes within Wales about Wales,

about how it embraces the new political structures within Wales as well. Obviously the changing fortunes of the conservative party at Westminster level have helped as well since 2005

7. Reputation management over time

Brown managed to conceal his true character from the public initially	Neather, 3
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mean in this country you can take any politician, really, and, to a degree I'm not sure... okay, take an example like Gordon Brown, he's an obvious one where he had a particular image built up over time which... I mean the spin wasn't entirely ineffective. When he took office... not office, when he became Prime Minister in 07 he had an image justifiably for being dour, for not being a great communicator and for being rather dull and stoic and those... the reason he had that image is because that's the truth, you know, and he couldn't escape it. Now, in fact... because of the way he conducted his intrigues he was well-known to Westminster insiders as being an exceptionally nasty politician as well. I mean, somebody who deployed the most... he'd never get his own hands dirty... somebody who had this pack of attack dogs who he would unleash on people and people were scared of him because it was nasty stuff and the way that Blair... you know, Blair is a hardcore politician but I mean he wouldn't... Anyway, Brown managed to... I think he managed to conceal that to a fair degree to the general public, for your average newspaper reader, and then it became more obvious in [0:11:20.8] you know, a series of scandals like the Damien McBride affair and so on. But I would say, broadly...

7. Reputation management over time

Politicians who are not publicly known may have their public persona positioned and shaped by communicators	McBride, 2, 3
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I think there are some politicians that you meet that you think are a bit of a blank canvas. You know, um, where... taking as an example people that come into politics through quite a technocratic route, um, whether they worked their way up through local government or the unions or, um, through the hierarchy of the Labour Party. Um, you know, people who don't necessarily have any set public image and when you meet them you almost think well, you know, how are you going to establish yourself? You know, what is going to be your selling point with people? And to take an example, two examples, um, Liam Byrne and John

Healey, two people that, um, you know, don't look like natural politicians, they're not TV politicians or anything like that. But they've both sort of worked their way up to pretty senior figures in the Labour Party, I worked with both of them closely. And with both of them, you know, you almost had that point where you sat down with them and you thought, you know, you could be anything, you know, you could be the intellectual who sort of theorises about politics and theorises about policy. Or you could be the straight talking, tough... you could be anything you wanted to. Or you could just be sort of very good and competent at your job and regarded as a safe pair of hands.

7. Reputation management over time

Reputation management is a long term process. E.g. cultivating media relations

McBride , 12

and in some ways that's one of the big dangers that Ed Miliband has got is that he doesn't... he's never invested much time in the media, doesn't necessarily understand the media. Um, he's got some good people around him that do but you can never make up for that sort of personal level of engagement that is required and sort of these people feeling confident that you understand them and where they're coming from.

7. reputation management over time

a long established perception of an individual is not easily altered even though politicians change their jobs

Hill, 3

The politicians, the incumbent in office, the Minister of Defence or the Chancellor, they're being valued for certain specific qualities, to be assertive, or to be compassionate, or to be understanding. Now, as the situation changes over years, or they may move into another job, then different qualities become important.

Yes, that's absolutely right, and you have to ... and what you have to do is to develop that, but ... different qualities to a degree become important, but there's an overall perception of a politician that has built up which ... and it doesn't matter which department they go into, people have a perception ... a perception of them.

7. Reputation management over time



The message of what a politician is about can be redefined in the course of time	Hill, 8
<p>If ... if someone is in office for a decade, surely there is a need to change the narrative over time. But then there's so much baggage that you've ... all the statements you've made, all the decisions you've taken. Is it ... is it ... how has it developed over the time, over the years? You came in in the middle ... half way, so there was a need, perhaps to change ...</p> <p>The four years were ... they were not ... they were a hard four years, actually. They were a hard four years. They were ... really, the government sort of goes 1997 to 2002 and then from 2002/2003 through to 2007 it, it's harder. Erm, I think the ... I mean the big ... you had your big shift moment, which was the post 2005 election, erm, when suddenly, what he did ... I mean, as you all well know, I mean, was the ... the agenda ... the narrative shifting was essentially agenda shifting. It was ... it was knowing that he was not going to fulfil a full term, not yet knowing exactly how long he was going to stay on, but knowing he was not going to fulfil a full term. This was about a very hectic rush towards implementation. And, therefore, it was ... it was a lot of headlines. I mean, health, activity, respect agenda and so on. These were things that changed the ... changed the narrative, erm, not from scratch, but it became different ... it become very different, erm, and I think that was ... you use a moment to change things, and the moment really was to say post 2005, having had ... I mean, not just the Iraq war, but the fight over tuition fees and so on. Some very close shaves in the House of Commons, that really post 2005 this was implementation, and that was the message, that I have been slow to make some things happen that I should have made happen quicker. Before I go I'm going to try and make up for some of that. That was really what the message was in that respect.</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
<p>To generate reputation sufficient time is needed</p> <p>2. If the politician was associated with particular policies in the past the possibilities to reposition his/her public persona are limited</p>	Eustice, 2
<p>I think there was another big factor. Michael Howard, to be fair, didn't have long enough, and you're right, he had baggage from the past, he had a previous reputation and it was difficult to untangle his new role from his previous incarnation as a tough talking home secretary, who people, when push came to shove, didn't feel that he was a change that</p>	

they thought the country needed, because they associated him too much with the recent conservative past.	
7. Reputation management over time	
In the case of Cameron the communication strategy is consistent over a long time and guided by an initial situation analysis	Eustice, 3
<p>The Big Society is just a later reincarnation of something he called 'shared responsibility', which was, if you like, a belief in old Conservative values, slightly more traditional Conservative values. And I don't mean John Major, 'Back to Basics' stuff. I mean a belief in family, community, community spirit, volunteering, national service, these slightly, almost you might sort of say the conservative values that would have pertained in the 1950s but which haven't been around so much since Thatcher. David Cameron represented a reconnection with those more traditional Conservative, social Conservative, erm, beliefs. And it was genuine, it was what he thought, and the themes that we picked tried to put a modern perspective on those traditional conservative values.</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
The discrepancy between current image and projected image determines how long the reputation management exercise last	Eustice, 10
<p>And then you had Michael Howard who was very well known, but may have had an image problem due to what happened in the past. How long, and what decides on how long it takes to see a visible, tangible, in the opinion research, see a tangible change in people's perception?</p> <p>Erm, I think it very much depends on erm ... it's interesting. I think the factors are, how well they're known, and how far the original perception is from where you want to get them, erm, and then just how much what I'd call flux there is in the system.</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
Cameron's public perception was shaped in a very brief period of time during the 2005 party conference	Eustice, 10, 11

And so if you look at say David Cameron, he was a completely unknown character and we built our whole strategy in the 2005 election around using a launch on the Friday before Conference as a springboard, and using the one week long conference to, you know, deliver his message and to tell the public what he was about. And in that one week he became the star of the conference, he was an unknown person, people had no preconceptions. By the end of the week I think the recognition level went from four per cent of the public to about eighty per cent, in one week. It was an extraordinary ... So you had the opportunity to sort of make the media ... make the media perception or the public perception about him, in one week. And that's unusual.

7. Reputation management over time

Michael Howard's public persona was difficult to alter as preconceptions about him existed

Eustice, 11

the case of Michael Howard it was much ... a much harder thing to do. He only had eighteen months anyway. There were preconceptions about him, and it was a longer process because you had to shift the previous conception and bring in the new. And you didn't have also the ... the big even that sort of shook up the kaleidoscope, created huge flux in terms of public perception, and 'cos you needed an even bigger event to do that. (...)

That's right, Michael Portillo is a good example. It can be done, but you do need that ... you almost need a cathartic moment when there is huge flux and where public perceptions are directly challenged. And it's not easy to do when you've got previous ... you know, when it's already established, you have a brand. It's a little bit like, there are some politicians who end up getting a reputation for being gaff prone, sometimes quite unfairly. They might just do one or two interviews and go wrong. Suddenly that's all the media want when they talk to them is another gaff. And I know Oliver Letwin had particularly this problem, just because he had made one or two ... problems. He's basically incredibly intelligent, one of the brightest people we've got on our front bench. He's absolutely the sort of intellectual underpinning of the current Cameron agenda. However, the media perception was that he was gaffe prone, and it's very hard to move that, so I think in the

end he sort of said, I'm going to stop talking to the media as a general rule, I'm just going to get on and do the policy work.	
7. Reputation management over time	
public persona of politicians can be reinvented	Eustice, 10
It can be done, you can reinvent people. It's happened in the past. I'm trying to think of examples, but it, it, can happen that you can reinvent someone.	
7. reputation management over time	
What publics expect of politicians changes over time	Macrory, 1, 2
<p>Are you aware-, well, you are aware. We're all aware that people have-, the electorate public has specific expectations of what a politician ideally should be like. Are you aware of what people expect politicians-, how they function and what they should be like?</p> <p>Well, I think it changes all the time and I mean to me it's always fascinating that probably the three greatest or most celebrated prime ministers in Britain for the last-, over the last sort of 120 years-, people would argue who they were but let's-, pre-Thatcher, Churchill, Gladstone and Lloyd George. Out of those prime ministers, none of them would pass the test, the 20<sup>th</sup> century test of being a public figure. Churchill drank and he was-, had all sorts of shady characters financing him. Lloyd George was a bit of a crook. Gladstone used to go out and pick up young page 2 ladies in the street and all that. So what made a politician-, what makes a politician acceptable to the public and what makes a public like a politician seems to-, the groundwork has changed the whole time</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
Cameron's personality is consistent over years	Macrory, 3
Now that David Cameron eight years ago (a new young back bencher) hasn't changed from the David Cameron we have now. So nobody needed to work on him but the party-, people	

spotted him. That's how I think it works.

## 7. Reputation management over time

Party leaders initially at the beginning of term try harder shape and manage their public persona, over time their true personality emerges

Beattie, 4,5

Back in one minute. Sorry. I was wondering, over time when you see someone changes, like with Blair, he wasn't the same person, but initially he was the smiling Bambi and in the end he was almost [0:25:59.0]. It's the same personality, the same person, or perhaps a cosmetic change, but why do they seem to ... Why this reputation, the way the public persona of an individual changes dramatically over time? Is that because you get bored after a time? You think the agenda was positive – now it will have to be negative? Not you personally but the ...

Now here's an interesting question. You can actually probably say that the real Blair emerged at the end of his time in office rather than at the beginning, and actually what happened was [0:26:48.4] great calibre who ... and quite a convincing actor who presented himself in a certain way in the beginning and then as he grew more comfortable in the job actually [0:27:08.2] because he didn't need to do any. With Cameron I suspect we'll get the same but I think what will happen is the nastier side of Cameron he's been very good at hiding and actually there's a ruthlessness to him, like a [0:27:32.2] arrogance to him, which so far he's been pretty well hiding. He's been very lucky that – not lucky. He's been very skilful at making sure that his true personality hasn't come through and he's ... because he's reasonably successful, and the papers [0:27:59.7]. Now the question is can he sustain that for longer? Possibly. If he didn't I wouldn't be surprised. Now part of this is you are shaped by the job. I mean there's, you know ... and the job can either enhance and diminish you, depending on how you do it and how things go for you [0:28:38.1]. And that's actually beyond our ... although we can comment on influences, it's actually more of a job for [0:28:48.5]. that's a different side of how this is done. I mean there's a saying that almost every politician who becomes Prime Minister goes into the job sane and comes out mad, but the exception is Gordon Brown. He went in mad and came out madder. It does distort you in a quite disturbing way sometimes by [0:29:13.1] ex prime ministers. But actually how

much do we influence that? We probably influence whether they stay in office in terms of their popularity, but actually in terms of their personality I think that's more the job than us.

7. Reputation management over time

Managing reputation over time

Stacey, 7

Do you get, for very good professional reasons, you need to sell your paper, do you need to get bored with a politician after a year or two or five?

No you get bored with the story though definitely. So you can't... you need the story to move on and a politician can't be sending you the same line for too long. So for instance the coalition knows now you can't just keep banging on about austerity the whole time, it's got to start talking about growth soon.

Why? Because you want a new headline?

Exactly. And the public want a change of tune, change of story. Like you say it gets boring. I think that's absolutely right.

7. Reputation management over time

Reputation management over time

Stacey, 9, 10

The next comment is the very last one. Do you think you can change the reputation you acquired once? Let's imagine you've got three or four anecdotes, you got this wrong, you had a very poor start, totally misunderstood by everyone, this is the narrative you've made, it's wrong. Can you change that deliberately?

You can but it's usually too late. I mean the person I can think of for whom it's changed is William Hague, he was just a disaster as the party leader but really quite well respected now as foreign secretary. Just looks like he's grown up, he's not going for those kind of cheap stunts like I drink 17 pints a day and wearing a baseball cap, stuff like that.

That took him, what, 10 years?

Exactly it took him 10 years and by the time that happened he was... he was never going to make Prime Minister. I think party leaders don't have very long to make their reputation in the eyes of people, they can rehabilitate themselves but they've got to go away for a bit and

come back and do it.	
7. Reputation management over time	
During the first few months in government you can still add to and strengthen your support	Price, 6
Erm, now yes when you are in government you do have all that baggage and as time goes by or accumulates, erm, inevitably as time goes by, I mean in the first year maybe of government you can add to your support by demonstrating that you have qualities that people didn't realise you had, by showing strong leadership. And I think Blair did that on foreign affairs probably by being a strong leader in the world trade and Brown did it by showing that he can manage the economy	
7. Reputation management over time	
The longer a politician is in government the more support gets whittled away	Price, 6
Erm, so you can for a while extend the coalition support that you have built up in a position, but before long it is inevitable that you are going to make unpopular decisions, you are going to start losing people and erm, sometimes you will make a humungous decision like Iraq was for Blair and you lose a massive number of people and getting those people back is very, very difficult. You can get some of them back but you're never, ever going to get all of them back, so it is true that over time your coalition support is going to get whittled away, and whittled away, and whittled away, and at some point your shelf life is going to have been reached and it is time to move on. Erm, and I think that probably happens to all politicians and that is why they can't go on forever.	
7. Reputation management over time	
Good strategic thought about positioning and goals can prolong the support and slow down the demise of a government	Price, 7

Erm, but as I say, eventually the negatives are going to mount up (on a government). Good strategic thought about your-, you know where you want to be, who you are, how you communicate, good strategic thought I think can delay the point of which, erm, your coalition <(in government) has become so small that it is time for you go to on, but it can't stop it altogether

7. Reputation management over time

Reputation can be changed over time, if it is flexible enough. But the number of make-overs is limited	Price, 9
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. Erm, but you can, you know, you can only reinvent yourself once or maybe twice if you are lucky. You can't constantly reinvent yourself erm, and so there will become a point of which you're ... Walter Mondale said that political images like mixing cement, at some point it sets and once it is set you really can't change it, erm, and so for Blair it was kept in the late nineties probably. Erm, yeah and although it did change and people thought differently of him by the time he left, you can't constantly ... you can't just sort of smash it up and start all over again. Erm, and that means that you will be leapfrogged. Other people will have moved on and will have been able to do that sort of reformation and change at a time when you're kind of stuck with what you've got, and that is why politics is in a constant state of renewal and is fluid and people don't go on forever, thank god.

7. Reputation management over time

Reputation management ins a "process"	Stevenson, 1
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, it's a general question, isn't it, because politics is partly about persuading people that you are to be trusted and to be liked, if you can, and to be respected, and all the other values that we want our politicians to have. So it's a continuous process. I think you would expect that in any public figure, not just politicians, so there is an interest in how the perception can help carry the message.

7. Reputation management over time



Factors that change reputation over time	Kettle, 1
<p>What struck me was that, if you look at politicians who are in office for a long time, then for some reason that I find difficult to explain, they may start with a...take Tony Blair as an example and others with a certain reputation and public persona perception which then dramatically changes over time, I was wondering is that caused by events or is it caused by change of personality or is it changed by inability to orchestrate and design the public persona? Clearly, they've put a lot of effort into it and, at the beginning, it worked out brilliantly and, in the end, he was almost described as a villain. How do these changes-, how are they explained (the reputation change in an individual)?</p> <p>I suspect every case is sui generis and it will reflect all of the things that you've mentioned whether it's the personality and circumstances of the leader, the historic situation of the party, the particular circumstances in which, you know, they find themselves, events and I mean these things...as you say, people do change over time in some cases but not in others. I mean, you know, the person who comes to mind just for some-, for no good reason who never changed was Lyndon Johnson, you know, who was always, you know, the ultimate machine politician and never pretended to be anything other than a machine politician and governed as a machine politician whereas Blair who-, you know, he's obviously a very interesting example, you know. He arose-, it was obvious Blair was a personality that the Labour Party-, that was tremendously advantageous to the Labour Party in opposition because he was young, because he was articulate, because he was not working class, he carried no baggage and he seemed-, he had a very direct appeal to middle class voters that Labour didn't-, that Labour needed to win and he was very open to a communications strategy so I mean on all...but by the end, as you say, I mean he became idiosyncratic, rather defiant, self-righteous and unpopular so, you know, it doesn't-, so-, I mean how that changed is a long story.</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
In the course of time politicians may lose their ability to communicate effectively	Kettle, 2

It was very interesting to watch Neil Kinnock's career as leader because-, I mean I can remember when I was a student going on a demonstration in Vietnam so such a long time ago and Neil Kinnock, who was this newly-elected Labour MP in 1970, gave a speech from a-, in a park, in Hyde Park. I thought, wow, this-, you know, this is a man with a real ability to communicate. I mean I didn't think of it in those terms but, you know, that, you know, he could just put it over in a way that was wonderful but, by the end, he became imprisoned by the-, by Peter Mandelson and the whole kind of-, and the system and became a-, he was and is a completely unconvincing communicator

7. Reputation management over time

Can and do politicians change their public persona over time?

Kettle, 5,6

I'm wondering to what degree politicians can reinvent their public persona and image and the two examples I've been following in the past years are that of Portillo and Ian Duncan Smith. On the one hand, I'm being told, no, it's by their advisors...it is who they really are, you can't create, you can't manufacture and fabricate a public image that's different from their identity. On the other hand, in these two cases, there seem to be...I'm wondering (I don't know, I'm asking) are there any systematic efforts and are you-, is-, does that take place and would you describe someone very differently from how you described them eight/nine years ago?

Well, Portillo, first of all-

Before you became a journalist and-

Yes, yes. Well, I mean Portillo is-, was unusual in the 1980s in that he was (as a Tory)-, in that, you know, he was Spanish, you know. He-, you know, he was sort of-, he was of the party but not rooted in the party. He was provocatively right-wing and I think he learned from experience actually and-, I mean I remember the first time I really sat down with Portillo and he came to lunch here and I can't remember what job he held at-, by that point but I thought he was the most able political brain that I'd come across in a long time. He was just, you know, really-, and to this day, he's really worth talking to just as a-, just to get

a take on a situation and I think he thinks politically in a very disciplined way. Now you could say but how can that possibly be because he-, because of what happened to his career and it may be that there are just sort of personal factors as ever in that. I mean Portillo went through some kind of...it's a cliché.

Damascene experience?

Yes, a Damascene event, you know, both by losing and then by, you know, recognising how much Blair had kind of captured the Tory vote and-, you know, so there was a rational as well as a kind of emotional thing in it that, you know, the Tories needed to recapture centre ground voters that they'd completely squandered any credibility with. He knew that very painfully because of his massive defeat and I think he learned the lesson of that. On the other hand, you know, there are all sorts of personal things about Portillo, his-, you know, his sexuality, his cultural interests, you know, his whole hinterland.

Which popped up or became more visible when needed.

Became more visible...yes, that's true. I don't have any answer to that. I-

He gave it a try.

Yes, I just think-, I think, in the end, Portillo failed because he was not popular, you know. He didn't-, I think, like Robin Cook in the Labour Party, he is an immensely interesting and distinctive force but he did not-, you know, he didn't build a movement around himself. Brown built a movement around himself and was very successful in terms of becoming party leader...likewise, I suppose you would say also Cameron but in, you know, Brown's case, he didn't have-, he did not possess the interesting qualities that made Cook such as an attractive figure or Portillo an attractive figure but they-, you know, they were not warm people. Your other example is-

7. Reputation management over time

Some politicians genuinely change over time and thus their public persona	Kettle, 6
<p>What's happened in the meantime to him (since his failure to lead and now)? The Conservatives...I've talked to them and, clearly, they would say that this was-, no-one gave him advice that he should focus on social issues (00:29:13) a genuine change in his perception and understanding of what the direction should be and-</p> <p>I think that's-, I buy that. I can buy that because I think, if you talk to this man, Bob Holman, up in Glasgow, who witnessed this celebrated moment in which, you know, Duncan Smith came to the estate, this huge great estate in Glasgow and then went-, and then as he was leaving, Holman said-, he said goodbye, thanks and-, as you probably know, and then Holman said I bet you never come back here again and this obviously did get under his skin and he is quite a sensitive person in that respect (emotionally sensitive) and that-, I think that clearly did work, you know. That-, you know, that got under his radar and-, so I do think there is something in the sort of personal journey in Duncan Smith's case. I mean he's not concerned to-, he doesn't have-, you know, he-, I don't think he has political ambition in the sense of ever thinking he could ever be the leader of the party again and, in that sense, you know, he's sort of free. He's kind of-, he's allowed to do this so I do think-, I think that was a genuine, you know, life-developing experience and that-, you know, I mean he's still a difficult touchy over-sensitive kind of person. I talked to-, when he-, I talked to Douglas Alexander at one point when Douglas Alexander was the shadow pensions secretary and he said that he was actually really keen...he had a lot of sympathy for what Duncan Smith was trying to do and he kept on trying to say so but, because Duncan Smith would always see insults where none were intended, you know, he was actually very difficult to work with and I think that's part of his-, you know, that's probably part of the legacy of his journey too.</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
The image of a well-known politician can still be changed over time	Greer, 3
I wonder what impact it has if you've been around for a long time. So if you have a record baggage of decisions you've taken and interviews you've given and, um how many years	

you've been, um observed by the public and by the media. Um, can you think of cases where even though there was that baggage of history and a track record, changes could still be made and were deliberately made? Or is that virtually impossible?

I think Margaret Thatcher is probably a very good example of where, you know, changes were made over the course of her career. You know, when you listen to speeches by Margaret Thatcher when she came into parliament and you listen to speeches when she first became leader. And then particularly from that point onward in her career, one thing you'll notice is that her voice becomes deeper and she speaks more slowly and she was coached because it was an authority thing. The idea that if she spoke slightly more deeply, slightly more sombrely that she would command more authority as a result. I think that's a very good example and there are many other cases. I mean media training, there are loads of other politicians who go through this where you can see subtle changes. I think hers in terms of her voice is probably, is probably the most, the most distinct kind of change. Um, the other side you could sort of look at, er, you know, at Tony Blair who evolved into this, you know, very sort of fully fledged American style, almost, politician in terms of the choice of clothes that would go with certain events and you know, what they were trying to communicate. And standing there with the mug with the family on it, you know, none of that is unintentional.

There are certain things that they're trying to do at that point, effectively or ineffectively. But it's about changing the impression and you know, one of the things I've often said is that, you know, image is perception and perception is reality and reality can often times be whatever they want it to be. Because if you create the impression that someone is like that, you know, through either physical image or, you know, through the, um, through the voice. I mean Margaret Thatcher didn't change as an individual, she held the same views, she was putting forward the same kind of policy, she had the same kind of objectives. But their view was, and I think it was probably right actually, um, that by slowing her down and deepening the voice she'd gain more authority as a result

7. Reputation management over time	
Politicians don't need a new reputation created, they usually need an existing reputation managed	Redfern, 8

No I don't think so, that was good. I mean it's so different to what I do in my day job in terms of—because you're not building that reputation, the reputation is there, you're shaping it and nuance it, but actually—and you're trying to offset the bad stuff but you don't—it exists, which is much easier.

7. Reputation management over time

The reputation of Gordon Brown was built over many years

Livermore, 1

does reputation make and break careers, accelerate them, stop them?

Erm, I think so. I think, I mean what, what I would say is we spend ... I think the answer to your, your overall question is that absolutely, yes, we worked incredibly hard on Gordon Brown's reputation, erm, and that we created a reputation for him painstakingly in the years up to him becoming Prime Minister, and, to be honest, the whole time that he was chancellor

7. Reputation management over time

For the PM it is very difficult to keep control of communications and centrally managing the agenda becomes more of a problem with time of tenure

Livermore, 8

Is that still ... so when you're prime minister and there's so many other pressures, there's the president on the telephone and the, the Russian president, and there's so many other factors that drive your, your daily agenda and your weekly and so forth, do you still have image advice or would you still have ...

And I think that your question is right that, what I'm trying to say is the longer you are prime minister or once you become prime minister it becomes increasingly hard to remain-, to retain that centralised control, to retain the, erm, er, continuous focus on the reputation. So you've come into office knowing, you know, hopefully with a set reputation, knowing what you wanted, know what you want to create, reputation you want to maintain and build. Erm, but it is very difficult to ... as prime ... uniquely as prime minister, not in these other jobs that we talked about, to er, to maintain a focus on that when there are so many competing pressures, which I think is why the longer you're in office the harder it gets and then probably the worse people get at it.

7. Reputation management over time	
Managing reputation over time	Wood, 3
<p>Is it to do with...?</p> <p>I mean there is... I mean I'll give you a good image example and it's true and it's pulling it all back from the BBC archives will be difficult. But if you... Rory Bremner... when I first got there and Amanda first worked there, I remember Bremner portraying William Hague as a schoolboy and he sat ... it was Rory Bremner but he looked like William Hague... he sits on a chair but the chair is ridiculously high, this enables him to dangle his feet. Do you remember this? Have you seen this?</p> <p>I vaguely remember yes.</p> <p>His feet sort of... and he's wearing shorts and long socks and a schoolboy cap and he sits there like some child. I remember towards the end, a couple of years later, Bremner doing another one, he did many of these sort of sketches but he did another one which Hague was a skinhead driving a taxi and giving an ear bashing to his passengers about immigrants and Europe and taxes and all that kind of thing. And of course that does show the image change but we changed... so I would say we changed the image but not by any conscious sort of image making but through adjusting, changing the content of what Hague was about and that shifted perceptions of him. And I think subsequently William's, broadly speaking, Williams has become a much more popular and acceptable politician than he was when he was leader. It's partly a function of him growing up, I mean he was only 40 when he resigned as leader, he was only 36 I think when he became leader.</p>	
7. Reputation management over time	
Reputation management over time – changes in the public persona over time	Wood, 4

If you look at the progress that both Iain Duncan Smith and William Hague have done since then, would you see their past record as a baggage that would limit the options that politicians have now?

There's no doubt that at the time, I mean I'm particularly talking about William, there's no doubt that that precocious conference performance from the 1970s cast a very long shadow. Er, and even when he was leader of the party 20 years after that speech it sort of was there at the folk memory of what he was and that summed up the problem, you know. He was the school swat or the far too clever boy but he was a boy not a man and you know the images of him lecturing in the Conservative Party Conference Hall in that northern accent of his back in the '70s it made people feel this guy's not really ready for the job. He's not a big enough personality, he's not got a strong enough character, he's immature, he's a child come to do a man's job.

All that was there, um, and of course there is two sides to William, there is the reserve and intellectual, um, very private, quite shy side to his character. And I suppose those two things, the sort of northern working class hero and the shy precocious intellectual, it all sided a bit uneasily together as a person, there was a conflict potential between the two things.

But...

I mean I think he's very much grown into himself in the intervening decade, now, I think he's a much more self-confident and more at ease with himself in terms of how he comes across on television. Um, and I think he comes across, he is, I think now, he's a more accessible and friendly and relaxed sort of figure than he was then.

#### 7. Reputation management over time

Reputation change over time

Wood, 7

So we're obviously not going to change our main policies on say economics or on Europe or law and order or whatever, things which we're fairly traditionally associated with. But we are going to campaign, er on poverty. Now he didn't articulate it as clearly as that at the time but that's what he meant and he launched this, um, I remember I was... how shall I put



it? I was sceptical about it, I just didn't know really, he, at the time, didn't... it was not clear to me exactly what he was on about. And he went on this sort of tour, pilgrimage which was really appalling day in helping the vulnerable, have you heard of that?

Yes.

And I remember we tipped up on some council estate in the Midlands for a sort of meeting and I thought what the hell is this all about, you know, going to visit some drug rehab or drop in centre or something like that with a few camera crews and a few reporters in tow. And it was not... I knew that this was really really badly worked out, we had not figured out what on earth it was we were trying to say. And this... and also, you know, the party, the parliamentary party were completely baffled by this, you know, the leader should be in London standing up to Blair in the House of Commons, what is he doing? He's trailing around northern England with a few reporters in tow talking to poor people, what the hell is this all about? That's what the average MP was saying. It did cause internal trouble that. Now of course it's now apparent to me and apparent to many what he was on about, I'm not even sure he knew exactly then what it was, he just knew there was something to be done about this. Er, it didn't work at all, politically between 2001 and 2003, the two or three years he had his lead, I don't think he did us any good at all, politically. Um, and I was pushing him to get back onto the more traditional, economic grounds, backing tax cuts and being more critical about Europe, taking a stance on asylum seekers and all this kind of thing. I don't think much of what Iain did in that era really made much purchase, um, a bit maybe but not a lot.

But of course subsequently after he was overthrown as leader he sets up a centre for social justice and the first two years of that it was still... Well by then, and I worked with him on that launch, by then I'd sort of got a clearer idea what it meant by this and I could sort of see its potential. And within about two years this thing had started to get traction and phrases like broken Britain, breakdown Britain, breakthrough Britain, um, the five pathways to poverty, poverty is not just about money, it's about the way people live their lives, etc, etc. Um, that had all started to become clearer to people as it became more embedded, that analysis. Of course all this is, as I was saying earlier, this is sort of policy based rather than image based. However, I think... my feeling is that what you do defines your image. So by doing these things Iain did become this kind of poverty messiah if you like, you know, he did become this almost sort of... what's the right word? Almost sort of, er, almost a sort of religious figure and adopted. In a way, he was doing, in a way, what a lot of churchmen

should do but don't. Um, you know he was really... and I think he did begin to change people's perception of him.

8. Controlling the agenda

Spin doctors have influence on the media as they control access

Neather, 3

did it take you and others so long to find out what kind of people surrounded...? Damien McBride was very nice to talk to, like the way it has been around in No.11 and then at No.10.

I think it was because... I think there was a definite element of fear. You know, people like McBride – Ian Austin before him – could be scary if you got on the wrong side of him. I never dealt with McBride. I just didn't deal with that kind of spin doctor [0:12:03.0]. You know, this is standard spin doctor stuff. They can control access.

8. Controlling the agenda

When the PM Brown is on foreign travel the communication agenda cannot be controlled and communications staff need to react

McBride, 7

I'd say when he became Prime Minister, um, what you very quickly realised is that you can do very, very little planning at all. Even those big foreign trips which have to be planned, um, became slightly wild escapades where you didn't know what would happen back home while you were on them and it was all about sort of rolling with the punches and being able to react.

8. Controlling the agenda

Communications management could not determine or predict the issues that would be discussed in the coming week

McBride, 8

You describe the build-up, the man... he becoming the party leader. Did you... and you describe what sort of travelling and meetings and international appearances he had to make to be seen as the person who can be in charge of the country and engage in diplomacy and meet heads of state and government. Did you explicitly develop a plan for this? Was it... did you have it almost written down for the next six months? This is the

agenda for the next six months.

Um, partly, er, I'm trying to think who would have been... who would have kept that sort of... I think it would have been slightly more, slightly looser than that. Um, I think only because we knew that, you know, you could, as I say, you could put things like foreign trips in the diary. You could never quite sort of predict what you'd be talking about in a particular week.

#### 8. Controlling the agenda

Communications advisors can decide to present a politician in a specific media, but still feel that in term of how the story turn out they are in the hands of the journalist

McBride, 14

A little bit and I think one of the criticisms that could be made of, either criticism or... you know I'd go back to the thing about trying to be authentic. Um, one of the criticisms that could be made is that when we were doing this sort of idea of presenting Gordon in a sort of different light and showing him doing different things, we would very much be in the hands of whichever journalist we chose to do that with on the day. So everything from that day with Kay Burley, Nick Robinson, the BBC doing a profile of Gordon, um, which was going to go out shortly before he took over leader about who is Gordon Brown? Done up in his home town. Um, similar thing that we did with News Night with, um, the name escapes me. down to newspaper things like, er, you only think... right, there were some that were very good, um, like, er Belle Mooney did a profile of him for the, er Times which was excellent, um, where she really got to grips with who he was and you know, she got a huge... and this was all part of the, you know, women don't know Gordon, here's someone who is the Queen of women, female journalists, what will she make of Gordon? Being introduced to this guy. That was great, you know, I managed that process.

#### 8. Controlling the agenda

Government efforts to set the news agenda

Beattie, 2,3

They would claim that they [0:10:48.2] there are certain periods throughout parliament, the first couple of days or weeks, the [0:10:55.1] and budget day and other big events where they can set the agenda. They can control what you have to record and what are they ... up to the point where they can frame it. If you meet the American President who's got an hour's time for you then you don't have an alternative. You have to appreciate the fact that at this meeting there's relevant issues that are important for the country for the future so

they can set the agenda. It's difficult to quantify it, but to what degree would you agree? Look, the set pieces [0:11:29.0]. The weekly set piece [0:11:32.8] is extraordinarily important, although it does not [0:11:35.5] outside here because, as I said right at the beginning, [0:11:43.1] of what we see there and what happens there then filters out through a very careful use and highly calibrated form of language and opinion to the wider audience. And just as important [0:12:04.1] because if morale is low they are a problem. The majority of British people, like in every other country, are not that interested in day to day politics, but they have a sense, like in most countries, of [0:12:23.4] who is winning on the [0:12:27.0]. Those are there for your advantage or disadvantage, but actually they are just kind of road stops on actually a much long longer journey and it's actually how you fill the gaps between those road stops that's actually in the end more important. And in between it's ...

What attempts can you identify made by Downing Street [0:13:02.8] leader of the opposition to determine what you'll be writing about? It's not what you write but what you're writing about which makes a big difference.

Well, you know, I will show you on the way out the corridor is sit in is a corridor with [0:13:25.1] all the way down. [0:13:28.2], and on a daily basis, depending on how topical politics is or how big a crisis there is then I will have a string of Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour spin doctors walking down that corridor. Health was big issue yesterday. We had a lot of visitations. First Lib Dems were first, then the Conservatives came in; Labour came in as well. Now they are there precisely to try and accentuate the positive and nullify the negative; that's their job

## 8. Controlling the agenda

Newspapers and news agenda setting

Beattie, 7

It is a big newspaper. As political editor, would you fancy that the next couple of days that television blogs and the media would pick that up?

When you get into the cannibalistic nature of the media, yes and no. I mean it's interesting what shakes and what doesn't shake. I noticed actually a piece I wrote this week about Ed Miliband quoting a shadow cabinet minister. That quote was chucked at Ed Miliband yesterday by Sky News. He'd taken a quote from a paper. So yes there is that influence in terms of we've given legs to a story or [0:43:13.0].

8. Controlling the agenda

Media relations management – and influence on coverage

Stacey, 5

Does that impact on the way you're reporting? Apart from you missing out a story, but do you... you've got on your mind that you want not to be disconnected from that flow of information. Does that impact? You don't have to talk about yourself, talk about colleagues if you want. Don't do any names just give me some feeling for...

I don't think... I'm just trying to figure out if that is the case. I think where it impacts is it doesn't make you any less kind of straight for your reporting but it means you're a down player. So if it wasn't your story you instinctively think that wasn't important. So my action would be quite important and you end up telling the desk, "Look forget it, don't worry about it with just 100 words on it." Whereas of course if you'd have been briefed beforehand you'd have written a lot more and made it sound a lot more exciting. But then the spin-doctors know that that's the case. They know if that if they tell you and you alone that there's an absolutely revolutionary reform going through you're going to call it a revolutionary reform because you want to sell your own story.

I was after how can they influence? How could they mould and shape the way you're reporting on a specific individual candidate or incumbent? Now if they knew that you need that information that's why you've got this job, that's what the editor would expect. Now if you don't want to offend them if you know how they want that candidate, that minister being described and portrayed then you don't want to really challenge them unless it's really necessary.

No I don't think that's true, I certainly hope that's not the case. I think we're pretty robust, we certainly don't mind laying into the ministers when they deserve it and I never feel any pressure to kind of soft pedal on anybody and certainly that's not what my desk, my news desk, would want me to do. Only to be fair that's the only kind of...that's the duty that I ever feel. I think the spin-doctors realise that they're not going to be annoyed if you lay into a minister when something's gone wrong, they just know that that's your job. I think sometimes if you start delving into someone's personal life or something like that they can get very annoyed. Luckily at the FT there isn't much call to do that so we don't rub up

against them for those kind of reasons. But it has happened.

## 8. Controlling the agenda

Agenda setting, agenda planning

Stacey, 6,7

What gets on the agenda and what doesn't? Spencer Livermore told me that they are fairly confident that he was in his time that there are certain events in the year where they know you don't have a chance, you need to write about... this is the story you need to do. That would be budget day and quarterly falls of unemployment or when you meet Putin or the American President. That's something that they can control, in between, very difficult. So who will decide what is during the week on the agenda? They do it once or twice a day briefings?

Yeah twice a day they have briefings. They have a pretty good set of... Labour used to be brilliant at it because they used to have the grid. So they would literally have day to day this is what's going to be on the agenda, even if there was nothing coming out they would know, right we'll drop this story here or... What they used to do all the time of course was repeating policy announcements, double announcing policies. People would forget they'd announced a policy so they just announced it again and it would create another day's headlines. Absolutely fantastic.

What are you led by? What is tomorrow's headline? It's difficult to quantify it I know but what are...?

Well every day, so for example once a week I have to do the morning news posting and you just... you go through what are the debates at the Chamber, what are the pieces of legislation coming, who's giving speeches. To that extent it's fairly reactive.

You are reactive.

Yeah. And I don't know if it's true that they have little control, I think they have quite a lot of control. They put a minister up to give a speech and he says some interesting things they know that's going to make the news the next day. The things they can't control is just the events, the scandals, the slip-ups that kind of thing. It's not like we're just beaver away generating, making stories up from nowhere. We'll have our freedom of information requests or interviews with... pieces of gossip that come down but I think they're in control of the agenda a lot of the time. They certainly can do if they choose to do, if they're geared

up enough for it.

#### 8. Controlling the agenda

No clear who sets the agenda

Stevenson, 4

is ... probably you can never quantify it, it depends on the situation, but I'm trying to see to what degree it is the agenda is set by events that you cannot control, by your own media and policy planning, by what journalists have on the agenda.

All of them. Everything. What happens. It's ... mad, that's how it is.

#### 8. Controlling the agenda

Columnists freedom to select issues they want to write about –  
agenda setting

Kettle, 7

But who sets the agenda? There may be something you write about that is what is discussed in the country and the media in general and that's what they may not like because they don't like the NHS issue in general or do they-

It's a really good question but the answer is messy I think in-, and it's different in each individual case because the ecology of the-, of journalism is quite complicated to me and, you know, deciding what to write about is affected by, you know, what subjects have been covered the previous day as much as by what the government would like people to write about or what I would like to write about. I'll give you an example...last week, I was absolutely ready to write my column (my weekly column) on the European Union. That is what I wanted to write about but my colleague, Timothy Garton Ash, who you will doubtlessly know, wrote about the European Union. He was going to write about Turkey and I thought that would be okay...that's a separate question from the European Union (sufficiently separate) and then he changed very late on and I wasn't-, I didn't know this so I woke up on Thursday morning thinking-, you know, with my piece sort of ready to be-, ready to go into labour and produce this piece. I opened the paper and saw that Tim had actually written a piece about the European Union so I had to just think of some other subject and my own personal rule is (on the Guardian)...I may not have this rule if I was on

another paper but, in the Guardian context where I think too many people write about the Labour Party too much, my-, I try to follow a compass which says, when in doubt, write about the government, you know, because the government is more important than the opposition so that was why I wrote about-, that piece because, you know, I was-, it was an immediate-, it was an off the top of the head decision.

## 8. Controlling the agenda

Politicians' communications staff tries to set the news agenda

Kettle, 7

The reason I'm asking (about who sets the agenda, who pushes stories into the news)..

So-, now that's-, I think some columnists are very-, some columnists have very close relationships with politicians either in-, or with communications people or special advisors, you know, and do rely on those suggestions and the conversations they're having to generate what they're writing about. I mean I'm at the extreme other end of that in that I positively don't-, really try not to have those conversations.

Do they seek them? Do they-

One or two people do. I mean don't name them if you will so-, but I mean someone like Michael Gove will ring me up a lot and discuss what I'm going to write about that week and he's quite keen to influence what I write that week. Osborne is kind of quite interested in what I'm going to write. Clegg's office is quite interested in what I'm going to write. I would say Labour's given up on me now or maybe they don't have a very good operation. I'm happy with that because I mean I'm bored with the Labour Party and don't really want-, you know, I think, you know, they've just got to work out whether they're a serious party of government or not again and, you know, that's the only piece I could write really so I mean I will write that piece every six months but there's no point in ringing them up to have a great long conversation but, interestingly, having said that, I did bump into Ed Miliband at something last week (at a lunch I was at) and, you know, he said-, you know, he sort of said some stuff about the Guardian which made me think it might be worth talking to him a bit but I don't think he knows what he wants to do so-, or how to do it so-



8. Controlling the agenda	
The media agenda is unpredictable due to online user consumer generated input	Jones, 18
<p>Yes but of course I mean there are these new factors like the online chatter and that is a complete new phenomenon you see which... I mean that's what's so interesting if you compare what's been happening in Britain with what's been happening in America, you see. I mean the online campaign in favour of Sarah Palin and the Tea Party that was a comparable phenomenon which was a sort of online insurgency. I mean it wasn't organised by Obama and it wasn't organised by the Republicans, it suddenly was an online manifestation and who knows where these online manifestations are going to go. You know, they're like a swarm of bees or starlings, they flitter about but they do have an impact.</p>	
8. Controlling the agenda	
Who sets the agenda	Jones, 23
<p>So there you get that sense that these are the sort of, the talking points that connect with the public. And I mean if you were in government and you thought ah this is just the one that they're going to go for you'd go for it. I mean you have to understand that, I mean the politicians pull back, they know. If you started a campaign now in Britain for the reintroduction of the death penalty and you got the Sun on your side, we'd be hanging and flogging them out there in the street. I mean you could almost build up a campaign for it. So I mean politicians aren't going to do that, they know that when it comes to these key issues like benefit scrounging that to me is a typical illustration of where this coalition has just tweaked it to its advantage and taken an advantage on this latent public sympathy.</p>	
8. Controlling the agenda	

TV and online media pick up news stories newspapers have placed on the agenda	Jones, 5
<p>Now this again you see-, so the newspapers, the way the newspapers report politics and the emphasis on personal stories, that feeds through. You switch on the television at ten o'clock at night and they're talking about what the newspapers are going to say tomorrow. Switch on the radio or the television in the morning and-, so this feeds through and of course it feeds through online so many of the debates online are stories which have been generated by the newspapers. This most recent sex story about these Sky footballers, well, I mean that was video material which was leaked to the newspapers so the newspapers here because they've got an agenda, because they're campaigning journalism, because they're paid money for stories, they have created a different environment to which the politicians have got to find a way to adapt.</p>	
8. Controlling the agenda	
Newspaper have greatest influence over the agenda and politicians adapt to this	Jones, 4
<p>the newspapers with their political agendas and campaigns still have the greatest influence over the daily political agenda and, you know, politicians will bow to that, will, you know, succumb to that and, you know, this whole business of them wanting to be presented to the public through the newspapers, they see that as the starting point</p>	
8. Controlling the agenda	
Media and proprietors' have so much power that politicians have to accommodate their agenda	Jones, 8
<p>Now we might be critical of the fact that the media have got so much power and that the politicians have to dance to the tune of the media but that's part of the UK political scene that's a reflection of the power of the papers because they have this enormous political patronage that they dispense; the proprietors are very capricious, you know, and you either scratch my back and we'll scratch your back or we'll make you out to be, you know, an awkward, difficult man and then you'll pay the price.</p>	

8. Controlling the agenda	
Both the media and the strategists drive the media agenda	Jones, 6
So that is right that the media, you know, are driving it (the agenda) in many ways but equally one has to accept that the strategists had a strategy.	
8. Controlling the agenda	
Downing Street is systematically managing information in order to set the press agenda	Jones, 17
I mean if you look at what the Sun has been doing and what the papers have been doing and the Mail, Daily Mail, Express, Sun, they come up time after time with cases of benefit abuse. Now this isn't magic, I mean there must be a calculated attempt within the party and the government machine to feed them. Some of them are from journalists but some of them, I'm sure, are coming from within the government machine as it is and the party machine because this is a tune that they want to play and they've got their act together and that's what's happened. Cameron is comfortable with it and therefore it all hangs together.	
8. Controlling the agenda	
The budget announcement is an exercise in long term, sophisticated media management	Jones, 9
So if you look at for example-, I mean this is the biggest change in my life time. The biggest change in my life time is that if you had for example a budget back in the 60s and 70s, the details wouldn't be trailed in advance. Now with the British budget we know almost everything because of course people like Gordon Brown and successive chancellors after him have decided that everything now has to be trailed in advance. The media agenda has to be managed	

8. Controlling the agenda	
Gordon Brown had as chancellor the privilege to set and manage his own agenda to a greater extent than any cabinet minister	Livermore, 2
<p>Yeah. That's interesting. I've been told by ... I've talked to a number of people and I'm happy to share some names who I talked to, erm, late on. I will say as the Prime Minister you could set the agenda and decide and have more control over the agenda, and be less, erm, erm, you know, almost remote controlled as a cabinet minister who has to implement what's being, being told now. I'm surprised now also to hear that you say, yes, the chancellor who is most important [0:05:49.6] the cabinet minister, you've more control over how you want to be presented than the prime minister.</p> <p>I think what I would say is that kind of, erm, Gordon Brown was no ordinary cabinet minister. I mean it was, err, a unique relationship between Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, and he certainly would never have seen himself as, erm, you know, an ordinary cabinet minister or in anyway, erm, there to do what the prime minister wanted. So he ... I think it would be fair to say and it is counterintuitive, but it's fair to say he had more power as chancellor than he did as prime minister, and that, that's partly because Tony Blair had more power as prime minister than Gordon Brown had as prime minister, so I'm not saying that the, that the, the office of the chancellor is more powerful than the office of prime minister. All I'm saying is that Gordon was able</p>	
8. Controlling the agenda	
Reputation management is difficult because most of the time PM is a the mercy of an agenda he cannot control – exceptions are the first and last weeks of the parliament	Livermore, 9,10
<p>It's probably very, very hard or impossible unless one takes one specific case to put erm, to quantify it, we'll just give it a try. Erm, to what degree is what, what you would do as advisors and the politician, erm, erm, as, as far as image is concerned, is that planned in a day and to what degree is it reactive and erm, decided. I mean is it you come to the office in the morning, this is what we want to do. This is how we want to ... you know you ... you have an idea, but then it is totally derailed by things outside your control, is that ... can that be quan- ... because I had to a PR erm, erm, in a commercial context, PR agencies and</p>	

they think-, they seem to have a ... you know they seem to give advice over six or 12 month period, you know, our commercial client and we plan the rollout of the new car and it's a 12 month plan. I tend to say, "No, you don't have a 12 month plan, you start at seven in the morning or eight and then you don't really know what happens by 12 o'clock during the day." Erm, can you say anything?

Yeah, I think that it would depend erm, that it differs depending on sort of what phase you're in. So there are certain ... if you think about the, the politics for us are very set calendar, and very set with them so clearly you've got you know a four year erm, parliament say, on average, up until now I guess. Erm, and then within that four years, you've got, er, certain fixed events. So for the ... say for the first [0:33:46.1], you know, say the first kind of two weeks after an election, probably to the day you know things are gridded out very, very carefully and you know that when I come into work today this is what we're announcing. And you've got the erm, you've got sufficient then momentum coming out of an election victory to oppose on media erm, your agenda. Now assuming it's not like a terrorist attack or something, erm, you can stick ... so it's got to be ... its got to ... in that period it's got to be very, very big to blow you off your course. Likewise at the other end in the erm, election campaign, erm, you've got very clear ... you've got a grid that, you know, in this day we're going to be doing this, and this day we're going to be doing that. And you pretty much again can stick to that unless your opponents are incredibly successful in blowing you off that. And then in the middle you've got things like budgets and you know, other big events, queen's speech and things like that. So then for a few days either side of those events, again you know, and you ... because your event is big enough to control the agenda. Erm, in between times you're right, you could come into work today and you've got no idea what's going to happen. So really it's about, it's about who's got the most powerful agenda, if you've ... in the ... and for the periods that you have a driving agenda you've got momentum behind you and then your story is big enough to dominate, you can be in control. But that in the ... in the period of four years that definitely is the minority of days erm, which is why at the end of the day it's very hard to control your reputation because you are the mercy, at the mercy of you having to react to your multitude of events that you're not particularly in control of and you ... you haven't planned out how you're going to ... how they're going to play out.

So you'd be at the mercy of pressure groups, leaks, resignations, backbenchers –

Foreign affairs, erm, the opposition, erm, you know, all manner of, you know, anything that

happens in a day.

## 8. Controlling the agenda

For government it is hard to control the media agenda

Livermore, 10

The hard thing is that it's very, very difficult in opposition to control the media agenda, to control the news agenda. So it's very rare for then to be a day when you are driving, and so when I say within that four year period there are certain days that you can dominate, they are few and far between when you're an opposition because when have you got a story that's bigger than the government, you know, the government's doing? You're just sticking, that's very hard to have those days (...)

So again it's hard, so you have to really build your reputation around a very few but very big, so you know, Tony Blair's clause [4 moment 0:37:10.8] you know would be an example. It's a massive media moment, but how many of them-, of those are there? Erm, every ... other days you're just kind of, you know, in the-, very much in the background and that's, that, that's very difficult.

## 8. Controlling the agenda

Blair's Government would try to push a big story on the agenda once a week

Kelly, 7,8

I've been told the days after forming government and the days perhaps running up to election day, and perhaps round the European conference or the budget you have much more ... You're in the position to dominate the news agenda to a larger degree than other occasions.

Mm.

Most of the time these big events that you dominate, that you organise, that you run are not available. What would you do to control ... I used to ask the question to what degree is it events? To what degree is it planned what you in the day to day process? You can't

quantify it, but what are the techniques or the strategy you have to control the news agenda?

Do you mean in between the big events?

In between, yes.

Okay, alright ...

I can imagine what you do the two days running up to the budget but ...

Sure. Look, you ... as I say, I did a lot of the 5 days a week for six years. I reckoned that on four of the five days in the week you were simply providing context. You were providing an explanation or various things the government was doing, or responding to events, to explain what the government's thinking was, etc. On the fifth day and coming now to the end of the week, you were maybe trying to announce something. You were maybe trying to make a statement or to highlight something that the government department was doing, so you were trying consciously to say "This is something that the government thinks it's important. This is something that the government is going to do that is different. This is something which you should take note of." If you try to do that five days a week then people, it all becomes a blur. So part of the technique is again to prioritise your own messaging, to prioritise and say what is it that we want this week people to take away as the government is doing something which is going to help their daily lives? And that can be any number of different things, but again it's a conscious process of putting the spotlight on something. It's not just trying to make everything into a big story.

#### 8. Controlling the agenda

Any attempt to control the media agenda needs to reckon with the specific agendas particular media pursue

Wood, 8

Yeah if you share image and perception through the policies and you pursue then surely you would want to control the media agenda, your policies would have to be on the agenda being discussed. Can it be controlled? How would you control it?

Well I mean...

Who decides what the agenda is? Your former colleagues, the journalists.

Well I don't think that is too difficult really. Um, I mean you've obviously got to have a story

to tell. If you haven't got a story to tell, if you haven't got something interesting to say and something fresh to say and something novel and... It's not going to fly, it's not going to work with any kind of media.

In opposition there's very little consequence of whatever you're saying, so that is of limited interest.

I don't know I think there's quite a lot you can do in opposition and, um, I don't think we did it, um, well we didn't do it in opposition when Iain was leader but we did do it in opposition when Iain was not leader bizarrely. And sometimes you can argue that it's actually easier and more productive, and I've certainly made this point to some senior politicians, that actually when you're not in the Shadow Cabinet, when you've not got an official role in the party leadership that there's quite a lot you can do. You've got much more latitude and free time to do the things you want to do and Iain was a classic example of it. Um, so the media agenda, well the media has got lots of agendas. The different media outlets have a different agenda. The Daily Mail has got one agenda, the Telegraph another, obviously the Mirror and the Sun, um and so on and so forth and then there's the broadcasters who are more, generally speaking, more reactive. So if you can get an agenda running in the newspapers and it's powerful and compelling and making headlines then the broadcasters will start to pick it up and start to run it. That's broadly what happened with Iain's stuff. But, you know, we were playing... I mean it was self-evident to me that certainly people like the Mail and the Sun and the Telegraph to a degree and their Sunday equivalents, were all troubled by the sort of social state of Britain. And were troubled by this question, why is it that the country gets richer, the poor seem to get poorer? Not necessarily physically poorer, materially poorer but sort of spiritually poorer. Why is that greater wealth does not produce greater happiness for some [0:33:21.8] people rather than sort of middle class or upper class pockets?

So there was quite a... I knew there would be a media appetite for that and indeed there was, quite a strong one. We had to establish some facts and some figures and do some analysis, in fact we did a lot. Er, and we knew what we were saying was, er, it was quite controversial, some of it was very controversial, some of it really did challenge what I loosely call liberal beliefs. I mean certainly the whole issue of the family, marriage, single parenting, all that kind of thing, very controversial, still is. Um, but then the media love a controversy as well, I mean they like to have contending Daily Mail supporters and the Guardian can also be it. But I mean both were taking an interest, both are arguing with



each other as well as the Mail supporting us, Guardian condemning us, BBC picking it up, representatives of both those sort of wings of opinion putting it on the television or on the radio.

8. Controlling the agenda

Predicting – controlling the agenda

Hazlewood, 10

How do you predict the agenda, can you, do you know in the morning or do you know in the evening what happens the next day? You can't quantify it probably.

Err no you can't predict I don't think, you get a feel for what is happening, what are the big issues of the day. You'd only have to look at the papers today to know what the main issues are, fortunately they haven't impacted on Wales to any great degree, a few police have been seconded to help with officers in London, but erm, no if you haven't got a feel for what is happening on a day to day basis then you shouldn't really be in the job I don't think.

How do you, what are your tools to predict what is on the agenda and what is on the day after?

A whole range of things. I mean I think when parliament is sitting you clearly what is coming up. So you can look at that, err outside of parliament conferences and things, there are slower burning issues that you know will be coming up at a particular time, seeing the work that is being done by the government and the administration across the road there and how you perhaps want to respond to that. Erm and then maybe just dates in the diary that you think maybe we can try and capitalise on that.

9. Planning / Organisation

Initially Brown had a reputation for being effective, which broke up once he was Prime Minister in part because he lacked a plan

Neather, 4

guess also... I guess in Brown's particular case there was almost a sort of disjunction between, on the one hand, him being viewed as pretty successful in terms of the economy... I mean his image was of being fairly effective, of being... of everything the Blairites were saying, you know, a complete control freak, too left wing, and so on, but in a

sense everyone tended to discount what they said a bit because we knew they would say that. It was only when he left power... you know, a senior Blairite, former Cabinet Minister, was saying to me – this would have been maybe a year into Brown’s [0:13:09.5] – it’s much worse than we thought. We thought he had a plan. We thought it was a plan we wouldn’t like, but we thought he had a plan. But there wasn’t one at all. It was... so, in a sense I think people were almost prepared to forgive some of the nastiness because ultimately they thought he was an effective politician, where he wasn’t actually even that, I don’t think.

9. Planning / Organisation

Politicians decisions and actions may go counter or ignore communications planning

McBride, 12

I organised for Kay Burley from Sky to spend a day with him, um, touring the flood affected areas in summer 2007. So again it was all part of him touring the country, um, doing these kind of, you know, more extensive TV exercises. Um, and she was someone we knew well, was going to do a good interview with him.

Now she had her eye on a headline which was, “He opens up for the first time about the loss of his child.” I was in constant negotiations where I was saying, “Kay, he will not do that, he doesn’t want to do it, please don’t put us in that position.” Um, she eventually got to the end of a long day and saw an opening where he talked about charity work that kind of thing and she said, “But you do a lot of charity work for, um, you know, a lot of your charity work is related to the charities of Jennifer.” And I think she... and I was giving her a look and she was almost giving me a look back like hold on I haven’t said anything, I haven’t said anything, I’m just talking about charity work. And Gordon himself sort of opened up, just did it himself, did it quite naturally, got a tear in the eye and that became the story, “Gordon Brown cries as he talks about his... the baby that he lost.”

Now that was Gordon opening up, I was quite surprised because I thought, well I knew he wouldn’t want to speak about that and he could have got out of that.

9. Planning / Organisation

Resources needed for successful communications management – staff that understand and espouse objectives and direction

Hill, 8

and in terms of communications I think the ... the most important thing is ... is you need around you people who need not necessarily all be communications experts, but around you people who are confident about what it is you want to say, confident about understanding the direction you're going in, because absolutely essential to success is the capacity to think that if I'm in a room with person X who's a key member of my staff, we can bounce off one another how we move forward, whether this is working, whether this is not.

9. Planning / Organisation

An effort is made by the Cameron team in opposition to stick to their agenda and not follow the media's own

Eustice, 9

And if you abandon that and just do fire fighting, or just try and chase where you think the media's going, as I said, the media is dysfunctional. If you make them your compass you end up as bad as they are and ... and you end up not saying anything. What the public hear in the end is noise, erm, but no message.

9. Planning / Organisation

The communications of opposition leader Cameron was planned, structured and integrated process

Eustice, 9

. And when you're one of those six or eight people, you know, you're in the trenches day in, day out. You have to ring each other with ... you know, constantly on the phone to each other all day long, over the weekend, as problems break, as issues crop up. And you just become incredibly close, you know. You're in the trenches together, and the idea that you're plotting against each other is fanciful. It just doesn't happen in real life. Erm, in real life you become incredibly close. Erm, and so close that, a bit like a brother and a sister, you can have like a ... you can have a big argument and a big row and it doesn't make any difference ... to the ... to the fundamental relationship at the core. Erm, and in terms ... how it actually works in practice, you know, you'd have ... we would generally have a planning meeting once a week where you would look ahead to the next erm month or so, and talk about the kinds of speeches and issues you would put in. Once that basic framework is agreed somebody would be charged with putting everything into a detailed grid of what days you're saying what. Once that was agreed, the speech writers would be tasked with writing the speeches and meetings would be booked between the speech

writers and the party leader to finesse those speeches, you know, typically about a week in advance. Erm, and then once the speeches are written the press office would be tasked to brief them. And that's sort of ... it works ... it works, you know, relatively well. It's just erm, the key thing is that you've got the ... the grid as your anchor, which is where ... that's how you manage your time and manage your priorities in politics.

9. Planning / Organisation

Communications advisors plan long term: policy announcements are planned long term and the publics are prepared for the policy	Thorogood, 8
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*Government processes really and building up-, yes, building up-, getting the public to a place where you've laid the groundwork for something and so it doesn't come as a complete bolt out of the blue but actually something that given the narrative that's been built up actually sounds reasonable and a possibility.*

9. Planning / Organisation

Intended image may be developed distinctively	Price, 1
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. Erm, I was a political journalist before I worked for Tony Blair, and you could have argued that Margaret Thatcher, for example, had a strategic vision for what she wanted to do, and that, err, instinctively those who worked for her understood what that vision was and sought to, err, work on her image in a way that wasn't just day-to-day. It wasn't just tactical. Erm, it certainly wasn't explicit and it wasn't thought through.

9. Planning / Organisation

In the case of Blair long term planning and intended image are equated	Price, 1
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Erm, Tony Blair, who I did work for, was a constant strategic politician. He had thought about his image, the image of himself, the image of his party, the image of his government, what he wanted to do for the country as a whole – very much into the strategic long term ways all the time, all the time

9. Planning / Organisation

Downing street is trying to plan communication and not to get distracted from events

Price, 3

I wonder to what degree you get, you get up in the morning, you have an idea what needs to be done in the day, or the week, or the month, and if you talk to people from agencies they, they, they love to have a plan for six to eight months, and how we want to communicate that, and what the emphasis for long term campaign, and then things happen during the day which you couldn't predict. It's probably hard to give ... perhaps it's easier to give an example. To what degree is it events, is it unforeseen anything that sets the agenda, and what degree is it you or, or the politician?

Well, it's, it's, it's, as you rightly suggest, it's a battle that goes on all day and, and every day. Erm, and it's very easy for-, to allow events to distract you from what it is you're trying to do. Now we and the current government have continued with it and tried to plan as much as possible. We have a, a, a grid which didn't exist before, which kind of plots all the main things that you can predict are going to happen, and try to give some shape to your communications and to what you're announcing and what you're doing.

9. Planning / Organisation

Government tries to integrate all statements - including those about unforeseen events – into the political and communicative agenda

Price, 3,4

And then almost every single day something else will happen that threatens to blow you off course [0.10.16.6] or certainly distracts the public and the media because they want to talk about something other than what you had planned to talk about. And you just have to deal with it and you can't sort of buck the-, you can't change what is going on in, in the rest of the world and get everyone to sort of fit into your agenda, it just doesn't work like that. Erm, which is why he always thought it was so important to sort of drum into everybody the need that even little announcements, even little judgements that you made about things had to fit into this structure. Once people were sufficiently conscious of that need then if something did come up during the day that required an instant response, in the back of your mind before you gave that response would be, ok what does, what does, what we are saying say about us in a broader sense rather than just a narrow sense of addressing the issue that

has come up. You, you can't fit everything into, you know, if there has been a train crash, there is no strategic complications responsible for the train crash. But it is something more political, more fundamental and more erm associated with ideology then you can and erm, again successful good politicians recognise that and people who work for them, if they are good, also recognise that, and constantly sort of come to it and remind themselves of it when, when the agenda does shift and move you off what you wanted to be talking about.

9. Planning / Organisation

Reputation management approaches need to be tailor made to fit specific politicians

Price, 9

Erm, so again that is why you can't have a manual for success in politics because different approaches work under different circumstances. Err a different approach will work if you are one sort of Minister, another obviously if you are Prime Minister.

9. Planning / Organisation

The grid helps planning ahead and fit everything into the narrative

Stevenson, 7

did have this grid for public appearances to keep a check on what is ...what are the public appearances ahead and how can we link them to that narrative and, and the presentation of ...

The grid is absolutely central, yes, absolutely central to it.

Yes, but there were more forces, constraints, that came into the diary, not just ...

It sometimes just blows up and you have to restart again, but the grid has every government announcement, but it also has, what's happening forward, so you can anticipate. You can say maybe we can do a speech on constitutional affairs and if so, then what would we need to do to do that. And so we're thinking right, this is March. Maybe June we will give a big speech, but maybe it won't be a speech, maybe it will be a presentation to the House, maybe a white paper. It could be any of those things, but we know what we're saying, that doesn't change. It's just what's the opportunity, where's the best way of getting this to fit to the narrative, to fit to the overall aim of what we're trying to do to fit with the person that's got to give it. These things have got to be thought through. And they are.

9. Planning / Organisation	
To what extent can ministers pursue their own agenda, to what extent are they limited to their predecessors' work and the PM's objectives	Davies, 6,7
<p>. Now to some extent you ( a cabinet minister) inherit what you inherit and it's quite difficult. There's a little bit ... And it partly depends on political cycle as well. I mean it was very different in 1997 because you could basically do, you know, sort of what you wanted really, but then you arrive at 2007, erm, say, at the Ministry of Justice, and you've got 10 years of Labour legacy to look at, and what he would have always felt was you don't come in and just rubbish everything that's previously happened. Other ministers have took a different view, for sure, and then of course there was ... That caused all sorts of internal, err, strife because of you course you'd be saying, you know "I've inherited this load of crap" and, err, somebody else somewhere would be really pissed off about it. Erm, but I suppose the overall answer to the question how much room do you have for manoeuvre in terms of policy is I suppose it's limited by how much has gone before and by ... I mean by the political cycle. So, you know, as I said, 2007 was quite difficult. By number 10 having a sort of very hands on approach to [0:17:57.2], but I mean both Prime Ministers when I had there had a pretty close-, kept a pretty close eye on the big briefs. You know, to some extent Brown was worse than Blair in that sense. Erm, so I suppose limited. I guess part of the trick of being Secretary of State is working out how much ground you've got to play with and how much you can 'get away with', err, without having to sort of refer it upwards. How much can you sort of basically plan your own [0:18:24.4] and get on with the, the bits where you know you can manoeuvre through that area without causing too much, you know ...</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
Time pressures, commitments and the personality of Jack Straw made prioritising and planning difficult	Davies, 12, 13

It does, yes. If there was ... There are more potential commitments, and appointments, and appearances in a day then do you have time for the [0:35:55.4] process of selecting it, would you try to have a say in that and say we don't want to be seen with bankers or the [0:36:02.5]?

[0:36:03.7].

It looks.

To an extent. Yes, to a certain extent. I mean you look at the diary ... I mean we used to look at the diary obviously a lot and sort of assess what he was up to and stuff, but on the whole ... I mean we'd try and influence it to some extent. It was more about making sure he was ... it was more about making sure he was seeing other people than, you know, who he was seeing. His diary was just incredibly difficult and so you, you know, as a political advisor you would obviously have a series of demands, say from number 10, or the party, or from the constituency, or from just individual MPs, and we would in a sense be responsible for eeking out time and space in his diary for those sorts of things, and that was up against a massive load of, erm, demands from you know, the civil service, the departmental side of his job, err, and it just made the diary a real sort of ... you know, so you had to sort of fight to get the time in. So it was more about making sure that he was doing – that you were getting the full role rather than it just being completely dominated by, you know, official engagement sort of type stuff. So it wasn't so much about making sure he was doing the right thing. Sometimes I suppose ... occasionally he would ... There were a couple of things that he ... one of the things that Jack did was he agreed to do pretty much everything. If somebody collared him in a corridor or wherever he would say "Yeah, yeah, sure." Now there was a couple of things we had to say "Hang on a minute, I'm not sure that's a very good idea" mainly because it wasn't the best use of his time because his time was so ... I mean his time was the most precious thing we had in many ways. Erm, and a lot of the time he would do stuff and you'd just think "Why are you doing that, you know, because it's not as important as a whole range of other stuff you could be doing." And there was a couple of things probably where it was inadvisable for him to do them and we probably stopped him from doing them, but, you know

For reasons of public relations sometimes.

More from ... Yeah, I suppose so but not at a sort of crude level like we don't want him being looked [0:38:00.7] with a banker. But there were sometimes issues about ... it's funny how bankers have become sort of ...



Yes, that's probably [0:38:07.6].

[0:38:09.6], you know. More sort of ... There were some [0:38:14.1] sometimes. When you're Foreign Secretary there's sometimes some people that, you know, Labour politicians might be supportive of who it might not necessarily be the best thing for a Foreign Secretary to be seen publicly endorsing, potentially. So, you know, that would be a good example. Erm, I'm trying to think if there's anything else. I can't think of any other examples, but probably, yeah, there would have been some you would probably definitely want to avoid.

#### 9. Planning / Organisation

Problems with planning media relations for Jack Straw

Davies, 13

You never know what happens. In the morning [0:39:06.4] so how can we plan ahead? How much can you plan and how much was in terms of media relations, and how much was it just driven by events and ...?

I mean it was about 80% driven by events, I suspect. I used to try to sort of build in sort of plan ahead time for media things and be quite selective about the sorts of things I wanted him to try and do, so partly, as I was saying before, trying to get some of those more like sort of rounded pictures of him, sort of the big interview type sorts of things, err, and also try to make sure that he was seeing political editors informally quite regularly, so he was sort of keeping in touch with them because they were obviously an important, erm, contact. So I would sort of plan those out ahead over a sort of three to six month sort of period. Often when they arrived they would have to get cancelled because something else would come up or something like that. Most of the time this media stuff was driven by, erm, by the demands of the job, err, really, on the whole. Yeah. I mean [0:40:14.0] stuff was, a lot of it was for the [0:40:16.0] that planning ahead stuff because life isn't like that, is it?

#### 9. Planning / Organisation

In particular departments media relations may be more reactive than in others

Richards, 3

Well, most of its reactive and certainly in the Department of Health, you know, you're reacting every day to other things that are going on in the health service but

9. Planning / Organisation	
Some Advisors write written memoranda to seek agreement on long term strategic communication issues	Richards, 7
<p>Yes, it's a piece of paper. I mean the ministerial system is the red box system so information to the minister goes into a red box. The political advisors put in political notes which are advice. I mean you would catch the language. You would make certain that nothing in there could be then, you know, put all over the front page of a newspaper (that would be terrible, that would be really bad) but you can say, you know, we have an issue here and here are some of the things we should do to address it and then you would discuss that in the ministerial meeting and you maybe go off and then try and create some opportunities or speeches or visits or policy pronouncements to go along with it and if-, you know, if it's any good, that could be a six-month programme or a year programme and you hope that there's some sort of strategy behind it and it's consistent and if not you get blown off course and your minister resigns or, you know, whatever else happens.</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
Personal Reputation is thought about, considered and planned	Jones, 5
<p>It is it's in the DNA of political strategists in this country that the presentation of the party leader, how that party leader is going to be presented in the media is of critical importance and that you decide early on. I mean I have been and have followed discussions, you know, within parties and within trade unions and within the whole sort of machinery in the lifetime that I've spent and it is always this discussion about oh well of course so and so is much better because he's going to appeal meaning that we the strategists think that this is the right man because we can present him in a way which will appeal to people through the media. I accept entirely that it's a media confection-, concoction but that's what they've got to do and they know that that's what they've got to do because if they can't do that they haven't got a hope and it was of course</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	

Politician's spouses presentation in the media is evidence of image planning	Jones, 2
<p>I mean there are people who are like that but you can't get away from this basic fact that in my opinion and we saw it in this general election in May 2010 (correction: 2010) where there was more focus than there ever has been before on the wives of the party leaders and this was because Sarah Brown had made a calculated decision to become Britain's first 'first lady' in the sense that that's how she wanted to present herself so that again was undoubtedly a calculated ploy.</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
Communications/media plans exist, but no plans for the reputation management of a politician	Jones, 5
<p>Surely as a journalist you would be keen to find a-, like a plan in writing of how they-, how advisors decide they want to pretend-, they want to present a-, the Labour leader as a street fighter; he would like to-</p> <p>I mean how Labour was rebuilt-, the book by Philip Gould goes in a lot of-, sort of the presentation of Labour. Yes, I mean we would love-, I would love to see-, I mean I have media plans from government departments showing how they're going to leak stories and trail stories. I haven't got a media plan for the presentation. I suppose Philip Gould got the nearest to anybody to it that I know because I mean he-, if you read his books and look at his material, it's quite clear that he's understanding this importance of trying to connect with Middle England in a way that Labour hadn't before and which-, of course once Blair did he won handsomely the general election.</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
Personality traits are reflected in the media and shape the politician's ability to achieve objectives	Jones, 5
<p>You-, they knew that he was a much better bet than George Osborne although George Osborne had wondered whether he would stand for the leadership. So I think partly one of</p>	

the reasons why Miliband you see (Ed Miliband) came through is that he is much more of a political street fighter and that again comes through. This ability to, you know, be a political street fighter is picked up by the media. We pick that up and that's the difference between David and Ed. Ed is a fixer; he's out there trying to sort things out in a way that David Miliband isn't. He's a much more cerebral sort of, you know, guy not as connected to the real world

9. Planning / Organisation

Media presentation of Blair's policies was planned with the support of communicators

Jones, 9

I mean I can remember when Blair was newly installed as the British Prime Minister and I would often go and give talks in other European countries and explain to them how it was that Blair was managing to capture the headlines around Europe and I said-, and they said to me how does he do it, what does he do. I said well look. I said I mean he has sitting beside Alistair Campbell, the editor of a tabloid newspaper. They think how they're going to present a story. They come out of some summit (European summit) and they have got the top line, the best, top line and that's what everybody's suddenly responding to. The other world-, the other European leaders are saying what's going on, what are they all talking about Tony Blair for. Well, I said it's not happened by chance; I said you have to understand that this is a calculated pitch to get the attention and they are very very good at it.

9. Planning / Organisation

Reputation management in the UK is a calculated activity by communicators

Jones, 20

Yeah, what I really want to see is, it's a very, well from my perspective, a very simple question. Is it haphazard? Is it reactive? What media advisors do in politics to manage the reputation.

In Britain I would say it's much more calculated than that, that's my short answer

9. Planning / Organisation	
Reputation management at the top of British politics is a planned process	Redfern, 1
<p>Based on your experience, what based on your experience would be politicians you worked for or colleagues that have in been touch and discussed that issues, it doesn't have to do with David Miliband you worked for last year, I understand.</p> <p>Yeah, that's right.</p> <p>I mean if you look at someone like Spencer Livermore for example, who genuinely I think did everything he could up to and including trying to get him to call that General Election and felt ultimately frustrated by his time in office. So I think to imagine for a second that there isn't a plan around reputation management would be naive. I think where there are incredibly forceful personalities that have a really good media profile themselves, you don't need it to such an extent, but generally speaking once you hit a certain level of ministerial rank then everybody's interested in media coverage. It's hard to do, it's hard to achieve.</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
Selecting and communicating messages more or less systematically	Redfern, 7
<p>Do you do any planning ahead in terms of the issues you wanted to set on the agenda, you wanted to address, or would you say now the next ten days, these are the three or four issues we've got in mind, we've got prepared and this is how we go ahead?</p> <p>Yeah I think, my understanding of it, there's a definite grid but also it was down to—up to David, so effectively he would go—he would be all over the country speaking in lots of events and something may occur to him at that event that he then wants to talk about, which he then did. So I mean the thing is with it, it wasn't like an election campaign where you do have, "Right today we're doing health, tomorrow we're doing education," because there was less—you know, this is a pitch for the leadership so it's more about just banging those messages across time and time again, day in and day out. So I mean I think he did that really effectively but he used the channels really well. I mean basically it's ridiculous</p>	

that I'm sitting here, he's not a leader of the Labour Party because it was text book. It was text book in terms of using all—doing all the right things, using all the right channels. The messaging was very clear, people understood it. He ticked all the boxes in terms of dealing with [00:28:22] within the Labour Party apart from the trade unions.

9. Planning / Organisation

The plan for PM Brown's reputation management was explicit and agreed upon between Brown and his advisors

Livermore, 5,6

Do you ... to what ... to what length do advisors go when they give this advice on reputation and then issues of image. Is there a written down plan that exists or is there informal discussions or in between are there more important meetings that has been mentioned? How explicit is that in ... in –

It's absolutely explicit. I think it's probably not written down just because of the inherent risks of writing anything down in politics. Erm, but it's, it's, it's not unspoken, it's ... it's articulated in proper strategies and in kind of erm, research debriefs to him, erm, so it's ... it's totally, er, explicit, fully articulated, discussed amongst advisors and then presented and taken to him for discussion, erm, so it ... it wasn't like he was being manipulated as it were without knowing he was totally erm, on board for that strategy, erm.

9. Planning / Organisation

Reputational strategy is drawn up before a politician becomes PM

Livermore, 7

I think that, you know, as you become prime minister you would have had your desired reputation decided upon, you know, your strategy.

9. Planning / Organisation

Ability to work towards communications objectives is limited by several factors

Kelly, 1

You, you've got ... I'm interested in episodes, and examples, and anecdotes if you want and I'll try to make sense of what I get from various, erm, interviews and respondents, and I talked to a number of people already. Erm, now you have a politician you work for that may be [0:00:23.9], Mr Blair or maybe someone else you work for in the Northern Ireland office. He's got certain qualities, and expertise, and competence, and you would like the public to know about it. How would you go about doing it?

Well, the first thing is that I think in these jobs you have to have a degree of humility and you have to recognise there are things you can control and things you can't control, and therefore you have to recognise that if you want to go from A to B you very rarely get the chance to go from A to B. It is a very rare opportunity that you get to say "I'm on a completely blank page. This is what I want to do. This is where I believe we are." And you get to give that message. You're always in a sense, yes, you're trying to achieve something but you're trying to achieve something in a context and it's how you use that context that matters because there's no point going against the grain of public opinion. There's no point going against the grain of events. There's no point saying black is white when it's not. You have to use the context in which you're in to get across your strategic message,

9. Planning / Organisation

Planning ahead, anticipating events and messages

Kelly, 1

(right after 9/11) And he comes back to Downing Street, and I always had this mental image of him coming through the front door of Downing Street, and this was a man who had been thinking about the possibility of something like this for some time, so did he know how he was going to respond precisely to such an event? No. Did he know that this was a theoretical possibility? Yes. Had he thought through how we as a country, as the developed world needed to respond to such an outrage? Yes. And therefore did that feed into his instant response, which was to say we want to stand shoulder to shoulder with the US? Correct. So you have a mind-set and that is developed over time. But then how it plays out depends on the events, depends on how you respond.

9. Planning / Organisation	
Planning grid	Waring, 3
<p>Do you have what Downing Street's got, a grid of, of public appearances.</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>And you would organise ...</p> <p>Yes. I mean basically ... Yeah, you have a forward planning grid showing what are the visits he's doing and, erm, we have regular meetings with like CBITUC, Chambers of Commerce and things like that, and then I just kind of keep a tally and think, mm, we've spent a lot of time with that journalist and maybe I need to make sure that he's speaking to that journalist and try and marry it up like that.</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
Planning ahead	Wood, 1
<p>I've done a number of interviews 20 or so altogether and what I'm really interested in is, um, reputation of a politician, if that has been planned because afterwards everyone would claim it was us who planned it and organised it systematically. So the question is essentially, um, who shapes a politician's or what shapes a politician's reputation?</p> <p>Mm, well as you probably know I spent five years working for two leaders of the Conservative Party, William Hague for about two and a half years and Iain Duncan Smith for about the same period of time and that was between the beginning of 1999 and 2003.</p> <p>Um, it's a good question and funnily enough obviously it did come up. Um, it comes up... I mean a lot of political planning is essentially about... well it's obviously about policy and the development of policy and the position of one party, say, on the Conservative side against another policy on the Labour side. Um, and obviously the process producing the policy is pretty intricate because it involves the politicians but it also involves the researchers and the policy experts and the media people. So there's that process always going on and there's a lot of tactical skirmishing which is obviously played out in the House of Commons,</p>	



it's played out in television studios, it's played out through press releases. So that's another big part and there's a lot of sort of planning goes into the sort of forward planning about policy. And forward planning about on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July we're going to say this and on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August we're going to say that and this month I'm going to talk about health and next month we're going to talk about Europe or whatever it might be. There's a lot of that going on.

## 9. Planning / Organisation

Communication objectives are linked to formal research

Wood, 2

As for the baseball cap, I think that was just an accident, it can't have been planned. I mean maybe the idea of going to a theme park would have been... It had a big W or Hague team or Hague on it so it must have... someone must have put some thoughts into this.

Yeah well I suppose there may have been some planning in it but I mean the truth is I don't really think that during that period, though I wasn't there, but I didn't really get a very strong impression there was a heavy lot of image management work going on around him. When Amanda Patel joined which was in the beginning of 1999, it did lead to this thing called project Hague, um and project Hague was really... it certainly was an image management project and it was... the problem, I mean a lot of the image management or image, you know, reputation management it's about addressing perceived weaknesses. I mean the perceived weakness with Hague was that he was very young to be leader of the Conservative Party, he had a rather... he had... there was this hangover from his periods on the platform in the 1970s. So he had this sort of precocious schoolboy image, um and people thought of him as out of touch if you like, the public in general and rather geeky or awkward. All those kind of things, I mean there would have been a lot... there was research done, I know there was research done by... in fact the guy who would have done the research Andrew Cooper is back in Downing Street these days. There was research done around that sort of thing. I'm trying to think, I mean the point of project Hague really was to show William as a stronger figure, it was more about trying to counter the schoolboy image and show him as a stronger figure.

9. Planning / Organisation	
Planning	Hazlewood, 1
<p>I don't know how much you know about my boss and the work that I do. I work for the Wales office [0:01:00.1] Secretary of State.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>She and I have worked together for about six years now. We ... My previous job was as head of communications for the Welsh Conservative party, so we worked together when she was appointed the Shadow Secretary of State, erm, back in 2005. Erm, do we sit down every day and decide how reputation is managed or if there's a big grand plan? No. I don't think anybody does, frankly, but clearly you've got some core messages that you want to maintain, erm, whether it be in opposition or now in government, erm, and, and your work is shaped round that I'd suggest. Erm, the priorities that we've set out – of course in line with the coalition government and what we're trying to achieve across Whitehall, but I think in terms of the Wales office we've identified a few areas.</p>	
9. Planning / Organisation	
How much can be planned	Wood, 9
<p>Do you believe in planning? Or would you say to a politician, a client, there's so many events that come up, planning in media relations with regard to image or anything else? Or could you balance that say this is how we can plan, this is how our events will be arranged? We did plan a lot, I mean a lot of it was very carefully planned, particularly the CSJ stuff, er, and the timing, er and the content. A huge amount of work went into the different reports and there were endless sort of private meetings about what these enquiries were going to conclude and if they did conclude that how would we present it, where would we present it. So yes there was lots and lots of planning. I mean you never really know at the beginning of an exercise if this is really going to work or not. I mean it so happened it did but you just</p>	

have to, in my view, you know, you've just got... you've got the idea, you've got the basics of the idea, um, you know how to do the research, you know roughly how long it's going to take. You can then figure out precisely how and where and when you're going to launch it. Because when we launched breakthrough Britain we launched that over a period of about seven or eight days with different chunks and with the best bit held until last. Because I wanted it to lead the ten o'clock news which is on the night before its official launch, but we'd had it in the papers for about a week. But I held back with the most interesting stuff until the ten o'clock news and they broke the story which is slightly unconventional because normally you break the story in the newspapers and let the TV people follow it up. But this time it was Nick Robinson, it must have been Nick Robinson, we did it with

9. Planning / Organisation

Planning public appearances

Hazlewood, 11

You have got a grid and...

It is a grid yes, err as you would expect for all departments.

Is there, I asked last time about conflicting interest, you are interested in saying these are the public experiences that are important, these are the messages, they are important, you have got the policy, the policy advisors would be on this, is there any conflict between....

Not really, I mean what we have tried to do within the Wales office is to, when it comes to visits, is to try and have themed visits. So one week it may be business themed visits, next week it might be something to do with tourism, so you'd work along those lines. That has only been a relatively new development in the last ten months or so and actually it has worked quite well because your focus and your mind is entirely on one issue, rather than this sort of scattergun approach which I don't think necessarily works. We can all sort of erm cling on to that, but it is not very effective.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Some politicians keep a low profile as a media strategy to avoid criticism

Neather 4

Osborne is almost an interesting case of almost reverse spin almost. He keeps his head down so much, precisely because he knows that there's not actually anything we can do. You know, the interesting comparison is Alastair Darling, because Darling, before he was Chancellor, he was Work & Pensions Secretary and he was Transport Secretary, and it was a standing joke at No.10 that Darling would never knowingly get in the papers if he could possibly help it. He just was very, very low profile and he's a sort of serious, dry, bright guy but not a media performer. And it actually worked pretty well. I mean particularly transport, there were some pretty bad stories out there under his watch and none of it really stuck to him because he just... it wasn't that he was anti-spin, it was just that it was...

But that is advice in its own right, isn't it?

It is, yeah. I mean if you put your head above the parapet people will shoot at it. With the economy, when the economy's... okay, you're going to have some problems on the railways ultimately, unless it's really a massive thing like the whole rail track nationalisation scandal, it doesn't really affect you, because ultimately most of the population don't take trains. The economy, you can't escape. And that's why I think... ultimately, when Osborne can't keep his head down, when the economy... I think their gamble will not pay off and if it doesn't then he's going to the flak.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

ministers' portfolio and rank influences their communications strategy

McBride 9

I think one is having a job which allows you to, um, make the news on your own terms. So if you are Chancellor, Shadow Chancellor, Prime Minister, Shadow Leader, Home Secretary I'd say those are the five jobs where you're guaranteed that, um, the media will be interested in whatever you have to say. There's a pretty low threshold for you being able to say something which will get on the news and that kind of thing which will be in your territory. Now what that means is that you don't have to take big risks or make big outlandish statements in your area or make big pronouncements or start big rows in order to get on the news.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Junior politicians rather than pursuing reputational objectives may at times be tempted to secure themselves just the headline

McBride 9, 10

And you see time and again, u people in more junior ministerial positions or especially opposition junior ministerial positions that make, um mistakes and almost damage their reputation by sort of thinking I'm not on the news enough, I need to do something to get on the news.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Gordon Brown's communications were tailored to safeguard his reputation through media strategy

McBride 10

And, you know, even Gordon was sometimes frustrated that he was making a very straightforward statement about the economy but because he'd been doing the job so long, um, you know, people weren't interested anymore. But he never once had the temptation to think right well I better jazz up my language on what's going to happen to the economy. Or I better warn about something that is going to happen to the economy. He would never have that temptation because he would always say, you know, "It might get you on the news that day but your reputation will be massively damaged years later."

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Advisors may push the politician to adopt a communications strategy in order to achieve their own ambitions.

McBride 10

, I think it is definitely about, um having good quality advice around you. There's lots of ministers who had very, who I came across, who had very ambitious advisors who wanted to get them into Downing Street, who wanted them to become Prime Minister and they drove their ministers in places where the ministers wouldn't necessarily have gone by themselves. Sometimes it was a bit chicken and egg, you know, the ministers themselves were quite ambitious. But, you know, um, I think Alan Johnson's advisors were very misguided at different times. You know, he clearly never really, really wanted to be... have one of the top jobs, never really wanted to be Prime Minister. His advisors clearly did want him to be and had a big agenda for him and a big plan for him.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Good communications advisors align advice with what is right for the politician

McBride 10,11

, um, on the other hand good advisors, I don't necessarily count myself as one of them, you know, but good advisors can be very good in terms of positioning people in the right way, being sort of conscious of sort of how to slowly build an image. How to slowly sort of, you know, push people in the right direction rather than being sort of over eager. (...)Um, and I think that I always thought the key to being an advisor was that you were never thinking about your own ambition, about what job you wanted to do. It was always about, you know, was this good for them?

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Sophisticated communications alone at times helped Labour generate the image of competence

Hill 1

And we ... I went through the whole range for the labour party and for government. I was in there at the very outset of the concept of spin becoming something that people used, deliberately distorted by the media in order to undermine the political process, or certainly not so much [0:01:48] as the politicians and the government of the time. But on the other hand, of course, when the communications was popular, erm, it had the ... quite the opposite effect. I mean, if you think about what happened between 1994 and 1997 when New Labour developed a reputation for having, at the time, the most sophisticated communications operation that any political party had yet managed, built on what the Americans had done, but we'd built a little more on it, and therefore ... what did that then ... what was then used for? That was then used, somewhat speciously in my view, but effectively, by many people in the political world, by the media themselves, as saying that because they're so good at communicating they'll be very good at government. Well, there's absolutely no reason why that's the case. But ... so when ...when you're in the ascendancy with your communication the fact that you're great communicators will suggest that you're good at everything else and so

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

If the party members see the success the leader's communications approach, they support it

Hill, 3

. The country looked again at the labour party and said, hang on, this has been for some considerable time an unelectable organisation, but not under him it's not, it's very electable under him. If they ... and then, and then the party first of all say, oh, what's bouncing back at us is very good news. We like, we like the messages we're receiving from the public, so clearly what he's doing we ought to be thinking about very carefully and liking, but also, for a large percentage of the party, they did actually feel that being a labour party member and being active in the party had for many years been a slightly embarrassing thing. And 4 now, you could ... you could sit at work, you could go out in the street, you could talk to your neighbours and friends and you could say, oh, I'm Labour, you know, and they'd say, oh, that's fine.

So ... so what was the communication about? The communication was essentially saying, New Labour, look at the name, New Labour is occupying the centre ground. We know what our messages are, we know whom we're communicating with, we know, therefore, that if this works, that our party will buy into it, even if they may resent some of it, they'll buy into it, and we know the same with our colleagues. They'll buy into it even if they resent some of it. So it's got three strands, and because essentially it's driving forward effectively with the nation as a whole, it takes all the strands with it.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Reputation is shaped through big stories and reiteration

Hill, 7

But ... and you live with that, but it's really recognising that in the end the reputation is made by the strength of what you do, erm, when you do the big set pieces of what you do, erm, and by that capacity, constantly, to bring back the issues that you're dealing with and the way they hit you to a narrative which means the general public still have a sense of what you're after and what you're trying to do

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Resources needed for successful communications management – linking strategy to tactics	Hill, 8
They've got to have people who are on top of the development of the strategy and who can also effectively oversee the implementation of that by the people who need to implement it,	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Politicians statements' are shaped by their intention to appear in the media	Eustice, 1
Erm, in order to react to something that's in the news you do actually have to have quite a concerted strategy to work out what are the real ... what is this guy's actual personality. What is it that he cares about? What is his character? What is he ... how would you describe him? And then you do need in a proactive way to try to have a strategy that communicates that, and it won't always work, but you do have to know what you're trying to say about that person.	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Communicators try and close the gap between what the public thinks of a politician and what they are really about	Eustice, 2
But it is, so there's those two things. There's understanding what the public think, which might be wrong, and there's understanding what they're actually about, which is what you should be trying to communicate to the public. (...)	
And in the case of, say Michael Howard, the thing at the heart of Michael Howard is he was a very decent man, who had been badly misrepresented and maligned as being the sort of forces of darkness, or 'something of the dark about him', which was the term used. But actually, he was [0:04:37] he was a very, very decent man, and if you were an advisor to him you knew that, because however busy he was he would send you a handwritten thank you letter after every conference to thank you for the work you had done to keep things on track. Erm, I remember once being, erm, you know, on a train station with him.	



We had to rush to get on the train, and he felt very guilty that he ... because we had rushed he hadn't managed to tip the waiter, you know, in the coffee shop before we'd got there. And you know he went on about this for about twenty minutes. So when you worked with him you really understood that he was a very decent man, and that was something that had to be communicated.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Communicators identify issues the politician cares about, what his believes are and emphasise them in their communications strategy

Eustice, 2,3

Erm, and the other thing about David Cameron was he ... you know, he was actually very loyal to the team around him, and a very ... again, quite a decent person. I, I remember if he ever lost his temper or, you know, lost his cool in an environment and barked at you, he would ... he would always ring back two minutes later to apologise, you know, he would ... that was something about him that was erm ... that was there. And so you needed to try to get that across. And then there were other issues that he did genuinely believe in. So the stuff about the environment, erm, issues around helping those who with ... who were more disadvantaged, tackling poverty ... These were issues that he genuinely cared about. Erm, we needed to communicate that through the way we, erm, dealt with the issues that he focused on

(...)

David Cameron didn't have that problem, so he was ... you were able to decipher exactly what it is that he stood for, what made him tick as a person, what his genuine convictions were, and project that on to a blank canvass.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Some politicians' allow their media relations to respond to headlines, others stick to a consistent strategy

Eustice, 3

Could change things ... I think erm ... it's really, really important that you've got ... I think ... I'm always a believer in ... in communications, that you need to have, you know, clarity, erm, consistency, and repetition. And the biggest danger that all politicians face is the pressure of day to day headlines. And the pressure of a leader written in the Telegraph or

an editorial piece in the Sun that says, 'He's too soft. We need to do X, Y, and Z. He needs to get tough'. If you respond to that and react to that you can end up losing your brand, because you just end up ... if you make the media themselves your compass, you become as dysfunctional as they are and the media is quite a dysfunctional institution. It is all about tomorrow's headlines. Nothing goes further than one week in the media. Whereas in politics you've got to have a strategy that runs for years and communicate a consistent message. And there's always a conflict between the two.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

It was part of Opposition Leader Cameron's communications strategy to challenge audiences rather than match their expectations

Eustice, 7

I suppose, although you're doing ... Early on David Cameron was very clear he wanted to ... he did want to stretch the conservative party and he was very ... the phrase he kept using was, you know, we've got to come out of our comfort zone, and he wanted to push conservative members and MPs out of their comfort zone to accept a ... a slightly different type of agenda. Erm, and so he was willing ... he would go into Conservative audiences and tell them what they didn't want to hear. I can remember during ... this is again about saying something about him rather than saying what people want to hear. During the hustings, among party members they did regional hustings during the 2005 leadership campaign. Erm, you would always get, as you would in any conservative audience, erm, you know, a right wing party member saying, what are you going to do about political correctness gone mad? Erm, and it's very easy in those situations to play to the gallery and ... protest. And actually David Cameron would [0:24:39] completely the other way and say, I've got a disabled child and I don't want people calling them a spastic. I've got friends who are gay and I don't want someone calling them queer. And he would actually be quite counterintuitive and challenge the attitudes of those on, on the right. And he did that deliberately because that was part of ... part of being consistent with him and not just saying what people want to hear, but actually being ... being yourself. [long pause] Covered it.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Good communicators consistently pursue the long term strategy and eschew the journalist's day to day short term perspective	Eustice, 11,12
<p>I've come across both, and the ones that do well, and I would ... Alastair Campbell did well, and I think Andrew ... Andy Coulson did ... The ones who do well actually understand that when they make the switch, and they stop being journalists and start being communications people. They learn that quite quickly. Andy Coulson when he first started was still the journalist. He was still very much kind of what have we got for tomorrow was the sort of mind-set. What have we got for the Sunday papers. Very soon he realised that that's not how you do it. And very soon he started to realise that you should be trying to project a message. Erm ... and I think, you know ... And Alastair Campbell got the same. But not all journalists make that transition. They're not always very good. Generally, journalists are only any good at the job if they stop being journalist. Journalists themselves, per se, are no good at the job, is my view.</p>	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Keeping a low profile as a communications strategy to cover weaknesses	Beattie, 5
<p>Did you think the Cameron people are aware of these personality flaws, this underlying arrogance? Do you think they are aware and discuss this?</p> <p>A better example is George Osborne, who's totally aware of his own faults. He's a very bright bloke – probably the brightest person in the government at the moment in terms of political brain. And he doesn't expose himself at all. He will not put himself up in front of the cameras except to talk about the economy and in his own very strict, controlled way. And he's actually quite difficult to get at. There's lots of questions I'd like to ask George Osborne but I can't get at him because he never, ever does press conferences.</p> <p>Is that because he doesn't like it or ...</p> <p>He knows it's a weakness, so the [0:30:21.0] holding the cards.</p>	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Need to think of communications strategically was institutionalised in the strategic communications unit	Price, 1

Erm, now, as I say, in my view Blair was a consummate strategic politician and he actually formalised that in that he set up in Downing Street a strategic communications unit with that specific purpose in mind. Erm, and it had a ... It made a big difference I think to the way in which he was perceived and the way in which his government was perceived, and it's been kept on by David Cameron, who understood ... saw the benefits of strategic thinking and, and he's carried it on in his own administration.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Across government individual politicians take a long term strategic approach to communications, guided by an objective

Price, 1

... in terms of regular ministers, cabinet ministers or more junior ministers, again, it very much depends on them. I-I've worked with a lot of them and observed others, erm, and some just understand the importance of thinking ahead, planning, err, whether they want to be in five years' time or ten years' time, how what they say today is going to affect all of that, erm, and tying in whatever statements they might make, or visits they might make, or whatever it might be to an overall, an overarching, erm, impression that they're seeking to convey about what they're about as a politician.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Lack of strategic communications thinking leads to failure

Price, 1

Others are purely day-to-day tactical. And Gordon Brown was an example of the latter and it's one of the reasons that he was a [pause], an appallingly unsuccessful Prime Minister.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Communications behaviour does not follow comprehensively researched prescription

Price, 4

So you can't have some sort of handbook sitting on your desk which tells you how to respond in certain circumstances that is based on quantitative and qualitative research that you can then apply.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Big issues allow communicators to fit them into the long term communications strategy	Price, 4
Erm, sometimes you can and on the big issues like the budget, or on foreign affairs statements and all that sort of stuff you can take your time, think about them and make sure that they do fit in (with the communications strategy)	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Communications of leaders requires to adapt to the environment and to change the expectations	Price, 4
And of course leadership isn't just about finding out what people want and giving it to them. Erm, leadership is also about being ready to change public opinion, to seek to alter the agenda, to seek to move the centre of gravity of politics	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Example for Blair's ability to fit an unexpected event into the strategic narrative and communications goals	Price, 4
That could be a lengthy process and high profile events can actually play a part in that. And, you know, a lot was made for example of the death of Princess Diana. Erm, it was a tragic death of one individual and yet Blair's instinctive sense for how he should respond to that paid a huge part in, in, in forging an image of him as the Prime Minister. Erm, and it happened in the middle of the night, he had to respond at eight o'clock in the morning, he didn't have time to go out and do focus groups or do any polling, he had to combine his own sense of where he was and who he was and who he wanted to be with an instinctive feel for what the country wanted to hear from him. And he got it right	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	

Government behaviour and communications cannot be compared to a business context	Price, 4
Politics is an imprecise science unfortunately. It is not quite like running a big company.	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Politicians decide if they take expectations of key publics into account or if they ignore them	Price, 8
I mean I think all ... actually I think all governments are coalition governments in Britain. Sometimes the coalitions are within parties and sometimes they are between parties, erm, but we were conscious that there were other elements of the labour coalition that we had to take into, into account. Yes, there are always, erm, there are always these competing pressures on you, erm and you can take them into account or you can ignore them. And sometimes you do, sometimes you judge it is the kind of issue where you should take into account...	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Prime Minister takes decisions to limit the gap between his views and the expectations held by a key public	Price, 8
Erm well I suppose the most obvious example or the most high profile example that went on for a long time is fox hunting erm, under the Blair administration. All Blair's instincts were that this was a ridiculous debate to get involved in. He had no personal convictions one way or the other. Erm, he didn't really want to tell people what they should do on weekends, he didn't really care that much about foxes being torn apart. He just didn't think it was all that important. But a huge amount of his parliamentary party did think it was important and they wanted it to go through. And he tried to hold it off, and he tried to err, find a compromise, and he tried to sort of fudge it in all sorts of ways and at the end of the day he realised that he just couldn't and he was going to have to go against his instincts and give something to the party if you like as part of party management and also just because the issue-, you know he couldn't avoid, it wasn't going to go away, he had to deal	

with it

(...)

So he did something against his instincts. Erm, he would argue now, he did in his memoirs the freedom of information, which is another thing which you know the labour party had gone about in opposition, seemed like a good thing, seemed like a good idea, he went along with it, he did actually water it down quite significantly from the original proposals that were put forward. But even then he bitterly regretted it afterwards and that was partly ... I mean that wasn't entirely sort of playing to the party, I think he probably thought this was ok and he didn't realise quite what the implications of what he was signing himself up to would, would be.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Being on script and following the strategic communications plan does not necessarily contribute to a politician's popularity	Price, 9
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. Then there were other very sort of buttoned up politicians who were completely on message, erm, like Stephen Byers who is always the example that comes to my mind, who you know would be word perfect when he went on television and radio, was very new labour, entirely on the script that Blair wanted him to be and yet didn't cut through because he just seemed like a sort of sweet gill weight machine.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

The weakness of Major's and Brown's communication was the lack of strategic vision	Price, 10, 11
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And they both had a clear sense of what that idea was. Brown's problem was, and Major's problem was that he didn't have a clear sense of what it was he wanted to communicate, either of them. There was no strategic overview to their [0:39:23.8], erm and nobody could really say, and they were never able to say in a sentence why they wanted to be Prime Minister, what they were there for, why they wanted to lead the country. And, and that is the same in business as it is in politics. If you can't sum up your strategic vision in less than thirty seconds, then you have got a problem because it means you don't know what it is.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Ideology limits the presentational scope to manoeuvre	Stevenson, 5,6
<p>think we know what they're like, but they're not. That has changed dramatically over the last twenty odd years or so.</p> <p>Yes. You can argue that, but in some ways it hasn't. They tend to have basic principles and positions that they revert to, which tend to drive that stereotype. The Tories are not concerned with ordinary working people and the idea that they can be "One Nation Tories" is somewhat incredible, and they revert to type. And everyone's much happier when they do, because then we know where they are, we know what they're doing.</p>	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Selection of communications channels and themes is instinctive	Davies, 2
<p>But on the whole, he took the view that he had to be as up front as possible about everything and so as a result that's quite easy for me because I was always able to take the view, well, Jack instinctively will want to do this interview or he will want to talk to you about that issue however difficult it is</p>	
10. media and communication strategy	
Due to his personality Jack Straw would address issues, media and audiences without strategic considerations	Davies, 2
<p>. I think basically, you know, his first experience of politics was when he was a, a child, when his mum was campaigning for the Labour party in the post war period, and she got him out delivering leaflets on the estate in Essex where they grew up, where he grew up. Erm, and I think his, his politics as a result is very much ... it's not ... It's not, erm, it's not</p>	



sort of brain surgery. It's, it's classic old-fashioned street politics really of talking to people as much as is possible, knocking on people's doors, standing up in Blackburn town centre on a Saturday morning when you're in, when you're in town on a soap box, err, to all comers, taking every question, not shying away from questions because you don't want to answer them, erm, holding public meetings in Blackburn and, and, you know, pretty much agreeing to go on the radio or the TV and talk about anything, err, if, if, you know ... Not that he was one of these people that sort of sought out publicity, but whereas a lot of politicians would say "I don't want to go on the radio and talk about that issue because it's bloody difficult" he would say "No, of course, I've got to. It's part of my job. It's part of the democratic process." Erm, you know, the fourth estate and all of that, parliament, the press, you know. And so he always took the view that you, you go in, you go out there ... and always does take the view that you go out there sort of with your paws up basically and ready to, to take on the, err, to take on the arguments. And I think that's partly how he's succeeded. And a lot of politicians are scared of that sort of interaction, I think.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Building alliances to protect and build reputation

Davies, 8

But, yeah, no, absolutely. I mean I'm trying to give a good example but erm ... I'm sure there are some. I mean it was definitely the case that people... you would try and encourage other special advisors to get their ministers to speak up on an issue to sort of show some solidarity and to sort of, you know, stay clear of that sort of thing

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

To expose a politician to the media in a difficult situation may be a deliberate decision

Davies, 8

But on the whole, where I know other politicians would have said "No, I don't want to do it" Jack's view always was – and my view too was it's better to ... you get more credit for going up in a difficult situation, so if, you know, if you're in the firing line on an issue you get more credit for sort of going up on the radio and talking about it than you do if you run away

basically

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

For Jack Straw communications was short term and not strategically planned

Davies, 10, 11

What constraints in setting the agenda ... Ideally, you would be able to control what's talked about next week, what are the appearances, what's the media we talk to, what are the themes we want to emphasise? But then surely there are constraints that you can't control, whether that be the case of Brown ... we talk about once we move to Downing Street that Russian President would call [0:30:40.1], and they wouldn't ... we wouldn't think as much about how we looked because there were so many things you just had to do.

Mm.

How was that in your case?

I mean I, erm ... I mean we used to try and plan ahead but we never used to plan ahead in a, in a sort of way that people ... I mean I think one of the great myths about politics is, is that everything is sort of planned out very carefully, you know. Actually, Jack was always really ... I mean one of the frustrations with Jack was that he was very ... he didn't really look ahead that much sort of much beyond the week ahead, two weeks ahead. I mean clearly he looked ahead in terms of sort of, you know, policy development and things like that, and how an issue might play out, but he wasn't thinking "Right, in three months' time we'll do a speech about this, and then we'll say that, and then we'll do the other and that will all fit together very neatly." He didn't really work like that. So when, when, you know, when he wrote a column about the veil, which you're probably aware of, the Muslim veil and things like that, there was a load of stuff afterwards about what was Jack Straw doing there? What was he trying to do? Was he trying to position himself to be the next Prime Minister, was he, or was he trying to ... or John Reid did something about that as well, so they obviously spoke to each other about that and decided what they were going to do. And while that's very interesting, you know, it's all a big sort of conspiracy ... No.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Jack Straw's media relations were not driven by objectives and guided by strategy, but by short term ideas and intuition	Davies, 11
<p>I didn't write it, no, no, jack straw always wrote his own columns for the newspaper, but he ... What happened was he wrote this column every week for the Lancashire Telegraph – still does probably – and, err, was coming ... did it on Tuesday, was in Brussels, coming back on the train, long journey, thought "I'd better write my column. What shall I write about? Oh, that's been annoying me. Yeah, I'll write that." Wrote it, sent it in, you know, and the rest is history sort of thing, absolutely no sort of, erm, planning or sort of great strategy to it at all. I mean I'm not saying that he wasn't a politician or isn't a politician who sort of, you know, thinks about, you know, his, his ... I mean clearly he wants to be popular, obviously, and wants to be re-elected and all that sort of stuff, but he did ... did he think about things in the sort of, you know, to the nth degree? No, absolutely not. No, you know, I don't know how much that's true of other people, but certainly with him it was always, you know, when he did those sorts of big things like that it was really just that he actually thought that it was worth saying and said it, you know. That was that.</p>	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Communications advisor of Straw limited the number of media appearances to protect reputation	Davies, 15
<p>I mean there were plenty of politicians who just did everything they could possibly do but ... you touched on it with Gordon Brown and stuff. People like Peter Hain and, you know, we may as well name names, would appear to just do every single bit of media ever. Now I think that devalued their brand, if you like, whereas I think Jack's brand was sort of he kept intact, and I think, you know, if he'd have done every single thing and become a sort of talking head then he would have been less of a politician in people's eyes than he did the sort of things that were the right things for him to do. So there's a quality control role there too because he had a reputation and also a seniority about him, and there were some things it was right for him to do and there were some things it wouldn't have been right for him to do, you know. (...)</p> <p>Because of the way he's being seen and the reputation that exists.</p>	

Yes, and because of the fact that he was, you know, the foreign secretary or the justice secretary and was a senior politician. It would have just looked a bit ...

So you wouldn't want to pick fights as [0:46:46.4] because that's not what the senior politician ...

No, exactly, and he wouldn't want to appear on, you know, every single, you know ... you'd think, well, he's not going to turn up at 6.30am to do Five Live. He'll do the Today programme at 8.10am, you know. There's a sort of ...

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Expectation management

Davies, 18

And I think Jack in a sense used to take that approach as well. You do everything you can to say "This will ... We'll do our best to make sure this never happens again" but it's more about sort of gripping it and being honest about it than, you know, running away from it or making promises that you couldn't possibly, erm, couldn't possibly live up to. And I, I, I suppose probably partly having worked in it for about six years you do get a bit jaded by some of the sort of crap that people talk, and hearing Cameron, albeit a politician who is on a different side, if you like, to me, I just thought that was incredibly refreshing and good to hear actually. I don't know if ... The thing for them is they probably won't keep that up because something bloody awful will happen and they will react.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Poor expectation management can harm your reputation

Davies, 18

Yes, he's been in power for three years. Why is it still ... yeah.

Yeah. I mean Brown was a classic ... you know, knives is a good example where knives in London, err, Brown would go on TV and promise the bloody earth. This is on [0:52:41.1] obviously, but he would, you know "We will make sure ..." and I can remember, I can remember sort of being involved in, in, you know, a terrible thing that happened. A teenager would be killed by someone with a knife, a terrible, bloody awful thing, family absolutely

distraught, people demanding that, you know, more is done, err, on this, and we would obviously ... You obviously have a duty to then look at, you know, look at the legislation, to talk to the judiciary, look at, you know, what are the guidelines for sentencing and all that sort of stuff, and there would be the Sun and the Mail papers would be saying, you know, there must be a zero tolerance. Anybody caught with a knife must be sent to jail. That must be the rule, you know, without any regard for circumstances or anything like that, and we would look at the guidelines and of course it has to be discussed between the judiciary because we have an independent judiciary. That's not a small point, you know. Erm, so you'd look at all that, you'd look at the ... And you'd come to a view and maybe the view would be, you know, we can, we can tighten things up or we can ask Lord Chief Justice what he thinks, all that sort of stuff. And I can remember having those sorts of discussions. We used to have them pretty much every ... whenever there was a terrible event. And I can remember Brown was in a press conference. He was doing it at, say, 10.00am, and we would get all these calls about 6.30pm/7.00pm from his office saying "He wants to announce X." And we'd be like "You can't announce x" and we'd be like "You can't announce x because if you do that it won't happen because, you know, number one they have an independent judiciary, so you can't actually, you know ..." And yet the stuff wouldn't go in. And you'd get up to ... I can remember being literally five minutes away from doing the press conference and Jack emailing him or calling him saying "Whatever you do, Prime Minister you've got to stick with this" because you'd be sitting watching the press conference and something else would come out of his mouth, and you'd just be like "Fuck" [Laughs] because although, you know, he then gets some headlines the next day "Brown gets tough" in the longer term Brown pledge doesn't live up to, err, you know, because judge hasn't sent that person to jail, and maybe they've not sent that person to jail for good reason. Maybe that person is a butcher on his way to work and he's got a knife in his bag, you know, or, or, you know, whatever. I mean maybe a judge has made a decision which on the face of it you might think is a bad decision, but we've got an independent judiciary, so ... Do you see what I mean? I mean it's really, really interesting because it shows actually the difference in, an instinctive difference between two politicians. Brown was, you know, very, very driven by headlines. Jack was quite driven by headlines in the sense that any politician would be because who wants a bad headline, but there was a point where you would have to say "Look, you've got to stop there." Do you see what I mean? Quite interesting.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

The young Blair's personality and approach was in line with public expectations

Kettle, 1

So the explanation would not be-, the suspicion would not be that it just took the public and it took you and your colleagues some time to understand what kind of person he really-, what he was, what his real objectives were, what he was really after?

Well, I would say not in that particular case. I mean I've known Blair a long time and it's-, those are questions I ask myself in one form or another at various points...you know, am I misleading myself about this, you know, too good to be true Labour leader? I mean the background is important because Labour-, yes, Labour had had a succession of leaders and a history of failure, a history of failing to adapt to changes in society and in the electorate, a-, almost a contempt for modernity and a record of failure and along comes Blair who was elected at a-, in an election in 1993 where Labour did exceptionally badly by any historical measure and-, so there was a-, obviously a very small Labour intake in his year of which he was very exceptional, not just in ability but I mean more in terms of his pragmatism and his moderation and his really non-ideological approach and-, so I think-, I mean I-, I mean he did feel almost too good to be true and-, you know, and he-, it was also clear that on-, that by the time that John Smith died in 1994, if he became leader, Labour was potentially going to do exceptionally well in the next general election because the Conservatives were exhausted and Labour potentially had a very good message.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategic communications was a term the Labour Party started using in the 1980s

Kettle, 2

Well, exactly. I mean there's only one-, obviously, there's only one leader but-, and clearly, Labour in the 1980s under Mandelson began to take communications strategy seriously,

you know. I think-, I mean Mandelson, in my experience, was the first person to start even talking about having a communications strategy in the Labour Party. The terminology was not used until he started using it in my memory.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

A politician's traits need to match the environment's expectations

Kettle, 6

Ian Duncan Smith.

Ian Duncan Smith is someone I don't really understand. What I don't understand about Ian Duncan Smith is how clever he is. I can't get that. I can't work that out.

If or how?

If he is clever. It seemed to me in the 1990s when he was a backbencher, an anti-European backbencher (and that was all that he did) that he was, you know, very-, you know, that he had this very narrow focus and I think that truly reflected the kind of person that he was at that time, you know...ex-Army officer and all that sort of thing, you know. He was-, you know, it was the Thatcher period and the immediate post-Thatcher period and for, you know, the Tory Party, as you know, it took a long time to rid itself of the view that all it needed was to rediscover Thatcher and he was part of that (very much part of that) and I think, you know, he was jolly lucky to become leader of the Tory Party in the sense that he did and it was only because of Europe that Clark who was the natural leader and the natural leader in waiting failed to be-, to do it and-, so Duncan Smith for precisely the converse reason (because he was anti-European and right-wing), they elected him and he was hopeless...I mean he was really hopeless.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Image management is about focusing on specific aspects of a personality

Richards, 1

I think politics at the very top level tends to magnify the characteristics of the individual. So they will become more than themselves (sometimes even a caricature) and if there're aspects of their personality or character traits that you want to make more of then you tend to do things that exacerbate that.	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Image strategy to be successful needs to highlight the politician's strengths	Richards, 1
So you can't try and pretend that someone like let's say Patricia Hewitt who's very cerebral and academic is a woman of the people because she simply isn't; she's patrician and comes from that sort of background. So with her, you'd have to sort of play to her strengths which are sort of a strong argument, an intellectual woman, you know, making big speeches with big ideas and so on and slightly less of the kind of gutsy grassroots campaigning style. So you have to play to strengths and try and rub out negatives	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Ministerial communications try to align image with expectations of key publics	Richards, 2
but more broadly a good advisor will know how certain things will play with the key audiences, particularly swing voters perhaps in the-, certain areas of the country like the South of England and have a sort of-, be in tune with that collective view and be able to then guide the politician in ways that helps match that	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
The personality of a politician and the strategy for his reputation need to match. If they don't, the politician fails to deliver	Jones, 3, 5
With Portillo, there was no doubt about it. He and I knew the man who was grooming Kinnock-, Portillo called Michael-, sorry, called David Hart. Now he literally just died a few weeks ago and I spent a long long time with David Hart. He was trying to present Portillo very much as the-, as a hard man to replace Margaret Thatcher but Portillo couldn't take it; it was just alien to him. And you're quite right to say that the media saw through that in the	



end. But the point was that David Hart's strategy-, I mean he was the one who wrote the famous speech that Portillo delivered about the SAS (who dares kills). He quoted this speech as a way of demonstrating his strength, his political strength. But Portillo just hadn't got it in him. He couldn't do-, he couldn't march up to the hill, to the top of the hill as David Hart wanted him to.

(...)

David Hart, the man, the strategist behind him (Michael Portillo) was trying to present him as a sort of hard man successor to Thatcher and Portillo wasn't up to it. I mean Portillo-, I had a very interesting conversation with Portillo and he said look I'm not happy with my-, with the image that this man David Hart is giving me; I'm not happy with it. This is before he lost his seat; this was when he was Secretary of State for Defence. So even before he lost his seat, well before he lost his seat, he didn't like the image that he was-, that had been invented for him of a hard man and of course that was the reason one of the reasons why he ducked out of standing for the leadership. So you see, you can't-, I don't think one can divorce the fact that he knew that if he was going to be this hard man he would have to come across in the media and he would have to do things that he just wasn't prepared to do.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategic communications management is recent phenomenon

Jones, 19

Now that's something, you see, which if you went back to the Michael Foot's day or perhaps to the William Hague's day, they weren't thinking strategically about the media presentation as you have to do in this country.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Politicians engage consciously in symbolic actions in order to portray believes and values

Jones, 6

which side are-, are you on that left side or are you on that right modernising side. Now Tony Blair hated the trade unions. Alistair Campbell hated the trade unions. Brown knew

that was his potential power base so when a-, an important trade union leader died, Alistair Campbell would be giving a lobby briefing and saying let me tell you about this and he'd say about Gordon Brown oh well as some union leader's died, you know, the Chancellor's away at the funeral. Now I mean there's no way that Blair or Campbell would ever go to the funeral of the leader but Brown knew where his bread was buttered as the English phrase goes and Miliband does to the same degree so (Ed) Miliband would be there if some figure in the-, on the left of the union movement suddenly died. He would make a point of being there whereas (David) Miliband would feel uncomfortable and wouldn't go.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Images are shaped to fit specific audiences' expectations	Greer, 4,5
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The question is whether it really matters a lot of the time. the third and final example I would give and this is one, um you'd have to verify with CCHQ, was in the conference, party conference, I want to say two years ago, it might have been three years ago, I want to say two years ago. In the main conference arena there is that whole sort of nervousness around the union flag, you know the sets, the Conservatives are a British party and proud to be British and so on but you didn't want to do all that five way thing because it was associated with an old school conservatism and they're all going to be bright and green and modern and airy and Steve Hiltoness which is fine. But they also realised that they had to play to their base in the auditorium and the country at large outside the auditorium. And what I was told by one of their staff at CCHQ, one of the ops people was that, um, the images in the union flag that were projected onto the walls, so they weren't physical images they were projected onto the walls, were projected at such a lighting that the TV cameras wouldn't pick them up but the human eye would. Now that's a level of detail that's pretty crazy. Is that really going to matter? Is it going to shift the voter so much that they see it? I don't know but I think it gives an indication of the kind of detail that senior politicians, kind of... or at least their advisors think. Whether they're prepared to admit it or not.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Awareness that images and messages need to be calibrated to expectations among the party base and different expectations among the electorate	Greer, 7
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Can you imagine they are limited in what they do and suggest? They've got after all the party activists, the whole party they have.... they have expectations. Now if you know what the image should be to the... what you want to portray to the electorate, that may be very different from what your party activists expect. So to what extent are you limited in...?

I think it's that classic thing of during the leadership campaign or indeed in the US during the primaries, you're paying to your base. So you go more left or you go more right or, you know, um, in the Liberal Democrats perhaps you go in two directions, sort of multi message. But then when you've won, you then have to move back towards the centre ground. It's not like you're moving from right to left or from left to right but you're moving from the right to the centre right or the left to the centre left. And you're always going to upset your activists doing that but I think politicians are quite aware that they have to give their base enough to keep them happy and they do that more often than not. But that their base will accept a lot more disappointment than the electorate will. So, you know, the classic thing, um, at the, er, you know, the um, say the grammar schools or something like that, something that went down really badly with the Conservatives, the Conservative base. The public at large, not necessarily, is fussed by it so they're prepared to sort of take the hit from their base because where are the base going to go? They can vote for their party or they might vote for one of the minor parties but it's much less likely. So no they are restricted from that in that they can't just say what they want, they do have to be a party that's informed by their base. Because ultimately they are a reflection of the base, they probably agree with the base but they're aware that the electorate wouldn't agree with the base. So they act as this kind of... they sit between the two, knowing all the while that they probably really agree with these guys but they have to give the electorate what they want in order to get elected.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Communications management requires not just presenting the leader but also managing expectations among the publics	Greer, 8
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How is the genesis of the making of Cameron in that context? Who was perhaps very much aware that he went only in the middle and the party perhaps, at the time he was elected, not ready for that and had to be pushed and pulled to where they are now.

In some senses I think that was quite like Blair but certainly not as effective. You know, Blair was very aware that the Labour party... I was chatting to a Labour MP the other day and you see this all the time actually, you know they're never happier than when in opposition. Because at that point policy is pure, you're not having to dilute stuff, you can go as far left as you want to sort of fight that noble fight. But ultimately you're not able to deliver and Blair realised that they had to ditch a lot of that as you know and become a party at the centre ground and was very bold with the clause 4 moment and, um, and at the conference. And then Cameron on the other hand realised that there was a similar party with the Conservatives, you know, you look at the, um, er, it's not racist to talk about immigration, um, the focus on, um, on policing and on all of those kind of issues which might have really fired up the, the um, the Conservative party base in 2001 and 2005. But it was never going to win an election, you know, it wasn't broad enough and he recognised that and was able to sort of go, "Well no we have to change as a party." He said that to his party and they were prepared to go with him, they gave him, not necessarily, the benefit of the doubt but they recognised just I think as Labour recognised, that they weren't going to win by talking about the same issues that always interested them.

The biggest example, the most, when I say the biggest example, the most obvious example is the tree, you know, changing from the torch to the tree. That's... changing your logo is hugely symbolic. Like Starbucks at the moment changing from the star with Starbucks coffee around it to just the siren because they're extending their product range, their brand beyond coffee. You know, they want to capture new ground and it's the same with a party. You know, by changing your logo or going from Labour to New Labour that's a distinct thing that says a lot about the party's willingness and the leader's drive to sort of change the image. Because it's exactly the same people who are in the party, you know, when the logo gets changed. Yes the logo might bring in a whole bunch of new people who wouldn't have been there before but the people who agreed that, who went with the new logo were exactly the same party as before just with a new leader who was a bit more open to doing things a little bit differently.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
To develop a public persona that gains widespread support within the party it is necessary to adapt the political message to a range of relevant publics	Redfern, 1
<p>So I think David in a sense, I mean it's still a great tragedy to me, but David lost because he was too honourable really in some respects and actually needed to be a bit more devious probably on—I mean that's a very unpleasant way of putting it, but you have to have—you have to be prepared to make some sacrifices and I think he was very clear that he wanted to go on a particular route and not be beholden to anyone which undermined him.</p> <p>So you would have said, "This is my policy, that was my policy in the past, I'm not going to make any changes just now because I want their votes."</p> <p>Yeah and I know there are people in that office who were urging him to do more to reach out to those members who were carrying votes and he stuck to his own person, sort of credo, and that was not enough. I mean it was so, so, so, so nearly enough and frankly had it been delivered, he could have said completely honestly, "I am not bound to you and so we are going to reform the party and the way it works." Ed can't do that because Ed, you know, he got himself stuck in with trade unions and now he's constant—it's a millstone around his neck which is [over speaking].</p>	
10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)	
Politics is two way communication and conversation	Redfern, 7
<p>Is this generating, more than I use it I read about it, but the content is generated, ideally agenda setting is that you would want to set the agenda but if content to a large degree is generated by the people who use it [over speaking].</p> <p>Yeah, the conversation, yeah. Well you're telling your friends to follow David because</p>	

they're your friends and you like them and you want them to be part of something great. You're doing it because you believe in David but you're also doing it because as part of your own life this is a good thing and you want other people to share it, I think that's the magic formula. But I mean David did stuff that others didn't, so he did a lot of YouTube stuff and he did a lot of audio, so he did a lot of audio recordings and I think, I actually think I've got a real—I really think that politics is a lot about the conversation and the voice and you know, people wanted to engage with that. I think that's one of the reasons why Ed is having his adenoids done, you know, because there's an issue with the voice there. I think the more David did that the more he spoke and literally he's standing there speaking down an iPhone into audio [00:26:48] which is punted out on his Twitter stream and suddenly maybe 20,000 people will have clicked onto it and heard it. It's a very powerful thing you know and you get this great sense of intimacy with a politician through that media and it's certainly something—you know, you almost invite them into your head actually and it's a very powerful mechanism which worked well.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Two way communications implies influencing policies

Kelly, 2

Now, you advise on communications. Where do you draw the line? To what degree do you want to be involved? And would you, and your colleagues, and others, your way of being involved in the joined up deciding of the politics, of the policies?

The best example I can give you of that is the Northern Ireland peace process where, yes, we signed the Good Friday agreement but, as George Mitchell said at the time, signing it was the easy bit. Implementing it was the difficult bit and it took nine years. During that process I didn't see my job as just being to expound the message of the agreement but to feedback into the policy machine how I thought public perceptions were changing towards it so as that taking issues such decommissioning IRA weapons, the reality is if we try to resolve there and then the issue of decommissioning IRA weapons on Good Friday in 1998 we wouldn't have had an agreement because it just wasn't possible.

So therefore there had to be a degree of interpretation as to when to push that to a head, and I saw it in my job, in that instance, to monitor opinions within the Unionist community so

at that to be able to say to the Prime Minister and to others I think the time has come where we're not going to make any more political progress unless we resolve this decommissioning [0:06:17.5]. Was that communications dictating the policy process? No. But was it informing the policy process of the context and the changing context in which you will operate in? Yes

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Linking the tactics and strategy	Kelly, 2
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. It's what I call a zig zag. You zig zag between the typical day to day events and your strategic message. Your strategic message, if it doesn't take account of those day to day events, will become irrelevant. It will become theoretical. It will become disconnected from the public mood, and it's all about maintaining momentum behind what you're trying to do. The analogy we used to always use in the peace process was its like riding a bicycle. Sometimes the policy process, the public perception are aligned and you can make progress very quickly. Sometimes they're seriously misaligned and it's very slow. The main thing is you have to keep a sufficient momentum going to keep the damned thing upright because once you fall over it's very difficult to get it going again.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Distinction between strategic communications and tactical media relations	Kelly, 3,4
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I've got this interesting argument that there are two types of communicators. One has got his history in journalism, the other one more in the marketing strategy. Now the marketing side, the problem with the journalism before was they tried to satisfy the journalists. They tried to keep them happy and give them a good story because they know what a good story is, but then they don't follow that long term agenda that we've set. What I'm perhaps even more interested in is that the journalism side and communicators would say "We know how a story, how an idea, how a thought has been picked up and been processed by journalists,

but is that really the target audience you're interested in, and how would you know what the target audience want as opposed to journalists." That may be different.

I think what journalism gives you is an instinct as to where the story is going. You know what the next steps are going to be. You can therefore warn the policy process of what the next steps are going to be. I don't think it's your job to give journalists stories. I think again part of the transition, if you like, from initial stage (of the Blair government) to [0:15:00.1] to a mature stage [0:15:01.2] it stopped trying to write the headlines of tomorrow. It didn't give up completely but it stopped. That doesn't mean, however, that you're not trying to get a strategic message across and you're not trying to get it across in an interesting way.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

The content of a politician's messages needs to be consistent – even though audiences may change

Kelly, 6,7

There is the awareness in [0:27:22.1] there is the trade unions that have a certain expectation what he should do, what he should like, or what he or she should be like, and there is the electorate in England, but in Northern Ireland there are business people and bankers in the city, a number of very distinct publics that have different ideas of what it should be like. What would be the advice? How do you deal with these very disparate and distinct expectations of what kind of leader and prime minister and politician do we want to be represented by?

Well, you have to recognise that different people have different questions that you need to address, and therefore it is perfectly legitimate to have a differentiated message for a business community, for the trade union community, for public ... different parts of regional views as well. What you also need, however, to be aware, is that you can't sell the contradictory message. In other words it all has to add up to a coherent overview. People who try and say one thing to an audience and another thing to a different audience, they may get away with it for a while but they then don't, and your credibility ... If people think that you're calculating your message and that you are shaping your message to pander to what they want, to ... you're saying what they want to hear but you don't believe it, they will see through it, and it is one of the most tempting things is to tell people what you think they want to hear. And you may get away with it once. You may get away with it twice. But then



the third time people will say “Hold on, that’s completely different to what you’re saying to that group” and your credibility, once it’s gone it’s gone. You don’t get it back. And it’s the job of a director of communications to say to the leader “hold on a minute, that doesn’t make sense.”

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

In relationship management heavy emphasis on journalists

Waring, 2

When you [0:05:14.0] do you think you overemphasise journalists because these are the ones you are constantly in contact with but they may not reflect what ...

I don’t think the Secretary of State does. I think he has a very good spread of business stake ... you know, because he sees all the business groups and he sees massive employers and investors, so I think he has a good balance, but obviously I would probably focus more on journalists.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategy of media relations

Waring, 8

But you’re saying that-, that’s what you do because that’s your job description.

No, the five ... I mean what I mean is I do a lot of ... because I do policy as well as media, so I do, you know, you do a lot of fire fighting like that. I, erm ... so it’s event driven in a slightly different way but I don’t-, I don’t ... I stopped getting too consumed with every day because that isn’t what makes an image. I think what’s-, when you talk to normal people [0:20:43.4] politics, you know, they may be read the paper twice a week and they might-, or three times a week, and they might read two or three stories at the front and then read the sport or read the television and, you know, the magazine part, and read the first three pages, or they might watch the ten o’clock news, and they build upon that and they build upon a tiny snippet, and it only has to be one sentence that one politician says and think “I agree with that” and forever they think I agree with him. So you can’t just get hung up on

one because everybody just [0:21:12.7] the press about something different, so I think the marketing part is more important. It's about that politician saying the same thing over and over and over again or having that same message, and if it resonates with people that's when their image is built, and if it doesn't resonate then they just, I think they just stay below the radar, you know.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategy – evidence for relationship management

Wood, 1

In William's time, although I wasn't there, it is true that the so called modernising faction within the party wanted to present Hague as a sort of modern young man and indeed Mrs Hague as a modern young woman. And I think it's fair to say that certainly... I think the decision to attend the Notting Hill Carnival for instance would have been... was obviously a planned thing and it was meant to show him in touch with the sort of youth of Britain and all that kind of thing. You're quite right, it obviously backfired horrendously.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategy – relationship management

Hazlewood 1

Erm, it's a different dynamic, I suppose, because we're working with another government, a government in Cardiff, so we need to maintain a good relationship with them. Erm, and in terms of reputation and how we manage that, we're not looking to constantly be in conflict with another government and ... I don't know about another party but the view we've taken is that we always want to work together in the interests of Wales rather than having Whitehall at one end and Cardiff at the other, and the two trying to clash. Erm, on the whole that's worked but there have been occasions when it, it's been called into question because of policy decisions, not because of personality necessarily. Erm, I think probably the biggest issue that we face when there's been a real tension between the two has been over the issue of organ donation. The government before the election of the government here,

before the election wanted to bring forward some legislation on opt out organ donation.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategy – relationship management

Hazlewood, 6

I need to ask that, I know it is very difficult for you to answer because you don't want to read somewhere you saying 'oh we make different statements'.

Oh no we don't, far from it, err, one message we did at the last conference was about the importance of Wales within the United Kingdom and how policy decisions taken in Cardiff impact on Wales but also across the border and we have developed this phrase as slate curtain, where if you live along the border, say in Wrexham or Newport or somewhere, very often the services that you're using, be it the health service or elsewhere, are in England and if it is in the health service it is not devolved in England but it is devolved in Wales, so there is very different level of services being developed on one side of the border and not the other. So where we are trying to say is look we accept that devolution means you can take decisions differently if you wish, that is entirely fine and that is right and proper that you should do that. However Wales is a country where we have got a long border with another country where very different decisions are being taken and what we don't want to see is people on one side of the border being disadvantaged from decisions being taken on the other err and that has gathered quite a lot of traction. And that is the real philosophical difference between the UK government and the Welsh government I think and we are very keen to see flow in both directions whereas that is not necessarily the case, not always, sometimes it is but not always with the government here. And I think, I'd like to think we are probably more in tune with what people are seeking.

10. Strategy (e.g. managing relationships, two way communications etc.)

Strategy – relationship management

Hazlewood, 7

No one does, did you at some stage sit together and think about how does the secretary of state want to be seen and what are the...

Yes, you know we have many conversations, Cheryl and I have known each other for a long time as I said earlier on, sometimes it can be unspoken because we have worked together for so long we know what works and what doesn't work. Erm, but I have always taken the view that it is important that if you are secretary of state you are out and about and being seen in Wales as much as possible and she does that. You know we go and travel across the country, a whole range of meetings, a whole range of speeches, public profile events and that is right I think. It is very easy to sit in your office in Whitehall and not be seen, not connect with the public, you have to connect with the public I think. Erm and that is part of building a reputation, if people can see you and get to know you as a person, then I think that starts to break down some barriers with the public, because there is still that sort of feeling that politicians are in one corner and the public are in the other and we try to meet in the middle as much as we can.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

In political communications a marketing approach is not very effective

Neather, 6,7

Come across almost two types of communicators or spin doctors. One are those that have a background as Journalists and others from a marketing background and they... what I've been told is that the strength of those with a Journalist background is that they know what a good story is, they know how to... what you're looking for and what you... The weaknesses, I'm told, by the others is that they really want a good story and they don't have a long-term plan position, what government wants...

They're very short-term, very short-term.

Do you see the difference between these?

I do, I do. And I work with various people who've had a marketing background and to be honest I think it's bullshit. It's like I can see what they're trying to do but the idea that you can develop the brand, it's just silly. When I was in No.10, I was in the Communications Unit, and one of my – it was about ten or twelve strong – and one of my colleagues was there specifically to work on public service reform and she had previously been some kind of brand manager within the NHS, very much marketing-lead. The work, as far as I could

see, consisted of these interminable meetings with senior NHS people – people from public services – trying to develop their key messages and key narratives. And I just don't buy it, I think it's... I think people will judge themselves what the services are like. On that particular point, what was hard for New Labour was that even though they tipped all this money into services – and they did put in a lot of money – there wasn't... services did improve, I think, definitely, and that shows up in opinion polling too, but did they improve as much as the money that was put in? You know, it's hard to say. NHS spending – what? Double? More than double? Is the NHS twice as good as it was? Not really. And that was reflected in people's scepticism on the matter. Another thing – core messages – it's neither here nor there.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Marketers assume their messages can reach their target audiences in an unmediated way- but journalists might not take the messages

Neather, 7

you're not perceiving, for instance, in...

I'm definitely on the Journalists' side.

I suppose you are, yeah. Looking at the... the marketing people would say now, for instance, the criticism of Cameron would be the U turns and perhaps he's not interested in detail and these are two potential weaknesses so they would have the narrative that, "Whatever we do, however we appear, whatever we say, we have to link this to yes, we're interested in detail and will pursue this to the end and don't do U turns." What other [0:31:30.9] that it can't be planned would be linked to these two or three main points that are in the narrative? So, that would be what they say all along...

Yeah. I'm not saying... that's perfectly logical, that's a perfectly good thing to do.

You wouldn't have been reminded as a Speech Writer that these are the five points on the narrative and you should try to link what you do and say back to it?

Yeah, probably, yeah. But I just think that... you know, speech writing is different because it's proactive – normally proactive – so, you're choosing what you want to talk about. The trouble is it... I mean Journalists are really looking for the story and one of New Labour's frequent frustrations with the press was that they couldn't take their message, as conceived by branding types, directly to voters. Well, they could, but not with the same [0:32:37.6] journalism. Whereas, if Blair gives a speech and you just wait for the Journalists to report

it, well they'll find what they think is the storyline and some lines of attack and so on. So, I think it is a very sort of marketing assumption that you can reach your target audience in this almost sort of unmediated way, that you can decide what the message is. Because you can, it's just not any guarantee it's going to arrive there like that. I don't know. Cameron is good and in terms of trying to persuade people the Tories have changed, but even then, you know, he didn't convince them that much. He convinced them enough to get to form a government and that's all you need but...

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communications advisors' understanding of the media, how journalists work, their intentions and how material is turned into a story is key for reputation management

McBride, 15

I mean one I organised and I'll take it to my grave was, um, the Mail on Sunday doing an interview with him before he took over as leader in 2007 where we, um, we got two reporters from the Mail on Sunday to watch an England football match with him, um, actually it must have been World Cup 2006. Watch, um an England match with him so that he could talk about his love of football. Now of course the way the Mail on Sunday did it was this is proving to an English audience that he, you know, he's not just a Scot that hates English people, you know, here he is jeering on the England team. But again it looked really false, you know, just him sitting there with these two journalists watching the football, you know, what on earth was he doing doing it. and again it's one of those where you think about it afterwards and you think, you know, somebody should have told me this is going to look false and as much as it was all very good conversation at the time, you just sort of think well how's it going to look when it's on the news print with a picture of him sitting there, you know, having invited these people to come round and drink beer and watch the football with him.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communicators with journalism background seem to be less interested in controlling news, but in helping journalists' generate it

Hill, 7

you see I'm ... you see I'm, I'm an unusual creature in that respect, because having never been a journalist I have never ever had the problem that journalists have of falling into the trap of giving too much information because their job is to develop and expand information, and yours is to control information. So for quite a lot of people that poultry turned gamekeeper is quite difficult, because they're suddenly having to control when they're used to doing quite the opposite. But I think yes, I think the general sense is people like having journalists about because journalists understand journalists and understand what the following morning's papers are going to look like, why the headlines are going to be as they are, how the stories are going to be written, just as long as they don't fall into the bad ways that journalists fall into, in which case you're giving it away when you don't want to.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Resources needed for successful reputation management- staff with specific expertise	Hill, 9
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But within that communications, I think ... I think it's understanding the strategy, helping with the language, understanding how to develop the stories, but also knowing ... having people there who are particularly good at presentation, because in the modern televisual age it's no good being ... an old fashioned politician is seen to be an old fashioned politician.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Quality of the team of advisors makes the difference	Hill, 10
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if you're going to be effective, you do need a good team around you who can provide all these services for you. (...) The key thing is, we've all worked with people in our operations who don't get it, and it's ... it's remarkable how some people who don't get it insinuate themselves into places where they can actually try and influence.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

When reputation is bad or government on the way out it seems to be difficult to recruit and maintain good staff	Hill, 10, 11
<p>Did you lose the best people towards the end of the ... the time in office?</p> <p>Er, up to a point. You're bound to ... you're bound to lose some because they're planning ... planning their future, you know. But yes, actually, most people did stay on. There was ... there was a ... you lose them, you lose them as you go on. I mean, that's inevitable. People only want to be doing a certain length of time, and for some people it was 1994 to 2007. Er, that's a long stint.</p> <p>Well, I've ... I've ... when I asked about the Conservatives, they said, well, once it was clear they had a chance to return to office, they found it much easier to recruit high quality staff. Of course, absolutely.</p> <p>Whilst if you're on your way out, it's more difficult to get [0:39:23]</p> <p>Yes. But, of course, we were on our way out in 2007, he was on his way out, but the government wasn't, although it was the same, because Brown did, I mean, did sort of say he wasn't really going to keep anybody who'd been there before.</p> <p>And he was losing staff then towards the end.</p> <p>And he was losing staff as well, yes. So, so I think you're bound to lose ... Yes, you are ... you are bound to lose staff, but on the other hand, if you've ... if you've been running a good operation, and if you appear to be someone whom it is really worth working for, then people will come in even then, late on, and that's part of their CV. I mean, look at erm ... Phil Collins [?] came quite late and now a leader writer for The Times. And I'm sure it helped him being leader writer at The Times that he came and worked with Tony, but he worked ... he worked hard for him for those last two or three years. So absolutely right that he moved on to something good.</p>	
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
Prime Minister Cameron employs staff to ensure announcements are necessary and consistent with policies, and policies with political believes	Eustice, 6
<p>And I think to try to address that, what David Cameron has done is he's brought in these three new people who are taking a, erm, if you like, a cross departmental view of the whole of government. So you've got a new head of strategy, who asks, are all these</p>	



announcements we're making necessary and consistent with what the government strategy and message is, that's important. Number two, have we checked this for policy, are we absolutely confident that this policy's a good one, rather than a bad one. And number three, having agreed that they were going to do this policy, do we have a communication strategy so that the public don't get a ... you know, a, a muddled view of what it is.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Two different way of doing political communication: The press officer's approach to satisfy journalists' needs, and the marketer's approach to stick to strategy/message

Eustice, 11

Why do you ... the last one I've got, the last question I've got, why would the Conservative and the Labour party regularly and again and again recruit for communications issues to present their leader, to present ministers, journalists, even though what you're saying what you're doing really is marketing led, it's marketing research led. So is there perhaps two decisive publics, one is the electorate, one is the journalists, and you may have to have two different approaches.

I think they're wrong. The answer is I think they're wrong. Erm, I, I wasn't a journalist. I think there's two schools of thought. Actually, I wrote a PR week column on this and you've got two ... there's two schools. One is that the role of the press secretary is to schmooze editors, give them what they want. If they want to talk about immigration give them a nice immigration story. Erm, if it's the Guardian and they like green stuff, give them a green story. Erm, shout at journalists down the phone when they say something you don't like, erm, hand out goodies, exclusive stories, to the rest. That's one way. I think that's a disastrous way to go, because you end up with editors who have an inflated sense of their importance, they swagger around as if erm they're running the country. Erm, it makes them very difficult to deal with because if you say something they don't like then they basically spit their dummy out and moan about it in the ... in their leader columns. Erm, and they try and bully you into doing what they want you to do. Now that's one school of thought and I think that's a disaster zone, but that's what journalists are prone to do 'cos it's all they know, and they're scared of editors. The other school of thought is that you ... message matters most. Erm, you don't give journalists what they want, you give them what they need, so they understand your agenda that you're trying to project, and that you don't make the media your compass, because you've become as dysfunctional as they are. Erm, and that

all of your work should be about projecting a consistent message over and over again, and that actually successful communications is about having a uniform pattern of information that you project, which says something that's true about the politician you represent. And I come into that latter camp, and generally I think campaigners, therefore, make, in my view, better ... better communications people than journalists.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communications advisors with a background as journalists contribute an understanding of the media

Macrory, 4

Yes, okay. Well, the media advice will tend to come from people who have got some kind of media experience so our last director of communications was Andy Coulson. I'm sure you've heard all about him. He was a very experienced journalist. He understood the media very very well indeed. So you'd have him as the first port of call. You've got people like myself who-, I'm an ex-journalist. I've had a lot of experience with the press. You've got other people so-, who-, and who would be incidentally expected to talk to journalists a lot. I spend half my day talking to journalists. So you have a feel for what they want. You have a feel for where the traps are. You have a feel for who's going to be-, so you would get advice from those

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communications for the Prime Minister are more specialised and sophisticated than for the opposition leader to difference in staff numbers

Macrory, 4

Well, it's because you've got the whole of the civil service behind you in government. The-, in opposition, everything happened really basically from this floor here (about 200 people maximum of which only a small number were in press and some events) but now you've got an advanced government machine. Every department has a press office (some people might say too many press officers but that's another matter) and Number 10 has, you know, a press office of civil servants (about ten or twelve people, very very good people). I mean they're experienced and know what they're doing so they provide all the sort of backup but under-, probably under the direction of special advisors such as the director of

communications.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communicators with marketing background are good at setting long term agenda, those with journalism background are more popular with media

Beattie, 4

Did you perceive differences in whether the spin doctors/media advisors have got a marketing background or a journalist background? The reason I'm asking is that I [0:17:06.0] overheard complaints saying that the former journalists who worked as spin doctors and media advisor, he tries to satisfies the interest ... he's interested in a good story. That's what he learned all his life, whereas the marketing person will say "I'm not particularly interested in you as a good story. I've got my plan for what I want to say, whether you can use it or not."

Generally, in my experience but not exclusively, actually the only really good spin doctors are the former journalists for the newspapers because they understand what we want and how it works. And they are-, they realise that we trade in stories and therefore we need stories. But that's not to say we don't frequently fall for and are taken in by very careful use of [0:17:59.8], probably too regularly at times. This is coming back to the choreography of how you present somebody. I find marketing people ... the main problem is there's [0:18:21.2] doesn't make marketing very good. They may be good at setting out the long term agenda. I'm probably unaware of it because I don't think like that. They maybe could have an influence on how I [0:18:51.1].

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Reputation hinges on the quality of pol communications staff

Stacey, 2

The ability to spin or manage or create a narrative is that to do with the resources politicians have? I was being told that David Miliband's article in the Guardian where he didn't mention what he should have mentioned and therefore was then seen as a potential contender and challenger. That only happened and spiralled out of proportion because he didn't have the staff to manage it afterwards because he didn't have the resources he

needed to contact everyone who would pick up the story and make something of it the next day.

It's not only afterwards it's beforehand, it's the people around you to tell you this is how it's going to be played out which is why former journalists are so important in some of these places. So for example there's been a story recently with Ed Balls announcing this big VAT cut, saying that Labour would cut VAT if they go into power. Now he didn't tell the shadow cabinet about this and his advisors actually say that they didn't expect it to catch the headlines as it did. But if that's the case he was very badly advised because obviously it was a concrete economic policy, everybody's looking for concrete economic policies from Labour to be tax cutters. It's almost designed to make headlines. I'm slightly cynical about whether they really didn't think it would catch the headlines but apparently they didn't and if that is the case then you definitely need an advisor to tell you how that's going to play out.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Skills and effectiveness of communications staff

Stacey, 4

Not even Brown did it while he was chancellor, it was thought by his people, they said "Sometimes Number 10 would pass on information to us to show us how unpopular he was but we wouldn't be able to do better ourselves." Do you notice any differences between, some communicators who have a marketing background, others have got a journalist background, do you notice any differences in that?

Yeah definitely, journalists are always better because they get the idea of a story and they know what you want as a journalist and the marketing people they want to sell you a product. The journalists don't really care about that, we just want the story, we want the exclusive, we want the new thing whatever it is and we don't want all this kind of... we can see the spin coming a mile away. We don't want to be told your candidate is x, y and z and isn't he great, he hugs better bears and the rest of it. We want to be told what's going on, what's the story and then if it helps paint the politician in the light that the person wants well we understand that. But if it's happening and it's true and it's a story that's all we care about. The journalists always get that better than the PR people tend to.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
Browns advisors as chancellor had tactical, defensive qualities that helped him become prime minister.	Price, 5, 6
I think part of Brown's problem was that, you know, he had a strategy when he was Chancellor, erm a personal strategy which was to become Prime Minister, pretty straightforward. And he pursued it relentlessly and ultimately successfully, of course, he did become Prime Minister. But he had around him people who were there to help him achieve that and they were thinking tactically all the time and often that tactic was how they could undermine the person who was already Prime Minister in Tony Blair and how they could position Brown. Often it was a very defensive game that they were playing, in order	
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
Brown as Prime Minister had initially the wrong kind of staff who could not develop strategy and visions	Price, 6
... In other words that they were trying to close off any opposition to him becoming Prime Minister and all the rest of it and they were, although ultimately successful in that he did become Prime Minister, they were exactly the wrong qualities that you needed once you got there. You needed people with a completely different vision, a completely strategic vision rather than a tactical vision and he just didn't have them and he couldn't find them.	
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
A journalists background helps understand publics, rather than formal research	Davies, 3,4
I suppose how do I personally feel I have that I suppose is from ... I mean I think my background was quite important as a journalist before I was a special advisor, and I was also crucially I think a journalist on local newspapers, err, so, you know, the Liverpool Echo, the Liverpool Daily Post, and I think as a result had a greater sense of the sort of public mind-set than perhaps people who came through, err, a different sort of route to the sorts of jobs that I did. And I think there is, there is a view that too many people come to the jobs I did through a sort of, you know, academy almost where they go to Oxbridge and then they go to, err, join the party and the press office or whatever, and then become special advisor	

and actually don't have very much experience of, you know, life, whatever that is. [Laughs] But, but I do think it's a valid point, and so I suppose ... I think I'm answering your question. I hope I am. [Laughs] Erm, I think instinctive, and I think, I think a sort of instinctive sense, based on experience, I suppose, and having a sort of fairly ...

I mean I am a ... I was a, you know, I was a reporter. I was a sort of a hack. [Laughs] And I don't mean that in a, in a, err ... I mean I'm obviously not going to disrespect myself.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

A press officer with a journalist's background ability to gauge the expectations of the media

Davies, 4,5

't you sense and find there was gaps ... Well, I find that a number of special advisors or the media advisors and handlers were recruited from journalists and for very good reasons.

Mm.

But then sometimes when you do surveys you find that what journalists expect, how they judge on what they want is perhaps very different from what the electorate thinks is right.

Mm. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Did you find that?

Oh yeah, absolutely, and I mean in particular ... yeah, I mean of course, you know, you can't, you can't sort of, erm, you can't just decide that the message is the message and it works for any journalist who happens to ring up because of course there's a whole range of different expectations from different journalists and different, you know, working for different outlets. And, and I think the best example of that is working in the Ministry of Justice where I spent three years in the Ministry of Justice telling journalists on the Guardian and the Independent that Jack wasn't an authoritarian, you know, wasn't sort of obsessed with locking people up, and then spent the rest of the time telling the Sun and the Mail that actually what we're trying to do was have a sort of rational prison policy where the most difficult, the most dangerous people got locked up, and the most-, the less dangerous people might be treated in a more effective way, and as a result was told that "Oh, you're incredibly soft and all prisons are holiday camps" and all that sort of stuff. So, you know, that was the most difficult-, without question the most difficult sort of brief to have and to find a, you know ... I didn't get the right answer to that one because it's very hard to get that rational argument going. I think to some extent we succeeded, but, erm, it was very, very

hard. So, erm, but I think dealing with journalists, although they do come from different outlets and different perspectives, or their newspapers are from different perspectives, actually what they want are pretty much the same things uniformly. They want a good line basically. Erm, they're not-, they're not judging you on ... And they're not necessarily judging your boss from their, from their political, err, their personal and political view. They're judging it from the fact they want a decent line for their story basically ... So I found most relationships ... I mean actually the relationships that I had which were the best relationships were probably the people who caused us the most grief in terms of bad headlines, but that was partly because I tried to have as good a relationship as possible with them so that, erm, it might not be as bad as, erm, as it might otherwise be so that at least if they were going to sort of, you know, pour a, a-, several buckets of unpleasant stuff over Jack's head in the newspapers the next day, at least they were carrying a quote from me at the end saying "It's all ridiculous what you've just said."

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

The quality and kind of pol communications advice hinges on the background and qualification of communications advisors

Richards, 9

I was and I am surprised that so many advisors are-, have a media journalism background. Now they will take-, (by definition, by their background) take very seriously what other journalists write. Now we may-, you may argue that journalists do like a role. They like political infighting because that sells newspapers but that's not what people really like about politics, is it?

It's interesting. I think it's a fault actually that politicians more on the Labour side will tend to see the sort of expertise externally as being with journalists so Alistair-, Jo Hayes, Alistair Campbell, you know, Bob and (what's his face?) Tom Baldwin, Bob Roberts and Tom Baldwin are all drawn from within a kind of comfort zone of political journalism whereas Cameron of course brought in people with marketing experience and commercial marketing experience who understood that media is a single channel but there're lots of other channels out there of communication that people are getting information from and Cameron himself of course having worked in commercial communications knows that and that's I think better and of course Thatcher had Reece as an advertising man, not a journalist, an

advertising man helping her image and they've sort of been-, they've always been better at it than we have. Now we had Philip Gould (okay) but, you know, it was limited the advice that we got but the point is journalists sort of poached the term gamekeeper. Journalists turned communications advisors are sometimes very narrow-, narrowly focused on other journalists and they see, you know, well, it's all about getting a good piece in the Sun or whatever and they don't see the broader marketing and communications challenges and it's a weakness that they have and it's something on-, in the Labour party we haven't really addressed actually.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

It is challenging for politicians in the UK to face, deal with and survive the media

Jones, 17

It's more politicised here than it is anywhere else and I say the state, because of the market, because of the, you could say, irresponsibility of the media in Britain, the state has to respond in that way, it has to be able to respond in that way. and if you take the Prime Minister of the day, I mean the very famous... there was a very famous commentator of the newspaper called the Daily Telegraph called Bill Deeds and he said about Ingham and he said about Campbell to me in an interview, "Look every British Prime Minister needs a thug sitting beside them who understands the British media. Because the British media is so irresponsible that you need somebody who can really put the boot in." And that's why, you see, why did Coulson... how is it that a British Prime Minister, right-hand man is a former editor of the News of the World? Or in Campbell's case the Daily Mirror.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communicator with journalism background ensures the politician's actions and communications is in line with newspapers' agenda

Jones, 4

So if we take Cameron for example, I mean he's-, there's controversy now about the spin doctor who's helping him, Andy Coulson, but it's very very interesting if you look back at the significance of Coulson because Coulson is the person who connects Cameron to the 'camtab' campaigning tabloid journalism of Britain. So he's the guy who repositions



Cameron as the supporter of our boys, our boys in Iraq, the sort of Sun campaign. He is the guy who gets Cameron on board because he launches-, Cameron launches the Sun's campaign to expose benefit scroungers. So Coulson has this key role in connecting-, in my opinion in connecting Cameron to this populist agenda

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Politicians systematically recruit expert communicators

Jones, 11

What one noticed was that when a party is defeated after a long time in power it takes them a time to recover and one of the signs of recovery is that people in the media and journalists are beginning to hitch their wagon to a new political party because they think it's going to go somewhere. Now that was very much the case. Labour came out of losing the '79 election and they were just on the floor. They fought '83 with Michael Foot who just had an absolutely woeful media strategy. Well, it wasn't a strategy; it was just a disaster. By '87, under Mandelson, they are beginning a credible fight back. By '92, it's level pegging and of course by '97 it's suddenly land slide, historic land slide. But if you look at what happens between '94 and '97, that's when Blair is putting so much emphasis on recruiting sympathetic journalists so as part of this momentum they begin to attract sympathetic journalists so if you take-, Campbell of course being the first one but a lot of journalists who I worked with at the BBC, others who work for the news agencies or the newspapers. Blair would personally help with the recruitment. He'd come up to-, I mean one of them, the man who was the editor of the Press Association News Agency (the main news agency) left to become-, to work with the Labour Party machine in preparation for the '97 election because they knew that the band wagon was going that way. And he said to me look Nick you've got to understand Tony Blair said to me I need you, I need you to help me and the man gave up a job as Press Association-, political editor of the main news agency. So there was no doubt about it, a calculated attempt to win people on board. Now exactly the same thing happened once the Cameron bandwagon started, once the party knew you see. He began to attract sympathetic journalists as he started his campaign for the leadership of the party and of course once he became leader that's when you begin to see, you know, they can recruit someone like Coulson and the whole of the media operation builds because of course what you have to look at is the success of the public relations industry in Britain.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
Reputation management and media relations are learned and perfected through experience on the job	Jones, 19
<p>Cameron, likewise, was picture perfect by the time he got... well he wasn't picture perfect entirely on the televised debates we have to say but by and large he was. He had led the way in the presentation of responding to the scandal of MP's expenses. Time and time again he demonstrated this ability to influence the news agenda to get sympathetic coverage. So, yes, I mean there's no doubt about it, the longer they're at it, the more competent they get</p> <p>(...)</p> <p>Last thought from me and then... do you think the longer a party or a candidate suffers in opposition, the more they are prepared to open up to that media savvy advice?</p> <p>Yes, yes and of course some understand better how to improve it all the time. I mean Blair was somebody who was learning and was picture perfect by the time he'd got to the '97 election.</p>	
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
Communications advisors with journalistic background base their judgement on experience	Jones, 19
<p>Surely if you have a strategic advisor who is grounded in that world of journalism and has been active as a journalist for many years, then surely the kind of advice he or she can give to that politician is very different from the advice that pollsters could give.</p> <p>Oh yes.</p> <p>Because you have a feeling for what sort of comment would immediately generate headlines within minutes and hours and tonight.</p>	
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	

Features/ type of pol communications staff needed	Redfern, 6
<p>You were more staffed than when he was the special advisor, I think there's only two if you're a cabinet minister so it is very limited, what you have.</p> <p>Yeah, absolutely, [00:19:56], I mean he had—Lord Sainsbury gave him some office space and a bit of funding and I mean that was another issue that the plucky underdog, Ed, had no funding, but you know, I think you need that. You need that to run a campaign. I mean he—so he had that and what he's done is given all that money back to the Movement for Change anyway, so the fact is it's all very honourable, as we knew it would be. But yeah, I think all the elements of the campaign was right. I don't think it was dirty enough and I think you need an attack dog like Damian who's vicious. I mean it's not me, I don't do that, but you need someone who doesn't care, who will just—you know, it's like a—it's the Kevin Maguire equivalent, you know, he's a journalist who will just pull no punches. You need somebody that's going to try and get him to pull his punches or to shape him and I think we had nice people doing it. We didn't have vicious people doing it which is what you need.</p>	
11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise	
Politicians who seem likely to win find it easier to recruit well qualified staff	Redfern, 8
<p>When you're looking at your campaign and the other contenders, did you have the impression that those who had the best chances to win or those—there was a bandwagon effect that 9 [00:30:31] expertise was easier for them to get and they had easy access to advice and resources and good staff because people thought, "Well if we're on their side there's a good chance we'll win" and [over speaking], you know, the ideas that important jobs, losing staff towards the end and Cameron was getting excellent staff when they thought he could win the election, so is that an issue?</p> <p>Yeah totally. People go where the power is. When Labour won the election in 1997, suddenly at a party conference there were all these beautiful women and, you know, very good looking boys and stuff and you think, "I don't remember these people from the Labour Party a few years ago" and all of a sudden you find that you've just got this whole new group of people that come. And, you know, I'm not saying that as—I'm saying that they did</p>	

have some of the—hold some of the beliefs of the Labour Party, but people like to be where the winners are and where the success is and I think that is right and I think that is absolutely true in terms of this kind of campaign. I do think a lot of people don't win and I think from the early stage that a very large number thought that Ed had a good chance. I think nobody thought that Ed Balls could win and nobody thought Andy Burnham would win and absolutely nobody thought Diane could win, but in a way what they're doing is staking out their position in terms of their future career and I think, you know, Andy Burnham probably was a bit hamstrung by his social media in some respect and it was quite a technical issue, but I don't think you necessarily need money.

I think you need to be seen that it's possible that you're going to win or it's likely you're going to win and then you get a lot of support and a lot of feet, arms and legs on the ground. I think if you're far away from me at the finish line you'll struggle, you'll get the diehards but you'll struggle to get any media traction and you actually have to punch much harder to get media stories through or be really maverick like Diane, who had no problem with media coverage and everyone loved her for it but she wasn't going to get—she wasn't going to win and everyone knew it.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

1. Quality of staff higher towards beginning of tenure than towards end 2. success of reputation management more dependent on ability to control communications than quality of advisory staff	Livermore, 6
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So you know, you have resources at your disposal, erm, and I think probably is the case that for both Blair and Brown over the course of their time in office, erm, kind of they probably had their best advisors at the beginning and the quality probably tailed off towards the end. But erm, er, I think it's more to do with circumstance than it is to do with that.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Staff expertise	Waring, 7
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Do you think of your colleagues in other departments ... Do you notice a difference between those with a marketing background and those who have got a background in journalism, the approach to planning ahead and ... The reason I'm asking is the people with a journal background, they're much more useful to journalists because they, they know what a good story is and they just help journalists get a good story. The marketing people think, no, this is our message. We don't care who's interested. This is the message. We stick to it and it's- , this is how we plan ahead. So there's more planning and ...

Yes, there ... Erm, yes, and the best media advisors are the ones that balance the two things because you do have to keep the media on side and you do have to play their game, and everybody's got a job to do, so, you know, when it just comes down to the little tiny microcosm of the relationship between politics and the media, when someone phones you up, a journalist, and you say "I'm really sorry, I can't comment on that" then they understand, but at the same time they appreciate it when you say "What I can tell you is, on background x, y and z." You know, there's ways that you can marry up the two things of you bombard them with the message or you don't tell them something, but you acknowledge that they've got to file tonight and they've got to write about you, and if you help them then, you know, they're going to appreciate it. Erm, I think that it's very ... It's essential that any government, any politician has exposure or advice from somebody that is a marketing person, that has the marketing frame of mind, that's thinking about the next elections because, as I say, you know, especially [0:19:49.8] you can get bogged down in the day to day and it's at your peril that you don't concentrate on the next polling day rather than just the next day headlines, and you can get absolutely consumed by it and it's-, that's not a good thing to constantly worry about everyday's headlines, I think, because that's not really an image. Your image is not made by one day's headlines.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Staff – expertise – marketing - journalism

Wood, 8

Um, I've been given, it depends on who I talk to, some would say media advisors have got a background in journalism and are much more effective. Others are telling me no they aren't because they know what a good story is and they help journalists get a good story but that may not be in the interest of the politician of the party or how they want to be

portrayed. So people with a marketing background are much more effective.

Well there is... I mean I think both, there's some truth in both positions, both statements. Um, I would say the people who take the more marketing standpoint, it is true that journalists tend to think in pretty short time horizons and they tend to be very headline focused. Um, therefore they don't tend to have a good strategic grasp but they're very good at fire fighting and delivering a headline quickly. Um, the marketing people see that as a kind of chaotic approach, if you like, or it's not strategic enough. Er, and I can sort of see there is something in that argument. The best team is probably to have someone who's really good at strategy and someone who's really good at getting the media onside quickly behind them. The weakness I always find in the more marketing based people is they, a) they move really slowly, b) when they do come up with something you say yeah well it's a sort of conceptually interesting but no one's going to write that. It's just not writable, it's not interesting enough or it's too kind of, um, ethereal. So... and it's just a bloody biennial slogan and you've taken sort of six months to come up with building a better Britain and you know. No one's going to write it it's just not interesting. Um, Iain did some work with a guy called Paul Bavistock who he had as a sort of marketing supremo under the generic title of a fair deal for everyone which there was a lot of research had gone into that particular slogan, a fair deal for 10 everyone, and it was meant to be sort of inclusive and it was meant to, in a way, reinforce this idea of...

It was tested, the slogan was tested.

Oh yes and it was... and of course it did link with this social justice stuff because the research was saying that people felt they were being left out in some way by the Conservatives. Um, so I have some sympathy with both viewpoints, probably the best arrangement is to have someone that's really good at long term strategy and is sort of marketing focused and can think in those terms. And other people who are much better at the kind of hand to hand fighting, the day to day battles that need to be fought and can of course do support and planning. And can say, "Right your big summit is happening here, we know that this is going to be the issue, three days before, bang, we're going with this line what should happen. And we're going to break it to the Daily Mail and it's going to be all over the airwaves in the morning and then we're going to make a speech in Dover and we'll generate a huge debate. There's bound to be a few casualties along the way, so what. We won't get it all right but we'll get."

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Communications staff expertise

Wood, 10

They wouldn't handle difficult issues, er, to do with party and the politician. David Miliband had two/ three special advisors and the civil servants wouldn't touch the issue.

No. Um, but governments nonetheless have thousands of press officers. I mean admittedly, um they are sort of limited in a sense. They're not allowed to engage in political controversy, although some just do it and bugger the consequences. But generally speaking the culture of the civil service is very cautious and very rule bound and very unimaginative and by and large pretty useless as most Cabinet Ministers will tell you. Bloody pessimists, just a disaster. And it's the special advisors who do all the main work, as you say, there are only typically two or three. So it is true that when you are in opposition and you're competing with the government their resources in communications terms are hugely greater than yours. Um, but then a lot of their army of press officers are like sort of stuffed dummies in the window, they're not really doing anything very much and it's very routine transmission of factual data, that's about all they ever do. So it's not quite as unfair a fight as it might look.

I mean were we constrained by... yeah. I mean I felt... the problem I had, it wasn't so much numbers, although to a degree... I mean there were some huge rows about the lack of staff, er. The problems I had were much more about how much I could pay them. If I could only pay typically £21,000/£22,000 a year it meant I couldn't hire people with any experience. So we constantly kept hiring people with two or three years' experience, if that and taking a hunch on that this person will make it and some of them did. Within six months you thought, bang, that's really worked, they didn't all but some certainly did. I think the quality though was pretty variable. I got a lot of flak from Shadow Cabinet Ministers moaning about the quality of their press officer, that's a kind of jump I don't really want to have to deal with, I've got plenty of other things to do. But I used to get that they used to moan about that. Um, so I mean resources certainly matter. I don't think in the end though you win or lose on it.

11. Marketing approach not effective / staff expertise

Staff expertise

Hazlewood 9, 10

No that is fine. The secretary of state has got a marketing background and a number of media advisors have got marketing backgrounds, others journalist background. Now in the interviews I have had so far I have found that the people with the marketing background would say as a communicator, as a PR in personal politics you are much more efficient if you have a marketing background because you are more into planning and you want a strategy and you don't just help journalists write a good story, that is not the idea, you have got your message and that you stick to. But the journalists and people that do media relations and politics would say no that is wrong because you need to understand how the story is, what a story is and what a journalist needs.

Yes.

Have you observed these differences?

I have.

Do they...

But I actually think, I think in terms of my relationship with Cheryl they actually complement each other quite nicely, as I have said my background is in journalism, erm I think it helps that I have got a strong relationship with most of the political journalists in Wales, so therefore if there is an issue that we need to discuss I can pick up the phone or have a coffee or whatever we can talk these things through. Erm it also helps me in terms of how quickly I want to respond and how I judge the response to a breaking news story, to an issue that maybe may potentially impact negatively on Cheryl or the department. Erm Cheryl as you say supports marketing as her niche, err she did it for ten or eleven years I think, very successfully. And I have seen evidence of that background in the work that she has done and commissioned within the department and erm I think that is very important, especially when you are trying to work on big policies, like the electrification issue for instance, making a case to get that policy delivered and explaining why it benefit the marketing in this case, Wales, that you are working for. Erm so no I have seen how she has shaped the department and its attitude to policies over the last twelve months or so because of the experience that she has bought to the job. Err and I always think if you are working in politics in a media context and having a background in journalism is a huge help because you can spot potential problems, hopefully before they become a real issue.



12. Ideal reputation	
A gap between the official policy the politician wants to be associated with and the law - regulation that is implemented	Neather 4,5
<p>Wanted to be seen as competent and a safe pair of hands then there would be a selection of issues where you can make a difference, would want to talk about those and avoid others, which would absolutely have no impact. One is, once I read the articles about you I thought I don't mention this but I do because it's been a good example – it's immigration [0:18:06.1] which is something that in many cases you only lose. So, that would be something that you would say, "Well, we don't really want to... we organise this the way we think is right but that's not what we really want to see in the headlines." That would be almost a policy decision.</p> <p>Yeah. Immigration is an interesting case because Labour were essentially gripped by two contradictory [0:18:37.1]. On the one hand, out of a sort of a traditional left wing point of view, they weren't actually very interested in immigration. They didn't really have a policy. They didn't have an agenda, not really at all when they came to power. It didn't really figure in their manifesto of 97 at all. Then they inherited the asylum seeker crisis – complete breakdown of processing of numbers and that really came to a head in the Summer, when I was at the Home Office in 2000. One aspect of that, around that time, probably starting a little earlier than that, was the decision to take a harder line on asylum, particularly with immigration by extension, in respect of various things they did. Mainly on asylum they claimed to be tougher, speed up decisions, deport more people. In actual fact a lot of it was rhetoric, not because of lack of will so much as just... in terms of administration it is just so hard – you don't know where these people are, they don't have papers. And then the other half of the policy was this essentially very pro-immigration policy, and as you say, they didn't really talk about that. They tried to... they essentially tried to talk to some aspects while at the same time liberalising it.</p>	
12. Ideal reputation	
There may be a specific personality best suited for a specific job	Beattie, 6

You cannot perhaps do a lot about how the personality is perceived, if you put them in the right office, the right job, then it may perhaps work. [0:33:04.6]

And then there's no guarantee you'd make a decent cabinet. [0:33:20.1] There's clear cases where Alan Johnson, for example, just should never have been made Shadow Chancellor [0:33:33.9] but he was an extraordinarily successful Secretary of State. He was one of the few Secretary of States [0:33:41.7]. There is a character here and we would be very quick to pick up [0:33:52.1].

12. Ideal reputation

The public seems to like big personalities

Beattie, 6

Why do you think the public are forgiving in some cases and in other cases it isn't. Boris Johnson, they seem to be very generous. An image of a mayor may have been different in the past or different elsewhere, but whatever he does he finds the job as mayor [0:34:13.0] okay with that.

[0:34:18.9] excessive [0:34:29.0]. I would [0:34:55.2] all of this by saying a really good serious grown up politician like Obama could still [0:35:08.1]. I'm not saying I want to go down the route of having just big personalities but I think people miss that.

12. Ideal reputation

Is a particular personality suitable for a specific job

Stacey, 6

You think it's fair to say that that was a personality that fits a job but wouldn't fit another job?

Yeah. That's possibly one of those examples. I think being Prime Minister is a whole different thing, actually, to being a cabinet minister. Being a cabinet minister you have to be on to the detail, you have to be really into the policy stuff, you have to be obsessive about certain things and that obviously fitted Gordon Brown very well. Being Prime Minister I think David Cameron, what David Cameron has done very well, particularly in the first kind of year, is he just rose above all of that detail, let his ministers get on with it and he just slightly played a presidential role almost and played this kind of father of the nation type

role which has worked very well.

12. Ideal reputation

Pressure of intense news cycle and the need to respond quickly. This leaves little or no time to research public's preferred images.

Price, 4

I am still not clear as to erm, the awareness in, in a politician's office and among their staff, of what qualities they think the public wants to see in them? That may perhaps change depending on what situation you are in after seven or eight years of boring John Major, something you wanted, wants to be different, or in an economic crisis the qualities and the attributes you want to see in a politician may perhaps be different from the ones you are prepared to accept and see in times of boom. Erm, and, you know, in, in business you always say that, that must be based on research, and you said that is because you are so grounded in journalism you know what your colleagues may perhaps expect but that may not be what the people want?

Yes, although politics isn't really like business in that sense. You can't, you can't quantify it and you can't ...you haven't got the time or the luxury on so many of the issues because, as you said earlier, things come up all the time and you are constantly being bombarded with erm, events and being asked to comment on things and react to things.

12. Ideal reputation

There is no description of a politician's ideal image/reputation

Price, 8

Erm, but I, I, there is just one element of your question that I think needs further examination. You talk about politicians sort of recognising what it is the public want a politician to be and how they want them to look and how they want them to behave, but there is no identikit model of a good and successful politician.

12. Ideal reputation

In a politician a range of different features and personalities may be popular with the electorate, even though their image may not be managed strategically

Price, 8

. Erm, there are those politicians who erm, who look the part in terms of authority and leadership and all the rest of it, and Blair is probably a good example of that. There are other politicians in his government, err like Mo Mowlam, who was the Northern Ireland Secretary, err, Clare Short, who were very, very unlike him, or Ken Livingstone, were very, very unlike him, more left wing probably, erm, spoke their minds, didn't really necessarily think particularly strategically in cases of Mo and Clare. They were very instinctive but in a very sort of short term way and were phenomenally popular. . Erm and actually if you ask people in the street what are the kind of politicians they have liked they probably would have mentioned people like that

12. Ideal reputation

Particular personal traits suit specific political jobs	Stevenson, 1
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wouldn't agree with that. I will extend this to make the point, but there are ... there are a set of characteristics of a Finance Minister or of a Chancellor of the Exchequer which are ... maybe of more value. For example Mr Brown was known as "the Iron Chancellor", reflecting a sober and prudent aspect in relation both to policy and to person. That was obviously suitable for that. But maybe those are not the same characteristics as you need when you become Prime Minister.

12. Ideal reputation

public expectations vary with the politician's job	Stevenson, 2,3
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Erm, but I think the others are ... are concerned about how the image is perceived, and how you present it, and certainly aware, as I said at the beginning, at the differences between the role as Chancellor of the Exchequer and the role of Prime Minister., You're doing different things with people, and you have a totally different way of approaching it.

12. Ideal reputation

Criterion for an effective reputation: being upfront	Davies, 1
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I mean obviously there are restrictions and there have to be restrictions, otherwise, you know, the business of government is very, very difficult.. Err, and I think much of his reputation was forged on the fact that he was pretty straightforward with people. Now, interestingly, some people would say, I don't know, Jack Straw was a sort of ... or is a, you know, bit of a, you know, bit of a player, bit of a, you know, does-, says this thing, says the other thing. Actually, I think, and I would think this wouldn't I, but I do think that he was pretty up front most of the time actually, erm, and he succeeded as a politician – is succeeding as a politician, but I mean he was in the Cabinet for 13 years, which is not something that very many people can say they did. [Laughter] (...)

There's three yeah.

The fact there are only three of them. And, err, he did, like Alistair Darling and Gordon Brown, he did some of the most difficult jobs, erm, there are in government in the UK anyway and probably anywhere in terms of Home Secretary, Justice Secretary and Foreign Secretary, not to mention the House of Commons. So to survive for that long, you know, isn't just a coincidence and it's partly I think about the sort of politician he was and about the fact that he and is, and, erm, and that he took a pretty sort of, err ... I think people who liked him or like him like him because they regard him as fairly up front and straightforward. People who don't like him don't like him for a whole range of other reasons [Laughs], but, you know ...

## 12. Ideal reputation

The public associates different qualities and abilities with different jobs

Davies, 2,3

... My impression is that you want specific qualities or the public looks for specific qualities in, erm, Justice Secretary, in a party leader, in a ...

Yeah.

People in their position. Possibly very different qualities.

Yeah.

Now if you have various different jobs, how, how do you match that, the expectation that comes with the job and the, the person you are?

That's a good question. So, so, you know, let me just try and interrogate your question. So how do you, how do you adapt yourself into the, to the role that you've got you mean?

And how you present it.

And how you present it. He, he ... Well, how you adapt yourself into the role, I mean clearly there are things about the different jobs he did which are different. So, you know, as Home Secretary you need to be ... You need people to feel, err, assured by you that, you know, you're in, you know, you're in control, err, that, you know, people aren't going to escape from prison or are going to get sent to prison when they should be sent to prison, err, and that there aren't going to be any terrible errors, and so they need to have a sense of a face that they know they can sort of trust, if you like. Err, as a foreign secretary I think it's slightly different. It's more about ... It's I think a lot about visibility and being seen to be part of the big picture and sort of being on the ground, and, erm, you know, visible when there's a big crisis in particular. Erm, I mean I think ... It's an interesting question. I mean I think ... I think he found those – found adapting into those sorts of jobs easier than maybe other people did,

## 12. Ideal reputation

It is inexplicable why some personal traits (being Scottish, age etc.) in some politicians are accepted or tolerated, in others not

Kettle, 2,3

If you're sort of-, I've been-, I would have expected anyway that there was this Chancellor whose performance and results were admired...then he gets a different job. There may have been suspicions beforehand but then, all of a sudden, the way he is perceived (00:11:33) but, in this new job, the way he's perceived changes dramatically so what I initially wanted to ask is...is there a persona (a personality) that is just appropriate for a specific task in politics and another kind of (00:11:51) that may-, because the job description is so different between Chancellor and Prime Minister?

I don't think-, I think it's very difficult to draw up a paradigm for that...really difficult. I mean, if you look at say the Liberal Democrats...a different party, different-, facing a different dynamic...they had-, in the-, about ten years ago, they had a leader, Charles Kennedy, who was an effective communicator. Unusually, his Scottishness was an asset, not a debit...in England I mean. He went down well. People liked him. He-, they listened to him. He was confident but then-, you know, then he had his drink problem etcetera etcetera and what the party wanted...it turned to a much older politician, Ming Campbell, and that was quite an unusual thing, quite counter-intuitive in some respects because, you know, age I think is

such an interesting aspect of all of this...you know, do-, I'm not putting this very clearly but it seems to me that one of the most curious questions about candidates and leaders in the modern world is why age is considered to be a deterrent to, you know, an effective and presentable leader and youth is always increasingly seen as a necessary quality. I mean, you know, you look around the world and, you know, old candidates don't tend to do very well and yet they can do, you know...an old politician can be very successful. I mean Jean Chrétien was relatively old in terms of the political generation of his peers and was very successful. His age was not a problem. Reagan, of course, is the kind of locus classicus in that respect.

He didn't allow age to become a political issue...inexperience.

Yes, age and-, youth and inexperience.

Yes, of my opponent.

Yes, I mean Reagan is an interesting example in that respect.

Are you aware that-

Berlusconi obviously is...he's kind of his own case I think.

He doesn't age.

Well, yes. Well, that's right. He doesn't present himself as old.

So it is a concern...he has the concern he doesn't want to age for various reasons.

Yes, that's right but it's odd given the propensity of older voters to vote as opposed to younger voters.

12. Ideal reputation

Age and youth may both be detrimental to the leader's credibility and a mix of ages in the leadership team helps	Kettle, 4,5
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Yes, but for those who stood (00:15:18) pressure...but let's find out what sort of traits and features they have that fit nicely with what people want so would you be aware that age is something they-

But-, I mean it's-, I think-, are you asking me as a journalist whether I have any memory of that discussion going on? I mean, in the case of Brown, I mean he didn't want a deputy leader at all...a deputy leader was a problem, not a solution, a threat, he was a threat so he would only be interested in a deputy leader who was no threat.

Yes, yes, (00:15:56) age which would make-, the point is an issue. Were you aware that when they have their-, when they think about personnel and planning-, whether age is something that is-

Well, to some extent, I mean to some extent. I mean it has been-, I think it's actually been useful for Cameron, for example, because he has Kenneth Clarke there on the team, you know, because he ticks boxes that Cameron can't and so, you know, I think the presence of an older figure is quite useful but I'm just trying to think...there must be an example if I could only think of it, you know, where an older candidate really has brought something.

Did Campbell's age as a Liberal leader only become an issue when he was leader because, before that, he was highly effective and, as a leader, they questioned whether-

And as soon as he was leader, people started talking about-, you know, a cartoonist drew him with a Zimmer frame and things, you know, so the age thing became really crucial. I'm just trying to think. I mean it's almost sort of since-, in British politics and you have to go back to Callaghan I suppose as being the last big party leader who campaigned on the basis that, you know, you can trust old Jim, you know, he-, Uncle Jim and all that kind of-, since-, and I think that's the dominant-, I think-, actually, I think it's a dominance of the media culture that excludes the older candidate. I mean, in the Lib Dems, they have a good



example I think in Vince Cable who-, you know, he's had his difficulties over the last year or two but, you know, he was by far the most credible figure in the Lib Democrats and, you know, a man in his 60s and I think he would-, you know, he did a lot to keep that-, get that party to the position that they're in now.

But then you mentioned two examples where the age-, the older individual is only balancing the ticket so you need-, it's fine if someone is older but not-

Not as the head of the ticket.

If it's a deputy, that's fine. If there's one in the team, that is fine...that adds the experience and the gravitas if you want but, as the leader, perhaps it is a very-, one is very much aware that it has to be present (the experience and age) but not as the leading representative of-

Well, I suppose there comes a point at which you say that this becomes something of an iron law rather than just being a series of coincidences. All I would say is and, you know, I'm getting older...we all get older, none of-, no-one gets younger. All I would say is I think a-, that the right candidate in his 60s could be immensely effective in particular circumstances other things being equal, you know. It's a bit difficult to draw up a textbook example of that but I mean Regan, obviously-, you know, you go back to Regan and, in some way or other, Regan's age and, you know, his general sort of serenity and the sense of his imperturbability, you know, were great assets. They-, you know, they comforted people and made people feel-, made voters-, they attracted voters. I mean did Kohl not have something of that at some point? I mean I suppose if you look at-, you know, if you look at-, I mean Mitterrand would be an interesting example in this regard.

Yes, but they're not-, you wouldn't have to be-

French presidents are-, have-, actually, do tend to be a-, tend to be slighter older, don't they?

It's a cultural matter (00:20:52) fashion points on dress and go fishing and they want to be seen as strong physically because, in France, they're not aware-, well, Sarkozy-

Well, Sarkozy is a break with tradition (isn't he?), a break with convention if not tradition.

(00:21:07) books and philosophy (the old French politicians), more-

Yes, I mean Giscard when he was elected was a relatively youthful unorthodox candidate, you know, who wore a pullover to be interviewed, you know, rather than a suit and-, but on the whole, French presidents have been older, haven't they? I'm just-

Yes, Pompidou, yes.

Yes, but, in Germany-, well, you know better than I.

(00:21:46) where I used to invite-, my former (00:21:48) invited from the Balkans politicians and they wouldn't understand why, in Germany, you're not appointed cabinet minister unless you're at least in your late 30s or 40s because they've got prime ministers who are 29 (these former Yugoslavian parties in the Balkan states). It seems to be-, can I move on from age?

Sure, sure.

## 12. Ideal reputation

The traits and features the party is looking for in a party leader changes over time

Jones, 12

Michael Foot. And then over time they came round to concluding well we'll pick someone who perhaps is not the-, you know, who's not loved by the-, as much as someone else might have been by the party faithful but who is much more electable.

(...)

If you look at Labour in opposition for many years, Conservative in opposition for many years and at the individuals they picked as their leaders through that period of time, is there-, is that a coincidence that initially they picked someone who was totally unelectable but was appealing to the party faithful (as with William Hague and even more relevantly

with-

12. Ideal reputation

Communications teams discuss and are aware of what an ideal leader should be like

Greer, 7

Probably you're interested in that as a journalist and... As much as I am. Do you... are you aware of plans that have been drawn up and written down in paper on the current image and the ideal image of a candidate or a minister?

Well certainly, I mean I was chatting to one of the advisors on the, er, on the, er... to Ed Miliband during his campaign, not one of the senior ones. But he put a paper to Ed where he drew on a lot of what's in that book there, The Political Brain by Drew Weston, and he was quoting chapters. And the point he was making was that, you know, people don't doubt that you're very clever, er, they don't doubt that you've got authority on the economy but they won't listen to you on that because you're not talking about a lot of the things that actually interest them and you don't come across as a likeable person. And that likeability was a key factor and everyone knew it was a key factor and that sort of... you can see it with Brown as well, it was very clear that there was active coaching going on to make him more likeable with the Brown smile thing which was a disaster at the end of the day. But, yeah, I mean those kind of things definitely, definitely become a subject of discussion because they have to. Because you're trying to sell your candidate and you're trying to down play the weaknesses as much as you're trying dial up the strengths.

12. Ideal reputation

The public expects to see a specific kind of personality come with a specific job

Greer, 11

So before the economic crisis set in, um, the very last question I have, before the economic crisis set in there were already these doubts about, um, that I read about, about the personality of Gordon Brown. Whether he's fit to be Prime Minister, the way he is.

Yeah.

We may not like the Labour party, the Labour government, we all have to concede it was

the longest and biggest economy boom of the country, it's always connected to what a government does, even though we... um. But they were two totally distinct and separate discussions. One is what they have achieved, much more spending for schools and education and for the NHS and so forth. More money in the community than before. On the other hand the person who is in charge is, in terms of his personality, not right, we can't trust him, we don't want him. So there is...

But I think there's something quite important in that and I think where the advisors of Brown got it wrong. They initially got it quite right because if you look at, you know, when people are going to buy something, you know, if you're going to, um, er go see a mortgage advisor, right. Is it how much you like that individual? You know, how much you think well I could go and have a pint with that guy or that woman. Is that what going... you know, is that going to shape you and you go, "I really like them so I'll trust what they say." So you go there, there's a guy really smooth, charming, flash suit, all of that versus the guy that isn't that attractive, he's a bit duller but he seems quite... you know, he's a numbers guy, seems quite authoritative, you know that's the kind of thing. It's a question of the right person for the right time.

And when they launched the not flash, just Gordon, that was great because Gordon Brown whatever you think of him, like him or dislike him, he had a terrible personality in terms of communicating with the public. One on one I'm sure it was a different story altogether. Um, he wasn't good at that, he wasn't a brilliant looking guy, he wasn't very good at communicating, you know, verbally. He wasn't very good at expressing emotion, he didn't have good... you know, any number of these different things that were bad about him. But those aren't necessarily weaknesses in the eyes of the electorate. You know, those characteristics in some senses are what... you looked at him and you could see a chancellor, you know, this is a guy that I would kind of... from a gut instinct kind of thing, this is a guy that looks like he's probably right to be a chancellor. He sounds like he's right to be... regardless of whether you agree with what actually happened.

12. Ideal reputation

A specific image may suit as chancellor, but not as prime minister

Livermore, 2

I think that the, erm, both his skill set and the image that he sought to create for himself and we sought to reinforce as chancellor was particularly well suited to him as chancellor

12. Ideal reputation

The public detects and shows sympathy for certain intangible features in specific personalities in politics

Livermore, 3

I think that if you take the general public, their engagement with politicians is so infrequent that, erm, it's kind of the, the softer side, so the communication skills, the ... you know, the classic question that pollsters ask is would you like to go ... would you like to go to the pub with this man, or would you like to, you know, have coffee with this person, and, you know, something that, erm, you know, people like Blair and Cameron always excelled on and that Gordon Brown didn't, and I think that is sort of, erm, it's shaped by ... it's almost a kind of intangible, err, feeling about the individual which comes through, erm ... I'm not expressing myself very well but it's, erm, they're very hard ... It's almost like the, erm ... I'm really struggling to put my finger on how to express the, erm, the nature of the engagement with the ... It's almost like the public don't see very often, don't know much about you, and yet can almost kind of detect, almost smell the, erm, the personality of the individual.

12. Ideal reputation

A particular un-fathomable and un-manageable feature in a politician's personality encourages the public to engage with the individual.

Livermore, 3, 4

Erm, and I don't quite know how or why but there are some ... So clearly there are some very concrete things that as an advisor, err, you can, you can help, err, manage. So the physical appearance of the individual you can have a lot of impact on, the, erm, the nature of the engagements that you ... you know, so where they're seen, what interviews they give and all that sort of stuff, and then, as you say, there's the substance. But there's something else, which I suppose is why I'm struggling on this. There's something else which is hard to put your finger on but it's like a quality that's very important that, erm, I guess some politicians have and some politicians don't, and it's that kind of almost magic that, erm, that the public is very quick to, to detect. And if you don't have it, they can be very quick to dismiss you, err and if not ... And if you do then they're much more willing to engage with you, and ... So I think that that's a very important quality.

(...)

I think that's right and I think that you have to be ... I mean I would say that Thatcher is an interesting case study because in a way she didn't have it but she made a virtue of not having it.

12. Ideal reputation

Brown failed to recognise that his personality allowed him to build up a public persona that is respected – thought not liked	Livermore, 4
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And that was always the issue with Gordon Brown in as much as there are politicians that are liked and then there are politicians that are respected, as it were. Not to sound too Machiavellian. But, err, she, erm, she fully understood that she was not there to be liked. She was there to be respected, almost feared. I think that where Gordon Brown, you know, failed on that was that he wanted to be liked where actually he would be much better off having been respected. Erm, and I guess it's human nature to want to be liked but, as you say, if your personality type is such that it's quite hard for the public to like you, you're better off, erm, accepting that and playing to your strength, which is to be respected and to be strong and all of that rather than always trying to be the one that people want to go to the pub with, you know, like, which was Cameron's, you know, great strength.

12. Ideal reputation

The public notices and disapproves if a politician does events only for perception reasons	Kelly, 5
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And that (how to associate events with the PM to manage his public persona) was being discussed internally and being ...  
Oh yes (we discussed internally how we use an event to manage the public perception of Blair), of course, of course, but equally if you were seen just to do events for perception reasons then increasingly you were seen through. The story about spin, spin did become too much the story, and therefore you had to take into account people's ... at the start people were all starry eyed and they loved all this showbiz. Then people realised this has been done for a purpose, and then they began to look for the strings, and they saw strings even when there weren't strings, so it always went full circle and that just became a reality.

12. Ideal reputation

A specific personality fits a specific job description	Waring, 5
<p>Do you think that specific qualities in a politician that fit a specific job. So someone may be brilliant in ... talking about again a number of the Labour people, there were concerns about Gordon Brown but by and large it was fine when he was Chancellor, and the big deficiencies in his personality and in his approach to the job he did only became obvious when he was Prime Minister.</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>Do you think from your experience here and elsewhere that someone may be in terms of not only expertise but also personality fit for a specific job?</p> <p>Do you mean a specific cabinet job?</p> <p>A specific cabinet job or maybe brilliant at another position but not this.</p> <p>Oh, definitely, abs ... Yes, definitely.</p> <p>In government.</p> <p>Yeah, I really do think that. I think people can be more suited to opposition, or to government, or to being the Chief Whip and managing a party, and I definitely think that's the case, but I think that what the UK has very cleverly done is built up a civil service and Whitehall operation that smoothes out the differences between ministers so that you can dial up or dial down what the army of civil servants does depending on the skills of that particular politician.</p>	
13. Timing and issues	
Through timing and emphasis government can shape the news agenda	Neather, 5
<p>Would you be... to what degree do you think a Journalist... I know it's hard to judge... from your perspective now... would you be influenced by some of the decisions that are being taken, some policies pursued that government tries not talk about, others they will talk about. To what degree are you lead by this emphasis?</p> <p>Well I think you're meant to... I think the most important way you're lead by their emphasis is pressure of time. If we know first thing in the morning, say Cameron's giving a speech on immigration or whatever, we have to get the paper off to print the whole thing by noon and my pages are gone earlier than that and you have to do the best job you can in the time</p>	

available – and the time is very, very short – to pick apart what you’re being told. In a sense, The Standard is under extreme pressure even by newspaper standards but it’s difficult. On immigration, for instance, it’s one of those subjects where ultimately the brief is in the figures, whether it’s working, but you don’t know the figures, the figures don’t come out until three months or six months or a year down the line, when ultimately you’ll know whether what the government was trying to do was right and whether it was all just spin. It’s just a question of approaching government initiatives with a sceptical eye and knowing where they’re likely to be trying to fool you.

13. Timing and issues

Communications advisors do influence the selection and timing of policies

Macrory, 8

But-, and there is a but which I know you were about to say which is that of course there will be times when you’d have to say, well, actually, don’t do that now; people aren’t ready for it and that’s where the focus groups might come in, you know. Possibly with the forestry thing, if we’d been a little bit more alert on that somebody could have said to Caroline Spelman or to the Cabinet or somebody actually I wouldn’t do that now, try it again in a year and a half when we’ve had more time to explain or sort of build up a narrative that would make it more acceptable so there would certainly be some of that but that’s nothing to do with the personality of the-, or the image of the politician. It’s to do with-

13. Timing and issues

Communications advisors deal with the timing of policies

Thorogood, 8

*That is something that-, yes, of course, you know, advisors would because we’re looking at the long-term and the strategy and how things will pan out so timings of things, definitely*

13. Timing and issues

Ministers are more in control of timing, Prime Ministers less

Stevenson, 7



You might do it differently because it didn't fit with things, And I think in certain positions like Chancellor or a minister for a particular department you have the luxury of choosing when, how and you can pull stuff and you can delay it and that's all very well.

13. Timing and issues

In opposition fewer resources and can't control the timing

Stevenson, 7

n, (in opposition) you have less resources, you have less chance to determine the timing of it, but you get more words out, you get more currency.

13. Timing and issues

1. For Gordon Brown the policy came first, communications strategy would then determine the timing and sequence and type of delivery

Livermore, 9

2. The policy in its own right is a communicative device

I think you did raise that before. I just want to be clear about that. Where is the line drawn between this is how we or I need to look and appear and this is the policy that I think is right? Up to what point is it the policy and all you then have to do is to interpret, to spin, to just interpret the policy in the right way? Or to what is the policy itself, the timing, the content influenced by issues of appearance?

Well I think the politicians I've worked with have a very clear sense of what they want to achieve. So presentation then becomes a matter of, as you say, timing, so it might be our strategy for this year means that we shouldn't do that this year, we should put it off to next year or we should ... or we should do it this year, depending what it is. So it might well affect the timing of it. It will definitely affect how we present it. So erm, if, you know, the politician might start out with, "Right, I want to achieve this, this year." And then we would go away and work out how. We would never start from a blank sheet of paper and say, "Right, this is your, this is your image, erm, therefore you need to do these things in terms of policy." It was more, this is the image that ... or this is the kind of reputation, positioning strategy we've got, erm, you know, of all the things you want to achieve, how shall we sequence them? Which ones are the most important to us? Which ones do we want to

make a real big fuss of or which ones do we want to do quietly and that don't really contribute to achieving this? So erm, it wasn't entirely cynical image driven, but clearly our policies are one of the weapons in your armoury in terms of communicating your image, imagery so that they were, as I say the timing, the sequencing and the ... the way in which they were brought to the fore, all was absolutely, erm, a part of that.

13. Timing and issues

Opposition is free to concentrate on its own issues – government has got to respond to issues

Livermore, 10

Well I mean I'm seen as in opposition now and I think the difference is, the ... the positive difference is it's easier to be in control of your own erm, destiny because you, you're not always called upon every day to respond to crises because that's the [0:36:30.8], so you can get on with your issues.

13. Timing and issues

The timing of policies is critical

Waring, 1

Much better. It's about reputation – reputation I'm interested in, reputation of ... I usually change it with the image and reputation. Reputation is so important for, err, you know, not just for the government and the ministry but also for the individual politician who we trust or don't. Who shapes the reputation, the reputation of your boss [0:00:33.3], who shaped that over the years? Who takes the claim?

Erm, I think that actually they do have to take quite a lot of the credit because if they don't say something sensible or meaningful that resonates with people then, erm, they wouldn't build up that reputation. But I think it's also about timing. It's about what intervention they decide to make at what time and does it resonate with people at that time. And I think specifically with ... I mean is it useful for me to talk specifically about my, my boss, or would you rather me keep it more general.

13. Timing and issues

Timing is critical in reputation building	Waring, 1
<p>If you, if you relate it to your boss that's brilliant. If you say in specific circumstances the questions you would like to keep general or relate it to another example you're aware of.</p> <p>I think with Vince, with Vince Cable, he had been saying things that, erm, he thought were very important in the run up to the recession about things that were wrong with the economy that at the time people didn't really want to engage with. They didn't care that there was a housing bubble because everyone was making money out of it, etc., and actually then when we had the recession his body of work meant that he had a sort of, had built a reputation sort of quietly and then he could really point-, and he could really honestly say "I was the only leading politician that was really pointing to this. So his kind of integrity and personal principles had guided him to say things that perhaps weren't popular at the time meant that he had got something to point to, erm, in terms of he'd built his reputation in the shadows, as it were, and then when the light was shined on it everybody was like "Oh yes, of course." And it was useful because people wanted to write somebody into the story that had seen it and to blame other people at the time. So I think that he had to take some of the credit for that, and then the other part would be, you know, the media wanted a hero or they wanted to have a figure like that, so it was kind of a bit of everything I think in that example.</p>	
13. Timing and issues	
Issues and timing	Waring, 6
<p>Erm, is, is, timing more, more relevant than ...</p> <p>Timing would be-, is, is considered strongly. However, the unique circumstances in Britain at the moment with the spending review means that timing is a lot more difficult to control because we're so driven by, erm, what the spending, what we can spend in each year of the spending review and the structural deficit that I think timing is something that ministers in this government have got less control over than they had perhaps in previous governments.</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	

a political decision in the case of Brown more impact on the reputation than long term media management	McBride,2
<p>Now if I was comparing that to Gordon, the, um, the biggest reputational damage Gordon suffered, damage to his image, um, was undoubtedly the deciding not to call the election, sorry it's two things. It's both deciding not to call the election, er, in 2007 and then the way that was explained to people. Um, and you couldn't do much about the fact that the media were going to accuse him of being a bottler. So suddenly this guy who had been regarded as strong, forceful, opinionated, stubborn, you know, and we'd managed in some way to turn those into positive characteristics as far as a politician went. Um, you know, they sort of became associated with him in the public mind. You couldn't do much about the fact that the media were going to label him as having bottled it and the Conservatives would play into that.</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	
Communications advisors predict public/media reactions to and media implications of a policy or decision rather than directly influencing it	Hill, 12
<p>Erm, you ... you do have an influence on how it's presented. You may have an influence on what time it is presented. In what circumstances are you tempted to want to influence what is presented, what decision is taken? You can predict the decision that will make us look bad, or make him look bad. Would that be something you would want to have ... you would want to discuss with the politician?</p> <p>Well, it's a good question. Erm, in ... I mean, the answer is, yes, you would, because if you're ... because the British system in particular is, is very much that the political communicators are politically committed. You don't bring advisors ... I mean, of course we've brought advisors in to help on polling and so on so forth, but basically, the team that runs the general election, or the team that runs a department and the team that ran Number Ten was essentially a political ... there were lots of ... of course there were lots of Civil Servants, but it was an immensely political operation. And, and you've got people around you who are politically [0:46:03] and therefore they have views, and therefore they have views on, on, on policy. Erm, and so to claim that ... to claim that you didn't drift into offering an opinion from time to time, but the fact is that you, you know that you've ... you</p>	

know that it, it essentially ... you know that essentially the policy will be determined by the people ... by the politicians, and the only job ... your job is to do, I think what you were just saying, which is to say, if you say that you know that this will happen, if you say that you know that that's where this paper will be coming from, that paper will be coming from, you boil it down to, we know that journalist X is, is, at the moment got a bee in his bonnet about this subject. If you say this, then he will do that. So in that sense you may be ... you certainly may be influencing timing or the nature of what's actually said.

Erm, but you don't ... I mean, when the Prime Minister decided that he was going on the respect agenda after the 2005 election, that was not a decision that was taken by sitting down and saying, what do we think the general public will like most and ... What he actually said was, I've ... he generally said, I've toured the country and if you ask me what people are really pissed off about more than anything else, I'll tell you, it's this. And, and that's fine. So to say that you, you never get involved in policy is wrong, because I think you've pointed out the right thing, which is that it's ... the implications of policy

#### 14. Policies and reputation

Communications advisors help guide politicians to pursue policies that achieve agreed communications objectives

Hill, 12, 13

... I mean, one of the big communications questions you've got to ask [0:48:13] is do you think that what you're about to do today will actually enhance what you're actually trying to achieve, or will it actually mean that you take a step back. And let me tell you, regardless of the merits of the policy, if you do what you're going to do today and you say it in the way you're going to say it, you are going to fail to achieve what you wanted to achieve. Now how do you quite work that out in terms of policy or not policy? I mean, it isn't saying, I think your policy should be X. It isn't saying, I'm totally neutral on all of this. What it is actually saying is, I know what my job is, and my job is to support what you are trying to achieve, but it is also to advise very firmly in terms of developing your success in this field and your reputation. If you do it, you do it like this, if you do it now you will cause more harm than good. So do it later and do it like this are certainly things that you can be involved in. But, but, but saying that, I'm sorry you can't ... that policy is wrong, I think you should introduce that policy, that goes ... that's a step farther, a step too far, that, and you don't really do that.

14. Policies and reputation

Communicators ensured systematically that Opposition Leader Cameron's themes in public announcements and public appearances were in line with his identity

Eustice, 6

If I got you right, earlier on you said what you did in 2005 was you identified what is the identity of David Cameron, and once you knew this is the identity then you created around it the policies?

From then (2005) onwards, the appointments, the commitments, the policies, the appearances in public, were they all vetted and, you know, benchmarked against that and who would have done that?

Yes, we had a very ... I mean, as you ... as most political parties do, we had a very clear, erm strategy, emphasising certain themes, erm, which were the themes that we identified. So issues like society, social breakdown, green issues. There were consistent themes that we would keep coming back to. And ... you know,

(...)

one of those would be, you know, what we used to loosely call character type issues as well, so that you would enable ... erm, David Cameron to talk about an issue which ... which said something about his personality. Erm, and we would ... we would frequently make sure that announcements we did said something and fitted one of those categories, so that each ... whatever the speech was about it was ... it was saying something about ... David Cameron and his beliefs and his agenda that was both true and consistent with the strategy. And you do need to do that. Otherwise all you have is a load of speeches, which welded together don't add up to a row of beans. You've got to have ... you've got to be ... you've got to have a clear message, you've got to be saying something.

14. Policies and reputation

Issues for policy statements would be selected in the context of wider political and presentational implications

Eustice, 10

You wouldn't probably want to mention any instances where there was agreement this is our policy, but someone raised the concern, we'll look bad if we table that now, and if we

pursue that now ...

Erm, I can't think of any instances, but yes, that would have ... that would always have been part of the discussion, now is not the time to do it ... There were other instances ... we always felt it was important, and he did, that David Cameron continued to talk about issues like immigration, because we didn't want to have silence on immigration and then when things started to go wrong, then if he talked about immigration it would look like a reaction to unpopularity. So he always ... we always felt that he had to keep return to issues like immigration, so that he retained the right to still speak about it. So yes, of course ... but those are perfectly legitimate discussions, because there's no point announcing something if it's ... if it's going to backfire and not work, and if the media are going to get the wrong ... the wrong end of the stick, so it's all ... yes.

#### 14. Policies and reputation

Cons. Director of communications is involved in policy and communication decisions at the highest level

Macrory, 3

Now am I fair to suggest that there are sometimes discussions going on about what one should say, how it should be said, how it should be-, where he should appear on television, where not?

Oh, yes.

Who would be-, not names but what level would be part of the discussion?

At a very high level; it would be the director of communications who would have the final say on that and certainly there's a lot of that. This is not-, you know, some people would say should he do an interview on such and such a programme and the director of communications will say no. Now there may be a million different reasons why he doesn't want him on that particular programme at that particular time. It may be certainly a policy thing. They may want to move the agenda. They know that that-, such and such will interfere or they only want to talk to him about let's say MPs expenses. We want to move the agenda on to something completely different (welfare or whatever) so the director of communications will say I don't want him on that programme or let's put him on that one at

the weekend or whatever. So yes, there's a lot of that on-

14. Policies and reputation

Change of image is contingent on substance. i.e.: as the politician develops and alters goals, the public perception of his/her image changes	Macrory, 7
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I followed for many years the public persona of Michael Portillo who by the end of the Thatcher years was a Thatcherite Conservative and then he seemed to deliberately change as he thought, oh, perhaps compassionate conservatism is what you need now to be-, stand a chance to be party leader so that made me think initially there is a long-term process that may be initiated by the politician or their advisors. Is that a one-off or-

Well, my belief is that that would come from the politician himself. It's what he wants to do. Ian Duncan Smith is another example. He must have-, you know, when he stopped being leader of this party, I think he was probably aware of the fact that his political career was at a very very low base and then he reinvented himself but it was he who reinvented himself. It was he who decided he was actually deeply passionate about welfare reform. Nobody's said to him this is a good career move because in a sense his big career was over. I mean he has no ambitions to be leader again but there was something he believed in passionately and that could only have come from him and he clearly is passionate. I was watching him this morning on telly and it's coming from here.

14. Policies and reputation

Policies are being drawn up in order to re-position the public persona	Stacey, 1,2
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To do away with slogan, this label of red Ed. Do you think some of the policies were devised only to make sure you're not associated with red Ed anymore?

Absolutely, of course. Yesterday he, well two days ago just before the strikes, he came out and said they were wrong and that public service unions shouldn't be going on strikes. There was only one reason he did that because he's really scared of being red Ed and he didn't turn up for the strikes and he didn't make a speech. Whereas he did make a speech, he did go along to a protest quite early on in his leadership, go and make a speech against the cuts. I think now his advisors think that might have been a mistake, he doesn't want to look like he's some sort of opposition campaigner rather than a national leader. So they very deliberately decided not to let him anywhere near. In fact he ended up going off to Birmingham, they very deliberately decided not to let him go near the strikes and in fact was quite condemnatory of the strikes. He's also then attacked Cameron on the right, he's particularly gone after Ken Clarke on some of the justice issues. Whereas when he was running for Labour Leader he sounded very liberal and sounded like he came from a liberal left of the party. He's now tacking quite quickly to the right particularly on law and order where he thinks he can out flank the Tories there.

#### 14. Policies and reputation

Reputation is based on specific policies, communication skills and publicity activities

Stacey, 2

How do these narratives develop? How do they start? It's not out of nowhere that it's being thought. The current Prime Minister, the U-turns is that... does that come out of nowhere?

Is that founded in policies?

Well I think with U-turns...

The U-turns are a good example because that...

Was founded in policies.

Yes.

A lot of the time when... somebody will suddenly come to the fore and it'll often be quite deliberate, Cameron certainly did it when he started running for party leadership where he spoke without notes. And sometimes just an event like that, and he cracked that joke didn't he, something like you don't have to have a young dynamic leader to win elections but it

helps. Or whatever the line was that he used then at the Tory Conference. Just a line or an event or something will just distil a lot of things and kind of set somebody's reputation. Then of course you mentioned before about going to the Arctic, a very important trip there, really important in establishing, publicises this green new type of Tory. So I think these kind of events whether they're deliberately engineered by the politicians themselves or whether they just come along [00.05.25].

14. Policies and reputation

Success needs ability to think quickly and integrate their own persona into national policies.	Price, 4
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but good and successful politicians are able to combine an informed sense of where the country is and where they want to take the country with good ability to think on their feet and an instinctive, err, feel for themselves.

14. Policies and reputation

Some decisions – who might seem inconsequential at the time - in the long run bolster a politician's position or undermine it	Price, 6,7
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Erm, but if you are clever about it you can make sure that as many of the decisions that you do make and as many of the really big ones that cut through to people, there are so many decisions made in government most of the public don't really clock, less affected, headlines come and go and it doesn't really make any difference. But there are a few very, very big ones which may seem inconsequential at the time like the death of-, they may seem very important but of little long term importance like the death of Princess Diana but actually they are much, much more important than they seem at the time. Things like that, things like terrorist incidents, things like the Northern Ireland peace protest, whatever it might be, or the position that you take on for example welfare reform which is where Blair took a very unlabour position on the welfare reform and that sort of thing cuts through, so you can allow those decisions to help bolster your position or you can allow them if you are not careful to undermine your position as time goes by.

14. Policies and reputation	
Among government staff there is a confrontation between policy concerns and presentational concerns	Price, 7
<p>I think that sort of debate does go on, erm, and on ... because I mean a lot of decisions are not cut and dried, they are not black and white, there is not an obvious response to what you do and you can erm ... there is a judgement to be made. Erm, and from my experience there are exactly those discussions where the policy people will be saying “this is the policy that we have got to take” and communications people like me, my boss, Alistair Campbell would say “that is going to look terrible, you can’t do it.”</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	
Presentation, person and policies cannot be separated	Stevenson, 1
<p>It’s a loop, it’s a continuous identification of the person, the policies and the timing, and you can’t really disentangle them. There may be different results, but the same problem would arise for Mr Cameron as Mr Osborne, Angela Merkel, they’ve all got the same issue, which is how do I present, and how will that presentation both inform the public about me as a person, but also help with the policies.</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	
Policy and presentation are intertwined	Stevenson, 2
<p>business often the impression is that, erm, at one level, the more senior level, a decision is taken and at more junior level then people have to think about its best presented. No, I think that’s not how it’s done in politics. I think it’s very much a part of the whole process. I think politicians above all are very good at picking up how they think they’re being presented, some of them more than others.</p>	

14. Policies and reputation

Ministers may gain room to manoeuvre if they identify areas of policy No 10 is less likely to claim and interfere with

Davies, 7

I suppose one interesting way is Jack in the Foreign Office where he was very much regarded as, you know, erm ... sorry, if we could turn it around. Blair was regarded in many ways as the Foreign Secretary, sort of, you know, he dictated a lot of foreign policy, you know. He was ... Iraq was Blair. The Foreign Office played a supporting role. The foreign office was, you know, someone pushed out of the equation. Number 10 for sure used to get frustrated with the foreign office and all that. Did that mean that therefore Jack was almost impotent and not doing anything? Not at all actually because what he then did was, you know, he wasn't stupid. He saw that, you know, Iraq and the big briefs were pretty much being sort of run from number 10. I mean obviously he had a role in that, but that meant that he then looked in other areas to see where he could influence. And so in terms of Iran, in terms of-, particularly in terms of Turkey, you're getting Turkey into, you know, trying to move Turkey towards membership of the European Union and things like that, things which probably wouldn't have happened otherwise. So it sort of goes back to what I was saying before. I think he sort of basically identified where the-, where there was scope for influence, and as a result exerted his influence to a great degree in those areas in a way which potentially ... I mean on Iran, you know, it ... I suppose how much did he achieve? He achieved quite a lot. I mean actually a better example is probably Pakistan/India where in 2002 ... Was it 2002? Anyway, whenever it was. You were getting really close to sort of the potential of, err, of a very, very serious conflict between ... and he definitely, working with Conan Powell, had a really, you know, significant role-, played a significant role in helping to avoid that, which at the time people said "Oh, what's Straw doing? No one is going to listen to him." But actually longer term they did.

14. Policies and reputation

Communications advisors suggest policies that positively shape a politician's reputation

Davies, 7

Within the range that is more or less limited that you can decide and draw up and identify the policies that you want to pursue, are you ever tempted – not you personally but colleagues in other ministries (you don't have to name any names) – has an advisor ever attempted to say “Well, we don't want to pursue that policy because it makes the minister look bad, or indecisive or ...”

Yeah, I'm sure that went on a load, absolutely. Erm, I mean I think ... Yeah, absolutely. I think people would play out personal sort of, their personal political, erm, views on ...

People in my sort of position would definitely exert their influence to do that sort of thing.

Erm, they would definitely, definitely try and keep their minister away from something that they felt was going to look bad for them publicly, media wise, parliamentary wise, whatever, absolutely. I mean without a shadow of a doubt

14. Policies and reputation

Reputation is a reflection of what politicians do and achieve

Richards, 3

Well, it's about what they do so it's about the legislation that they put through, the things that they're tasked with doing by the Prime Minister. Sometimes that's terribly unfair. I mean today Caroline Spelman is having to make a terrible reversal on the policy of selling off parts of Britain's forest. Now you know, she didn't come into politics to do that. She was given that job to do as part of the coalition agreement and she's messed it up and now she's having to take all the blame for it so it's very unfair she's getting a lot of flack for something that wasn't really her fault but there we are; that's life, isn't it, it's politics. So partly it's that-, her reputation now is really severely damaged because of what she's done which is to launch a policy which has fallen to bits so partly it's that.

14. Policies and reputation

Ministers freedom to select and define policies is limited by the Prime Minister

Richards, 2

Patricia Hewitt for example was charged with a very rigorous reform programme of the National Health Service. It seems pretty mild actually now compared to what we're doing at the moment but she was booed off a stage by nurses in 2008 I think (no, earlier than that,

2006, '05/06) because she had to go and make a speech about reform of the NHS which, you know, reflected the Prime Minister's wish of what should happen and she-, her reputation suffered greatly because she was-, well, with certain people, because she was charged with this reform programme. So what they do counts an awful lot,

14. Policies and reputation

Policies are functional in the management of a politician's reputation

Richards, 3,4

Well, there's a good example where you would take something like a negative like that so they're indecisive or they're weak or they're too left wing or whatever, you know, whatever the narrative is that's developing and you would try and do things to prove the opposite case. So you would try and triangulate that a bit and pull them back and try and engineer something whereby they can be decisive or brave or, you know, so on and so on. Well, it depends what the situation was but they could take a-, you know, take a-, make some bold stands on policy reform let's say and come out clearly in favour of something or another. I mean Ed Miliband at the moment, you know, he started off with a little bit of a subtext of being a bit of a ditherer and they-, he started out as leader by taking some quite hard decisions on who his chief whip should be, who should be in his shadow cabinet. He's come out today very firmly in favour of electoral reform. Now that is him on advice being told to make bold stark decisions quite quickly page 4 and clearly to counter the idea that he's vacillating.

14. Policies and reputation

ministers' freedom to draw up and implement policies is very limited and so is their ability to manage their personal reputation

Richards, 4

Where would you draw the line between the presentation of the individual and policy content? In the examples you've given, there seems to be-, well, it's hard to define a line but you're saying you're making policy proposals that would positively reflect on your personality and-

Well, I mean this is much misunderstood but I mean UK ministers are prisoners of a policy

agenda usually not of their own making. Andrew Adonis listed I think nine characteristics of ministers recently from the Institute for Government where he is now but being a leader wasn't one of them. So the idea that they come in and are actually in charge of a department is a misnomer, you know. What they come into is they inherit a weight of policy that's already in play, a manifesto weighing down on top of them that's been voted on by in the current situation a coalition agreement so stuff they didn't even want to do and then perhaps a prime minister with his or her own ideas of what to go-, where to go next and in amongst all of that they might just about have one or two things they want to do themselves. So they are often projecting an image that's not really of their own making. If you read Chris Mullin's book about being a minister for example, he set out three objectives: 1) not to use the ministerial car; 2) to reform the traffic control system; and 3) to introduce a law to ban hedges growing over a certain height in people's gardens and the whole of his ministerial career was spent battling on those three fronts and not even succeeding to achieve those three so, you know, what they want to do is very limited often and not even achievable then.

#### 14. Policies and reputation

There is a discrepancy between what ministers would like to do and what they are meant to do. Government restraints limit their room to manoeuvre

Richards, 4

So you cannot-, what-, earlier, what you said earlier sounded as if to be deemed decisive and strong and single minded, you would make policy statements that would reflect and, you know, equal that but you can only do that to a very limited extent.

You're very-, your room for manoeuvre is very limited because you're-, you know, you're on a path and you're driving a big heavy lorry and you can't just suddenly U-turn off the road, off the motorway, you know. They are-, and this is what amazes me about politicians – it's their ability to kind of take on a cloak of a personality that isn't really theirs, you know, and do things that aren't really what you know them-, know to be their own views, you know. It's almost becoming-, they become a cipher for other people's wishes often.

14. Policies and reputation	
Ministerial advisors' brief sometimes comprises both communications advice and policy advice	Richards, 4
. So it kind of-, and the other thing is the special advisors-, often there isn't a clear demarcation between presentation and policy roles for the individuals so they may have a policy and a presentational function and be thinking about both things at once so it can be that they're in the room very early on	
14. Polices and reputation	
Political rows and controversy with one's own party may be functional in reputation management	Richards, 5
So you would decide how seriously you want to take them and whether you ignore them, would you?	
Yes, and sometimes of course politicians will want to row with the party because it'll make them look strong. They want to define themselves against maybe the left of their own party or in Cameron's case the right of his party to look like a strong leader. Blair was a master of this. He would endlessly pick fights with elements of his own movement and then all of a sudden look good with the unions or with the left or whatever.	
14. Policies and reputation	
Adversaries, rows, policies are deliberately picked to charge the politicians' image with meaning	Richards, 8
and similarly Ed Miliband is having the same thing done. I'm not privy to those conversations but they are going on about what should he do, how should he-, you know, what fight should he pick, where should he place himself, what should he-, you know, is he going to go to the Durham Miners' Gala and be the first Labour leader to do that or not, you know, what will that say about him, what sort of speeches should he make, is-, you know, is he in favour of AV or not. This sort of stuff is all being calibrated all the time through the	



prism of how will this make me look

14. Policies and reputation

Technical and political decisions help build up a politician's reputation

Jones, 15

So if we get back to Brown, the fact that Brown talked the media into thinking that we were going to go for an election and his aides put this around and everybody knew that if he got the killer instinct that's what he'd do. He'd go and get his immediate mandate and be in for five years, now that's what a gambler should have done but he didn't do it did he?

14. Policies and reputation

Labour government policy was only announced if it could be presented in and to the media ("to win the propaganda war")

Jones, 9, 10

And of course the change that Campbell brought about in Labour was (and this was very very significant) that no decision or policy should be introduced without thinking how that policy was going to be presented so that was the change in the mind-set so it was no good thinking up a policy unless you thought through how this was going to be presented to the country and of course if it was going to be a complete no-no they weren't going to do anything about it. I mean if you look back now it's very interesting to see the examples you see where Labour completely failed to tackle problems because it never knew how they could possibly present them to the public. I mentioned nuclear. We in Britain are way way behind tackling the energy deficit. We've got ageing nuclear power stations. We've got ageing coal fired power stations. We at the moment are using a lot of North Sea gas and imported gas to generate gas fired electricity which is the most expensive and the most-, I mean it's okay on the environment (it doesn't create as much environmental pollution as coal or nuclear) but of course it's burning a natural fuel and it's sort of costly and a stupid way to do it. We haven't invested in nuclear and now we're on the point you see where we're probably going to have to have French companies coming in and building the nuclear power stations because we haven't got any. So there was a thing where the Labour

government sat on its hands because it could never think of a way of winning the propaganda war to build new power stations. Another one which of course is now coming through is the fact that Labour you see were the people who invented benefit after benefit but the point was benefits which were introduced like incapacity benefit as a benefit to try to help somebody over a period and back into work have become an entitlement, a way of life and no-, and again this is a failure of Labour. Labour have never tackled the problem of what to do about the fact that there's a culture in Britain where it's better to live on benefits than to go out to work and it's your entitlement. So there again, these are big big issues which Labour never tackled and the reason and one of the reasons in my opinion why they never tackled them was that they never devolved-, developed a strategy which they knew how to present to the public so it's the reverse of the Campbell rule. They could never think of how to present these.

14. Policies and reputation

Media proprietors are discussing with politicians how a politician's decision may influence the way they are framed in the media	Jones, 10
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Caring to the environment was the one you see; how can we do it? And they postponed and postponed and postponed. I mean another classic is Heathrow Airport, the fact that our airports are being overtaken. So there were a lot of things, key areas of policy that you can look at where there's this failure to be able to put them across in a way that the public is going to understand and that's why you see when you look back at what Blair achieved over the War, I mean, you know, in the lead up to the War, we had a million people (I use the word 'a million' in quotes) on the streets of Britain protesting about the War yet we went to war and Blair was re-elected in 2005. But if you look at newspapers like the Sun, they stuck rigidly by Blair throughout it. Blair was close to Murdoch; Murdoch promised newspapers would go on supporting Blair as long as he went on supporting the American initiative in Iraq so these things are interlinked

14. Policies and reputation

Sometimes policies lead to headlines, sometimes intended headlines persuade politicians & communicators to adopt a policy	Jones, 9
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So it's the politicians-, which would you suggest or perhaps you've got an example to illustrate it but it's the politicians who draw up policies and take them to advisors and journalists to say what is the best headline to portray. It's not the other way round. It's not that communications advisors and journalists think this is the policy that would nicely fit into the story; this is the decision that would nicely fit into the narrative.

It has to be a combination of the two. It has to be a combination of the two so you had an extreme with Margaret Thatcher where she was so determined her conviction was going to carry her through. That is the ultimate conviction politician. But in most cases, it's a balance between how far can the politicians go (is this policy saleable or isn't it saleable

#### 14. Policies and reputation

Sometimes politicians' may be associated with an image that is not reflected in their policies

Jones, 7

Ed Miliband is doing exactly the same thing now because they're trying to keep in with the constituency of the trade unions. Miliband, no, I mean he was absolutely adamant that he was going to keep everything in the trade union law. So do you see what I mean? So there's a divide. Now you might think that that's a point that the public wouldn't quite get but the way it's presented in the media, they do get it so Ed Miliband is presented in popular papers as Red Ed. I don't know whether you've seen it but that's how they pronounce him, this suggestion that he's somehow under the thumb of the trade unions. So this is going to be a bit of the baggage, a bit of the political baggage that Miliband will take into him-, into a general election which could be difficult for him.

#### 14. Policies and reputation

Specialist public opinion impacts on content and timing of policy

Jones, 22

I mean... and clearly the way that the media will handle it, I mean Labour, you see, just dared do it because they knew that the left would mount a campaign, as the

left is trying to mount a campaign, and that they were frightened that that would happen. I mean the Tories know that there will be complaints, they know that the students are complaining but the media are on their side, most of the media is on their side and that is a calculation in why they're going to go for it. So that's my feeling. I mean if they thought that they couldn't rely on the press to take their side on the scrounger's debate, well I mean they would have backed off but that's not the case. I

14. Policies and reputation

Politicians select issues in line with published opinion

Jones, 20

.” Look at the way this student protest has been handled by the media. You just look at the way in which the media have cooperated with the cops and the use of all this CCTV and pictures and identifying students. I mean the media are gagging for it. I mean any little student, Worcester University or wherever, who was on any of these demos they're going to find the papers just gagging to start publishing... if the cops suddenly came out with more pictures they would all be all over the papers. So I mean what you have to understand is these things don't happen by accident. The papers... that is something that would be a narrative that the papers would be keen to demonise students, they're keen to demonise benefit scroungers, people living in big houses, these are the demons, it might be Gypsies. This again is another thing that the media in Britain is very good at but you've got to be able to find a way of turning this to your advantage.

The other point related to that would be if we advise the Prime Minister should you go out and talk about student's fees and increasing student's fees and say that is the right decision and I want to explain to the public why we do it? Or should he rather leave that to the Minister and not mention it at all? Now that should, in industry, business, that would be led by research. You would say, "Well there are the students that demonstrate but 90% of the public believe these students should pay more." Or before the images that make us think well the whole public is enraged because students have to pay more. So which way is it? It's all grounded in research if it was business. So our advice, would that be our gut feeling? Or would it be grounded in research? And that will then tell us....

Well it would be a composite wouldn't it? Of all of these various factors. But the way the media is portraying it would be a very significant factor. So that would be one of the calculations that you would make. Is this going to chime with the popular press? This thought that these scroungers are around and no one's ever tackled them and that they're partly our problem. And the Mail, the Sun, the Express mounting these campaigns, these campaigns feed through to the telephone, radio, television, programmes, these things feed through to the online chatter. So this is somewhere clearly, clearly where this has gone and is going in the government's favour.

14. Policies and reputation

Politicians tackle issues they can explain rather than issues they cannot explain

Jones, 19

And that would lead to the point where if you were selling a car you would first do market research and find out what kind of car? What attributes? What qualities does the market want? Now why don't they sit together and say, "Benefit abuse is what we want to play and use...."

Cutting expenditure is what we want to do.

Okay expenditure that's right.

And therefore benefits... where have we seen it go completely mad? It's benefit abuse. How can somebody come here with seven children and be given the rent of £1 million house? How? Well it's because Labour never, ever stood up to this whole question, they would never faced down the fact that benefits had become an entitlement. I mean if you talk to the thinking, modernising side of Labour, that's the David Miliband side of Labour and there's a famous man called Matthew Taylor who used to be Blair's policy advisor, he said, "Look, the one thing that we were trying to do all the time was to try to address this problem that benefits which had been introduced to help people had now been seen by these people as an entitlement. The people who designed them never intended that they should be an entitlement, they were to help people get out of a hole and into a new job."

Out of a lifestyle as they say.

It's a lifestyle so how are we going to... so he said, "Well we could never tackle it." So there's Matthew Taylor, key policy advisor for Blair admitting the point that I was making to you that this was something where Labour actually sat on their hands because they could never face what they thought would be a furore from the left. Now Cameron's lot know equally well that they could face a furore from the left, they are facing a furore from the students aren't they?

14. Policies and reputation

Parties/candidates systematically frame issues they can benefit from

Jones, 19

Well let's feed some thoughts into that for you. I mean it was clearly on the Labour side that this was a no go area for Labour because they knew that any attempt to change the benefit payments for disabled people was a no, no. It was just a no go area. The Tories always knew that there was a high level of abuse, it was just how could they begin to sort of put together a propaganda platform that was going to tune in to what the country thought. I mean they knew that a lot of people thought that. They have been very, very clever.

14.Policies and reputation

Communicators do give suggestions on policy issues

Jones, 18

The reason I'm suspicious is surely to justify their salary and their position in the hierarchy of the party or the ministry they will have to claim, whenever they present their own job and talk about their job, that it is calculated and planned. Now my suspicion was...

But if you're the political leader you would want to surround yourself by people who you felt were capable of giving you that advice you see. That's... I mean the difference is when you're saying that of course the media people would want to suggest that, of course they do. But of course you're the leader and you're now having to think, "Blimey Coulson's great

he's aligning me with all the campaigns, I can see, that really matter. He's got me to switch my position on our boys so that the Conservatives are now offering more to help in allowances to the troops than Labour. We're ahead of it. We're the party which had tackled the... done more to tackle the abuse of MP's pay because I've stood up to the Tory toffs. Now as Prime Minister, I'm the Prime Minister that's really tuned in to the public anger over benefit abuse. I launched the Sun's hotline for benefit scroungers."

14. Policies and reputation

Policy and presentation are being aligned

Jones, 19

And then suddenly the politician begins to think, "Ah I've got to join up my policy decisions and my decisions with how they're going to be presented."

14. Policies and reputation

Communications advisors discuss presentational consequences of policy decisions

Jones, 19

And that is the reason why the Coulsons and the Campbells and the Inghams in his day were so invaluable because they could tell the Prime Minister, "Look if you say this it's going to be... that'll be the headline, are you happy with that headline? Because that's what it's going to be, that's how they're going to handle it and this story will go on for two or three days. Are you happy with that?"

14. Policies and reputation

Blair's decision to disassociate Labour from the trade unions had presentational objectives, i.e. To appeal to the mainstream electorate

Jones, 7

Why's that? Because he thinks the trade unions, that's where our support comes from, where the money comes from, they're important to the party or is it because they think this is the section where we win the elections because you win them in the middle, don't you?

Exactly right and that is the very very point that-, you see New Labour as it was didn't want to be presented to Middle England as being under the thumb of the trade unions because, if it was, it knew it would never get elected. That is exactly the point. That is exactly the point. And it was because Blair was prepared to distance himself from the trade unions and have nothing to do with them that made him so much more appealing to Middle England because of course I mean he you see-, I mean Margaret Thatcher changes the law on industrial relations in this country and it's Blair who says we're going to accept this lock, stock and barrel

14. policies and reputation

Politicians try not to address issues they find difficult to communicate

Greer 8, 9

Have you come across discussions advisors have with their politicians about changing to reflect change in society over time? As you think of... I came as a student, I came across Michael Portillo who was a true Thatcherite, you know the time when he, er, perhaps hoped to become party leader and he thought well the Thatcherism is perhaps not going to have an election so perhaps not even involved in the party. I'll become a compassionate Conservative so that changes over time. Is there... is that, again is that based on tuition and gut feeling? Or is that, um advisors are very much aware that expectations in society change over years? And with Blair being in power for ten years perhaps you need to change.

Well I mean you're constantly tracking what issues are important to voters, you know, if you rank them and obviously those do change over time and it's the job of a politician to speak to those issues. So the ones that concern people most. Interestingly though you talk about sort of gut and, you know, versus evidence versus gut. I think the clearest example that there is a problem is probably the whole sort of immigration issue. Because it's clear that it's a concern for a lot of the electorate and the electorate on that issue, in many cases, are quite ill informed. You know, they hold views about immigration that simply don't tie in with what's going... you know, the idea that immigrants are coming here and taking houses and benefits. You know, that bears no relation to reality and any standards that are applied with those immigrants in terms of housing and so on are equally applied to British Citizens. So no one's being sort of, you know, put out. It's not like they're all coming here, you know,



“Give me my dole money.” But despite knowing that this has been such a big issue, the major parties haven't really been prepared to engage on it because they're afraid of what might happen.

So they know that it's something that people care about but they're afraid of the what if that they can't predict. And Cameron in the multi culturism speech the other day was having a go at trying to bring that out into the open. But then you saw the panic that sort of happened as a result and the issue hasn't really been taken forward since then.

#### 14. Policies and reputation

Communications and policies are intertwined and cannot be separated

Greer, 9

It's interesting when I mention image or reputation, whilst journalists I've talked to would then talk about photo opportunities and how you organise press conferences and how you organise the presentation at the party convention. Whilst you tend to talk then about policies. Is that, is that for a good reason? Because you believe it all comes down to decisions you take and not reputation?

It does because... and I think people too often see policy and communication as distinct things. They're not. Policy is your chocolate bar, right, that's really tasty or not tasty it might be crap, you know, awful, no one wants to eat it. Communication is the wrapper and the marketing campaign and the example I always give when I'm talking about sort of, you know, communications and television technique or things like that is that you can have the best chocolate bar on the market and it can be to die for. But if you put it in a bland, grey wrapper and it's on the back row of the bottom shelf in sort of independent newsagents, it's not on the sort of Tesco's and the Asda's and all of those, it is never going to sell or be as successful as the mediocre chocolate bar that's in the nice wrapper and has an effective marketing campaign. You know, the better policy is not necessarily the winning policy and that comes down to communication, effective communication.

You know, the Big Society, it might be the greatest idea since sliced bread, that doesn't matter because the communication has been diabolical. So it's never going to really... it's never going to have a chance to succeed, it's never going to have a chance. It might be a bad policy but the communication has been so bad that we'll never actually really know

whether it was good or bad. So I think when people focus, you know, they focus say on the photo op or the staging for the press conference, well that's not a distinct thing. You know, that doesn't sit in splendid isolation. It is, it is the public face of the policy that they want to communicate

14. Policies and reputation

Policies are chosen to help politicians win short term

Greer, 10

Now, yes, policy is chosen based on what they think will get them quick wins or medium term wins, probably not long term wins because politicians are subject to the demands of democracy.

14. Policies and reputation

Success depends more on effective communications than on the quality of policies

Greer, 11

Towards the end, coming back to what you said initially. Initially it sounded to me, perhaps I misinterpreted that, that with some whatever they do, to some extent, they get away and their reputation is untarnished. Now that sounds as if if it all hinges on the quality of the policy and how it's explained and implemented, um, and the image of an individual who stands for the policy hinges on the quality of the policy. Is that just the, um... how does that match?

It isn't about the quality of the policy. You can have the worst policy on the planet, you can have a policy that will do tremendous damage to the country. Um, it might not do that damage immediately, it might be a longer term damage, something like that. If you can communicate it effectively, if you can sell that policy effectively, then that's the policy that's going to succeed.

So it's not about the quality of the policy, it's about the effectiveness of the communication in terms of selling that policy. So it comes back, for me, to the chocolate bars. The best chocolate bar in the world with a really crap wrapper, the worst chocolate bar in the world with a brilliant wrapper, a mediocre chocolate bar, worse ones are that because people only swallow so much. You know, a mediocre chocolate bar, it tastes okay, you quite like it but

it's brilliantly sold, brilliant packaging, brilliant marketing. Which one are people going to buy? I mean that's what... it's not about the quality of the policy. The quality of the communication will determine which policy is successful to the extent of which policy gets implemented and that's the key thing I think.

14. Policies and reputation

Junior ministers have little freedom to manoeuvre, get little recognition

Redfern, 2

I mean I do have to say, I have a lot of sympathy for Armando Iannucci and the people that write, 'The Thick of It,' because actually that is how—for the junior ministers, that is how it is, which is there is a grid, there is a strategy for what they're going to do. There's a bunch of rubbish events they have to go to and make speeches at. They're never going to get recognition for that. They're probably going to get criticised most of the time so there's a real desire to get a positive, authoritative news presence where they are respected and there's so little respect for politicians now and so much obsession with personal and the showbiz style politics, that it is incredibly difficult to achieve it and I think, you know, it's the holy grail frankly of consultants and advisors to get that voice, get that voice out there and make it kind of credible.

14. Policies and reputation

In Politics the policy and reputation decisions are closely linked and intertwined

Livermore, 7

Okay, alright. Erm, is it, erm, in ... in ... in companies and corporate environments sometime finds that erm, policy decisions are taken in the board room, highest level and the communications decisions at, at another level, a lower level perhaps, so they would have then someone to communicate, would have to be decided before. How is that in terms of reputation management and politics linked? Is that there's one level where people say took ... and then take policy decisions that are detached from many thoughts about the reputation that come ... kicks in later or is that, is that linked and you know – I think that it's one of the things I noticed coming out of politics and into the private sector is

that your characterisation in the private sector I think is one I'd agree with. In politics, reputation drives everything. So erm, you know, the reputation is the central question and communications, strategy and policy are utterly interlinked at the, at the very top as it were. So you decide on the reputation or the positioning or the strategy that you want and then that drives everything else. So it drives your communications. It drives the policy development. Erm, so it sits at the apex and is the, is the very first question as it were that is asked and answered and everything flows from that.

#### 14. Policies and reputation

1. For Gordon Brown the policy came first, communications strategy would then determine the timing and sequence and type of delivery

Livermore, 9

2. The policy in its own right is a communicative device

I think you did raise that before. I just want to be clear about that. Where is the line drawn between this is how we or I need to look and appear and this is the policy that I think is right? Up to what point is it the policy and all you then have to do is to interpret, to spin, to just interpret the policy in the right way? Or to what is the policy itself, the timing, the content influenced by issues of appearance?

Well I think the politicians I've worked with have a very clear sense of what they want to achieve. So presentation then becomes a matter of, as you say, timing, so it might be our strategy for this year means that we shouldn't do that this year, we should put it off to next year or we should ... or we should do it this year, depending what it is. So it might well affect the timing of it. It will definitely affect how we present it. So erm, if, you know, the politician might start out with, "Right, I want to achieve this, this year." And then we would go away and work out how. We would never start from a blank sheet of paper and say, "Right, this is your, this is your image, erm, therefore you need to do these things in terms of policy." It was more, this is the image that ... or this is the kind of reputation, positioning strategy we've got, erm, you know, of all the things you want to achieve, how shall we sequence them? Which ones are the most important to us? Which ones do we want to make a real big fuss of or which ones do we want to do quietly and that don't really contribute to achieving this? So erm, it wasn't entirely cynical image driven, but clearly our policies are one of the weapons in your armoury in terms of communicating your image,

imagery so that they were, as I say the timing, the sequencing and the ... the way in which they were brought to the fore, all was absolutely, erm, a part of that.	
14. Policies and reputation	
PM Brown decides on a course of action, the communicators make sure it is noticed	Livermore, 9
<p>Okay, I'm sorry, that's not what, I'll ... I'll try that again, if ... if the constituency was in Scotland and, and there was some crisis situation in London then, then you would make sure you're seen to drive to London at three o'clock at night because this is to seen-, to appear to be committed and to be engaged in the situation, driving there at three o'clock at night looks much better than doing that at eight o'clock in the morning. Would it be or –</p> <p>I think more –</p> <p>I think I've come across as an example in the past that's why I'm asking.</p> <p>Yeah. I think if I took that example you give I think there will be more ... probably the reality would be that he would want to drive there at three o'clock in the morning.</p> <p>Anyway, yeah.</p> <p>And that we would just make sure people knew that.</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	
... I do think in the first term, I think even Alistair Campbell would admit this, there were times when presentation drove policy too much. I don't think in the second and third terms that was as much an issue,	Kelly, 3
14. Policies and reputation	
Communicators help politicians to be more focused and turn a policy into a core message	Kelly, 7

And the most important thing I ever did and ever do is keep constantly saying what's your top line? What's your main message? What's the message that you want people out there to get? And quite often leaders start out with a message which is a long meandering paragraph. Right, get it down to a sentence. What's the sentence? What's the [0:31:34.6]? What's the way that you're going to say it in a way that people will remember and people will understand? You can put that the other way round that people will understand, and because they understand that they will remember. And it's clarity; it's conciseness; it's directness; it's speaking in terms that people understand, and that's the way you do it. In terms of the rest, it's about prioritisation but that's as much a policy issue as it is a communications issue. How do you prioritise your time?

14. Policies and reputation

Ministers' freedom to pursue policies of choice is limited

Waring, 5,6

I've been told before that in part the policies you pursue shape what people think about you, but that the ...

Absolutely.

But the freedom to pursue policies in any cabinet post, any department, is very limited. You can inherit from a predecessor, which isn't the case here or it's Downing Street that tells you that it's ...

I think it depends on strength of will. I think you couldn't necessarily pursue something that was completely outside of the government's agreed agenda, the cross-government agenda, but I think force of will, you can do almost anything in the department if you're absolutely hell bent on it, but you wouldn't make any friends and therefore that can be very counteractive. I don't say it's a good thing but I think it's possible but you've got to be very clear about it.

14. Policies and reputation

Policies and image	Waring, 6
<p>I don't expect to have an answer on this but I'll give it a try. Erm, as I said before, the policies you pursue have an impact on what people think about you. To what degree when you shape and time policies, and select policies, is that on your mind?</p> <p>Erm, when we select policies, err, it's not really a consideration as to what people think of you, it's more what will the impact be, but then when you start developing it more, erm, then you start to think how would we describe it to people? How are we going to sell it to people? And what are the particular sort of ins and outs and how will it work? I think delivery and marketing are probably the things ... which is probably the wrong way round in politics. You probably should start with what people want but ... I mean, for example, on corporate governance, it's something that the Liberal Democrats particularly feel that there is, there's kind of the wrong culture in corporate governance in some of the tweaks to the culture and the regulation would have a positive impact, and we thought that for a long time, so we always knew we wanted to do something about it but of course we want to engage business, we want to make sure it fits with the kind of UK economy. We want to ensure that we don't sell it in a way that means they don't understand it's about making markets work better rather than it's not punitive. It's supposed to be advantageous to them. So we knew we wanted to do it, but you have to think very carefully about the implementation in order to come back to the image and make sure it all fits together. So I think you start with the principle first rather than-, and what it will do for the image.</p>	
14 Policies reputation	
Management of policies is more emphasised than management of images	Wood, 1
<p>But what you're really asking about it about something more difficult which is really the image and reputation of the leading politician, right. And I suppose the short answer to your question is there's surprisingly little done on that score because, probably, because it is so difficult. Er, I think a lot of the effort would have gone into the other areas I've described and less into this whole general image building and gravitation management.</p>	

14. Policies and reputation	
Policies and image	Wood, 2
<p>Um, there's a story, I mean I can't remember the detail, but I know that an internal memo on this subject did get leaked and did get run, I think it was in the FT, in the sort of summer of '99. Um, I'm sure you could find that story or stories about it. Um, I must admit I was never, I was never personally a great fan of this kind of approach. Because I thought that the best way to build William's reputation as the strong and decisive and grown up leader was for him to do strong and decisive and grown up things around policy and around speeches and around interviews and around ideas</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	
Reputation is built through the policies someone pursues	Wood, 5
<p>Surely he would, when you think about which policies we select and we want to pursue you would think about how does that look and make him look. Is that...?</p> <p>I think that's fair enough. But I mean I think it's...</p> <p>Iain Duncan Smith turned around his whole image by pursuing, you know, this social compassionate, er, policy.</p> <p>The Iain thing is perhaps a bit different. But with William I felt... and I think this is probably what we did, is out of the policies he was pursuing would come a following, that would build his reputation image better. For instance we... he defended the farmer who shot the burglar, the Tony Martin case. Now that immediately positioned him in a very strong law and order position, it was, at the time, controversial, much less so now. Um, he ultimately did... I think the Macpherson report which talked about institutionalised racism in the police, he ultimately came out against that. And he used this phrase a lot, "The Metropolitan Elite" and he was positioning himself against the Metropolitan elite, although you could argue in many respects, you could argue he in many respects represented them. I mean he was an Oxford graduate, he had been a sort of brilliant student, um...</p>	



14. Policies and reputation	
Policies shape reputation	Wood, 6,7
<p>I think IDS, I mean even more than William, Iain was far more sceptical about this whole image making thing. He was really very strongly against it and would say so. Er, and he rather like me believed the way that... if the Conservative Party had this nasty party image, a phrase that Theresa May used at the conference, I mean I don't accept that argument, I didn't then and I don't now. But in so far as it had a negative image or had some negatives associated with it, to me that was inevitable. Some people would say they're not going to like us. But again Iain's view would have been the way you change perceptions of a Conservative Party is you change the policies of the Conservative Party and his whole, um, social justice campaign was really... that was his way of changing the overall image of the Conservative Party. Not about him personally at all, he would never have seen in... He never saw politics in those terms. But he did see that agenda as a way of demonstrating and he used to say things like, um, we've let the left colonise the area of poverty. It's the left who have the complete monopoly on the under privileged, we not even allowed to talk about it. When it comes to poverty and people in poor circumstances, poor schooling and all that kind of thing, people... you know that's a Labour issue and the Conservative Party traditionally had nothing to say about it, has apparently shown no interest in it. And if people interpret that to mean to say they're a bunch of cold-hearted bastards, I'm not voting for them, that's not an unreasonable conclusion for them to draw.</p>	
14. Policies and reputation	
Policies are not instrumentalised to project an image	Wood, 8
<p>Um, but it does mean that the public start to become more familiar with it and this concept of broken Britain which emerged out of all this, um, was already down and Iain's crusading</p>	

on it. But the broader point is was this... this was never, this agenda was never conceived as an attempt to rebuild the reputation of Iain Duncan Smith, it wasn't. It has but it was never conceived, I never sat with Iain and said, "Look we can get you back into the Cabinet but you have to do X, Y and Z because that way you'll get a new image and people will like you." And if I had he would have laughed at me and said, "Don't be ridiculous."

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Some politicians do not take advice, in some cases it is a collaborative process

Neather, 8

I come back to speech writing once more?

Yeah, sure.

In a way speech writing is doing drafts and giving advice, isn't it? Saying this is what you should say and you do various drafts and you mentioned how many you thought had been done for one of Gordon Brown's speeches – 67 drafts, that's what you mentioned.

Right, okay.

And you've written for various politicians. Why and under what circumstances would a speech writer say, "Well, I'm doing the draft but what they say is completely different from what I'm telling them?" What does it come down to? Why would they accept your suggestions what they should say and why would they take the facts and leave out the narrative that you've created?

Well, I don't know that... I think it's because... it really depends on the speech...

Not the individual that you write it for?

No, I mean the circumstances of a particular speech. There are some politicians who are keener than others on busking a speech – just improvising, stretch it a bit. Straw had a tendency to busk it when he was nervous, when he was... I remember one speech he gave to the Police Federation. It was a very hostile audience and he was busking a whole section in the middle. I was just sitting there thinking, "Oh, God, this is terrible," because it was going to make the whole thing longer and you had all these bored cops. Basically it was the last thing you wanted. But I think with the big speeches – and generally I didn't work with the big political speeches – pretty much what's delivered is what's been written in the final draft. I think the difficult with the message is that speech writing is essentially an iterative process and it's also a group process. I mean it's between more than one speech

writer and a politician. And while you might start out – and you would start out, with something like a Party Conference speech – with essentially a series of core message, they tend to get – not necessarily lost – but altered in the whole sort of writing and rewriting process. I think it’s almost inevitable. I just think you’re never going to come out of an involved speech writing process where the speech is shot through with absolutely core messages in the way that it was when you started out. I just think it’s almost inevitable that it gets twisted, that it gets altered.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Brown was not too keen to get research feedback about personal issues and would therefore not be told as frankly as other politicians

McBride, 12

I can count on one hand when I was in the room where he (Brown) was getting feedback about focus group and what they thought of a particular issue. And he would be told about these things but because he was guided tentatively... would get embarrassed about being told, “People thought this about you, people thought that about you.” A classic example, I’m trying to think, I think they were careful with him what they said, how honest they were about him.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Political communications in the Labour Party become more important in the course of the past 40 years which in part reflected party leaders’ attitude towards it

Hill, 2

And so it was, it was, it was necessary. But the ... the fact was the recognition that communication was at the heart of successful politics was something that was ... well, I can tell you it goes a long way ... if you know anything about my background, I began ... I began with Roy Hattersley. And he ... I was the first person ever employed by a member of the Labour front bench whose job it was, not initially, but over time, to deal with the media. So by the time we got to 1976, '79, when we were in government and I was a special advisor, I was really the only special advisor who spent a lot of time talking to the media. I was the only one. Now, I’m not a journalist by trade, I just learnt my trade on the job as a special advisor, but I learnt what journalists need, I learnt what journalists want, I learnt how

to ... you know, to develop that relationship, which is essential. Erm, but at that stage there was no recognition that you had to have a communications team, or at least some communications operatives as part of your core operation. But er, by the time we got to 19 ... 1997, or 1994, it was very obvious that that was the case. And, of course, we had a leader previously in John Smith, who didn't really recognise that. John Smith wasn't very interested in the media. He just let us get on with it. Neil was, but Neil, of course, was ... Neil was ... Neil sometimes lacked a little bit of the discipline that was needed. But, of course, Tony's got it. There you were.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Blair consulted many people for communications advice and it wasn't clear whose advice he would ultimately follow	Hill, 4,5
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Now your job description was for, for, for years to shape, to be responsible for shaping the narrative for Tony Blair. Now, but then I'm told by ... I've been told by, by others that, particularly for the Prime Minister, there are so many people around to want to give advice, there's so much competing advice. How do you deal with that?

Well, I mean, first of all, I mean the first thing is, who is he close to and who's he listening to? Erm ... secondly, it's absolutely true. I mean, it is the nature of anybody, and it certainly was his nature that he would ... he would talk to lots of people about things. I mean, you got used to it. Erm, he'd ... he'd want to make his mind up, but he wasn't sure, so he'd have a conversation ... for argument's sake I'd have a conversation with him and ten minutes later I know that he'd pick the phone to somebody else, and he'd chew over it and [0:15:07] chew over it, and because ... and then he'd say right, I think I'll do that. And that's fine. Because one, he was a good consulter and a good ... good at making decisions, and he felt that often talking to five people was better than talking to one. But on the other hand, that's when you've got the time to do that. That's when it's things that are, you know, are in the pipeline, that you're working on. But on day to day ... on a day to day basis, I mean, you know, the question of what you do as Prime Minister will often depend on who's around you at that given moment.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Politics is instinctive	Hill, 5
Well, you see, I think the thing was ... I think you've got to remember in the end that politics is instinctive.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Blair decided quickly which gave him time to consult with communications advisors, Brown, behaved differently which impacted on his time budget	Hill, 5
Erm, and ... why Blair could think about it was because he was good at making his mind up. I mean, Gordon used to ... used to really worry over things, and he used to chew away at them, as if it were a bone, whereas Tony didn't do that so much. Erm, and I think that gave him time in his quieter moments to think about it. And also it did give the opportunity ... you know, you'd have the ... we could have the opportunity of a train journey, or the opportunity of a car journey, and instead of chewing over something that was awkward or difficult, what you'd often find you were doing, you could actually have half an hour about ... where are we trying to get to with this. Where are we trying to get too generally. Do you think that we're coming across as being too strident.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Blair could focus on communications events / issues and for a while blank out all else	Hill, 5
So when, as you say, there's the Russian President here and there's the TUC there, this again requires a significant capacity of compartmentalisation. Erm, and again, erm, I found that Tony was very good at that. He's very good at shutting off and saying right, for twenty minutes I won't think about that, I'll just think about this, and that's it. And I'll ... what I've got to say, and my message to the TUC, that is all I'm going to be thinking about. Erm ... so in that sense, erm, in that sense, whilst of course you are weighed down with things, and he would be very ...	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	

Politician needs to trust their communications staff	Hill, 8
So you do need a ... I think every minister needs a core of people whom they can trust	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Close advisors can sense what kind of person this particular politician really is	Eustice, 2
When it comes to what you should be saying about them, and what they are actually about, that is something the public don't know always, but what, if you're a very close advisor to them, you do know. The moments when you're in a very private meeting discussing how they should react to a particular story and you will see maybe a flash of anger at something that's suggested that they don't agree with, or you will see a very strong, principled loyalty to their colleagues and their MPs, and an unwillingness to erm, to sort of er, betray trust in colleagues. You get a sense of their character, of what sort of person they're like	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
The influence of advice and advisors is limited by a politician's decision to reject advice	Eustice, 4,5
<p>What makes the difference then? Is it the quality of the advice you get, the quality of the advisors you can afford? Is it the [0:14:41] you have to do research? What makes the difference? Because what you're saying there, the inside, and how you present someone to be authentic, the person he or she really is, that is not an insight the last five years. They could have known that ten years ago or fifteen years ago.</p> <p>Yes, but they didn't. I think actually one of the most important things is the judgment of the politician themselves. There's a limit to what advisors can do. You have an advisor ... what a politician ... you should have a court of advisors around you, erm, and some of the advice you give them you will take, some of it you would reject.</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	

<p>Politicians may reject communications advice because they think the advice is not reflective of their personality and believes</p>	<p>Eustice, 5</p>
<p>And the ... I think the telling thing about David Cameron is that he always had the strength to reject advice when he wasn't comfortable with it. And ... so if you had someone advising him on speech and would advise him to lower his tone of voice or do something, if he didn't feel that was right he would ignore it, and he would say no, I'm not doing that. Erm, I can remember during the leadership contest ... there was a suggestion that he, in order to get in the news, he needed to attack David Davies, or frame the choice and actually be quite tough about how David Davies was a, you know, yesteryear old school Tory who couldn't be the change the country needed. Erm, and David Cameron rejected that advice. He didn't want to get into personality politics. It wasn't him. And he realised that if he did that it would look wrong and it would be betraying what he was actually about, which was actually quite a generous person. So fundamentally the politician has to ... they have to hold that court. They have to take advice from people but absolutely be willing to reject it when it's not them. And only they really know who that is. And then they need also advisors who don't think, how do we make you look good and how do we get you in GQ magazine. They need advisors who ... who actually are thinking all the time, how do we project what this person really is to the outside world.</p>	
<p>15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken</p>	
<p>Opposition Leader Cameron had a small team of advisors that would discuss openly critical issues</p>	<p>Eustice, 9, 10</p>
<p>Yes. It's quite interesting. You always see ... I always find it quite funny when you see media stories about big bust ups and, you know, people sometimes depict this image as though there are rival camps with, you know, the ... some guru who's leading each camp sort of ... stroking their cat sort of James Bond style, or you know ... waiting ... plotting against the, the other rival camp. The truth is about politics is in the middle there are really ... there are six or eight key people who keep the show on the road, and they will have sometimes very, very frank, er, arguments about what they should be doing, erm ... and there will be rows but it's not ... it's never, erm ... they're never plotting against each other in the way that ... people suggest. You know, you have very frank discussions about what</p>	

you ought to be doing, that's a healthy, very robust discussion. But once you've made an agreement that's it, and you move on

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

The final decision about presentational issues is taken by the leader

Macrory, 3

but at the end of the day the Prime Minister is his own man and if he says actually I want to go on this programme, you know, he has the final say though he will obviously take a lot of advice.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Personality/skills of the politician and quality of advice

Stacey, 9

So last thing, you wouldn't think the Conservatives over years their advisors, their communicators learn from what they did for, literally what they did for Ian Duncan Smith, what he may not have wanted or Hague and they reduced or downscaled the management of the public persona of the leader. It's just that the current one is less in need of it or is better at implementing the advice. So you wouldn't say they just said oh it's no good trying to manage reputation, we won't try this anymore, it has been done but it comes more natural now.

I think it's more natural now. As I said before David Cameron is a PR man, he doesn't need much managing, he is very effective at self-managing. I mean, yes, he has some good advisors who have an eye for a great photo opportunity or speech opportunity. But you can have that and if you're Ian Duncan Smith it's.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Reputation management may be driven by the politician's personality

Price, 1

Okay I think maybe in her case it (strategic reputation management) happened because she was just a very strong personality and that kind of bubbled over into, into the [0:00:58.0].



15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
If reputation management takes place depends on the politician	Price, 1
And I think the short answer to your-, the question that you posed, is it depends very, very much on the politicians themselves	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Good media advice is led by the politician	Price, 1
Good advisors will always take their lead from the politicians.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Politicians who plan communications long term and manage by objectives make sure their advisors thinks the same way	Price, 1
And those who do think like that convey that to their advisors, make sure that their advisors also think in the same way.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
A politician's stubbornness stops image and policy research from being taken up	Price, 2
Erm, so, you know, having that sort of sense of your own opinions and, and, and, err, gut feelings is, is one thing, erm, but if you're too stubborn about it – and maybe that's where Margaret Thatcher went wrong in the end – if you're too stubborn about it then you lose the support that you'd sought to build up.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	

If the politicians lack intuition for what their publics want, they become more reliant on research	Price, 5
<p>, , although he didn't, he didn't have anything like the emotional intelligence. He didn't have the same instinctive grasp of where ordinary people were the Blair had. So he was more reliant on advice and on focus groups and all the rest of it, there is a little bit in my-, I don't know whether you have seen Where Power Lies, the last book I did, there is a little bit in there about him on that, erm, and he was much more reliant on advice because he didn't get it himself, he had to have other people telling him how to do it.</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
A politicians public presentation is only efficient if their messages are genuine and not just a regurgitation of advice they received	Price, 5
<p>It worked with Blair because it was genuine, he just really felt like that. It never worked with Brown because it was an addition to his personality rather than part of his personality, it was what he was being told to say, what he thought about and read about, but it didn't come from his inner core as a politician. Erm, and people see through that instantly, I mean they can just. They, they, they have ... when they see a politician on the telly they can tell whether that person is sort of genuine about what he is saying or she is saying or whether it just doesn't ring true and with Brown it didn't ring true</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Brown as Prime Minister did recruit good staff but failed to communicate with staff effectively	Price, 6
<p>Erm, and when he did find people and bring people in he wasn't able to communicate to them on a personal level what he wanted them to do and so he never got out of his communication difficulties, most of which derived from his own personality and his own sort of erm political position Brown is example that illustrates that the best resources cannot make up for lack of strategic thinking – vision</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	

<p>If the Prime Minister's decisions is swayed by presentational advice or policy advice depends on the case, the situation and his/her convictions</p>	<p>Price, 7</p>
<p>And a leader will then be conflicted, will be listening to these two, erm, different opinions and he has to go one way or the other. And it will depend on how fundamental the issue is, err it will depend on whether he thinks the communications advice he is being given day to day is tactical or whether it is strategic. But no those very decisions do come along. But then there will be other issues, erm, and it was true of-, I mean if you look at GM foods again ... Arguably you could look at Iraq as well but let's take GM foods as a good example. Blair was out on a limb on GM foods, he was saying it is a good thing, you know feed the world, nothing to be scared of, and he stuck to that and he was quite public about it. And I remember being responsible for an awful headline in one of the papers that had a picture of him as Frankenstein on the front page of the Daily Mirror and 'The Prime Monster' written underneath because of his ... I sort of went a bit over the top in his support because that is how he had been talking to me about it and his support for GM foods. And he thought, no, no, no I know that you are telling me that the public don't agree with me but I think I am right and I am going to convince them I am right and there we are. And then of course it just came too much and he backed off. Erm, so it was very sort of-, discussions were going on about it and it is true of a lot of them, but then Iraq people would have said this is going to be a PR disaster and he said "well it is what I have to do"</p>	
<p>15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken</p>	
<p>Not all politicians accept image advice</p>	<p>Stevenson, 15</p>
<p>the quality of the communications advice more to do with the amount and quality of resources you have to do that, or is it more to do with the incumbent who is willing to accept the advice?</p> <p>Well, as I say, some people don't regard their image as being important and obviously you would have problems with them. But most modern politicians are absolutely up to speed on this. You know, the number of people working on this issue, the number of ... the amount of time that's given to it is reflective of that. It's a big priority.</p>	

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Reputation management depends on the politician’s personality	Davies, 1
<p>You work for a politician you know is competent, and honest, and decent, has got a vision of what he wants to achieve. You need the public to know. How’s it done?</p> <p>Yeah. How’s it done? I mean I suppose in the case of ... Well, I suppose the first thing to say is, is it depends on who the politician is to some extent how it’s done.</p> <p>And I think that I always thought with Jack in many ways I think I had quite an easy job with Jack because he in some ways is the kind of politician who is basically up for anything, and basically wants to be as up front and as open as is possible</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Keeping the politician away from awkward media appearances may be due to the politician’s personal preferences.	Davies, 8
<p>Is, is there ... Would there be media where you tried to pick the kind of media that your minister is more comfortable with? Is there media where you say, well, we don’t like to talk to them? We don’t like them. We don’t like their line, but we don’t have any choice. We need to ... This needs to be done. I’ve been several times about Gordon Brown who would have to do some media appearances that he didn’t like, was really awful. I need to talk about [0:23:45.4]. They said you have to do this because this is part of the job. So to what degree can you say this was the kind of public appearance we want to do and this is what we have to do and we don’t have any choice.</p> <p>I mean Jack would have run a mile from any of that stuff. I mean if Jack had been the Prime Minister and anybody had said to him, you know, you need to go on and talk about your favourite rock band or something he’d have said “No, I’m not going to do that because that’s not what people want to hear.” That’s a separate issue, I suppose. On the whole I took the view that unless it was just a ridiculous request – and there were certain things you would get that you would just say no straightforwardly, like, you know, he’d get asked to go</p>	

on Have I got News for you and things like that, and he'd say "I don't think so." I'm not going to put him up to have the mickey taken out of him for half an hour.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not takes

Jack Straw was advised to use his personal background to portray himself in the media	Davies, 8, 9
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If you're talking about private life, family ...  
He always ... I mean private life, he was very clear. I mean he had a very clear view that he didn't talk about it, and I think his view about it was too ... he was actually too rigid. He almost, erm, he almost took it to the point where he, he didn't, you know, he drew the line very, very, erm, very, very sort of severely, if you like, to the point where he didn't even really talk about, you know, his own background for a long time. And actually I said to him "I don't know why you don't talk about that sort of stuff because actually, you know, it helps to shape you and shape your-, the sense of you as a politician because actually it's really interesting, you know." He grew up on a council estate in Essex. His father left home and all that. He was very, err, he was very, he was very wary about going down that path, but ultimately started to talk about it more without talking about his wife and his kids, and that was basically where he drew the line. He said ... If any journalists ever asked him about his wife and kids he said "Look, I don't talk about them, I'm sorry. It's not relevant." They didn't ask.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Media relations while abroad were done because Jack Straw liked doing I, not because it was relevant for his key publics	Davies, 14
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Did you, did you find any, any commitments abroad with heads of state, governments, with, you know, other ministers for justice at the time. Was it rather constrained or another tool you could use for presentational reasons?

Sometimes, yeah, I mean, yeah ... you mean when he was away doing, err ...  
Yeah.

I mean we always used to do quite a lot of ... He used to quite enjoy doing media when we'd go on trips, err, and we'd ... Obviously, [0:40:59.4] Condoleezza Rice in Blackburn and Alabama, err, and that worked really, really well. Well, sort of worked really, really well, but of course, you know, everybody got into the whole sort of Condi and Jack thing. That was a good example actually where you had the British press doing tabloid type photo story things about the 'Jack and Condi love affair.' And that was a trick of course that his wife was on, you know. It's like sort of no one noticed. It was classic. [Laughs] But, erm, so I mean we would tend to use, use those sorts of ... I always used to feel that you got, got much fairer press, generally speaking, from the foreign press than you did from the British press on the whole. So if he was doing something in America we'd always try and get him some sort of American chance, and he liked doing those sorts of things. There was always a bit of a conflict because of course, you know, the political advantage of doing something with the New York Times or the, I don't know, the [0:41:53.7] or something was limited because not many people in Blackburn would read those papers.

Yeah.

But he liked doing them and that was quite good to do.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

If pol communications advice is picked up depends on attitudes of politicians and their level of interest in it	Davies, 14
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Why are some ministers wise advised by special advisors media relations advice, you know, how to manage public persona and perception, how is it sometimes listened to and why would it not be listened to by the minister?

I mean again it probably depends on the minister. I mean some ministers are so obsessed with being on TV that, you know, it's critical to have somebody there just, just basically creating opportunities for them really, I suppose. I mean Jack wasn't like that. Erm, it's a good question. I mean just ask it again, sorry. I've just slightly lost my ... Why is it ...

(...)

The advice is there but sometimes there seems to be ... I mean for the advisor, how to present a politician. The concern and discussion is there, and the advice is there, but sometimes it's picked up and followed and sometimes it's ignored, and I wonder why that

happens and under what circumstances.

I mean, yeah ... As I say, it does depend on who the politician is and I think I was always fortunate in a sense that Jack was a politician who had been around for a long, long time, and sort of had ... you know, he cared obviously about his career but not as much as maybe somebody would care about their career if they were in their forties or something like that, and who'd be looking at 25 years to 30 years more of doing this sort of job, whereas Jack clearly, you know ... I'm not saying he had a sort of end in sight type thing, but he was, you know, an older politician and more confident about his, his career and himself, and he basically reached the very top.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Jack straw listened to pol com advise, and feedback

Davies, 15

Does it mean listening more or less?

Erm, it probably meant listening ... Err, interesting, I mean I think you can never underestimate how politicians, even the most senior politicians, are quite nervous about the media and, and also need a lot of – to some extent a lot of, erm, err, sort of a lot of sense of having their confidence boosted. You know, Jack would often say “How was that? Was that alright? Was it okay? You know, how did that go?” And you'd think, well, of course it was fine, Jack. You've been doing this for years. You're good at it and ... you know, sometimes you'd say “Actually, Jack, it wasn't that good.” I mean most of the time he was pretty good. So that's one reason I suppose. It's a little bit of a sort of, err, [0:44:25.1] it's a sounding board to some extent, another pair of ears, and a support as well, I suppose. Erm, he used to usually listen to me. Most of the time he would go along with what I said. Sometimes he didn't, but I think probably 95% of the time I would sort of advise him and he would, he would accept my advice on the whole. Erm, and I think on the whole it was pretty good advice. [Laughs]

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Honesty about perceptions is critical	Richards, 1
<p>I think one of the roles of the advisor is to be brutally honest about the way their boss (the politician) is being perceived and the value of having an advisor is that they can do that in a way that others can't.</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Special advisors give more independent communications advice	Richards, 1
<p>So in the UK system obviously special advisors are political appointments appointed by the politician themselves; they're not civil servants. So civil servants will say yes minister/no minister but the advisor can say, you know, more sort of direct advice and part of that advice is presentational. It's how they sound, how they look, how they're being perceived to a broader audience through the media and beyond and sometimes you have to be quite honest about that.</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
For different reasons communications advice is being ignored by politicians who think they won't need advice	Richards, 6
<p>Now there's you and other advisors, there's the expertise you've got, the advice you give and whether then it's followed up, that surely depends on the personality of the person you're-, who you're working for.</p> <p>Yes, of course it does and I mean there're two things at play. 1) is that anyone who's got to the Cabinet feels that they've-, you know, they must be doing something right so there's a kind of inbuilt resistance to change because they think, you know, I'm in the Cabinet and you're not and therefore, you know, I must be doing the right thing and the other sort of thing in play is the fact that you can offer all the advice you want but they don't necessarily take it. So you know, the advice sometimes can be just ignored for whatever reason or, you know, it can be the wrong advice; you can give bad advice so they rightly ignore it. So you know, there's sort of cultural resistance to change and the fact that there's a tendency</p>	



sometimes even to ignore means that nothing changes and I mean

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Communications advisors take different approaches to reputation management – there does not seem to be an agreed best practice

Richards, 6, 7

Well, I mean I think firstly-, well, I would say that each case is different so there isn't a template. Each advisor will approach this differently and each politician will receive it differently and there isn't a kind of training college we all go off to where, you know, how do you mould the image of a politician and learn the same stuff. So I produce endless memoranda for different politicians, you know, suggesting they do different things but other advisors would have done it differently. So there isn't-, (this is why you're talking to lots of people I suppose) there isn't a template nor is there a science to it where, you know, it's-, I think we're less developed in the UK than let's say the States where image is more powerful because of the nature of the media and so on and they spend more time thinking about how image is received and also of course they-, they're in a political culture I think in the States where personal attacks and character questions is probably more salient than it is in the UK particularly at the presidential level so it's more important to them so they're further done that line I think but on the other hand, you know, we have been doing this a long time and the-, if you look at Churchill or somebody (a master of PR presenting his own image through PR to make people think of him in a certain way) it's not new, is it? It's just-, I think it's just not quite as developed as in other countries.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Some politicians take advice on presentational / visual issues

Richards, 7

I mean look at William Hague and his baseball cap, you know. That was obviously on advice. Somebody said you need to look more youthful or whatever and it's haunted him for the last 15 years, you know, and it'll never go away, will it? I mean that's always going to be there.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Some politicians take advice by communications advisors on which action to take and which themes to address	Richards, 7
Cameron’s image was very carefully crafted and created. He had lots of advisors advising him and in the early stages particularly when he was doing his photo opportunities to try and detoxify the brand, you know, it was pure image management. I mean the huskies and all the rest of it.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Gordon Brown’s poor reputation may be due to his reluctance to take advice	Richards, 8
So there’s that and with him you’re right I mean what would you have done with him? You could have-, I would have had him pictured on his way to church more and made him look like a serious religious figure. I would have had him pictured with his children more. On the very last day as he resigned if you remember he came out with his family and everyone went oh look he’s a family man but we never saw that when he was prime minister. I would have made him make fewer speeches because those speeches were awful and didn’t mean anything, you know, but he wouldn’t have taken any advice so it doesn’t matter. Probably there were people saying those things but they didn’t get anywhere at all but you’re right I mean if a serious man for serious times is the way you go then you-, that’s what you do; you don’t start grinning on YouTube because that plainly doesn’t work.	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Some politicians’ public persona is so for some reasons not manageable	Jones, 19,20
Foot of course was seen as somebody who was just hopelessly, obviously committed, but hopelessly left-wing sort of... I'm just trying to think of the right word to describe him. As somebody who was just a left-wing dreamer, you know, it wasn’t possible that he could ever be Prime Minister. So for some it’s just never, ever going to be possible. but of course for those who apply themselves and who understand this media and have what I call the X	

Factor, you see, I mean that's what the programme is all about, the X Factor and that's what I think Cameron's got. He's got an X Factor, he's got a degree of ability to present himself in an engaging way to the punter and the punter, they're caught, he catches their attention. Blair was the same, Thatcher was the same because I mean she was just totally a conviction politician. You either hated or her or loathed or loved her, you know. But of course people like Howard there would just be a question mark over them as seen by the public. And Kinnock was the same, people thought... they weren't quite sure about him.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Clegg's positive perception in the leadership debate was due to technical issues such as good preparation	Jones, 16
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Well it had but you see the point was that Clegg had had much better... he had... his rehearsals they had been... they had understood the difference that it wasn't a question of relating to the audience, it was like as though you ignored the audience for your main point, you had to talk to the camera. And you had to work out which of the cameras were going to be on you, you see. So these were the... this is what Cameron has said

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Conservative government pursued a core policy on advice of an advisor in spite of critical polling feedback	Greer 10,11
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You've now described a defined best practice. When you compare that to what you see day to day over there, any example come to your mind where they diverge tremendously from their disadvantage from best practice?

Yeah, um the Big Society is probably the best example of that. You know, if you look at the... before the election I read every speech given by every Minister, Shadow Minister and Liberal Democrat spokesman and every policy document for the couple of years leading up to the election. Um, and I wrote, um a book, Why go Conservative? As part of a series we were doing. And it was very, very clear before the Big Society as a term came into existence the sort of the underpinnings, the concept of the Big Society was fundamentally within all the Conservative policy. It was very much about the idea of devolving power away from the state, reducing public spending, encouraging volunteering, um and there's

another side to that that I'll mention in a moment that's quite important. Encouraging volunteering and encouraging civic society, encouraging the power of people so that people could... you know, the idea that a decision should be taken as close to the individual as possible and where the decision could be taken by that individual it should be taken by that individual. However where the decision could not be taken by that individual it should be taken by an individual who is as close to the voter as possible, as close to the citizen as is physically possible.

So that was right through all of it. You know, right from your foreign aid through to your NHS, through to your education, you name it it's there. And then Steve Hilton came up with this idea of the Big Society as a way to explain all of that. The problem was he didn't do any testing, you know, he loved the idea, he thought this was the way to kind of encapsulate what it was they were about, just as Tony Blair went, "Education, education, education." Now when Tony Blair said, "Education, education, education" you didn't know specifically what he was going to do. But you got a sense that you're definitely going to be talking about more investment in education. You were definitely going to be talking about improving standards in education. You don't have to say any of that, you just have to say, "Education, education, education" and that communicates the sort of sense of what it is you're going to do.

For Steve Hilton Big Society was the equivalent of that for the underlying message and objective in all Conservative policy. The problem was he didn't test it. He didn't go out and focus group, he didn't ask people, "Big Society what does that mean to you?" Well for a lot of people it didn't mean anything, for a lot of people it was confusing, for a lot of people it meant something completely different. And it wasn't until, um, an American, um, advisor who was in CCHQ at the time eventually persuaded let's actually focus group this. They did focus group it, it bombed, nobody liked it and Hilton still pushed ahead with it because he still felt it was the right idea, the right thing to do and now they're paying the consequences of it. And the best example of how they're paying the consequences of it is happening at the moment. they didn't communicate it effectively, um, with all of these cuts that are affecting the voluntary sector, you know, because the local Councils are cutting the funding to X, Y and Z community projects and people are saying, "Look at this the Conservatives talk about this Big Society and they're actually destroying the Big Society by, um, by cutting the funds in the voluntary sector." Well actually that's part of the Big Society, I mean that comes right back to the very beginnings of what it was about. Cut the funding

so that they're no longer reliant on the state. So that the individual is more reliant on themselves, um, and is supporting themselves through, for example, private fund raising and all of that kind of stuff. Because the whole idea of the state subsidising all of this goes against the idea of a smaller state which goes against the idea of a Big Society.

But of course because they've communicated it so badly that's not what people think. no one knows what it really means and people are now turning round and going, "Well you're doing all these cuts and it's destroying your Big Society" all because the Conservatives didn't come up with a good term to begin with. Big Society should never have been the way to describe it. So I think that's probably the best example of it. Just a really, really, really... and again I can't say whether the policy was good or bad, I don't think we'll ever really know now. Um, because it's been so tarnished by a poor name that was chosen and a complete failure to communicate it effectively.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

David Miliband did get advice which he refused to accept

Redfern, 5

That's the person he was not the advice necessarily.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely, because the advice would be, these are the hurdles to clear, you know, bring in the trade union, you know, say something that's going to warm their cockles and then say something to the Co-op, say something to, you know, The Fabians and the socialist societies and the LGBT and, you know, all of that stuff he did, but I still think his broader messaging was about how he would govern, it was very prime ministerial and all of that stuff. You know, there was no other way round, that was I think a personal choice and that other people advised him to do more, but that he took that view and you know, there we go, history is made. He may be back

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Gordon Brown was adopting a behaviour that was either in denial of research findings or misinterpreting them

Livermore, 5

Is that [0:17:02.6] conflicting advice in part at least justified by the awareness there are different publics and have different expectations? Very, very crudely there is people that vote for the people are members of the party and the activists would [0:17:15.8] and then ... and there'd be male and female voters and older and younger, so expectations are different, is that reflected, and probably it is in your research and then the kind of advice. Yeah, I mean we did lots of ... I mean research into different groups. I'm not sure I ever came across anyone in any research over 10 years who wanted him to smile. Erm, er, so ... so ... so I think that most people wanted the same thing. But of course when he meets activists they want him to be pleasant in private. But I'm not sure that he was elected to be friendly. Erm, it's not really what we were ever looking for from him. Erm, I think that was a ... a misunderstanding of ... of his core strength and not really what people were looking for.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

An effective communicator is a strategic councillor who needs a good relationship with the politician in order to function efficiently	Kelly, 8
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I think the one thing I would say is that the personal relationship matters, right. You don't have to be ... It's quite often advantageous not to be the leader's best friend. You don't have to be a soul mate. You don't have to have the same political instincts as the leader. You do have to have the ability to tell that person the truth and not to be afraid to tell that person the truth because if you pull your punches in saying how things are going to be perceived then the leader is not going to know how to present things in a way ... the leader has to think "I'm going to say this in such and such a way, and I'm being told the reaction is going to be such." If the leader is under an illusion about what the reaction is going to be, you haven't done your job. So however uncomfortable it is, however much the leader doesn't want to hear it, you've got to be able to give the message. And at the end of the day, that becomes the truth teller role, the strategic counsellor role, and I do increasingly think of communications advisors as strategic counsellors rather than just communications. And that means you have to have the relationship where you can look the person in the eye and say "Look, whether we like it or not, this is how it's seen." So that's what you're ... that's the context. You've got to understand that context. That's it.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
Advice is given, decision is taken by the politician	Waring, 3
<p>Surely there, there's so many advisors, two or three special advisors, but so many other people who want to give advice in your department. How difficult is it for you to control the public experience. Others want to have their agenda, which may be different from what you would advise.</p> <p>Well, Vince is a kind of very strong minded politician and he's very independent minded, and he's probably far less, erm ... He's not far less image conscious than other politicians but, erm, I think that you get some politicians that they really, they take lots of branding advice and lots of image advice, and Vince like listens and then he makes his own decisions, and so, erm, I think he controls his own image quite well but I wouldn't necessarily say I would control it that well.</p>	
15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken	
If the advisor is trusted it is more likely the politician acts on advice	Waring, 4
<p>Do you think it helps that Vince Cable for many years worked as an advisor himself, it, it helps in your working relationship?</p> <p>No, not really. I don't think it makes a difference because it was so long ago.</p> <p>In other interviews I've been told that some politicians happily accept advice, others ...</p> <p>Vince, erm, does accept advice. Erm, he does accept a lot of advice, and, erm, but it's much easier now than when I first started working for him and we got to know each other. I think you have to build up trust and you have to prove that your advice is right, and then they say "Oh yes, I can see that when you told me to say that it worked well" or "I wish I'd accepted that bit of advice" or something like that. Erm, I imagine that with other politicians, because so many of them have been special advisors recently like George Osborne, or</p>	

David Cameron, or, erm, I mean Nick Clegg worked in Brussels, didn't he, as a [0:11:14.2], erm, that might make a difference. But Vince was a policy advisor, you know, about 50 years ago or 40 ... Not 50 years ago. 40 years ago, so that's not really having much of an impact.

15. Personality and acting on advice advise is taken – advice is not taken

Giving and accepting advice

Hazlewood, 11,12

That is my last question, why, the politicians you have worked for in your position for the party and now, why would some accept your advice and why would others be more cautious to accept the advice?

That is a good question, erm I mean I have worked with a lot of them over the last ten or eleven years. So those that know me, know my reputation and I am not afraid to tell them when I think they are wrong and I think that is important. I think if you have got somebody there who is just constantly agreeing with a politician all the time then that could lead to trouble, it might not, but I think questioning why things are being proposed and then justifying the decisions is a much better approach. And coming from a background outside of politics as well, is quite important. Err I was probably one of the first journalists to be appointed to do a job for a political party within Wales, others followed and I think all parties saw the benefit of having somebody who had worked on the other side and challenged politicians and have written negative things. But I wrote plenty of negative things about the conservative party as a journalist and they still employed me. But, I am not quite sure where I was going with that particular point, but erm Cheryl and I have had plenty of full and frank exchanges of views. That is quite healthy I think.

16. Politician's communicative style

Good personal presentation – here speeches and speech writing – depend on how it is organised/managed and on the working style of the politician

Neather, 8,9



n you talk about it sounds like a laundry list, the speech, is it that the various necessary interests of departments are too strong vis-à-vis the people who put it together and design the narrative?

Well, that certainly does happen. Yeah, that certainly does happen within a particular department or within government. Within government it'll be a question of particular Cabinet Ministers demanding that certain material goes in. But it's...

Am I over-interpreting it if I'm saying that that was the case more with Brown than with Blair and that's the reason why the quality of the speeches was different? Or is that over-interpreting the organisation behind it?

I think it's just the way that people work and the way that they tend to write. I just think it's in the writing process, in this sort of endless drafting and redrafting process. But Blair – I mean you've probably picked up things I've written about him – Blair's style for writing was sort of very last minute anyway – different for Party Conference speeches but quite big other speeches that I've worked with. I mean he didn't really apply himself to them and concentrate until relatively late, you know, on the plane on the way there or something, and then would start redrafting stuff. And I just think... what I'm saying is it's an... even a brilliant writer, you know, a quite clear thinker like Blair, it's an imperfect process and the message gets muddled. And then the only other thing I'd say about it is that it does depend on the individual speaker because, you know, Blair was just very good at giving speeches and very convincing. Brown was really not. The classic example would be... well, all of Brown's Conference speeches but I think in particular the speech in 07, at a key Party Conference, where it was really clear that they tried to gee up the speech so that the first sort of ten minutes were a bit clearer, in terms of [0:39:08.7] and then it was a laundry list, where you have to go through the achievements on various areas. And it's just boring. Whereas Blair, partly through his writing and partly just through his delivery, could carry it off, Brown... people were just really bored and...

#### 16. Politician's communicative style

Show of confidence and good quotes are key for journalists' interpretation of a party leader's conference performance

Neather, 10

k what matters (in a leader's conference speech) for Journalists are the overall confidence that the speech is delivered with, so that a speech like... various speeches... Iain Duncan-Smith, the Party Conference in 03, the quiet man speech... absolute car crash and because of the way he was doing it. It was just... this is just so clearly a man who is not fit to be... it was just painful to watch. I was there. So, there's the delivery and then there's the actual newswire of the piece in terms of new policy announcements. And any big speech, whether it's Party Conference speech or a big speech by a Secretary of State, you know, you want some tidbit that you can... and it's possible to get positive coverage out of that.

16. Politician's communicative style

Politicians recognise the relevance of presentational issues

Eustice, 5

When you compare how they took advice, were there any ... take the specific cases of, of, of Michael Howard and David Cameron, or any others you would like to bring up. If some would say, we don't take advice from, from communications advisors just because this is about policies and this is not all presentation? How would that impact ... (...)  
 , I've never come across ... 'cos they don't last very long in politics if that's what they actually think, and the ... erm, communications is just fundamentally a very important part of this,

16. Politician's communicative style

If the leader needs guidance, political communications advisors can help, if he/ she is not up to the job, they can't

Beattie,2

Is it ... the core of this opinion, this narrative that shapes, is that linked to the personality, to the person, the identity he or she really is, or could it have ... Is there potentially it may have gone differently that narrative or that opinion you've formed of a person and it's a self-fulfilling prophecy ...

Well, no. If a politician clearly isn't up to the job and shouldn't be in that position in the first place then it's not self-fulfilling; it's inevitable. If the politician has the ability to be successful but has to [0:08:11.7] just to get there then it's something that can be shaped, and that's where the media advisors may themselves, yeah, have an extraordinary influence and have to be extraordinarily careful how they walk down that tightrope. Now with someone like Ed Miliband you can have the best policies in the world, but I have [0:08:38.6] the person

leading then it doesn't matter because you have a presidential style of politics which is still strongly dictated – more than ever since [0:08:46.3] debates – by how somebody looks and sounds, and you can't escape that. And I don't ... And these things are sometimes just basic like you don't get pictured walking out in front of a door sign which says exit.

16. Politician's communicative style

Politicians can make seriousness and matter of fact language a sign of virtue and may be advised to do so	McBride, 10
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I mean he used to always use that as a bit of an excuse that because he'd had to be so disciplined and so careful with his language for so long, that when... he found it difficult making the transition to Prime Minister that he, um, was still very cautious and he blamed that on... he almost said, "Well that's why people sometimes think I'm boring or don't think I can communicate." I always thought that was a bit of a, you know, he should have just rolled with that and not tried to explain it away, he should have made a virtue of it.

16. Politician's communicative style

Whilst Blair's image was based on his gut feeling for what was right, its presentation to the public required calculation	Price, 2
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It was also based on calculation as to how he (Blair) would therefore represent that ( his gut feeling for the right image), what he saw was the broad centre of public opinion, and as a result become more successful as a politician and get re-elected, which of course is what politicians want to do

16. Politician's communicative style

There is no recipe to ensure statements are always right	Price, 4
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Now on the same day the then leader of the opposition who is now our Foreign Secretary, William Hague, got it wrong (in his statement about the death of Princess Diana) You know sometimes you do get it wrong, just happens

16. Politician's communicative style

Preparation and presentation training does not make politicians more effective	Stevenson, 2
<p>, and I don't think that's a problem. You've got some who maybe think that more time spent on preparation will make them more effective. I don't think that's the case. I mean ... it's hard to judge people on that, but erm ... er ... I'm trying to think of an example. I mean, I think ... in [0:06:26] for example, I don't think John Prescott was particularly keen on the presentation training and everything else. He felt he was what he was and he just got on with it.</p>	
16. Politician's communicative style	
Effective personal communication hinges on talent which some politicians have and others lack	Kettle, 2
<p>What you then got-, I mean-, and Mandelson, in a sense, was kind of looking for someone to play Hambo and he, as you know, worked with Brown closely and Blair but, in the end, I think he grasped that Blair was a-, you know, was a better deliverer of the messages that he thought Labour should be trying to deliver. However-, I mean I think Blair's great talent was an intuitive talent. He-, time and again, he just had the ability to discuss-, to deal with a difficult question in ways which, you know, were very effective, you know, in-, you know, just in his use of language, his body language, all those subliminal messages that he gave of being normal and being reasonable and being articulate and not being phased by a tricky question, not calculating his answer. I'm not saying he didn't calculate his answer but he was very good at giving the impression and, if you ever talk to him, even today, he's still brilliant at giving you the impression that he gives you the run of his mind and that's very beguiling for a journalist, quite seductive whereas Gordon Brown is the absolute antithesis of that. Gordon Brown was-, you know, calculated everything and, increasingly through his career, became less and less able to communicate any message in any effective way which had always been the case of a previous Labour leader, Neil Kinnock. (...)</p> <p>Gordon, to some extent, was the same although I always thought he was a bad communicator. I always found him difficult because his use of language was so curious and old-fashioned and I once wrote a piece saying that there were two politicians in UK life who speak a private language where you ask them a question in what you think is normal English and they answer in their own political terms in ways that are kind of like someone from a foreign country speaking the language because they're so careful and those two</p>	

people were Gordon Brown and Gerry Adams and there was-, because in UK politics, Sinn Fein are the-, have always been the-, saying UK politics, of course, is insulting to them but I mean they've always been the most-, the party with a private language. Words mean different things to them than they mean to the-, certainly to the British audience and I mean Brown was a bit like that.

16. Politician's communicative style

Reputation management may have failed Gordon Brown

Richards, 8

Also with Gordon Brown I mean you had a very very difficult job to start with because he obviously had very limited appeal to the voters and as things went on he repelled more voters than he attracted and he was a very unattractive figure so you can't-, there isn't-, you know, what can you do. You can't really-, there's a great clip of Peter Mandelson saying that he would have settled just to have him-, have his tie straight and he couldn't even manage that, you know, so what can you do.

16. Politician's communicative style

Politician adapt to the media's personalisation of politics

Jones, 4

So yes, you know, it's chicken and egg. I mean who comes first. Is it the media or is it the politicians. Well, I think there's no doubt about it that because we have the media that we have in Britain that does treat politicians as celebrities, as personalities, that emphasises that side of politics, there's no doubt about it that the politicians have to adjust to that

16. Politician's communicative style

Politicians consciously seek to present themselves and manage their reputation

Jones, 1

so throughout my lifetime as a reporter I have known that politicians have consciously, consciously sought to present themselves. So we had a Labour prime minister, Harold

Wilson, who would purposefully make a point of holidaying in this country, being photographed on the beach so people like Harold Wilson made a point of presenting themselves as a normal family man. Then of course the next Conservative, the next prime minister was Edward Heath and he was a prickly, awkward bachelor who was desperate to show that he was something else and he took up sailing as a hobby and invested a lot of money in it

and really-, I mean this wasn't just one photo opportunity; this was a calculated attempt. There was no doubt that Margaret Thatcher was very keen to portray herself. She was this extremely powerful woman but she wanted to present herself also as an ordinary housewife and she would want to be seen with her children cooking and doing things. We then had-, the next prime minister was John Major. Now he was someone who could never quite adjust to the modern media and he found it very, very difficult, err, presenting himself as someone other than a sort of-, a bit of a political technocrat But then of course came along Tony Blair, another leader who went out of his way to present himself as a modern, young family man Err, one of the Conservative opponents against him was called William Hague. He, he, he was seen as a bit of a political freak and he went to great lengths to try and show that he was with it. He turned up at the Notting Hill Carnival (a big West Indian carnival); I remember photographing him and filming him there. He went to adventure parks on rides just to show that he was a normal human being. We've seen again how Gordon Brown, the prime minister who succeeded Blair, was someone who went out of his way. I mean his spin doctors were very very conscious that Gordon Brown was this mad, political obsessive (that's how he was presented) who hadn't even got a girlfriend. They were desperate to try and get pictures of him with a girlfriend. When he did, they did. His wife, Sarah, who used to be Sarah Macaulay and is now Sarah Brown, she went absolutely on a one-woman mission to try to present her husband as a normal family man. And we've had David Cameron who's taken this to even greater lengths than other politicians by allowing a degree of media access which has been unprecedented, allowing film crews in to see him feeding the babies, washing up, looking after his disabled son. And Cameron-, I mean there's no doubt about it that this was not just a photo opportunity; this was his calculated decision. He set out from the beginning and he said I have got to portray myself and the public have a right to see me in my family setting.

16. Politician's communicative style	
Media opportunities for politicians are most dependent on the politician's initiative.	Jones, 2
Yes, the media go along with it (media opportunities for politicians) but it's more than just 50/50. It's not just the media suggesting it; it's a willingness to want to do it and an eagerness to do it.	
16. Politician's communicative style	
Politicians' level of interest in collaborating with journalists varies	Jones, 2
No, I'm happy to accept that the journalists are part instigators in many of the photo opportunities. I quite-, I think that is quite right but the point is it's the politicians who want to come out to play. Some politicians don't want to come out to play and we know that in the media. So there are politicians who will go out of their way to flag up to the media I'm happy to come out to play; you think up a photo opportunity for me and I'll go along with it.	
16. Politician's communicative style	
The success of impression management requires politicians to have a positive attitudes towards the use of TV.	Jones, 16
Well he hadn't... he was completely gobsmacked by the fact that when he came out he just realised that he hadn't... he hadn't realised. You see one of the things that's so important in a televised event like that and you can immediately sense... and of course television is one of the defining... I mean you asked me why it was that certain politicians fail and certain don't. Well of course television reveals all and if you're in that sort of debate the camera is your friend, that's the person you're talking to, that's the person you're relating to. And you've got to imagine that the camera is your friend that's the person you're talking to. And if you're suddenly remote, looking away, not understanding that's your friend and he failed to understand that that was going to be the way that it was going to be done	

16. Politician's communicative style	
Lack of self-control and uncontrollable events undermine efforts to manage a politician's image in the media	Jones, 3
<p>And with Kinnock you see, Kinnock's problem was that he had this flash of temper and we knew- we knew in the media that we were just gagging for the moment that he lost his rag and we could write another story about Kinnock having a row with somebody or falling over with his wife when he went along the beach in the famous film. He walks along at a party conference to do a film shot and he's suddenly swept over by a wave. So that was Kinnock's problem.</p>	
16. Politician's communicative style	
Tony Blair had an ability to present himself to the media favourably	Jones, 8
<p>That's right, just recently. And we're down on the Moscow metro and there's a publicity stunt that's been fixed up by the British embassy and there were posters on some of the tube trains in Moscow and we all get on one and Blair is talking to people who happen to speak English who happen to be under this poster on the tube train. All the journalists are at the other end of the carriage. Campbell is with us. Alistair Campbell is with us looking at Blair. Blair turns round to talk to the cameras and he gets this little signal from Alistair Campbell and immediately Blair knows exactly what to do. He's strap hanging, looking at the cameras. It-, and that's the picture that's used. There's the-, you know, the leader of Britain on the metro going to work (what most people are going to be seeing the next morning in the papers). Now it's that ability.</p>	
16. Politician's communicative style	
Some politicians lack the ability to present themselves favourably to the media – in part because they fail to make use of advice	Jones, 7, 8



someone like Blair you see who was such a charismatic character in comparison to (Ed) Miliband who doesn't know, you know. You saw the famous photo of him holding his banana. I mean he doesn't know how to respond to the media. He's the most uncomfortable person with the media.

(...)

But it's the-, that ability to respond instantly, not to muck it up. Now you see a lot of people just-, you know, someone like (David) Miliband, he's-, he would have been briefed what to do but he was-, he's such an uncomfortable person in my opinion with the media that he wouldn't go along with this; he wouldn't be able to do it. Somebody like Ian Duncan Smith would probably just get in a muddle. Brown couldn't do it at all. He wouldn't know what to do; he'd get completely muddled up. He wouldn't listen to the person who's trying to tell him what to do and then he'd go and muck it up rather like he did in that famous instance in the bye election when he stomped off with his microphone still on. So this is the problem: you're dealing with people who just fail to understand that you've got to go along with the media.

#### 16. Politician's communicative style

Some politicians may not be short of resources and advice, but they lack the ability to present themselves and engage with publics

Jones, 6

Why would you-, how would you explain that given the understanding of media management and presentational issues and the general manufacturing of image that some are better at it and others fail. Ian Duncan Smith who probably had access to the same understanding and knowledge and expertise (or perhaps he didn't) but perhaps one explanation for why he failed is that he wasn't a credible leader who would-

No, he just-, he lacked-, when the chips were down, he lacked the credibility; he lacked the where with all to present himself to the public as someone who-, I mean he had a chance but he fluffed it

#### 16. Politicians' communicative style

Some politicians cannot or don't meet the media's presentational expectations which reflects negatively in coverage	Jones, 7
<p>Exactly. It is a fact that he (Ed Miliband) doesn't understand how the media operates. He can't feed the beast. Now if you're with Cameron, he knows instantly (or with Blair). They knew instantly how to please the camera and that is of course a game, a peculiarity in Britain and another reason why, you know, the politicians live or die by the sword of publicity here in the UK in a way that they don't in other countries. Unless you're prepared to play along with the media, unless you can empathise with the media, they're going to set you up as something peculiar and of course this is the trouble with Duncan Smith. I mean Duncan Smith couldn't hack it with the hacks. Cameron can. Oh, yes, don't you worry, he knows just how to play the media and he plays it very very well in my opinion. Blair when he was wanting power was playing the media to perfection; you just couldn't fault him. Of course, he had someone like Campbell as his eyes and ears helping him.</p>	
16. Politician's communicative style	
Pol communications is a planned process whose success depends on the politicians' personality	Redfern, 1
<p>You've got this politician you work for as a consultant or as a member of staff and that person has certain qualities and expertise and you would want the stakeholders [00:00:30] to know. How is it done?</p> <p>It is a planned process but it is also—it's also about personality. I mean I think a lot of the time where it goes wrong is that people forget about the personality and they focus, or they want to focus much more on substance than the policy and obviously that's incredibly important. But if you contrast Gordon Brown and Tony Blair, for example, I would argue that one of them got it right in terms of a level of substance and a level of personality and forcefulness and an ability to communicate, and one of them didn't give a monkeys about the communications aspect of the job and in fact, you know, there is some people that left his office because they couldn't really deliver what needed to be delivered.</p>	
16. Politician's communicative style	

Gordon Brown's communications were reactive because his thorough decision making style could not deal with the intensity and speed of events PM's have to deal with	Livermore, 2,3
<p>... His skill set meant that he was able to exercise more influence as chancellor because he is, he's temperamentally suited to, as I say, taking a long time over decision-making, planning interventions very carefully, when suddenly so ... In as much as he could stay on the front foot essentially and stay proactive as chancellor. As soon as he was prime minister and he was responding to events, he was forced onto the defensive, onto the back foot, constantly reacting. Err, whereas someone like Thatcher or Blair might have been able to use their ideology or kind of mission to force themselves back onto the front foot, Gordon never managed to recover his balance, as it were, and was always in reactive mode and therefore never was able to exercise the authority of the office to, to control Whitehall, or his cabinet, or ... because there was no overarching clear agenda, and I think that's where the-</p>	
17. Internal structures / organising work	
Weaknesses in personal presentation – here speech writing – have to do with how the work is organised	Neather, 9
<p>any good communicator would pick up on that weakness in the speech that it's just a list of facts and achievements and that's not only the reason we're here. Is that then a sign that the communicators are in this struggle to put it [0:39:45.5] hours a day aside to have the quality of the advice and the quality of the...?</p> <p>I don't know but I think it's... the stuff about cramming different achievements in different areas, that's... it's kind of the way that most party politicians think and it's partly... it maybe... if it's been circulated and seen by Cabinet colleagues they'll want to get their opinion in but I've just seen it happen with various speeches, the way you just... you know, there's this obligation just to make a nod to various areas and it's just boring, I think. I'm not sure whether it actually matters, though. The whole thing about speeches is the number of people that actually see the whole speech is so tiny. I mean you're talking about the people in the hall who are, in the case of the Party Conference, the Party faithful anyway, and a tiny number of people who watch the whole thing on Cable TV, on Satellite, and Journalists. For everyone else, the actual</p>	

17. Internal structures / organising work	
Some negative research findings on public perceptions my not be passed on and discussed with the politician	McBride, 4
<p>Um, so that was the kind of thing that we would do, um to sort of gauge public mood on people. Now clearly that's the sort of thing that equally Number 10 were doing about Tony Blair, um, largely through Philip Gould's focus groups. Um, although I always got the impression, Spencer would often feedback, that they were not telling Tony how unpopular he was. They were not telling Tony how, um, distrusted he was and how uniform this view was and people didn't regard his sort of stubbornness over the war as strength, they regarded it as sort of, um, something destructive.</p>	
17. Internal structures / organising work	
Brown's communications staff was reorganised, grew in view of his succession to the leadership	McBride, 9
<p>there was a group that was convened to manage the processes of him becoming... getting selected as leader of the Labour Party. So the group that was almost a campaign team, um ceased being a campaign team because there was no campaign, he was going to be elected unopposed. But then sort of rolled forward and became almost a kind of, you know, how do we plan the transition? Where do we want him to be in X months' time by the time he goes into Downing Street?</p>	
17. Internal structures / organising work	
Disconnect between communications advisors at strategic level with access to the PM and communications advisors at technical level	McBride, 13
<p>And I sort of, you know that reinforced everything I'd always thought that he keeps private things to himself, doesn't share them. Now at some stage that would have been shared with Gordon at some level or with Sarah Brown and she would have shared it with Gordon. Now I was never in that room so that... you know I was never in that sort of... the feedback about this thing going wrong and it was one of those things I thought well at some level someone will be in that room saying, "Damian organised that thing, it went wrong as in there's been a bad media reaction to it, um, you know be careful about doing anything like that in future, i.e. be careful about accepting Damian's advice." So there was that</p>	

disconnect you'd occasionally get and Gordon was, I'd say, bad at being one of these people that would frequently have behind closed doors meetings with people who wanted to give him image advice. You know, Alan Parker from Brunswick, Alan Parker's sister, Lucy Parker, um, BB Kidron, the film director, um, countless other people who would, at different times, be sort of brought in, they would have behind closed doors meetings with Gordon. Michael Wills was another one, the MP, um Will Stevenson, as I say, would be another but I think he was always a bit more kind of, you know, er concerned with another aspect of Gordon's image.

Um, and Gordon would always have those discussions and that would make him think about his media strategy and all this sort of thing and that wouldn't necessarily be relayed to the likes of me that were doing it day to day. So that was a disconnect

17. Internal structures / organising work

At Downing Street 10 there is a disconnect between policy advice and communications advice

McBride, 13

Now to my mind that wasn't... the biggest problem with disconnect came when we went into Downing Street and Gordon suddenly had this sort of weight of policy advisors, lots more policy advisors than he had before. He had a much bigger Civil Service machine, he was trying to get his head round all these policy issues and there was then a big disconnect between how policy was formulated and anyone thinking about sort of what this meant for the media image and what this meant for media handling. Um, and just a very simple example of that just because it's topical would be that I don't know at what stage, um, anyone brought the media into the discussion about Al Megrahi and Libya and what that would mean. So Gordon clearly had foreign policy advisors giving him advice, he had the Foreign Office getting involved. A whole level of people getting involved in what was a major decision, major issue with sort of huge media implications.

17. Internal structures / organising work

At Treasury it is easier to keep track of issues and their communications implications

McBride, 13,14

When I looked at those (Al Megrahi) papers that were going back and forth last week, I was in Downing Street that entire time that that discussion was going on, never knew about it once, never knew it was an issue. Um, and I don't know that my Civil Service counterparts did either. Now that strikes me as mad and it would never have happened in the Treasury. In the Treasury if there had been a major issue with major potential implications, I would have been in the room and I would have said, "Hold on a minute, what's going on here?" You know, and I would have been seeing things in terms of what's this going to look like in front of the Daily Mail? Now that's not to say that the decision would have been any different but the process would have been entirely different in that there would have been some thought given to, "Isn't this going to be a massive media issue when it breaks?" So that's where I think there was a bigger disconnect.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Brown as PM due to overwhelming other duties and commitments did not make the time available needed to think about presentation, media relations and communications issues on the agenda

McBride, 16,17

I mean the only other thing I'd say is that, um, it used to be a constant frustration that he wouldn't spend enough time thinking about his media appearances, wouldn't commit enough time to them and I was always tearing my hair out about sort of why is he going off having to do all these union meetings and um, you know, meeting back bench MPs? Now clearly that was all very important but it was added to the weight of distractions in Downing Street to which he could add all the foreign phone calls he had to make and committee meetings he needed to chair. Well I used to think the reason we're losing some of the sort of strength that we had in the Treasury is that we don't... he's not spending enough time thinking about what really matters today? What's going to be in the papers tomorrow? You know, what's the way that we make sure that we've got our message across?

17. Internal structures / organising work

Communications staff at Downing Street 10 had problems gaining access to Brown

McBride 17

Um, and there were times that I'd go the entire, you know, two days without seeing him and two days waiting to get something signed off that was really important that would make a difference. Or where I'd sort of think there's a real opportunity to get him out there on an issue that matters.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Party or civil service machinery limited Brown communications advisors' freedom to manoeuvre communications issues

McBride, 17

And people would just sort of... you know, you were being told by the Civil Service machinery or the party machinery, "Sorry can't do this, too busy" you know, and that was a huge frustration, a huge difference from where we were in the Treasury

17 internal structures / organising work

Senior communications staff just like policy staff accessed Blair directly to plan stories and responses for the day

Hill, 5,6

For example, I mean, pretty well every morning Jonathan Powell would go in with a list of things he wanted done. On most mornings at some time early-ish, seven thirty, eight, I would go in, and probably with Jonathan, or join Jonathan, and we'd say, right, what's going on. How's the media going? There were two things then that were required. What Jonathan required was from this pad full of decisions that the Prime Minister had to make, that he could leave the room with most of the things he needed ... I mean, you know, be reasonable, but most of the things he needed resolved, resolved. What I needed ... whether or not the Prime Minister agreed with me, which that ... this story mattered and this story didn't matter.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Effective rep management needs communicators who have access to the politician

Hill, 6

But the important thing was on the really big things to have that brief opportunity just to check, which of course had two great virtues. The first great virtue was, of course, me knowing that's what he thought. The second great virtue was the media knew that I knew

what he thought. And, therefore, that meant that my job of being his sort of representative on earth was made that much easier, because over time they tested out the fact that on a day to day basis what I told them he was thinking turned out to be what he was thinking. And that was absolutely vital if you're going to have a proper working relationship. Yes, exactly, the access issue. Right. And that access issue is ... it's what I say to clients, and have done over the years. You need a Head of Communications who's on your Board, you need a Head of Communications who's close to the action, because the last thing you want is when something goes wrong you say, who do we ask, where is he, what's going on, I'm completely out of the loop, what's happening. Whereas they should actually have somebody in communications

17. Internal structures / organising work

To make media relations for the PM more efficient the communications team would have flexible, flat hierarchies

Hill, 6,7

... probably a Civil Service problem, certainly I think an Industry problem that one is. You can't phone up to the top, you've got to go to them, and they've got to go to them, and they've got to go to them, by which time the story's disappeared out of the window. And so that whole sense of access is absolutely right. And I mean ... the vital thing about ... about ... the way we do communications was that actually access to him, if the message was this is genuinely a very serious story, as long as it's somebody whom he knew ... You couldn't have anybody doing it, but as long as it was somebody ... like, for example, at weekends you would have a duty roster. And although, as you would imagine, the journalists were desperately keen to constantly talk to me, but you've got to try and break it down a bit, but sometimes a journalist gets a really ... gets through and gets to the duty press officer and gives them a really detailed story, which requires two or three yes or nos from the Prime Minister.

And I would say to that person, phone him, because you tell me, I tell him, he tells me, I tell you, I have to try and understand from you what you've told me. Go straight to him and say, I need to know the answer to this [0:23:46] and you know, and they would do. So he ... he would be somewhere, Chequers or somewhere, and person X who's a press officer on duty would phone up the Prime Minister and say, Prime Minister, this is the story. I need the answer to this and this. And he'd say, the answer is yes, no, it was all done, back they



go, yes, no. Fwtt! Nice and clean. But that's because, you know, if he thought we ... if he thought the key people in Downing Street trusted these people, then he trusted them. And he knew them.

17. Internal structures / organising work

In government it is more difficult to arrive at decisions because more people are involved

Eustice, 8

However, erm, I say it's a double-edged sword, because the downside of being in government is, erm, yes, you've got more people and more support, but it's harder to get a decision, because you've got more people.

17 internal structures / organising work

In opposition versatility and speed of reaction is higher because the team is smaller

Eustice, 8

And it's easy to think well somebody else ... that's somebody else's job, they must be doing that. And perhaps they're not doing it as well as they should and you've no way of really telling that. So because it's a bigger organisation and government is so vast, it's actually much harder to deliver coordination, whereas in opposition you have a fleet of foot team of maybe no more than six or eight core advisors, a mixture of MPs and erm, and key, key advisors, and they make the judgement calls on all the big issues. And it's very easy to pull together a conference call on Sunday, discuss it over the telephone, make a decision and execute it, and it can be done very quickly. So you've got a sort of versatility and speed of reaction in opposition, which I think you lose to some extent in government. Obviously, if there's a really big crisis government can always react quickly when it needs to, but I think on a lot of issues it's harder to get decisions and get things done.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Blair met his media advisors for daily strategic meetings

Price, 2,3

And [0:07:00.8] being discussed, is it, you know, in, in corporations or companies you have sometimes communications advisors. The Press Office complain that on one level there is the boardroom strategic positions taken, and then at a lower level the decisions on communications are taken, and that is fully linked.

Yes.

You can't properly communicate unless you have an input on the decisions that are taken.

Yes, and that-, exactly that problem's always in Blair's mind. Erm, he was aware that he would have a small group of us in his office every morning and we would talk about these things, and very often those discussions would be quite strategic,

17. Internal structures / organising work

Blair/ Campbell centralised government communications to ensure that the message was coherent

Price, 3

and his big fear was that's fine, you know, he can be the Prime Minister and have that discussion with ten people in his room, but government is huge, government departments are enormous. How do you make sure that everywhere further down the line people understand it? Erm, and that's one of the reasons for some of the changes that were made to the government communications service under him and which Alistair Campbell drove through – very controversial at the time, and government departments didn't like being told by the centre what it was they were supposed to be communicating. Erm, but he drummed it into us every single day that we had to fit everything – not only that we were saying in Downing Street but other departments were saying – into what he described as the big picture. He was always going on about the big picture. Does it fit into the big picture? Erm, and he would get very frustrated if things went off message, if you like, or, or appeared to be contradicting what he saw as the general thrust of, of, of the political direction he wanted to take the party, the government and the country.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Ministers even got sacked if they did not stay on Downing Street's message

Price, 3

Erm, and some ministers understood that and bought into it whole heartedly, others either felt that it was improper of the Prime Minister to try to tell them what they should say or be thinking, or they just simply didn't understand what he was trying to do. And some of the latter of course then got sacked because he wanted to find people, he wanted to have ministers in place who did understand what he was trying to do.

17 internal structures / organising work

Cabinet Ministers' communications are limited as Downing Street wants all communications to support the image of the PM only

Price, 11

Well I mean we have been talking about Prime Ministers and I never worked for, I only ever worked for Prime Ministers, I was lucky in that sense. Erm, I hope that you'll get the chance also to talk maybe to some special advisors who work for Ministers lower down the ladder, erm, because obviously the challenges that they face are different, they have to you know-, Downing Street wants all Ministers to really think only about the overall image of the government and bolster the Prime Minister.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Cabinet Ministers' communications are torn between total allegiance to the PM and relative autonomy

Price, 11

Individual Ministers of course have a different agenda, they have got their own careers to worry about, they could be hired or fired at any moment, if they fall out of favour with number ten it could be out, if they just do everything that number ten wants they could start to look like a dummy and lose public support. So in some ways strategic communications for a Prime Minister is much, much easier than it is for a more junior Minister. Erm, and there are some that in my view are very successful like David Blunkett for example...

17 internal structures / organising work

Due to intense and extensive demands on the office, it is very hard to manage the PM's schedule and to cope with the job	Stevenson, 4
<p>:54] said that while at the Exchequer it was easier to plan ahead and to have an influence, it was easier for advisors to have an influence, particularly communications advisors to have an influence on how things are done. Once Gordon Brown became Prime Minister there were so many other constraints and things, so many other expectations that were outside an advisor's control</p> <p>Yes, I think Prime Minister ... Prime Minister is an impossible job these days. There's too much ... I don't think the Civil Service organise it properly, but that's a different conversation. And too much is left to the Prime Minister and he has too few powers to make it anything. Also it's ... it's ... you know, he has to be awake for Japan, he has to cope with Europe, and he has to go to bed with America waking up, so it's impossible as you are on the go for twenty-four hours. It's also twenty-four seven, and it's also right round the world. So how the ... how do you manage that, it's pretty difficult. Killing.</p>	
17. Internal structures / organising work	
Brown's communications team met regularly and discussed technical and presentational issues	Stevenson, 4,5
<p>been told that a plan on how you [0:12:56] an individual, a leader, a candidate, incumbent, wouldn't be inviting, [0:13:01] but would everyone sit together and think at some stage, once in a year at the beginning of term, this is how we want to be ...</p> <p>Oh, I think ... I think more than that, yes, more regularly than that, yes. From time to time people would gather and discuss that, yes, of course. How is our man doing? Is he getting what he wants to get across, are there changes we could make. For example, with Gordon Brown, I felt very strongly that ... at one point the team that were doing the broadcast interviews weren't sufficiently sensitive to how you filmed him and I brought in, a film director, who I won't name, a very famous film director, to work with the team, to explain how you light him, what's happening with the cameras, below, looking up, looking down, all that sort of stuff, which they were aware of, but hadn't seen the examples of it. And we looked at examples and said, that's the one, you know, that's the one where he comes alive and you can see him and from then on, that's the one they used whenever they could.</p>	

Obviously they can't control everything because if you go to a public or international event the cameras will be all over the place, but to the extent to which you can control it, you have a plan for how to light him, how to shoot him, where the mike has to be, all that sort of stuff. You have to do that.

17. Internal structures / organising work

For communications staff to be efficient, they need to be close to the Prime Minister	Stevenson, 7
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the Prime Minister is always fighting for time to deliver something and it's very hard to get that slot back again. because he is doing so many different things. When you look at his diary and his phone calls, his meetings, internal meetings, his management meetings, his policy meetings, his appearances in the House, coming back to receptions. Plus there's photographs, and all the other stuff that has got to be fitted into one day, and he's got to have time to think and to articulate what he wants to happen next and ... it's very hard to get too much engagement from him, so you have to know where he stands on issues, what he would like. You can't really work with somebody in that position unless you're very close in thinking and intellect.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Special advisors also oversee and control governmental press office and align all activities with minister's interests	Davies, 15
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Erm, yeah, I mean [pause]. And why do you need people like me doing the job? I mean primarily you should be doing it so that you both ... it's not just about presenting the minister most effectively, it's about ensuring that ... you know, I saw the role as basically first and foremost I was, you know, Jack's advisor and I was loyal to him, but then there is a sort of, you know, there's a sort of corporate, if you like, err, how does the government look as good as possible and your role in doing that, marshalling, making sure that the Press Office, you know, the Government Press Office or the department of the Press Office are doing their job as well as they can be because of course they don't have as much of a stake in ... They certainly don't have a stake in the politics and they have less of a stake in the

personalities, so you've got a critical role there, and then obviously the party have particular demands too and so, you know, you're making ... I suppose you're making sure that the balance is right and that you're doing the right sort of media as well.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Internal organisation – communications advisor at the hub of information is more effective	Davies, 16
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Was there a lot of conflicting advice on those things?

Yeah.

I imagine ... there's a cabinet member there. A lot of people would want to give advice.

Oh yeah, yeah, I mean the ...

Is it difficult to get consistent advice when you've other people that compete perhaps ...

I mean it was always, erm, it was always an issue for me sort of ... I suppose I was the hub of all the sort of attempts to get him on. So I would be directly called up by journalists to get him to go on programmes.

Yes, other civil servants, party members ...

Absolutely, yeah, yeah.

PR agencies would all try to approach him directly and give advice.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean he was very good at always deferring it back to me or referring it back to me.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Labour party has become more centralised, less democratic	Kettle, 8
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That he's (Ed Miliband) no good.

He's no good?

That's the narrative now...that he's not up to it and his numbers are very bad and are

getting quite a lot worse so maybe that's why he was keen to talk to me (that would make sense) and no politician is ever going to say they're not going to talk to you...well, very rarely but I mean-, I think-, I mean the Labour Party is so changed from what it used to be as a socio-cultural phenomenon, you know. I'm old enough to remember the Labour Party when-, you know, when it was really a federal party in the sense of, you know, the unions operating openly as having one set of interests, the left and the right being defined around caucuses which were-, whose existence was openly admitted and they were-, and to some extent, around individuals. Obviously, in the 50s, for example, you know, it did polarise around a so-called Gaitskellites and a so-called Bevanite pole but, you know, it was also right and left. It was also, to some extent, unilateralist against multi-lateralist and, you know, it was just a very very different culture so leadership candidates emerged in a very different way to the way they would emerge now I think so, you know, when Wilson-

Sorry, that was-, can I just hypothesise and you tell me I'm wrong...less thinking of who's going to be elected, more thinking of who-, what's our identity and who fits that identity?

Yes, yes, no, definitely and so, you know, you could say Labour-, you know, it all became post-ideological and all of that and more presidential and less democratic.

#### 17. Internal structures / organising work

The Labour party has become more centralised	Kettle, 8
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More centralised?

Yes, yes, it's more centralised. I mean the single biggest thing that has changed in the way the Labour Party operates, you know, in the last 30 years has been the absolute destruction of the Labour Party Conference or the Labour Party National Executive as a focus of political activity which the leader had to negotiate.

17. Internal structures / organising work

Party leadership gained more control over Labour party conference

Kettle, 9

Why...because it was a nuisance to what the leader and his people wanted?

Yes, yes. I mean they-, you know, they wanted to set the agenda, set the terms under which the agenda would be advanced and to-, you know, to finesse all the difficult questions and that began-, you know, that began under Kinnock...that process began under Kinnock, continued under Smith but absolutely taken to a new level by Blair and Mandelson so I mean, you know, the Labour Party Conference, you know, just has no significance now. It's merely a rally which-, it was not a rally until about-, it destroyed-, you know, it destroyed itself in a sense because it became so threatening to the leadership but, you know, I think that's a huge change. You see the same process gradually taking place in the Liberal Democrats but the Liberal Democrats are a smaller party and they're less important and, you know, with a less strong-rooted history and a less strong-rooted cultural distinctiveness so-, which is really interesting and it's really good for me actually having these conversations because it makes me confront things I haven't really thought about properly and I'm very-

17. Internal structures / organising work

There is a discrepancy between what ministers would like to do and what they are meant to do. Government restraints limit their room to manoeuvre

Richards, 4

So you cannot-, what-, earlier, what you said earlier sounded as if to be deemed decisive and strong and single minded, you would make policy statements that would reflect and, you know, equal that but you can only do that to a very limited extent.



You're very-, your room for manoeuvre is very limited because you're-, you know, you're on a path and you're driving a big heavy lorry and you can't just suddenly U-turn off the road, off the motorway, you know. They are-, and this is what amazes me about politicians – it's their ability to kind of take on a cloak of a personality that isn't really theirs, you know, and do things that aren't really what you know them-, know to be their own views, you know. It's almost becoming-, they become a cipher for other people's wishes often.

17. internal structures / organising work

Communications advisors are involved and present when policies are developed and decided upon	Richards, 4
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But as a communications advisor, do you-, I mean when you looked around the other departments, were the communications advisors at all allowed into the room where the policy and the content decisions were taken?

Yes, I mean in the UK system the special advisors are in the room all the time. They're not contributing. They're listening but they're allowed into any meeting at all that the minister is having particularly on policy and, in the early days for example of the health service reforms (so before my time but with other advisors), they would-, with Alan Milburn for example, the policy advisors and the presentation people would be in the same room for many many hours working through what the health policy should look like and what it-, how it would be perceived and how it would play with the public so the PR aspects were built in and embedded early on in the process and that's the model of how to do it. You need to have that early in the stage of the-, early in the early stages of the process; otherwise, you end up having to fire fight

17. Internal structures / organising work

Communications advice in ministries is more linear, at Downing Street more complex	Richards, 8
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Your colleagues in other-, I talked to at times-, it was much easier to media relations and present the minister in a ministry rather than in Downing Street then because there're so many people involved and it's so difficult then or more difficult to get access.

Yes, it's more linear. In a department it's a very linear process. You've got special advisors (two of those), one Secretary of State and then a press office that sort of is the official press office so they can do some of your bidding but not all of it. In Downing Street there're many-, there's a plurality on advice.

17. Internal structures / organising work

It makes a difference if a politicises communicator promotes government and party at the same time	Jones, 9
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and there was no doubt that Campbell changed. I mean I think, you know, they need-, because of course he was the most proactive press secretary, politicised, proactive press secretary that there had been. I mean there had been other press secretaries like Bernard Ingham but they were no-, they just operated within the government machine.

(...)

Campbell's difference was that he was a political animal through and through and he was operating in promoting the government and the party at the same time in a way which we hadn't seen before. So just to explain it, Bernard Ingham would never and never went to a Conservative Party conference. He wasn't part of the party machine; Campbell was

17. Internal structures / organising work

Effective Political communicators are involved at the top policy making level	Greer 5,6
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In corporate communications you have the debate about, um decisions that are taken, policy decisions, corporate decisions that are taken in the board room. And then at a lower level you've the people who communicate. So they're being handed down the decision and being told you have now to explain to our key public why this trend and so forth. And they would respond that you can't manage the reputation of an organisation if at one level you have policy decisions and down here we only communicate them. We need to have an

impact on the policy decisions. If you take that and look at politics and the reputation management there, where would you say that communicators are? Are they in the rooms where decisions are taken? Or is that different? What does it depend on? The personality of the politician? How they allow access?

I have a very good example, um, an individual, um at CCHQ when, um, when Andy Coulson was brought on and Steve Hilton obviously was the big brains. So they had this big meeting one day with... a lot of the staff was there. So you've got, right at the top, you've got, you know, Andy Coulson, Steve Hilton and then all these other staff who weren't anywhere near that senior. And they were talking about this new idea that Steve really wanted to push which was about, you know, equal pay for men and women and how it was important to ensure that this was enshrined in the workplace and promoted and so on. And of course everyone was really on board with this idea, absolutely, we should do it, bring it on, a really good idea. And Andy Coulson hadn't said anything at this point in the meeting and he stopped them and he said, "Well can you guarantee me that we live this at CCHQ?" And the room fell silent because they couldn't and that was a classic example of where you have policy was being discussed and a policy formation in a sense and then you had the communications guy who was then going, "Well it might be a great idea but if we go with this now and someone comes back at us and says, "Well look at CCHQ there's inequality and pay there" you're going to be in trouble." So I think that was a good example of how the communications built.

You could look at Labour as well, Alistair Campbell, you know, right up at the very top sort of communications but also I would imagine and this is I'm making an assumption here, would have been quite involved in terms of... certainly in terms of how policy was portrayed and I would imagine in terms of which policies we choose to talk about at the right time. But that's a key part of policy formation. You know, because that creates the environment in which policy is formed and it establishes the priorities, you know, which is the policy of favour? I mean we all remember the Conservatives when it was the environment was the only thing they were talking about. And then environment quickly died a death once that had done its job and it fell out of fashion. So I think communications at a senior policy decision making level is very important, it has a very direct input but they are still quite distinct, still quite distinct things.

17 Internal structures / organising work

It is recognised that developing and discussing politics only works if a communications person is closely involved in the process

Greer 6,7

What would it depend on, in your view, whether the communicators are allowed in where decisions are taken and have a say in these decisions? Is there generally general practice? Or does that depend on how desperate you are in your position that you... you do anything?

In terms of its general practice, I mean I can't say, talk about all the different parties or at all different levels. I would say that if you're not involving your communications person you're very, very, very silly. Because in the UK you do get, when you speak to politicians and again this is anecdotally, but I have to say I've spoken to a lot of them, one thing that comes across very strongly is this sense that policy is pure. You know, it's the big idea that really matters, this is what we need to talk about, we want to enter with the electorate we need to talk about policy. To an extent that's true but most people are not as interested in that policy as you are and truth be told a lot of people in your party probably aren't that interested in that policy. So the communications side of it is very important and communications I think has been disparaged a lot. People get the sense that, you know, communicating it, sort of marketing it, selling it, that kind of thing devalues the ideas. That somehow you're not being dishonest necessarily but that you're doing a disservice to policy. If the policy is right that's all you need and that's clearly not the case. So I think any politician, any party at that sort of senior level or indeed any time you've got an experienced communications person as an MP or as a councillor whatever, you need to involve them in that kind of process. Not because they need to be involved in deciding what the policy is, certainly not, they need to be involved in terms of how do you actually sell that policy? How do we sell that idea?

17 Internal structures / organising work

In David Miliband's leadership campaign the strategic planning was done by him and one or two advisors – the team gave technical support

Redfern, 4

So we were trying to come up with lots of ideas and actually when it came down to it it's always David that I was going to take the call on. You know, you could badger him and people sure did, but he wasn't—you know, he did his own thing and he knew where he was going. He had a pretty strong sense of purpose and vision and I think where the campaign team was really helpful was in the—is in the technical support and the arms and legs on the ground, rather than the vision thing, which I suspect came from him and one or two other people right at the top and I think that is exactly how you develop a reputation politically. I think the big problem at the moment is that we've got a Labour Party now that doesn't have a vision and doesn't have a direction and so is going out to its members to try and get that and that will never work because no-one will ever agree. So, you know, this whole refounding Labour stuff—

17 Internal structures / organising work

Perhaps conflicting advice can be avoided by organising the team appropriately	Redfern, 8
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I had a look at how many people gave their advice and were on that team. I understood from people who worked for cabinet ministers is that well we're understaffed but at least we know what's going on because there's just two political advisors in the office. In Downing Street they used to tell me that lots of advice, but then I talk to them now and 10 minutes later there's someone else in there with conflicting advice. Was that an issue, was that a problem, consistence and [00:28:57] undermined by—there's so many people who want to help?

By conflicting advice?

Conflicting advice.

Yes, I mean and the thing is with that is the way you've got to deal with that is you've got to create a core that is very trusted, right? Now I wasn't in that trusted core but there were two or three people at the top and actually there was a core press team as well, there was a guy called Ollie Money, who now works for David who I used to work with at [00:29:22] on the media side and yet he was paid. So there were people there that were employed and then what happened was underneath that there was a layer of people that knew what they were talking about, like I say, me, people like Luke Bozier, Alex Pearmain who's now the

Head of Social Media at O2, you know, quite a few people then, but we didn't really come into contact with David, other than to say, "Hello" and you know, "How's it going?" It was much more—what we were doing was we were thrashing out brainstorming ideas for social media strategy underneath which Jess would then take and pitch in and she would shape in the way that she wanted to shape it in the way she thought it would work, but the main thing was there were no rules in terms of how we pitched ideas so it was totally brainstorm rules and we could say anything but they would obviously then be focused down into something that would be workable before they were sold it.

17 Internal structures / organising work

1. Prime Minister Brown received conflicting advice on critical issue

Livermore, 5

2. Some presentational decisions were not based on research findings

But if you've got this, this years of research and the suggestions that come out of it, did then the advice he was given, did that match that research or was that ... We think people want to trust you and keep the economy in order but still you'd better smile. So how, how did that link?

I don't think he was ... this is ... this is the kind of point about erm, there is a strategy that says 'play to your strengths and be Thatcher' as it were erm, and er, you know, coming after the ... a period in which the public have sort of grown sick of, you know, Blair's great strength at the beginning was his brilliant communication skills, towards the end that strength had been turned into a weakness and it was seen as thin and slightly artificial. So plus you had someone who ... as a leader of the Tory Party in David Cameron who was basically trying to imitate those elements of Blair. So Brown was perfectly positioned to be the antidote to erm –

Er, you know Brown was perfectly positioned with the antidote both to Blair and also a very striking contrast to ... to Cameron, so there was a clear strategy there, you know be the Thatcher type of figure, be strong, be ... be slightly, erm, distant, erm, potentially. But of course, as I say, Gordon, er, perhaps because he's human wanted also to be liked. Erm, and of course there were other outside influences who were saying to him, "Oh, you've got to smile more, you've got to –" You know, so there's the ... I'm sure as you ... you'll hear from lots of people, there's the constant dynamic of, you know, compet- ... competing

advisors offering competing advice.

Erm, and I've got no doubt at all in my mind as to which was the right advice. Erm, but of course you've got people saying to him, "Oh, you should smile" you know and ... and it totally ... not only he's not very good at smiling, you know, and always would smile in the wrong place, totally conflicts with the, the core positioning that, that we were seeking to, to try and find as it were.

17 Internal structures / organising work

aligning conflicting advice for the PM

Kelly, 2, 3

So is the agenda manageable? Is the news agenda, is the themes you want to ... the way you want to present, the way you want to do media management for that politician, is that manageable if there's conflicting advice and how is it done?

Well, I did lobby twice a day for six years, and at 11.00am or at 3.45pm, no matter whether matters were resolved or no matter whether there was a single view, I had to say something. I didn't have a choice. I had to say something. It's remarkable how the knowledge that you've got to say something forces you to come to a view. Now sometimes you simply play for time because you were aware that there were conflicting views, that we weren't settled on a position. So I developed this phrase saying I'm not giving a running commentary on how we're coming to a conclusion just to buy you time. But again part of my job was to go back into the policy machine and say "Sort this out. We've only got a limited time when we can say that without losing credibility." So you can act, if you like, as the prompt, the rod to say "You've got to get a move on. You've got to get this resolved because we're wasting credibility" and again it comes back to momentum. It's how long can you stall while people try and reach agreement before you reach a decision. Now sometimes you had to ... you recognised that you had reached the end of the road, and sometimes you had to go to the Prime Minister and say "I can't not give a view on this. This is what I am going to say. Do you agree?" [Laughs] And that is an interesting process. (...)

#Would the structure that it is known you have to brief the press once a day or twice a day, would that help focus minds around you that they ...

Yes, because they know that I'm in the position where I'm going to have to answer the

question. They know if I say, well, we don't know what we're going to do, that's not very good for the government. Now what they rely on you to do from time to time is the buy time for them to reach a decision. But if you come to them and say "We're running out of road here" then they know that the point has come. It's not something (...) but there were times when you had to say "For the sake of the policy you have to reach a decision." You can't dither.

17 Internal structures / organising work

Successful communications is involved in the design process of policies and decisions

Kelly, 5,6

In business what I come across-, what we all come across I guess is there's one level, the top level where decisions are taken and then a lower level communications are decided, or some of them. How would it be organised in a ministry ... I think Northern Ireland office was ... you were [0:22:33.6].

Mm.

Or in Downing Street. Is that separate and then it's almost first the decision is taken and then communicators are being allowed in the room, or is that all in one ... Is there an integrated process?

I think that was the real positive impact on communications terms that Alistair Campbell and [0:22:58.4] had. I think they got communications into the room. And again I sometimes said that my job was to sit in the Prime Minister's den where the policy experts debated away, and sometimes all I did was pull a face, and the Prime Minister might ignore it or he might say "What's wrong with you" and I'd say "Look, all this sounds fine but have you thought about this, or that, or whatever." And you try and be the voice of common sense. When I was at university I had a thesis on is common sense common or is it rare? And I decided that it was rare. So again I don't think that you can run in modern day government if you have this traditional view of communications as being at the end of the production line. It's to be right in there at the design process. It's got to be right in there as the policy is being developed. It's got to have the ability to go back and say "This product isn't going to sell. This product is bust. You've got to change it." And I think there is a danger in the reverse, which is if communications forgets its humility, if communications forgets that it isn't the be all and end all, that actually the main thing is to make policies that actually work, but at the



same time if you just leave it until the end then forget it.

17 Internal structures / organising work

In order to be effective Communicators need to allow themselves time to reflect on their communications activities

Kelly, 7

And one of the things I do think this Prime Minister has learnt is that you need to carve out thinking time. If you're Prime Minister you can be on the go for 24 hours a day. The trouble is by the end of one week you're not going to be a very effective Prime Minister. So you've got to carve out the time to think strategically. And it's the same in communications. I very, very deliberately try and pace myself. There will be certain times when I'm very busy. There will be other times when I will very deliberately try to ease off to give myself thinking time because that's when you think about what does this mean? And it's that question, what does this mean, that is at the heart of good communication. If you're just following events, reacting all the time, then you lose sight of what does it mean? What does it mean for the leader? What does it mean for the public? What does it mean for the media? You've got to constantly ask yourself that question, what does it mean?

17 Internal structures / organising work

Conflicting advice

Waring, 3

If you look at it in a broader perspective, you talk about colleagues and people who have done this in past years with the previous government. They are civil servants. They are ex person in the field and they advise on what you should say and what [0:07:05.9] and so forth, which maybe may contradict the media advice that he receives.

Yeah.

So there are other people in the department ...

Yeah. Yes, I think with politicians when they get into government they are-, have, erm, you've got a whole ... each department wants their department to look the best and the strongest and that isn't always necessarily ... I mean it's always in the politician's interest to

look like they're the head of a strong department, but sometimes what the head of news or the head of media wants in a department that's a civil servant is different to what the politician will want to get across.

Mm-hm, with final decisions taken by the politician.

Yes.

17 Internal structures / organising work

Internal decision making structure

Waring, 3

But who's, who would be ... Clearly, you don't have to answer. Who would be in the room when final decisions about where to go, what to say, what's the content, what's the message are taken?

It's a combination but special advisors, civil servants, head of media, Secretary of State. So it's a combination.

17 internal structures / organising work

not involved in the deliberation of communications staff about issues of image

Politician is

Wood 2,3

But these are issues that you would sit together and discuss the issues just as we're talking about it now, that would be that explicit?

Oh yeah. But not so much with him. I mean I'm among the advisors. Er, he would not have liked it, he was always pretty suspicious of this kind of thing. You know, he wouldn't.... So I don't think there were many, I can't remember conversations with him per se but I can remember conversations among the advisors about this kind of thing. Although frequently I would say... I mean if you go down the road I've just described then you haven't got to do much other than just go on doing what you're doing and try to make it fit together if you like.

17 Internal structures / organising work

Conflicting advice to the opposition leader

Wood, 5,6

How do you organise the internal process? You would know how you want to present him, you would know what the narrative, the storyline should be. I'm sure that there were other advice, perhaps conflicting advice, how was that reorganised then? You know, um, I've been told it's particularly difficult in Downing Street where you've got loads of people and they all want to be good advice and then you never get the same narrative, the same...

Well I mean if you read the book Tory Wars, have you read that?

No I haven't.

It's worth reading because it throws a lot of light on this.

Okay.

Um, it's written by a guy called Simon Walters, he works for, um, he works for the Mail on Sunday now. But Simon wrote a whole book about the power struggles around Hague and they're struggles about the sort of thing you were talking about, the clash of the advisors and the different perspectives, different two main factions of organising faction and the sort of traditionalist faction. Because a lot of this image thing did get discussed in that context. So that would be worth taking a look at. What actually happened under... is the faction, the modernising faction had been the ruling faction around Hague and basically effectively Amanda would tell me and to a fair degree Seb Coe as well, all joining over the sort of midpoint. Um, there was a change, some of the modernisers left and I don't think, broadly speaking, there was one stream of advice that came to William, a different stream of advice from the one he'd had in the first half of the parliament. So we didn't... there wasn't a huge amount of conflict, there was some among the advisors because there were some people wanted, if you like, a more liberal approach than we wanted to follow. But generally speaking, um, the stream of advice was pretty consistent. The problem though... so we got rid of the, if you like, we got rid of the advisors who took a different view from us but then you had the Cabinet, and particularly more than Portillo, adopting a much more modernising stance. Er, but they weren't involved specifically in advising, um, in advising

William about his image but they were certainly heavily involved in discussions on strategy and policy, of course they were. Um, so that was the Hague era.

17 Internal structures / organising work

Conflicting advice , internal organisation

Hazlewood 7,8

You give advice on these issues, now surely as a minister there is more than one person who gives advice, not just the people who work for you but others you meet, err, a range of advice you get from members inside and outside of the department, is that conflicting advice a problem in not only [0:19:31:1] but also presentation and media relations issues?

Not really, I mean we have got three people in the press office who are civil servants rather than political advisors like myself, I work very closely with them, there is not just secretary of state but there is a minister as well within the department, we work for both of them. Erm I can't think I have come across an occasion where there has been conflicting advice in the six years that I have worked with Cheryl, err if there was a difference of opinion, I think we are actually mature enough to sit around and talk about it and work our way through it. Erm that has got to be the best approach and what you can't do, I think in the past perhaps some politicians have been forced to be someone they are not, to try and gain a particular persona within the media and I always think you get found out about that. I think Lynn Campbell perhaps, who was badly advised, a personal view, was badly advised when he was leader of the Lib Dem's, I happen to think he is a first rate politician and erm I don't think he fulfilled his potential as leader because of what people were trying....

Well the reason I am asking is Damien McBride....

I told you he'd be interesting.

He is yes, very different from how I thought he would be once I had read the article about him. He said in erm number eleven there was a very limited number of political advisors who gave advice to Gordon Brown once they moved to Downing Street, so many were parachuted in who were trying to tell him what to do and there was no way you could as a member of staff control what advice you would actually take and that maybe somebody this 8 advice and another day something completely contradictory, so that was something that I had on my mind ever since...

Okay well there is only one special advisor in the Wales office, which is me. It is the same with colleagues in the Scotland office and the north of Ireland office, so in a way it makes it a bit easier I suppose, because you haven't got a, I don't mind working with other people, far from it, I have worked in big teams before, but I think when it is just a very small team it is easier to form a consensus about how we....

18. Identity and image

Reputation is most damaged if behaviour contradicts public persona of honesty and straight talking

McBride 1,2

Um, I suppose I can think of some incidents particularly on a sort of personal level where if you take the affairs that were revealed about John Prescott and David Blunkett, how that sucked credibility away from people, gravitas away from people whose entire reputation was based on being straight talking, honest, you know, the sort of bloke that people could relate to. And, you know, it was incredibly damaging for them and their sort of... that whole persona that they'd built up for themselves. Whether that was a true persona or not, I think in both cases it probably was but there was obviously this different side to them, and the exposure of that other side just totally ripped the ground from under them in terms of their, their sort of public and media reputation. Um, and neither has ever really recovered from that, although Prescott has been bluff enough to sort of get through it and Blunkett I suppose at some stage.

18. Identity and image

Politicians who do not claim their life was exclusively about politics, may be judged differently in their private failures

McBride, 2

There have been other people who have had things exposed in their personal lives, affairs and that kind of thing where it hasn't affected them because they haven't ever played up to that sort of straight, you know, gravitas, I'm all about politics image. And, um, you know, where it hasn't been as wounding for them. um, you know, another example along those lines is someone like, um, er, McNulty, the Home Office Minister, who again was sort of really carving out this career as a sort of straight talking man of the people, "I tell it like it is" that kind of thing. As soon as he had the expenses scandal, it came out about him where it

looked like he'd been, um, milking the expenses system and doing dodgy dealings and that kind of thing. Totally ripped that away from him and so, um, you know, I think those are examples where, you know, it was almost overnight that you saw someone sort of lose, lose their authority.

18. Identity and Image

The flexibility to construct a politician's public persona is limited by their personality

McBride, 3

Um, you know, and in some ways someone like Alistair Darling was probably a bit like that that he almost didn't have a reputation or didn't have an image other than as safe pair of hands, nobody knows much about him, he just gets on with the job until he became Chancellor and then had to deal with the economic crisis. And then, you know, people wanted to attach various sort of images or characteristics to him after that. So there are people that you meet where you don't sort of think... you know, you almost think well you could bolt whatever public image you wanted onto this person. Or they could do it themselves, you know it's not... wouldn't necessarily be my job or a special advisor's job. There are other people where you meet them and you think, you know, you are very, very obviously only going to be able to sort of present yourself in a certain way, um, because either that's, you know, you think they've got limited capacity, um, a limited desire to sort of understand the detail of what they're doing, limited desire to go out and make speeches or define themselves in any way. You know, and people just have a sort of very straightforward thing where you think well you'll probably be quite good on TV and, you know, you'll look good for the cameras and...

18. Identity and Image

Manufacturing an image that does not reflect the genuine personality fails

McBride, 6

Right, um, er, so I was going to say the thing that I... the number one component I'd say looking back on my career is just, er, faithfulness to themselves and having acquired an image, rightly or wrongly, to stick with it. Because I never, ever saw any attempt to change

an image if there was anything remotely inauthentic about it, I never saw that work and it was always totally destructive in the other way. In that the public can see right through it and they would just sort of think right, you know, I know what's going on here, I'm being manipulated, um and I don't think it ever worked for people. if it was inauthentic, I think if it was a case, with Gordon as it was sometimes, of people not knowing the real him and about him sort of showing a real side of himself then, you know, you had a chance of that sort of cutting through at least with some people. I think trying to do things which were, which were inauthentic were just doomed to fail.

18. Identity and image

Communications advisors may design objectives and strategy that are not aligned with the politician	McBride 10
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. Um, and David Miliband's advisors, very misguided often, um, you know, constantly putting David in situations where David didn't want to be. Um, notably in August 2008 when, um, er, they... David Miliband wrote his article in the Guardian where he didn't mention Gordon Brown and sort of talked about what we needed in the Labour Party and it was obvious that his advisors were very aggressively pushing that to the Guardian, were straightforwardly lying to me and other in Number 10 about what he'd said in this article. Um, and you know, that caused problems. So bad advisors can be bad for you

18. Identity and image

The public cannot be deceived through deliberately about the identity of a politician	Hill, 11
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I mean, to be fair, you know, with Gordon Brown, I mean Gordon's lack of popularity was based on a lot of little things, it wasn't really based on some over ... I mean, people may not have liked him generally, but they didn't care very much if he was a bit grumpy if he'd done a good job as chancellor at the time. Most of the time people thought ... they'd say, ah, it's okay. But there were a number of facets of, of, of, of his behaviour and how it came across, which created ... which caused the general public to have more doubt. And that's ... and so, therefore, I mean, I think the answer is, you can't ... you can't pull the wool over the

eyes of the general public in the modern media for, for very long. And of course you try and play to your strengths and try and play down your weaknesses,

18. Identity and image

Presentation needs to be linked to substance

Hill, 11,

So in the end, transparency will out, and, and the same with spin. I mean, I had a ... I had a ... I went to do a speech about six months ago and the people who ... quite a big audience and they said, we're pretty keen to attract a lot of people, so we thought we'd say 'Spin or Substance'. So I said, well, I don't actually like the title, but I'll come and do it. So I went and did it and I stood up and I said to them, I am here under false pretences, because I am billed to do a speech which says 'Spin or Substance', and I'm going to give you a speech which tells you why the actual title should be, 'Spin needs Substance'. And I could never do my job unless the people who did the policy work, etc, etc, all did their work, and the person I was working for knew what they wanted and that there was ... there were deliverables and that when I said something people didn't walk out the front door and say, that's rubbish. So spin needs substance, and, and it all needs substance, and so do the individuals in question. So consequently the substance is made up of, you know, an acceptable balance of strengths and weaknesses, an acceptable balance of successes and failures, and then, on top of all that, something that the general public says, that's all right, or something where the general public says, I don't like that. And that is a ... that is a complex thing.

18. Identity and image

Narrative and reality of a politician have to match or the impression management will fail

Eustice 1, 2

I think the most important thing er, where some people, or some parties, get it wrong is ... is with everything, the narrative you're trying to portray about a politician has got to have ... at its core, it's got to have that truth, that fundamental kernel of truth that is what this person's about

(...)



And the other thing that was very clear about Michael Howard was he was about getting things done. He might not have been the most sort of charismatic people, and it was wrong to try to present him in such a light, but what was, what was absolutely fundamentally true about him is that he got stuff done, he rolled his sleeves up and he delivered stuff. And that was what we tried to communicate about him.

18. Identity and image

Images of a politician need to be true and consistent

Eustice, 2

. And that is why when it comes to what you should be trying to say about them, it's got to ring true, it's got to be consistent with what they actually are, and it's something that the closest advisors know better than the public.

18. Image and identity

There is a discrepancy between the reality of a person (or party) and the image of it in the media

Eustice, 1

And the truth is that with the media it's a sort of pseudo environment anyway. What we read in the newspapers and watch on the television isn't, with some exceptions like what's going on in Libya now, but it isn't always an exact description of what's going on in the world. It's a pseudo-environment which sort of depicts what people think is going on in the world, but actually sometimes is quite disjointed from reality. And that presents, I think, a real challenge for ... for politicians, because they will be frequently misrepresented.

18. Identity and image

In the case of William Hague as leader of the opposition communicators did not connect the images they created to his personality and beliefs

Eustice, 4

I, I think, erm, with Hague and Ian Duncan-Smith, probably less so Ian Duncan-Smith, although he did abandon it ... With Hague I think they approached it the wrong way round. Rather than saying, what is William Hague, what is his character, what is he genuinely like, and then how do we articulate that, how do we articulate that that's what's needed, instead they thought, how do we make him look trendy? Erm, let's put him in a baseball cap, erm,

let's send him to the Knotting Hill Carnival where he can dance in the carnival, and they put him in positions where actually there was a juxtaposition between what he actually was and what they were trying to present him as. And that just doesn't work. It has to work in tandem... What you're presenting them as actually has to be what they are deep down, even though they don't always get given the credit for it. People don't always know what politicians are like, but you have to find a way of portraying what they are like, rather than erm, trying to present them as something they're not. And I think that's where Hague got it particularly, er, wrong, actually. And it was a classic case, and I think the advisors he had at the time, it was much more about, you know, how do we get headlines in papers, how do we ... how do we shift this. And if people thought the Conservatives looked old fashioned well, then let's look trendy. When actually what they should have done was thought, how do we find a way through this that's consistent with what he actually is. And they probably should have presented William Hague as a ... you know, a young man with a serious mission, who wasn't flash but was sensible.

18. Identity and image

An effort was made to ground Prime Minister Brown's projected image in his personality

Eustice, 4

Labour tried this, of course, with Gordon Brown. He's not flash, just Gordon. They tried to do that. The problem was that lots of other problems caught up with Gordon Brown. But they had the right idea of trying not to present him as a flash person. They tried to present him as a serious person. And Hague should have done the same.

18. Identity and image

Cameron's reputation is based on his actual personality

Macrory, 2

but nobody's sort of saying to Cameron-, taking him aside and saying, right, we want you to be like this and we want you to change your personality a bit. Well, if they are, I'm not aware of it.

18. Identity and image

Public persona needs to be based on truth – the actual personality

Thorogood, 7

*but having said that, obviously as PR advisors, there are certain things that we would perhaps advise which is-, you know, like common sense things on appearance or-, you know, we would never ever try and tell somebody what to say or to pretend that they liked something to appeal to a greater audience than they do. Everything has to be based on truth. I mean that's always what I tell everybody but there are tweaks that can be made.*

18. Identity and image

The public persona cannot diverge from the person's identity

Beattie, 1

.. With Ed Miliband, what's happened is an opinion has started to solidify on how he's seen and that is slightly [0:01:43.8] not particularly comfortable in his own skin, and it presents a major challenge for his media advisors, erm, because yes you cannot do anything which isn't genuine to him. Now all politicians [0:02:06.1] so let's say [0:02:11.1], could you imagine [0:02:14.6] having a beer and sharing a [0:02:19.9]? Now they could with George Bush. They absolutely couldn't with John Kerry. And you've probably got the same thing here. You could imagine having a barbeque with Cameron and he would probably look down on you, you could actually imagine them having a barbeque. They can't do that with Ed Miliband. So they are trying to shape him [0:02:46.8] but [0:02:50.9] true image of Ed Miliband is more of an intellectual, but that doesn't sell so they are stuck. So the question therefore is can media advisors do anything if the [0:03:04.7]? No. If the personality isn't there they are completely hamstrung. Can they try and find ways of accentuating the positives or hiding the negatives? Yes.

18. Identity and image

a strategy to present politicians differently from what they really are like may fail	Beattie, 1
<p>Would they not try and manage expectations if they have the person [0:03:26.4] and they can't do anything about it. Could they not try and emphasise their strength and try and tell you the intellectual personality is what we feel comfortable with and what we would need? But this interesting. If you took the case of William Hague when he was leader of the opposition, they very badly advised him to put a baseball cap on and go to a theme park and go down a water slide, the log flume, go to Notting Hill carnival, and actually Hague was a very intellectual man who has gone on to write two very good books on politics, probably three now. And one of the great flaws in the 2001 election campaign was that they used that campaign to [0:04:26.3] the intellectual and very wide ranging. I've no idea whether Blair said "I am going to do this to accentuate my [0:04:37.8]" or he just felt he wanted to do it, but what it did do was highlight how wrong the Tories got it because what they should have done is go Hague is not [0:04:52.4]. He can't do it, but he is a bright person. He should have done [0:05:00.3] procedures, but they were [0:05:06.9] to see that they had to do that.</p>	
18. Identity and image	
Discrepancy between identity and public persona	Stacey, 5
<p>On the one hand you've got the identity, how a person, someone really is and on the other you've got the public persona, the way we see someone and no one would claim that is identical, there's a gap between it. How thick can this gap be until you and colleagues would notice?</p> <p>I don't think it can be vast actually particularly once you reach high office because you're constantly in the spotlight and journalists are always meeting. You just can't keep up the facade for that long and I think we... reporters are fairly good at sensing it, what someone's like. Even if they haven't got a sense of it themselves we can talk to their colleagues, we get an idea pretty quickly of what it's like behind the scenes. So no matter how reasonable George Osborne likes to portray himself everybody knows that he's quite a Machiavellian schemer behind the scenes. No matter how Prime Ministerial Gordon Brown</p>	

wanted to look everybody knew that he was throwing mobile phones around behind the scenes, losing the plot and calling people at 3.00 in the morning. I think we're pretty good at figuring this stuff out.

18. Identity and image

Discrepancy between public persona and identity

Stacey, 6

Was it successfully hidden with Gordon Brown for a number of years as the narrative that he's...? [00.18.11] handle of the economy?

Yeah that's a good point, yeah. Actually and perhaps that's what I would... as journalists we can easily get distracted and if there is a narrative and if there's lots of stories that back up that narrative you get into that narrative and there might be other things going on that contradict that. It's very difficult for us to accept that, maybe less so that the FT because we can afford to be a bit more nuanced and textured about our portrayals of people. But certainly if you're working on a tabloid, mid-market paper whatever, it's very difficult, you tend to have one line that you have about them. So anything to contradict that is very difficult. I mean for instance the Daily Mail had to do a huge u turn because David loved to talk about and everything he did in the early days was just fantastic and they just realised he wasn't going to win and he was actually losing. So they did have to kind of pull their coverage round and I know that was very difficult for the reporters involved. So, yeah I think that's true and you're right that narrative about... but then having said that there were still a lot of reports about Gordon Brown and his slightly inhuman tendencies, even when he was in the Treasury.

18. Identity and image

Reality and image need to match

Stacey, 6

Here's a good example, on Father's Day they dropped a story to the Sunday Telegraph, Number 10 did, about David Cameron, well David Cameron wrote a piece for them I think it was saying that errant fathers needed to be humiliated or runaway fathers needed to be

humiliated into not running away from their obligations with their kids. Perfect piece of reputation management, it was Father's Day, he was... a) he was kind of courting the female vote which he's been struggling with recently but b) it just made him look, it put him in the father figure role and that's what he's really been going for, this kind of father information type thing. And it put him perfectly in that role. The thing is they did it very well because by writing a piece exclusively for them, for the Sunday Telegraph with lots of strong words in the Sunday Telegraph then slaps it all over their front page, kind of dominating that news. So they know they have to give journalists stories and that was the way to manipulate reputations I think. Having said that it did slightly fall apart later on because some of the details, how women are going to have to pay now to try and chase up fathers who don't pay their child maintenance costs turned out kind of pretty much contradicting what he'd said. So sometimes the details will catch up with you anyway. But it was a very good piece of reputation management.

18. Identity and image

Public persona hinges on personality

Stacey, 7,8

I don't know if you get bored with a politician in the same way, I mean someone like Tony Blair can dominate headlines for about 20 years.

How?

that's a good question. He's always got something interesting to say and he's such an extraordinary character. When he first came in obviously he dominated by taking on his party and that was big. Then when he got into power there was a huge amount of reform going on and there was the war and he's this kind of slightly manic, crazy character who's just endlessly fascinating. And he's charming so people want to talk about him, people want to write about him, people want to meet him that helps.

18. Identity and image

Reputation and personality	Stacey, 8
<p>Why is that some politicians get away with a story that others would not? In an objective sense, you claim that you are and you try to be but still you get the feeling that some get away with... Boris Johnson for instance he's been questioned that idiosyncratic behaviour is something that you wouldn't accept with others.</p> <p>I've been thinking about this because, I can't remember, whatever the last outrageous thing Boris said, I just thought nobody else gets away with this. Charm, I mean like I said with Tony Blair, definitely helps, good jokes help, not taking yourself too seriously I think that's the key. Actually that's a very British trait and the public quite likes it I think, if you're able to just give a disarming joke to share, you know I'm not that serious and I'm not that important whatever, we quite like that. I don't know what it is about Boris, he just uses his power over people where he can just get away with it. Maybe he says what people think but lots of people say what people think and get in a lot of trouble for it. I think it's the ones who don't do it with a knowing smile that's the one that is less entertaining, if you look very earnest.</p>	
18. Identity and image	
Discrepancy between reality and public persona	Stacey, 8
<p>That's very interesting. I don't want to take any more of your time. Is there anything in that context which you thought I should have asked and haven't asked?</p> <p>I don't think so. Yeah I think that actually what I would say is that you can't manage a reputation completely, I think you just come unstuck. You can't make Ian Duncan Smith the most sparkling, dynamic leader like person, it's just never going to happen, they tried and failed.</p>	
18. Identity and image	
Personality and reputation	Stacey, 8

And to a certain extent what Henry says about Cameron is right, when you meet him he is that smooth, he is that charming and I think that's probably true of Blair as well. Boris gets away with stuff he does because he's genuinely witty, self-effacing and they have to have it in them; you can't just construct this persona around them.

18. Identity and image

Personality and reputation

Stacey, 8,9

You think it's the quality of advice? It's the way they accept the advice, they implement it, they use it, they... I've been told by other journalists that if Tony Blair was given not necessarily a journalist, a photographer over there and then he would act, he would immediately switch on that button and others might not.

That's true but that's the charm element isn't it? Some people are just very professional at that. But I just think it's natural, if you have it in you to just turn on that... just fix somebody and really engage with them. David Cameron is very good at that, I mean I've only met him briefly twice and he has seemed very engaged. But people say that if you ever see him in a small setting he will just go from person to person to person, really engage fully with them and then he'll probably forget everything. Actually Tony Blair was classic at this where he used to promise the world to everybody he met and then he'd completely forget about it as soon as he talked to them. Apparently Boris does the same thing, he makes all sorts of wild promises to people because he gets really caught up in whatever they're saying and then he'll just completely forget, it will go by the wayside. But everybody feels kind of charmed and pleased to be in their company.

18. Identity and image

Substance is essential in presentation

Stevenson, 5

You can package it all you like, but at the end of the day the substance will be important. But, it's a mixture (of substance and presentation)



18. Identity and image

Emotions and family carry messages, though need to be authentic to be credible

Stevenson, 6

can we imagine these conversations, these discussions, any advice ... Does it go to the extent you would say one should emphasise emotions, or the facts, the, the knowledgeable expertise, chancellor, or should it go to ... as, as Cameron did, he presented his family and his children, or his child, and showed the public on You Tube how he would cook. That's a very ...

Yes, but I don't think people take much of that. They know what that is, that's packaging.

But is it been ... these options that are available, are they being discussed?

Well, I think they're carefully thought about. I mean, Mr Brown took the decision early on not to involve his children at all, and the only time you saw the children, and they were allowed to be photographed was when he left Downing Street, because he wanted to show that he was returning to a family base and he had other things to do and other interests and it wasn't the end, it was just the end of a chapter. So that was a very deliberate policy, whereas before they had chosen not to do that. And I think we felt very strongly that Mr Cameron had actually over-used his children and his family circumstances, in the run up to the election.

18. Identity and image

Image management is about focusing on specific aspects of a personality

Richards, 1

I think politics at the very top level tends to magnify the characteristics of the individual. So they will become more than themselves (sometimes even a caricature) and if there're aspects of their personality or character traits that you want to make more of then you tend to do things that exacerbate that.

18. Identity and image

Image strategy and tactics need to be linked to actual personality	Richards, 1
<p>So with Hazel Blears for example, her-, one of her pitches was that she was very down to earth, plain spoken, working class, non-Oxbridge, not like the usual politician and so we would try and put her in situations and make statements that made more of that. So for example, she made a speech about how-, you know, it was there should be more different voices in Cabinet for the Hansard Society or she would try and do visits that were very much sort of grassroots community schemes and so on. She wouldn't be comfortable making a speech at an Oxford college; she would want to go and talk to, you know, people in Sure Start. So you would make-, you would push in that direction all the time.</p> <p>The mistake that some advisors make of course is to try and shoehorn their politician into places that they shouldn't be and try to make them into something that they're not and, you know, you can't put lipstick on a pig as the famous saying goes</p>	
18. Identity and image	
Politicians tend to be perceived the way they are	Richards, 6
<p>it's hard to think of an example of a politician whose image has been completely changed round as a result of PR, you know. They tend to end up being perceived in the way that they are. Prescott, for example, you know, is a bruiser and there's not much he can do with that image. Indeed now he's become a parody of himself because that's who he is so, you know, all the advice in the world isn't going to make him something different.</p>	
18. Image and identity	
The attempt to model a public persona that does not fit the individual's personality may fail	Richards, 8
<p>Well, you could have-, well, I'm asking; I'm not suggesting. Someone said that they tried to make him smile to be-, it was a serious time. They could have portrayed him as a very serious person for serious crises.</p>	

I mean they-, there was an article that Hazel put her name to which I wrote which was about him appearing on the YouTube channel talking about-, it was about expenses. It's on YouTube if you want to-, but he was told to go on that YouTube because it was sort of young and funky and modern and he was told to smile during the course of this interview and it made him look completely idiotic and out of character and it wasn't the right medium and at so many levels it was a disaster and it's the best example from recent times of-, (apart from the Hague baseball cap) of trying to shoehorn in a personality into something that they're just not in a way that everyone immediately recognises as being false

18. Identity and image

Communications advisors can't always explain why politicians' reputation is not always reflective of their actual performance

Richards, 9

I'm-, just one last thing. I just wonder-, I think many in their job do that-, there're these personalities that are almost Teflon-like so even if their record is mediocre it doesn't seem to damage and undermine their-, the way they're perceived and others are doing a good job and still the mood is we can't-, don't want to see them anymore. How do you-, why is that and how do you deal with that?

Well, I don't know why it is but you're right there's a definite thing where people who are good effective ministers don't necessarily come across like that in the public eye and sometimes people who are idiots, you know, somehow manage to prosper and I don't know why. I don't think there is a set answer to that. It's because people are capricious and not paying that close attention and, you know, weird things happen and-

18. Identity and image

It is difficult (impossible) create a politician's public persona that differs from the individual's identity

Jones, 3

No, I mean let's just deal with both of those in turn. I mean there was no doubt about it that Kinnock was a very abrasive character. He liked nothing more than arguing the toss, arguing the point with journalists so there was that problem with Kinnock and Kinnock knew that you see. He was presented as a Welsh boyo, somebody who would go out on Friday night, have some beer and then go and have an Indian meal and end up having a row at the Indian restaurant or wherever. That was the image of Kinnock and he found it very very difficult to counter that image because partly it was right

18. Identity and image

If personality and public persona do not match, journalists may notice the discrepancy	Jones, 6
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we weren't going to go along with the deception with Portillo and we knew. I mean he actually told me but other people had long suspected that Portillo wasn't quite happy that, you know, they were trying to present him as some hard man; in actual fact, he's a sort of wishy washy bit of nothing, you know. I mean he wasn't up to it, was he? He wasn't up to it

18. Identity and image

Individuals' images cannot always be changed	Jones, 19
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Kinnock could never quite get over the fact that he was seen by middle England as a sort of loud mouth, Welsh Boyo who just wanted to pick a fight with somebody on a Friday night after he'd been to the Indian restaurant. You know, that was the image, he could never, ever get rid of that image.

(...)

But of course it presupposes that they are somebody who is comfortable with the media. I mean, you know, Michael Howard could never, ever recover from the fact that he was seen and had been portrayed endlessly by the media as a shifty, untrustworthy, rather unpleasant character. I mean he could never get over that. He could never, ever win over the public to that degree.

18. Identity and image

To safeguard their reputation politicians try avoid discrepancies between what they say and what they do

Greer, 1,2

But ultimately it's a, you know, in terms of reputation, the key thing I think is one of not necessarily trust or honesty but perceived trust and honesty. And what I mean by that is the worst thing I think that can happen to a politician is where the electorate actively see them for having been dishonest or to have engaged in something that is actively disreputable or breaks that kind of trust between the electorate and them. So they get a reputation for that. So even though people will say, "I don't trust politicians" that's quite different from when a politician actively does something to break that trust and a good example is probably the expenses scandal. Or when you have an MP who goes on about family values and the importance of family and then that MP is found to have had an affair or multiple affairs going back years. Or an MP who takes a very hard line on drugs and you know, you should ban it that kind of thing and then is found perhaps not maybe to have just taken drugs in the past but perhaps even now and again still takes drugs. You know, if you're that kind... you know, it's partly your reputation and your actions and how those two interact is what makes or breaks a politician.

18. Identity and image

The electorate might approve of politicians because they are authentic, not because they are genuinely likeable

Greer, 13

It's a classic thing with sort of Regan Democrats, you know people who didn't necessarily agree with what he stood for, didn't actually agree with what he was doing but they approved of the fact that he stood by his guns. You know, he said what he thought and they respected that, they respected someone who said what they thought, they believed they were being genuine, all of that and they would vote for that individual. They didn't necessarily agree with them. You don't have to like them to vote for them, it's not about who's the most attractive or who is the nicest, who's the most charming. In certain circumstances that's certainly important but just because, you know, just because you're

dull and ugly doesn't mean you're going to be a bad politician. It's a question of how you communicate that dull and ugly or how it's communicated for you.

18. Identity and image

If the public notices a discrepancy between reality and generated reputation, the politician's career is under threat

Livermore 1,2

But ultimately the reality didn't match the reputation that we had created and I think that's one of the reasons for, erm, quite an accelerated decline [0:02:52.2] Prime Minister so that once it became apparent that ... what we tried to create was essentially a reputation for strength, and once the reality of that was, erm, found out almost as Prime Minister there was quite a dramatic then decline clearly in his, erm, popularity and ...etc. So I suppose what I would say is there is a huge focus, in my experience, on reputation, but if the reality doesn't match that then it absolutely can break a career. And so it's almost like the reputation made the career but the reality then, then broke it. So I think the relationship between those two things is incredibly important.

18. Identity and image

Reputation is undermined if it does not match reality

Livermore, 3

that's why I wanted to make that point that you can have all the reputation and the image that you like but if your substance doesn't match that you're never gonna make a reality of that, of that reputation that you sought to build and painstakingly spent years building. If the substance doesn't match then it's kind of, it doesn't really matter what image you sought to create, identity and image

The public persona has to be perceived as being authentic

Livermore , 11

I think that, yeah, I don't ... I agree that it's incredibly important but whether or not it detaches you from the record, I think maybe they're two different things. So I think that, you know, Boris Johnson had a history of, you know, has got a very colourful past shall we say. But that absolutely plays into and reinforces the, the difficult to quantify a personality thing. So I mean he ... why is he there? It's because he's a maverick, you know, erm, so,

so almost his past plays into and erm, amplifies that that what people kind of like about him, that kind of maverick you never quite know what he's going to do today type erm, image. Erm, so I guess what ... where, where he's interesting is that his personality is erm, authentic in terms of his-, of the reputation and the, the brand that's been created for him. I think where there are issues is where the personality, erm, is in conflict with the ... or ... or, erm, we'll go back to the smiling point, you know, the personality. That's not, that's not an authentic expression of the whole of the personality. Er, so it's-, that's clearly the wrong brand to create. Erm, so you know, the, the record and the baggage and whatever for say for Gordon Brown was all around erm, competence and strengths of the chancellor, er, so, so that reinforced one particular positioning, erm, you know, which was true ... like much more true to his true personality than the kind of smiley thing that you mentioned before.

18. Identity and image

Narrative has to be fine-tuned to be in line with reality

Kelly, 1

and the important thing is that you have at the back of your mind a strategic narrative of how you view the world, and you try and interpret what you're doing but what other players are doing within that strategic narrative. That sometimes means you have to fine tune your narrative because you have to fine tune it to fit with reality, but it is that constant recognition that you're operating in the context that matters.

18. Identity and image

Perception of the politician has to be authentic and cannot be deliberately changed

Kelly, 3

All the time surely expectations of the public electorate, how they want the Prime Minister, what they want him to be like may have changed. Initially perhaps they wanted someone who was somehow different from Mr Major. Towards the end then something very different, something different from what Blair had become in the public perception and something more genuine, something different. Can you reinvent an individual, their public persona, if

you sense people are getting bored or fed up with an individual they've had for 10 years? I think the key is that you have to remain – it's an overused word but I think it's a good word – authentic. I think you have to ... People don't study the detail of policy. People judge people by ... and judge people and organisations I've found out by a sort of collective body language. It's a view of is this person being sincere? Is this person working for genuine motives? If they think there's a gap between what you say and what you believe or what you say and what you do then I think they see through you. So was the Tony Blair of the first term the same person as the Tony Blair of the third term? I would say fundamentally he probably was but he had changed in that he was much more prepared to take on popular decisions in the third term than he was in the first term, and he was much more prepared to say that "Look, people may disagree but this is my honest view and I'm going to pursue it." So it's not that you set out with a conscious objective to say the perception of the leader is this, I'm going to change it to this. It's that the leader himself changes in [0:13:17.4] and public opinion catches up with it. And I do think if you try and put an artificial bubble around it then it bursts very quickly, very quickly, so you've got to be authentic.

#### 18. Identity and image

Authenticity in public relations

Waring 8,9

Can you tell me how the decision to participate in Strictly Come Dancing, how that decision was taken?

Yes, erm, he was invited. He absolutely loves dancing and people were like "Oh, he'll look a bit ..." Some advice was he'll look silly, like when the economy is bad, you know, he shouldn't take part, and I said I think some people might think that, but I said I think they would be mean spirited and ridiculous. I said people love Strictly Come Dancing. It's the most popular programme on the BBC. I said they like Vince because he's normal. He's got a hinterland, and I said I don't think we'd be able to stop him in a million years because he wanted to do it so much, so I just sort of thought I didn't perceive a problem with it. I think people ... I don't discount the people that said, you know, we've got a serious economic problem and people think he should be concentrating on other things, and I-I said "You're right, that's why he must absolutely do it on weekends, not in ministerial time. He must



concentrate on the job.” And, you know, people don’t want to sit there on Christmas Day and think “Oh, the economy is in a bad shape.” They just want to watch people making fools of themselves dancing on Strictly Come Dancing, so I think it’s a good idea.

So that case was good because it was authentic, whilst others ... [0:24:52.5] want you to comment on what you do on Saturday evenings. There must be the temptation to do these entertainment programmes on television and radio all the time.

Yes.

But mostly would turn them down.

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

#### 18. Identity and image

Personality and public persona

Waring, 9

How big has the discrepancy been between Vince Cable the person what he really is like and how he’s been portrayed in the media?

Erm, not a very big discrepancy at all, quite close.

Because you’re lucky, that is, as far as you know, from other departments can be ...

I don’t think there’s a huge gap because ... because the political journalists have such good ties to special advisors and they spend time, and they are completely immersed in Westminster, and they pick up all the gossip and they see everybody, I think they’re pretty much, erm, I think they were always quite on the money.

#### 18. Identity and image

Image and authenticity

Wood, 2

Um, I never really felt that... he didn't really have... you know I mean with most people most things are given, the way they look, they way they talk, they way they walk. It's quite difficult to change that and most attempts to change it just don't work or backfire. So I was never a great enthusiast for the image side of things and in any case as far as William should... in my view and a few people shared it. In so far as William had an

image, you know, he should just play to his natural strengths and his normal accent, his comprehensive school upbringing, his basically, you know... There was a very down to earth side to his character which made him as a sort of out of touch elite Tory... You know, knowing his real background, his real temperament, it seemed to me that really what we had to do was just bring out his basic character and people would warm to it which in the end of course has happened

18. Identity and image

Identity, actual features of, need to be portrayed to develop a reputation

Wood, 5

Consultant, management consultant.

He worked for McKinseys, um he was... as a reporter I covered his bi-election in 1999, he was one of the youngest men ever elected to parliament at the age of 27 I think. Er, so in many ways, you know, he was a freak, William. Er, and you know you could see him as part of an elite. But of course I didn't really see him like that because I knew what he was like at the personal level and he wasn't really like that, he was very clever and very sharp but he was pretty down to earth. He wasn't... he was in touch with, in my view, he was pretty much in touch with normal people and I knew enough about his life up in the north of England and the constituency. And when he used to talk to us about how he used to like to go to the local pub and he could talk for hours about what the farmers were talking about, worrying about their sheep and their dogs and, you know, their incomes and the weather and all that kind of thing. He liked all that and he could talk very fluently and easily about it so it wasn't an act. Um, so I was constantly working on the theme we can bring out his character and his personality and his leadership skills through doing the right things. Save the pound and er, you know he was the first person to question the high levels of immigration Britain was starting to experience at that time. So he did adopt a lot of positions that in the end came to define him.

18. Identity and image

Gap between personality and public persona	Hazlewood, 2
<p>Well, I've been told several times by people who've gone on to meet the Secretary of State that they find a very different person to the image that's been portrayed of her in the media. Erm, she ... I suppose in the Welsh [0:03:37.6] context comes from a slight disadvantage that she represents seats in England.</p>	
18. Identity and image	
Identity – public persona	Hazlewood, 7
<p>And that is why I go back to what I said earlier on, when people have met Cheryl they have a very different view of her than what they have read in the newspapers and seen on the television, that is very important. You can't see everybody of course, but</p>	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Leaders' public performances are intended to address distinct audiences	Neather, 9,10
<p>There are certain messages that the Party faithful would expect, others that the moderately interested television audience and then all the political pundits that sit in there. Wouldn't you somehow have three completely distinct, different speeches for those three distinct audiences?</p> <p>Well, to a degree, but most people aren't watching the whole thing. The vast majority of people are going to see a few clips on TV and that's it. And so that's the importance of sound bites and so on. But it just... that particular context of a Party Conference, yes you're speaking to the Party faithful so there's all sort of crap that's said then that they would actually like – other people would find boring, and there's not really any way around that. And one of Blair's strengths was his relative unconcern for that, whereas Brown [0:42:02.6] it. Journalists – I think it's just much more of a sense of confidence, really. Confidence in...</p>	

19 Audience segmentation – audience response	
Politicians may change their appearance to respond to public expectation	McBride, 4
<p>Now at some stage that got fed back to Alan Johnson and he, um, started wearing dark, navy blue suits and he stopped being seen in public wearing sunglasses and his speech became a bit softer and, you know, less of a kind of, you know, man giving you a batter more equilibrium. So at some stage, I don't know by who, and I don't think under Gordon that clearly seeped back to him and probably came as a bit of a shock to him.</p>	
19 Audience segmentation – audience response	
Segmentation of publics in opinion research was limited by resources available	McBride, 5
<p>Right, would you split that up to specific publics? Surely you're not interested in any electoral resistance, certainly not in this one, you're interested in, you know, being perceived in a specific, positive way by 100% of the public. Would you split that up and say the groups we're interested in, this is what they think?</p> <p>Er, I think it was almost always, and this again came down to cost, um, that you couldn't afford to do much more than this but it would always be swing voters in marginals. So it was just almost religiously it was swing voters and marginals.</p>	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Chancellor Brown's staff only had anecdotal evidence of what specific publics wanted Brown to be like and behave	McBride, 6
<p>I think occasionally you'd almost rely on newspapers to do, um, things for you. So for instance, you know, we would never, we would never have spent money sort of testing how Gordon was viewed in Scotland. But if a Scottish newspaper you'd pour over the results because it was your only time to get a handle on that. And, you know, occasionally that would throw up really important, interesting things like, er, you know, people really hated the fact that, um in Scotland that Gordon was trying to distance himself from Scotland and trying to act more English. They hated that, um, at the same time you'd pick up from there</p>	

that, er they blamed the London media for a lot of that and sort of, you know, creating a bad image for Gordon.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Among Brown's staff there is an awareness of the electorate as specific publics	McBride, 8
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um, but for example, um, you know, deciding that he should do a round of women's magazine interviews because this is a difficult market for us, women don't know who he is, he should do this to introduce himself to that market. You know, that was carefully planned, carefully staged about who we were getting in, how it would all work. Um, someone like Spencer was integral to that and integral to preparing it.

19. Audience segmentation / audience response

Browns communications advisors discussed and linked intended target audience and and communications technique	McBride, 16
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And I think one of the mistakes we made was trying to sort of almost do too much through him. I mean in some ways Wilf probably had better ideas which is, you know, there should be books about him coming out. You get him to spend a lot of time with an author that would write a book about what he's really like, um and get them to do that for you. But if you were trying to get to that sort of audience, you know, almost the sort of GMTV watching, er, women's magazine buying thing you're not going to do that through someone writing a heavyweight book. So you almost had to go out there or you felt you had to go out there. Um, but whether that was the right judgement I don't know.

19. Audience segmentation / audience response

Blair tailored his speeches to meet audience expectations, e.g. speeches to party conference vs to the media	McBride, 16
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Yeah, I mean the thing I think I'd say about that is that Tony Blair used to... you know, you've always got this big moment of the conference speech and I always used to think there was an awful lot of stuff in the conference speech which was not communicating to the public, wasn't communicating to the TV audience at home, wasn't even communicating

to the media in the room. It was about saying to the Labour Party, um, "I'm not Tony Blair, I've gone back to... you know, we are, I am more traditional in my views and I understand where you're coming from and why you were angry towards Tony by the end of his time in government." And you'd always almost sit there during those passages of a speech and just think oh this will be over in a minute, you know, and we'll get back to the bit that... because you could almost see the media rolling their eyes sometimes.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Blair and Brown calibrated the speeches they gave address specific audiences

McBride 16,17

Now Tony had a sort of weirdly different approach. I think he used to make, on the whole, very boring conference speeches which came alive for five minutes which were exclusively directed to the public and that kind of thing. But the rest of the time it would be almost for the speech writer community who would think that's a very nicely constructed speech. But, um, what he didn't do was (But Brown did) ever sort of have these passages which were basically about saying to the Labour Party, "Let's shout, everyone else out of the room, I believe in Labour and this is why we're here and this is what we're about." And so that's probably the only example I'd give where he was, um, you know, you felt a bit sort of... I just felt from that kind of media management point of view that, er, that, you know, this should have been geared towards the public and it wasn't.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Awareness of specific publics with different expectations

Hill, 3

What I think is at the core of what you're looking for is this idea that somehow there is a permanent reputation building business going on, and if only it were that straightforward. Because, you see if you're a party politician you're building a number of reputations.

If you're a party politician you are building a reputation with your colleagues, a reputation with the country, a reputation with your party, and very often they may be in conflict and so

consequently the reputation management then is a very ... is a multi-headed beast, which makes it very difficult to say that you have got a ... you've got a plan.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Attempts to reconcile the style and messages that are right for the electorate with the images that are expected by the party

Hill, 3

What you've got to do ... what you do is you essentially ... in communications terms you've got two or three tasks. The first task is obviously to get across in the best light what that person is saying and why, but then you've got the task of ... do we ... is it actually necessary to temper this, because if you say it that way ... if you communicate in that way the general public won't like it. If you communicate in that way your party won't like it, and then you've got to say right, well, let's in the first instance live with where the person whom you're dealing with stands. Right, does this person actually feel that unless the party likes what they're saying they're not comfortable with what they're doing. Or are they, as quite a lot of the Labour politicians did throughout the time we were in government, saying look, the party has got to understand that if we are going to remain in power the language and the approach that we use has got to be one that is properly understood by the country

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Blair found messages that integrated expectations of the electorate with what he had to say to the party

Hill, 3

And in the end, the best politicians have a capacity to speak to the country but in a way that is understood by the mainstreaming of their own particular party. Historically the Labour Party has found that quite difficulty. Erm, but, but historic ... that was really what Blair did. I mean, Blair ... Blair convert ... Blair, by his use of language and by his manner, converted being Labour to instead of being something that was slightly straight was something that was absolutely mainstream. And the important thing about that was what he did actually performed both the function – I mean his colleagues sometimes resented it, sometimes liked it, but recognised how successful it was

19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Communicators select the audiences that fit the politician's strengths	Eustice, 2
David Cameron was a slightly different person, and ... who is also quite a decent sort of character, but ... erm, had a more modern kind of feel to him. He was a younger, new generation sort of person. Erm, more at ease with modern Britain. You could put him into situations where he could communicate with er, with the younger generation in a way that would be natural, and in a way that you couldn't have done with Michael Howard.	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Media are selected in order to address specific audiences	Macrory, 2
. Cameron-, nobody created Cameron in my opinion. He was-, Cameron was what he was. He's his own person. He's not a product of anybody's-, nobody's told him to be what he is. He is what he is and it comes to him naturally and that's why he sort of rose up because he was the man for the time. We can help him obviously. You know, you can suggest that he does certain things which will get his image across to a wider audience so you can suggest he does a big interview with GQ magazine or you can get him-, target certain audiences. You can put him on (which I always thought was a mistake) the Jonathan Ross programme which was one of the first big TV interviews he did because you're getting to a different audience and you think, well, he would come across well on Jonathan Ross in a way that Ian Duncan Smith wouldn't	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Awareness of target audiences	Beattie, 3
When they talk to you or your colleagues, [0:15:09.8] aware they perceive as their audience, their target audience – journalists, or party members, or the electorate? Are you aware that in their minds they've got this segmentation of what are the groups that are relevant to them?	



I mean all of them, they are as aware as anybody. You're talking to some [0:15:33.3]. The Mirror sells 1.2 million copies. We have up to three and a half to four million readers. It's a big, big influence in a lot of people's lives in this country. That's more than the evening news. So they are very aware, particularly from a labour party ... If it's a Labour party issue, we have more Labour party members [0:15:53.2]. We have more union members – members who are [0:15:56.8]. We are a way of getting a message from them to that constituency. They are also aware that there is a hierarchy, as there is in every country, of how opinions are formed in Westminster, and we are part of that mix as well. But I would never pretend that we were influential on that as The Guardian or The Spectator. I wouldn't pretend we are part of that mix. So you are talking to three constituencies: Westminster, party membership and the wider public. And the Mirror probably is best talking to party membership.

If you talk about the Labour party.

If you talk about the Labour party, yes, in the same way The Telegraph is best for talking to [0:16:54.6].

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Different audiences have different cycles of attention and interests

Beattie, 4

You wouldn't recognise a pattern long term what kind of [0:18:56.9], what kind of public appearance, what kind of messages. [0:19:01.9]

Alasdair Campbell famously or infamously said that when the media gets bored, that's just when the public starts to listen to it, which is kind of a difficulty for media because we get bored very quickly, so they need something to keep a message alive.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

The public is more forgiving than the media and accept idiosyncratic leaders

Beattie, 5,6

Do you think [0:30:26.0] ... Put it this way, Gordon Brown was ... There was a lot writing that he may have been mad, but there was positive media coverage while he was chancellor,

and initially when he was Prime Minister that changed and there was ... [0:30:42.7] perhaps if you are chancellor you've got a different job description and therefore a certain persona or personality is right for specific job. If that job changes, you might be ...

There's two things there [0:30:55.2]. The actual talent pool is very small and actually if you start casting around let's say in terms of a Labour leader there's not that many choices. And it was exactly the same problem for the Conservatives in the early 2000s [0:31:19.0] because it took them eight years to find somebody who was on course to be a leader, so these guys are quite rare. [0:31:27.7] an interesting disconnect between what the public want [0:31:34.9] and what the media demand of politicians, and actually if you look at Alex Salmond in Scotland and Boris in London, the public are much more forgiving than the media are, and they're much more willing to embrace a strong personality than the media. And we are in danger of actually killing our own son because people make Boris an example of good copy [0:32:18.2]. They make good newsstands. And yet we go out of our way to almost try and destroy anybody who does put their head above the parapet. That's also a political [0:32:31.2] by demanding a ridiculous amount of loyalty, so that is an interesting question.

#### 19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Segmentation of audiences

Stacey, 4

Do you notice they segment their stakeholders and they would have one message for you or the style if they sent the message in a different way and attributed to...?

Yeah to a certain extent, I mean it's difficult to know what they tell the other papers. What you really notice is where things get dropped. So particularly on the kind of... over the weekend. Stories will just get briefed to certain papers and they know if they keep it to one paper and they say, "Look this is an exclusive" it's more likely to hit the front. So when DWP want to do their last stats on scroungers they'll give it to the Mail, sometimes the Telegraph. So that's always the slightly difficult situation that papers are in when the party they don't necessarily support in their editorial stance isn't in power and it's more difficult to get some of these stories.

But in terms of the way they brief it.

Yeah I mean I'm sure they are sensitive. For instance yesterday there was a story about

the way the Royal Family is funded. Now to us they were talking about their kind of complex financial matters but went behind it and the revenues that have come in from the Crown and State and all the rest of it. I'm sure the Sun they went in and told them all about Prince William and Kate Middleton how it's good news for them. So yeah but you really notice it when you miss, not that you miss a story, but when a story goes somewhere else that's really irritating. I mean my predecessor used to cover welfare, he just gave up on the whole department because they just constantly briefed the Mail and didn't tell anybody else anything.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Blair was aware of different audiences and adapted communications accordingly

Price, 2

There was. He had a great ... That was a presen- ... that was more a presentational talent, I think, than a, you know, talent if you think it's a talent, or a-, or, or something more negative if you think it's something more negative. Erm, he did. He would, erm, he could sort of be different people. He could be very sort of blokeish and ordinary when he wanted to be. He could be very sophisticated. He could be ... [Pause] He could play to an audience,

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Blair adapted the presentation to audience, not the message

Price, 2

but the, the, the central message was always the same, and I was always very struck because I have been with him when he would have private meetings with backbench Labour MPs, or he would be speaking to people in the City of London, or he would be speaking to, you know, this pressure group, or he would be on television. And the core message he didn't change. The way in which he delivered it he might change and the sort of, you know, persona that he exuded and his, his ... And that's a kind of empathetic communication which he had, erm, which was, you know, people skills, it was emotional intelligence that he was expressing. But the core political intelligence didn't change

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

In presentations the content stays the same, whilst the style is adapted to the audience	Stevenson, 3
<p>k ... I think you can make too much of it. I mean, if ... in writing policy one ... one is always thinking about how it will be delivered, you know, whether it will be a statement in the house, whether it will be a press conference, whether it will be a speech, a big speech. You know, you'd use different materials for each environment and, and ... they will be prepared differently and they would be written differently, that's certainly the case. I don't think they change the essential policy, because the policy has still got to be the policy, and that's important, but it's a very different speech if it's just a statement to the House of Commons than if you're trying to go out and talk to a big audience, maybe an international audience, it's completely different.</p>	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Political survival is conditional on ability to communicate with key stakeholder	Stevenson, 4
<p>op of that you've got party members, the rank and file, the unions and stuff like that. Are you aware of their different publics [?] and their different approaches to communicate with these publics?</p> <p>All the time, yes.</p> <p>And ... example to ...</p> <p>Er ... there are too many, but, I mean, you know, but ... it's not as if that's distinctive or different. Of course you have to respond differently to different things and you, you are a creature of various sections of society who have permitted you to rise to the position you are in and in some cases elected you to do that, and if ... if you can't communicate with them, you will lose your power base, so of course you must ... you must [0:12:46] everything you say, every position you adopt must [0:12:52]</p>	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Communicators are aware of specific publics and their distinct perceptions of the politician	Stevenson, 5

What is it that makes the public come to perceive a politician in a specific way?

Does party affiliation still have any impact on that?

Yes, of course, yes. In some ways too much. Because once you get to Prime Minister you're Prime Minister for the whole country and you have to serve in that capacity. But of course people will have a lens through which they look at ... particular politicians. Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats ... we know what they're like, and therefore they will be like what we think they are.

#### 19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Intuitive and common sensical identification of key publics and their attitudes

Davies, 5,6

you have discussions about what your key most important publics were, the party rank and file, the parliamentary party, journalists, the electorate, the male and women, or the younger ...

Did I have discussions with Jack?

Yeah.

No. I mean I think ...

Did you think about it yourself?

Yeah, I used to think about it ... He ... I suppose the most ... I suppose in the sense that we did discuss it, we probably did discuss it in the sense that we didn't ... We'd never go into detail saying, you know "We need to target a message at, you know, 45 to 50 year old women living in Worcester" or something like that. But, but did we think we want to aim our message at, you know, what you might regard as the majority, you know, and how you define that, you know, yes, we did, absolutely. And I'll give you an example. I mean a prison is a really good example of this because there's this debate about short sentences. Do short sentences in prison work or not? And there's a lot of evidence to suggest that they don't. Jack's ... Jack's argument, which I used often as a line to journalist because I, because I think it's right, first and foremost, is that it may be the case that locking somebody up for three months, it's very difficult to get that person rehabilitated in three months, if, if not impossible actually, err, and it might be better if they're, you know ... it may be in the long term more effective to their rehabilitation to treat them in the community in some way, give them a community sentence or whatever than send them to prison for three months.

But try telling that to the people of Blackburn on the street where that person lives, where that person is every single night causing grief in their neighbourhood, mugging somebody. You know, you can't forget those people because actually they're the law abiding majority of people who don't commit crimes, and that ... The old lady who has been terrorised by that person who's been sent down for three months isn't going to care whether three months is not long enough for them to do anything with them. She's just getting three months of a break, you know. And, err ...

You [0:14:15.3] journalists. Journalists [0:14:15.9] ...

You can try and say that to them. They wouldn't l... It didn't really cut ... I never felt like I got very much success on that front, but, err, you know, I think that's a bloody good argument actually, you know, because ... and it ultimately comes back to that street politics thing actually that, you know, there is a law abiding majority ultimately, and, you know, their view is not ... I mean I think, I think what Jack objected to and what I objected to as well was the times when those sorts of views were almost regarded as "Ohyeah, come on now. That doesn't fit with my sort of liberal, err, you know, north London [0:14:51.8] party type of approach." You know, it's terrible that these poor people ... you know, it's not their fault that they're in prison. It's not their fault that they commit crimes. Well, where does the responsibility lie, ultimately? And I'm ... particularly where I work now, you know, we have a strong view that a lot of people shouldn't be in prison who are in prison for a whole range of reasons [0:15:09.9] in particular ...

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

a cabinet minister may find that cabinet colleagues behave like a critical public

Davies, 7, 8

But did other people? Yeah, absolutely. Did other people, you know, if they didn't like a particular policy did they brief against, you know, against other ministers within the same party? Absobloodylutely. I know who did it. Erm, it was, you know, extraordinary that people used to do that. And when you look at it now, it's incredibly self-indulgent, isn't it, because hey we haven't got power anymore, you know, and we did then and we were ... we caused enough problems for ourselves without, you know ... you know, why cause problems internally when actually ... Anyway ...

19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Party members are a key public that are (usually) taken into account by ministerial communications advisors	Richards, 5
<p>So you're limited by the agenda of the government, by the plans you're down to do. What about the party? Looking for limitations, you could in theory say, well, this is the direction that's good for us, we look good if we go that way, our government limits us, Cabinet office tells us what to do/what not to do and what about the party; is there any-, is that-</p> <p>Well, the party is a key sort of audience that has to be thought about. They don't have any constitutional power of course but they can inflict defeats at the party conference and add to voices that-, of dissent, you know, so-, but they can be ignored as well. John Prescott, when he was a minister, you know, he didn't want to go down a certain route of funding council house building by councils (the so called fourth option) and he was mandated by the party conference year after year after year to do it and never did it and just ignored it and had a big row every year, went away and carried on as normal. So there's no constitutional role there at all. It's merely a noise they can make to try and influence ministers' behaviour.</p>	
19. Audience segmentation – audience response	
Politicians and their communicators attempt hard to gain favour with powerful media proprietors	Jones, 11
<p>Blair worked so carefully to try to win over newspaper proprietors, you know. He went all over-, he went all the way to Australia to woo Murdoch, you know, and of course the Murdoch press switched; Cameron did the same. I mean it was very very interesting. When Coulson got the job in May 2007, I happened to be that year's chairman of a charity called the Journalists' Charity and we run a lot of fundraising events and Coulson was working his way back into the favour of the Murdoch press and restoring his contacts and</p>	

bringing Cameron along and you could see this momentum was building and of course it culminates in 2009 when the Sun swapped sides again and decided to back the Conservatives.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Sometimes politicians devise policies to satisfy key publics, sometimes they apparently stick to your conviction

Jones, 8, 9

Is what you're saying reflected in the selection and the emphasis of content as well? Surely someone like Campbell or Coulson, they would in some instances (in a party conference speech and other instances) give advice on-

Exactly.

What should be emphasised, what should be said and how.

Yes, exactly so, exactly so. So I mean that's the other area where there is of course a tremendous degree of concern. Now if you take for example the current campaign which the tabloids are running about the price of petrol and already the Chancellor is hinting ahead of the budget that he might bring in some stabiliser to stop the prices going up. So oh no no, there's no doubt about it: the party conference speeches are always destined to try to meet the agenda and appease the agenda of the tabloids. (In a nutshell: What do leaders try to get out of a party conference speech?) Of course, the difference is with people like Margaret Thatcher who was not prepared to and who came out with that marvellous line about the lady's not for turning. I mean then everybody began to realise that she wasn't going to back down. I covered the 1984 miners' strike and you knew that she was not going to accept a negotiated settlement of the strike. The only settlement of the strike was when half of the miners had walked back to work, returned to work and broken the strike, the other half would have to walk back with their tails between their legs. There was going to be no other way and the country got to know that there was no other alternative you see. And of course with Blair, I mean we didn't know then the lengths that he was prepared to go, you know, to get his way because I mean he believed that this was the role and I mean he's written about it, the role that Britain had as a world policeman and



that it was his responsibility to use the power that he'd been gifted of Britain's great, you know, ability to mount military campaigns and offences; he had to use it in the role of a world policeman. So they are conviction politicians or were on those issues but most-, mostly you do see the politicians bending to the sort of-, the campaigns of the moment.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Great interest in headlines or PM's questions even though this may not be relevant to target audience	Greer, 3
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I think there's a lot more thought goes into... you mentioned headlines and I think that's quite right about sort of getting constant sort of short term good hits for yourself and negative hits against your opponent. And less thought about what that actually means in the bigger picture for the electorate who are receiving that message. Does it mean anything to them? You know, there's an obsession for example about Prime Minister's questions, I'm really not sure how important an event that actually is in terms of the wider electorate and how much attention they pay to it, either directly or indirectly through the comment that's formed as a result of the impressions that are gained out of a particular Prime Minister's questions.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

David Miliband' s failure to to satisfy various groups within and outside the party was a deliberate decision in awareness of the risk	Redfern, 2,3
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So you're saying it's not the—it wasn't the lack of advice, so they all would be fully aware of this is the risk we are running but it was the position of the individuals that [00:07:27].

I know for a fact that people like Andy Bagnall, Jim Godfrey, were across all of that. They are brilliant political advisory people. They know every aspect of how the boat works and

the [00:07:43] that you need and all that stuff. Yeah, he made the decision and frankly it was a gamble. It didn't pay off but had it done it would have been quite a spectacular win because, as I say, he would have been his own man completely and in a way that Tony Blair wasn't, actually, to some extent. So yeah, interesting stuff.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

in political leadership contests the party publics are not researched formally as they and their expectations are known to everyone involved.

Redfern, 3

When you work for corporate clients surely you start any campaign doing extensive research and you find out what are the stakeholders, what are their interests, how do we meet them and so forth. In the case of Ed Miliband last year, was that a hunch, a gut feeling, what the various stakeholders wanted? Is that all—because [00:08:22] embedded somewhere in this Labour Party world so you know what the different groups want, or is that based on research? What were the resources you had to find out?

Well I think it's different to a corporate campaign. In a corporate campaign you absolutely do all your due diligence research, everything else and so you know absolutely everyone. You have a big spider diagram of who the stakeholders are, you know who—you know, you plot them against influence and impact. So effectively, you know this, anybody who is in that top right quadrant, i.e. the most influential or the most impactful, those are the people you want but you want to move the people who don't have a positive view of you over to that quadrant and so you spend quite a lot of effort there, and there's a few people that you just keep warm and there's a few people you ignore because they've no significance.

I think on the corporate side you go all out to brief, you know, media briefings, you'd have dinners, you'd have dinners, you'd have round tables, you know, you would get a sense that you were reaching out into those communities, that you had a very clear set of briefings, a very clear set of objectives. You were lining people up and it would take time but you would do it. With the Labour Party and with David it's different because all of the stakeholders know who he is and they know roughly what he stands for and he knows a lot of them and he knows the movers and shakers and who is going to deliver him votes and all of that stuff. So for me I think the thing that his campaign revolved around to some extent was yeah, he

knew who all those guys were and he had pretty good relationships with them but he was gambling on the fact that the sleeping membership, the quiet membership, the membership you don't hear of, don't hear from, don't come to meetings, who do get galvanised by things like a leadership contest, would gravitate to him massively.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

David Miliband's team for the leadership election recognised that while his messages were directed at the electorate, the key public were party members

Redfern, 4,5

But the mixture, the various traits, the various attributes that you are now describing, how the [00:15:00] is that the rank and file of the Labour Party and the electorate, what they're looking for, there may be a discrepancy between what the electorate wants and what Labour Party members want.

Yeah, there is.

So that is only based on your—you had a feeling for that but it wasn't—it didn't have that numbers and figures and could say, well this is—

I think there was polling done but there wasn't—I mean the things is with it, because—it's a bit of an arbitrary thing because he—obviously everybody's focused on Labour Party members, right and, you know, as I say, David's gamble was that he was, I think, talking to the country more than he was talking to the Labour Party members. So whenever he was on anything, whenever he was on a platform you got the sense that he was talking to a broader electorate and, you know, that was his gamble.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Focus on target audience

Redfern 6

Did you in that campaign see any difference between advisors who have a marketing background and journalism background and a different approach and how you deal with publics and journalists?

I think it was—yeah, I mean I'm not sure I saw that much of top guys but most of [00:21:16] political background. What I noticed was extremely good organisation and what I mean by that is for example you look at Andy Bagnall and it might be interesting for you to talk to him actually, he knew every single step of the way what the process was in terms of the Labour Party, so who had block votes, who had—you know, whether the Co-op could support. He did a massive campaign getting all CLPs on board so David won convincingly across constituency Labour Party's. I mean ours, I mean I thought they we were going—I thought they would back Ed, the fact is David got 80% of the votes, you know, it was extraordinary. He was storming it and, you know, we thought, well if he can win Walthamstow, where it's very left wing, he can win elsewhere.

So I think that was the thing, I think—I don't know what was going on in terms of journalist liaison, but I suspect—I don't know, I think it was less important and I think that judgement was right, that it was more important to get the structural process right so that we didn't miss any opportunities to garner support votes, because you know, how—in a trade union election, for example, you know, classic, it's like [00:22:40], if you've got a biography and at the bottom of your biography you've got 150 branches that are backing you and the next guys got five, you're going to get more votes, you know, you are going to win and I think that was the calculation for David and the fact that he'd won the party, it's just that miscalculation on trade unions, which was him I think.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Communication strategy balances the focus on two main target audiences: the own party and the electorate

Livermore, 8

How you take into account these constituencies within the, the country and Party?

Erm –

Do you or is that done at all?

Yeah, absolutely. Erm, I mean the primary objective of er, any politician that ultimately is to win ... win election and get into power. So that clearly is your primary audience, is the people who are going to vote for you in the country. Erm, but often in order to get into the position in the first place you have to get elected within your Party. So erm, they're often, they're often sequential so you, you first have to keep the Party on, on board and, and, and

court favourability so your, your reputation within the Party can start out as very important. But once you've then achieved that office, clearly the ultimate audience, as I say, is ... is the country. And it's more a matter of keeping the Party happy than it is about shaping what you do and what you say and your reputation to suit that. So you have to keep them on side and so that's clearly an issue. But it's in no way your primary focus, once you've achieved ... well up until that point it's, it's going to be your primary focus because they are your electorate. So it's really a matter of what phase you're in, who your primary electorate is. Erm, yeah, so while you're trying to get elected to that position your primary electorate might be the Party but you make sure you keep an eye on the country because you don't want to do anything that's going to be in their long term detriment. It's then flipped probably so that you're then, your number one focus is the country, but keeping an eye on the Party to make sure that they don't get unhappy.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Awareness of target audiences/ stakeholders

Kelly, 4

Your target audience is public opinion working through the medium of the journalists, and that's why, for instance, broadcasting has a value in that you can reach over the head of the journalist to public opinion. That's why [0:15:49.7] can be a very useful mechanism. That's why social networking has its value. You can't, however, bypass journalism, in my view. There used to be a great debate, you know, should we be taking on journalists? And my view was always no because I always thought that there was only one winner in that. Whether you like it or not, the medium is there and you have to work through it. You're not trying to get it across in a way that makes public impact because you're right in the sense that your target audience is not the journalist per se.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Anecdotal, casual segmentation and research of target groups

Waring, 4

Ultimately it is the electorate, isn't it?

Yeah.

The key stakeholder. Now that is – it's so diverse and it's all over the country and what they think, and how they view government work may be very different. That actually you cannot ... it's not reflected in appointments and in talks and in what you, the feedback you get on a daily basis, or is it?

No, it's not reflected every day.

Do you do opinion research more systematically?

Well, of course we get opinion polling but that's mostly done ... erm, we don't have the resources to do like opinion polling on each politician. I don't know if other parties perhaps do it. I mean we do, we do, we do ... erm, all parties do polling on their own, on their leaders, of course, but you wouldn't do it on your second, third, fourth most high profile. So, yes, opinion polling, but don't forget that MPs also have their own constituencies where they obviously have sort of a microcosm of society. I mean even the most affluent seats have their more deprived parts, so you do get the socio economic breakdown and you get businesses, and you get feedback from other, your other parliamentary colleagues and say "Gosh, when I've been on the doorstep this is going down really badly." And a lot of the time that anecdotal evidence is very useful.

#### 19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Awareness of key publics

Waring 7

To-, to what degree do you discuss that in, in, in Mr Cable's constituency which is not, you know, most [0:16:56.3] are not high profile business people but their interests are very different.

We talk about it a lot.

For the community, he's responsible for the business community.

Yeah. We consider it a lot because there is a tension there, as we have to make sure that we are balancing up, balancing that properly because there's nobody else in government that's championing business as much, so you do have to make sure that you're fulfilling that government responsibility.

On the other hand, wide business, or banking, or big business is not that popular. You have a comfortable alliance with people that ...

Yes, exactly.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Adapting messages to audiences - segmentation	Wood, 4
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Would you have been aware and his advisors that they were very distinct public, distinct different expectations? Now when the 14 pint interview and the Notting Hill Carnival and so forth I think Cecil Parkinson that [0:16:12.1] what they did. On the other hand there may have been a youngish audience that thought well this is what we want them to be...

Well I understand that when this sort of thing is discussed, I mean it is discussed in the context of different groups in society, the young youth group, young people is one group. Women are obviously another group, um, sort of... and then of course there's all the sociological stuff about what social class people are in, um, to what extent the Conservative Party can only ever do well when he can appeal to the C1s and C2s. He can do reasonably well with the As and Bs but it's that middle ground that Margaret Thatcher once appealed very strongly to. Um, so there is a lot of, yes, discussion about all that but that's often more... that is quite frequently discussed in terms of policy, er so we ought to be doing something for working mothers say. Or why don't we do something for students, say, or actually our policies for the elderly are not good enough. And then there's the whole area of, you know, the aspiration classes and all that kind of thing. We need more aspirational policies, we need to appeal much more to Mr and Mrs Average in a three-bedroom semi that they're buying on a mortgage in, you know, the East Midlands or something.

Um, I mean there's an endless amount of work done on this and whether it ever, I often wonder, whether how much it... I'm sceptical as to how much good it does from the point of view of the political party. Some people would probably be more believe you can target messages much more precisely on different groups. I'm not sure but I think real life people get a general sense of a party and a politician and they either sort of like them or they don't like them or there somewhere in the middle and not quite sure.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Distinct audiences

Hazlewood 3,4

But in your [0:07:00.8] in the public appearances would you keep that in mind and have an influence in saying ... well, if she has a constituency in England then she has certain interests and wants to represent the various issues that are being debated about England.

Of course, yes.

Do you keep that low profile or is that an issue?

No, not necessarily. It's not really an issue. I mean it's well documented that she has the issue of the high speed rail proposals. I'm not wishing to go into those but that is, as far as I'm concerned, entirely separate from her work as Secretary of State for Wales. I don't involve myself in constituency issues because it's not my role to do that. I think we within the Wales office keep her focus and the focus of her work entirely on what happens within Wales and how we can best represent Wales within Whitehall and within the UK government. And that would be things like working with colleagues to deliver on key policy. It was always going to be a difficult time when we came into government in May because of all the financial problems that we inherited. Erm, the first six months were very difficult. There was a perception that Wales was being, erm, disproportionately hit [0:08:09.9] comprehensive spending review. Not actually the case, but, erm, that narrative started to build up and there were a number of key projects which the last government failed to deliver and it kind of left them for us to deal with [0:08:23.5] training academy, [0:08:27.2] to a lesser extent, rail electrification from London through to South Wales. Some [0:08:33.9] was never going to happen, so even though people like Peter Hane are very keen on it we can easily deal with that one. [0:08:42.0] massively expensive, multibillion pound project. By the time we get to take the decision it was already a) over budget, b) not fit for purpose for what the [0:08:52.2] current training requirements. So we've dealt with that and over the last few weeks we've made further statements about [0:08:58.0] which have given new investment to the site. But rail electrification became quite [0:09:03.9] of what [0:09:06.1] was doing for Wales and also the Secretary of State's reputation and role within government and what she was doing to help Wales. We've delivered on that in March of this year. We made the announcement. It's coming through to Cardiff by 2017, keeping the door open to Swansea



and looking to working with the Welsh government here to electrify the commuter lines in and out of Cardiff. That was a real turning point I think in the perception, broadly, of UK government and what it was doing for Wales and the role that we've been playing within that. I think the last six months have been far more positive. Of course there are critics. Our political opponents will try and expose those as and when they can but the mood of the media on the whole I think has been a lot more sympathetic, and understanding and realising there's a difficult job of work to be done.

19. Audience segmentation – audience response

Target audiences

Hazlewood 5,6

Are you are aware of different, the different publics you talk to, you have different messages, a different style of where you communicate to them. I mean one is the general election but actually that is more complex than just we talk to the people out there in the country. Erm, I talked to [0:12:23:3] two weeks ago, the business secretary you are very much aware, on the one hand you have got the ordinary people that vote and on the other hand you have got the business community, a very distinct interest, very different messages they want to hear, how do you reconcile the two? Do you have similar channels?

Erm, we have a very regular dialogue with the business community but that is by no means the only dialogue we have with people but of course you are going to talk about the policies that impact on specific sections of the community. So if I was talking to a business audience or was writing an article for a business article for business magazine then clearly I want to be focusing on the clear skills areas, but I don't think we'd necessary just make err, a broad distinction, erm when we are planning electoral strategies.

Yes but the entire country listens, so whatever statements you make you have to somehow take into account that it is not just the people of Wales but the entire country that listens to the statements that you make. Do you make a distinction, do you see that different interest there, on the one hand the Welsh seem to be interested in perhaps more evolutionary or the

opportunity to take their own decisions.

Yes.

Whilst the country at large may perhaps be concerns, we don't want the United Kingdom and Wales and break ups, there are these specific interests.

Absolutely, from the perspective of the Wales office we are talking specifically to the Welsh audience rather than, I mean other than a party conference where we would have a broader discussion about where is this based within the United Kingdom, erm for most of the year it is within the borders of this country that we are talking to. Erm so the message is going to be somewhat different I would think, err, I am not putting that particularly well, erm...

But as the party [0:14:15:3] have a different interest from what the people of Wales want and surely as a member of the party, no matter what officers of state she has got now, surely you need to sometimes balance the different interests of the different groups you talk to, you remember the party so you do talk to them and if they are not too happy about the future of the revolution then how do you reconcile that?

Party members are always going to support the party and its policies on the whole, we'd hope anyway, the importance is reaching beyond that, you are always going to have a co-vote I think with them, even when we were at our lowest ebb in 1999 in Wales we still got 16 and 17% of the vote in the assembly elections, but you need a lot more of that to win an election, so we got up to 26%.

I didn't put that well, I meant the party conference and the delegates there, the activists that are there, the party conference who perhaps take a difference stance to a solution or other policy points than the people of Wales.

Mmm-hmm.

So do you have different messages or is that, you just shut up in a certain situation when you think that doesn't look good if I make that announcement here and now in that audience?

I think, once you are making a speech on the hand at party conference, the message that you brief out to the media, which will go beyond the conference or could be slightly different, you know what you are saying on the whole, but embellish is perhaps the wrong

word, but emphasise certain specific points to try and make a point.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

A political decision that impacts on reputation may be beyond control, however the explanation why a decision was taken is part of the communicators' brief

McBride, 2

But what we... and you couldn't control the decision that was made that was made for other reasons. What you could control was the way that he explained that and the fact that he did it and sounded evasive, said that he hadn't looked at polls, said that actually all this stuff about an election had been dreamed up by other people, he never really wanted one in the first place. That was what, I think, did lasting damage to his... both his public reputation, more importantly the way the media perceived him and the way that they characterised him from that point on as being at once, you know, slow to make decisions, dithering but also, er, reluctant to take responsibility for his own decisions, um, always looking to blame other people, that kind of thing. So that was slower burn, some of those things I've described, but in terms of having a serious impact on someone's image which you found very hard to come back from that was certainly, you know, certainly, you know, one of the best examples over the last 10/20 years.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Events have to be used to contribute to the narrative (values, ideas, aims)

Hill, 4

Of course events drive, but what I do agree with, and because it is consistent with everything that should happen in communications, whether it's a company advising a major client, whether it's people talking to government, is that you do have to have a narrative, you really do have to have something ... all this ... it's ridiculous language that's used in this business. But basically you need to have a clear set of values and ideas and aims and ... and against that everything is measured. So in that sense, whether it's suddenly a one off or whether it's something that you know is going to happen in two months' time, it's got to be relevant to your narrative. And that's really ... the task really is

to pull it ... to pull it so that it's ... so that it fits into what's happening. It may not fit very comfortably. It may ... it may be a real struggle, but it's about having a strategy which, which acts as your compass as you move forward.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

The ability to develop a long term strategy depends on the technical ability to fit day to day events into the narrative	Hill, 4
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But the point is that you can do some of what the Hill and Knowlton people are saying. You can plan to roll out an education programme. Of course you can. But in the end your reputation is based upon the capacity that you have on a given day at a given time to convert an event into something which either helps the narrative, or doesn't hinder it. And therefore, although you may be working out personal reputation based on the capacity to deliver a narrative which is yours, in the end the long term planning is really ... well, that's very useful and very important. The long term aims and the way you get there and the strategy and the narrative are essential, but it is that capacity on a day to day basis to convert ... to convert what's coming and say, you've got to say this, we've got to put it this way, this is the way it's got to be expressed. It won't make any sense to people if you don't say this. Remember, yet again, repeat this, because they still haven't got that message. All of those things are day to day things without which you can't make the big thing work.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

All of Blairs advisors should be aware of the narrative and give advice that fits into the narrative	Hill, 5
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a But you as Prime Minister have got to have that strategy and that narrative firmly printed in your mind. And remember, they are always thinking about their reputation, and their reputation hinges upon getting that right. So it's not as if you're dabbing stuff onto a plain canvas, it's nothing like that. You know, your job is to ... in a way your job is to ensure that there is a consistent narrative and a strategy there and then, because you're so familiar with it, and because he should be so familiar with it, and because actually most of the people around him should be familiar with it, that if person X isn't around, person Y

should actually be familiar enough with the strategy to be able to say, remember Prime Minister, if you're dealing with this subject you've got to say this and this, because if you don't do that, it won't mesh.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Blair held occasional strategic communications meetings to gauge if strategy/narrative work

Hill, 5

I mean, all of this is there. And occasionally of course, you obviously ... he (Blair) would actually have councils of war about, you know, is the strategy working, is the narrative the right one, so you do do that from time to time, but you've usually spent enough time in advance to feel reasonably confident about where you're going.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Strengths and weaknesses of politician and opponent are compared and in a second step a narrative is created to echo this

Eustice, 3

And although Michael Howard had lots of very good things going for him, it was harder to communicate that. We did try. I mean, the key slogan during the 2005 election was, erm, Action, Time for Action, Action Not Words. These were very much ... the dividing line we tried to draw was between Tony Blair who was all talk, and talked a good game but didn't deliver, and Michael Howard who would get things done. And that actually was the right message to deliver for him.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Reputation emerges gradually and newspapers shape it

Beattie, 1

Now what I'm doing, I'm trying to find out if, erm, the way we perceive politicians, if that is the result of planned process or whether that is the result of day to day media management, and then after someone claims that was all planned or not. Who sets the agenda? These are things I'm trying to talk to advisors who in part try and convince me that it's their making, it's the result of their strategy. And I talked to journalists to find out the other perspective. Clearly, you wouldn't want to admit or that's what I'm asking you.

Who makes the public persona? Who creates it?

There's a really interesting case here with Ed Miliband as an example of how this works. [0:00:49.1] the opinion of Ed Miliband has actually probably been shaped more by newspapers and the media, and [0:01:02.6] rather than by television, although television has been instrumental in how's he looked at. Erm, and it's been a very gradual process, but because our broadcast has to be unbiased it's left to the newspapers to go "This is what we think of it" and flex what the mood is. Now we .

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

How the news media gradually shapes an individual's reputation over time

Beattie, 1,  
2

In the case of Ed Miliband, how did his understanding of what that person was like, how did this creep on the agenda at all in the first place? It's now developing and solidifying, as you're saying, but how did it start in the first place?

This is where you're going to get this way newspapers, particularly around [0:05:37.0] and new media as well works, is what you'd never get is a defined piece that says this person is [0:05:51.1]. What you get is a [0:05:54.7] piece and opinion moving in a direction. Now how that happens ... and we are much more aware of [0:06:04.3] because we do use kind of verbs, adjectives to distinguish very clearly what we are thinking about someone, and we are very conscious of the way we will phrase things to be negative, positive or neutral. What you therefore got was this accumulation of coverage, and this happens with all politicians. This is not just Ed Miliband. You get an accumulation of coverage which goes – becomes increasingly negative, derogatory or losing faith even in that particular politician. And as a result of that, then you build up to what happened this weekend, which was then the story we all could have written two months ago gets written. But that is a result of something much more long term, under the radar, and quite intangible to begin with, but then opinions get shaped and once the opinion has been shaped then you'll see this very rapid self-congratulatory "I was right all along" pieces. [Laughs]

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Who makes reputation, - communicators or journalists	Stacey, 1
<p>You' So just very generally, to start very generally, who's making reputations of politicians?</p> <p>Well a lot of former journalists probably.</p> <p>Not current journalists, after all it's what you produce.</p> <p>True but I mean in terms of who's managing the reputation, who's creating it on the politician's side, who are the people around them, you get a lot of formal journalists, particularly at the top of parties. I mean it depends what your question means. Do you mean kind of how do politician's reputations get made?</p> <p>How it gets made. So is it... would you claim, would you think that's part of your job description? You're contributing to it, you're making it. Or would you think it is much more complex?</p> <p>Of course we are. I don't think it's something we're necessarily very conscious of. Events happen and you report the events and it kind of starts to...you start to build up a picture of somebody. Some papers probably will approach a politician with a very specific idea of who they are and what they do and what their reputation is and then everything will colour that. So if you're the Sun particularly in the early days of Ed Miliband's leadership he was red Ed, so everything he did was red Ed and he very actively went and tried to pursue that and tried to create that reputation. Actually there are [00.02.23] he did an interview with him recently where they kind of wrote back on some of that in the end because he was able to kind of say some fairly right wing things particularly on law and order. So I think they've realised that red Ed is not going to stick. But it was interesting that they definitely tried, they made a concerted effort to do that. Obviously not something we'd do on the FT</p>	
20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists	
How narratives develop	Stacey, 8
<p>I mean Ed Miliband is kind of an interesting one as well because I think he came in slightly as a blank slate, you never knew quite what to make of him, we just knew he wasn't David. It's becoming clearer and clearer that he's indecisive and he hasn't got a very firm grip on things and it's that narrative starts to take hold.</p>	

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists	
All decisions and actions are fit into the narrative	Stevenson, 6,7
<p>You know, ten years ago you would have done the policy and then you'd have stopped there and given it to people and said, now present that. You don't now do that. You think about the presentation all the way through, how does this fit to the narrative, where you want your character to come from and come to. Where does this policy fit in on that, is it here, is it here, is it up, down, does it move it, does it bring it round, all the time. That doesn't change what the policy is, it changes the mode in which you introduce and present it. I don't think that's bad or particularly worrying, it's just because we're fitting into a different set of constraints</p>	
20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists	
Jack Straw's narrative was around authenticity and this helped explain his behaviour and potential u turns in his policies (perhaps his communications advisor isn't fully aware of this)	Davies, 9, 10
<p>If you're in politics for 10 or 20 years and you start lead student union, you're very radical to the left of the labour party, almost leaving it ...</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>10 And then you come to the point where Mrs Thatcher would say "I trust him" and you would try and help, for various good reasons, [0:28:18.4], how do you ... In other contexts people would say you're flip flopping, you're inconsistent and you contradict yourself, and that could ruin or break your reputation ...</p> <p>Yeah.</p> <p>For being authentic.</p> <p>Well, I think there was always ... With Jack there was always a little bit of a myth about, you know, was he some sort of student radical. I don't think his ... politics I don't think changed that much from when he was a student through to, through to now ... I mean [0:28:47.5] is an interesting one where he would say yeah, h e did go back, but he was held here for I think a year or something like that and Thatcher, among many people, were among the people who would try to say to Jack ... so it's sort of a ... I think you know, he would also say, look, you reserve the right to change your mind to some extent. I mean as a grown up, you know ... In a sense you can't win, can you, because if you change your</p>	



mind people say it's a U-turn, but you don't change your mind, you're regarded as sort of, err, you know, you're not willing to listen to anybody. I mean you just literally can't win on those things. I mean, god, if ... I mean I can't really speak for him in terms of, you know, things that he's changed his view on, but my goodness I've changed my view on a lot of things over the years and I'm like, you know ... well, we all have, haven't we?

Yeah, we all do it.

It almost feels to me a facile sort of thing for people to say because we all live in the present, don't we?

It's not a criticism. Some get away with and others ...

Yeah.

... [0:29:43.2] by it.

He was always very ... I mean, look, he was always very happy to ... I mean I think he always used to say "Look, you know ... " Sure, he changed his mind on some things, you know. He, err ... And he always has a ... he can explain why, you know. I can't think of an example really. And sometimes he just used to say "yeah, I was wrong about that." [Laughs] And it's like, you know, again it comes back to the u authenticity point and just being able to sort of accept that we're all, we all change our minds on that stuff.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Politicians' image is shaped by the prism of the media

Richards,  
2

also how they appear through the prism of the media because of course that's how most people get their information about politicians and certain politicians just become figures of fun, don't they? They become the target for satirists and quiz show hosts and sketch writers and all the other people that, you know, are sort of out there, Have I Got News For You and so on and often again that can be very cruel, it can be unfair, it can be very satirical but that is-, that's politics

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

For journalists it is hard to say when the narrative / framing of a politician/party will be changing

Jones, 14

The narrative / framing of a politician/ party is determined by political presentational issues

We've got the elections coming up over whether or not to have a new voting system. I mean that could all turn out to be a disaster. The Liberal Democrats could be completely wiped out in the local and assembly elections up and down the country. If that happened, if it was a complete disaster or slaughter, that then might lead to repercussions which might suddenly destabilise the coalition and break that narrative. Cameron has got a little bit close on some things.

(...)

Is it-, it would be hard to say when the narrative changes. I mean if we look at the current narrative, the current narrative is that, you know, the Conservatives are-, and it's helpful to think of the current narrative because then you can think back to previous narratives. I mean the current narrative in the media is that Labour's overspending is largely to blame, that they failed to deal with things like benefit abuse and housing benefit abuse and that therefore Labour are to blame, partly to blame, largely to blame (you pick your word) for the deficit. There is also the narrative that we as a country are quite happy with the thought of a coalition. We've never had a coalition before. We like the fact that the politicians are sitting down debating things. Comfortable, that's the word that I would use, you know. The country seems comfortable about the coalition. There is another sort of narrative that Cameron has sort of managed to do this if you like almost without the black arts, without the spin. I know we've got a hiccup over the question of Coulson but the general presentation of it is, you know, that we're comfortable. I mean if you look at the opinion polls, you know, we're still comfortable with Cameron. So those are the narratives that are running at the moment. Now could we see them turning? I mean at some point the-, I mean it's up to Labour to try and establish a new economic competency and they've got a long way to go. When it comes to the second narrative, the narrative over whether or not we're comfortable with the coalition, well we are at the moment; we still like the thought that these politicians are, you know, having to sit down with opposing parties. So we're still comfortable. That narrative is still running and this narrative that, you know, Cameron is a breath of fresh air and that he puts people at ease and he seems to be quite a statesman, people like the way he handles himself and represents Britain, that is still running isn't it. So those narratives could change but at the moment they seem to be running along. Now it would be very difficult to predict when the narrative might change.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Over time the media shapes the narrative that frames Cameron

Jones, 17

And this was the point I made in Germany, I mean, when I was in Berlin that that's part of the phenomenon now you see, if you look at what was the most mocked image, we're getting back to Cameron you see and how long is the narrative going to last that the country is comfortable with Cameron? Well I mean the most mocked image was that famous poster of him, that baby faced poster, which was the most defaced image online. I mean, you know, the way that that was... you know, the online viral of graffiti over that, I mean that was the most mocked image of the 2010 campaign.

And of course this is pointing to some of the dangers for Cameron you see. The country could tire of Cameron and when you asked me where the tipping point will come, I don't know. But he's got close to it on a number of occasions when, you know, perhaps that tide of the media will change and will turn against him and it'll become much more ridiculed. There is some ridicule of him if you pick up the newspaper, the Guardian, you've probably seen the Steve Bell cartoons, have you seen them? where they put his head in a male contraceptive and Steve says that he did that because of Cameron's smooth face and Cameron has come up to him and said, "How long are you going to keep this up?" So it's obviously getting to Cameron, you know, the way that he's presented. So this is a typical illustration of the power of the media in Britain, that will turn, there will come a moment when that will turn against Cameron. I couldn't say exactly when it will be but one can sense that would be a key, key moment and it'll be a combination of factors which will suddenly switch the storyline. You can almost sense a bit of it coming through now, a little bit.

20. Communicators shape the narrative – or journalists

Online activists join newspapers in framing the PM

Jones, 17

Well you've got another check now, you've got the thing which is happening on the social networking. So what the phenomenon was that the television is in control while the debate is taking place but the social networking is already having an influence and the

newspapers, of course, are wanting to try and recapture the agenda for next morning.  
(...)

So it's completely different phenomenon and the newspapers were therefore setting the agenda and the Sun wanted to set the agenda for Cameron next day to say that he'd recovered. And of course by the third debate they were able to say that because that's what the instant opinion poll was showing, that he'd got his act together, that's what the online chatter was saying. So this is a new phenomenon you see and of course what it is, you see, is online activists who were setting, helping to set the agenda in a way that has never happened before.

#### 20. Communicators shape narrative – or journalists

It is difficult to turn the personal strengths and skills into an appropriate public persona	Redfern, 1
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Yeah, I think I think in terms of events making the reputation and making [00:02:55], I think that's absolutely right. I mean if you think and these are sort of more abstract, but I mean looking at David Miliband, I don't think the public are as aware, as for example the international community are, of his stature and his, frankly, his brilliance as a statesman, right? But the public does get a sense of it because actually you read opinion pieces, you read comment and you think, "Hmm, David's doing quite well. David's a good guy. I like David," which is why David got much better public recognition in the leadership battle than Ed, because he's just got that presence and he's dealt with difficult stuff and he's had to deal with Pakistan and India and really—and it was all done under the surface, but it actually trickled out, which was quite unusual, which is quite unusual actually.

#### 20. Communicators shape narrative – or journalists

Party leader engages with particular sections of the party base to shape his public persona	Redfern, 2
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Did you use the international standing, the connections, the network that Ed Miliband had to portray him to shape the public perception?

I think to some extent. In terms of my involvement I was mostly involved in social media development and all that stuff but from what I observed and from my own—I'm Chair of

Walthamstow Labour Party, so what I saw was David working ethnic minority Labour members very hard and showing a real understanding, particularly in my area of Pakistani politics, but [00:05:22] politics and you know, ethnic groups and that to me was—you know, that really was showing a kind of very powerful political, sort of, vision really, in terms of understanding how these different groups operate and using that knowledge to build that reputation. But this was specifically with core groups of Labour members, you know, he needed that support and those votes, but what he didn't do was he refused to [00:05:52] preferences and he refused to because he'd had a lot of run ins with trade unions, particularly his time in education, to really [00:06:02].

20. Communicators shape narrative – or journalists

All events were used to develop the narrative of who Blair is and what he stood for	Kelly, 5
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Did you ... I'm not writing it down for obvious reasons, but did you as a team in communications have an idea of specific attributes/features you would want the prime minister to be associated with and then try to organise, not policy decisions but events/public appearances around it?

Oh yes, look, any event the prime minister was involved in, you know, you would look at it to see what does it say about him as a leader? And that is part of the strategic communications issue/mission is to associate him over a period of time with events which shape his view. For instance, when he was President of the EU and the EU budget round came around, we knew that part of the issue was going to be could we persuade the accession states to accept theoretically a lower budget because we knew that they couldn't actually spend all the budget that was going to be allocated to them. So you went to Hungary, you went to Lithuania, you went to Estonia, you know, you consciously ... now, domestically that also ... this was a Prime Minister who got things done, so you were seen to be in action. So those kinds of events were very important in trying to shape that perception.

20. Communicators shape narrative – or journalists

The PM may not always be able to choose the event, but he can choose what to say at or about the event	Kelly, 7
21. Positioning public persona	
A specific public persona is positioned with the positioning of political competitors in mind	McBride, 7
<p>. You know, Gordon in the year before he became Prime Minister, um, we worked on doing a sort of big regional tour which was almost about introducing him to the public in these areas. But it was also an opportunity for him to do, er, what we never done much of which was, and something he was very good at, which was doing local radio, um, in various parts of the country and, um, you know where you knew that they would almost use it as an opportunity to say, you know, "We've got Gordon Brown on our show, here we're introducing him to our listeners." And so you deliberately sought out those opportunities to, as I say, introduce him, get him sort of talking about things beyond the economy, get him talking about local issues and, er, at a time when Tony Blair was very much perceived as sort of hold up in Downing Street, you know, almost didn't care about the public anymore, all he wanted was his legacy and all he wanted was his sort of international reputation. We're showing that Gordon was, you know, down to earth, listening to ordinary people that kind of thing.</p>	
21. positioning	
Reputation of one politician is being built up and positioned by recognising and contrasting with the publicly known weaknesses of another	McBride, 8
<p>I'm simultaneously sort of thinking well this is a major contrast with how the last foot and mouth outbreak was done, how Blair dealt with it, Blair delegated, er that's why the foot and mouth crisis got out of control. So this is a key contrast in the opening weeks of his premiership between Brown being hands on, managerial, gets the job done, serious, you know, hard working. Blair being delegating, prone to mistakes, gives too much authority to people that then abuse it, um, and that kind of thing and not being as hard working. And so that was the right thing to do anyway but it was great from my point of view because it deliberately invited a contrast. And so you would constantly be making decisions within that timeframe about sort of what's the way that we strengthen that</p>	

image.	
Positioning public persona	
Communications advisors have their politicians pick fights as a positioning exercise	McBride, 10
Um, John Reid had very ambitious advisors and they would sort of push him to do things, push him to have rows with Gordon, you know, because they thought that was good to be having a big row with Gordon, it would put him on equal terms with Gordon. It sort of paved the way for a potential leadership challenge	
21. positioning public persona	
Browns staff was aware of the weaknesses of his public persona and had a plan to deal with it	Price, 5
I think in Brown's case, erm he had a lot of different challenges, he had been around for a long time, people had already formed opinions of him. He had been in a difficult job as Chancellor of the Exchequer because you make a lot of unpopular decisions but his stewardship of the economy had been well respected. He was in, he was in a pretty good place in terms of his competence as a, as a Minister. But his personality was an issue, his Scottishness was an issue erm, and his staff were aware of all of those and he was very aware of all of those, and there was clearly a plan when he became Prime Minister to deal with the negatives.	
21. positioning public persona	
Browns messages were calibrated to counter the perceived weaknesses in his public persona	Price, 5
So he had a big, big thing about going on about Britishness the whole time err, which was trying to put him in line with, you know, where the Daily Mail was and where he thought the country was	
21. positioning public persona	

Visible strength of Prime Minister is contingent on weakness of leader of the opposition	Price, 6
but he was blessed with leaders of the opposition, really until Cameron came along who were behaving tactically all the time. They were looking for a weakness here, a weakness there, and the government's position and going for it regardless of what it said about their overall stance.	
21. positioning public persona	
Opposition leaders' means to present themselves are limited	Price, 6
Yes, I mean in opposition it is all about what you say. I mean you can't do anything so it is all about image, it is all about words, positioning and so on.	
21. positioning	
Cabinet Ministers may manage to support the image of the PM and government and work on their own image at the same time	Price, 11
Absolutely, yes it depends on what job you have got. So when David Blunkett was Education Secretary and then Home Secretary, I mean his instincts were very close to Blair's and therefore he had the support of Downing Street, he had the support of Blair, he was able to fit it in to the government agenda and Blair was thrilled, but he was also able to work on his own image and his own-, and he fought very, very strategically and the people who have worked for him weren't just fighting day to day battles they had their eye on the big picture and others did and some didn't and probably the ones who really stand out as big figures in, in all governments are the ones who do think like that.	
21. Positioning the public persona	
Brown advisor does not know what shapes public perception of a politician in a particular way	Stevenson , 5
if we knew that we wouldn't be sitting here, would we? We don't know. It's a combination of so many different things. As you say, so many things are not under our control so how can you tell? Somebody who suddenly has a crisis, suddenly turns out to be very good at	



it and is convincing and comes across well. He becomes sanctified in a particular way, whereas before that, the press decide he is the Iron Chancellor and whatever he does, it is decided by the press that he should play to that image a little bit. It's a very complicated thing.

21. Positioning the public persona

Communications advisors identify a politician's strengths and systematically create situations that make these strengths visible to audiences	Richards, 6
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So you would take them as they are and look at their different-, very different strengths I suppose they have and then try and make the public understand these are their strengths. You wouldn't say what-, I mean you would never think about changing the individuals you have sitting in front of you.

You would do both. You would look at their strengths and you would look at their weaknesses and you would try and adapt their performance to both of those things. So you would recognise that Patricia Hewitt can sound patronising for example, a trait that she would admit herself. So you would think-, you'd try and use language in speeches or put her in situations where she doesn't look patronising. Hazel Blears was being-, was endlessly patronised by people who underestimated her so we'd try and put her in situations that showed she was a real player, you know. We put her in front of big crowds of trade unionists for example and showed that she could take on that or put her in difficult sort of tough interview situations with heavyweight interviewers so-, to prove that she could hold her own. So you know, you have to take the negatives and try and address them and then you accentuate the positives as well. Patricia Hewitt has one of the most rigorous intellects of anyone I've ever met so you know that you could put her in a situation where she was making quite a complex argument to an audience of experts and completely hold her own and then that would be one of her strengths

21. Positioning the public persona

Leaders' public persona is presented and interpreted by communications advisors to be in tune with critical publics (e.g. centre)	Richards, 7
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Yes, right but then Cameron is not naturally a moderniser. He is naturally a right-wing Conservative and that's fair enough and he's, you know, schooled under the leadership of

Thatcher (he worked for Thatcher) but knows enough to know that you've got to pull to the centre to win the support which is what they almost did but didn't quite win. So it's obviously an artifice; it's a creation, a very clever skilful one and one which by the way the Labour Party could never land any punches on. We tried to make him a chameleon if you remember (Dave the chameleon) and that didn't work and, you know, different ideas but none of it ever worked. So he's a very credible artifice but it's still an artifice

21. Positioning the public persona

Politicians associate themselves with subjects because of how it makes them appear, not because it is an issue that is otherwise of interest to them

Greer, 9

So I think that, yeah, in terms of those kind of things do they change over time? I mean the environment is a great example. The number of politicians over there who really don't care a jot about that issue, it's not something that fires them up. Indeed it's not something that really fires up most of the electorate but they talk about it because it's a thing that you talk about. You know, they're passionate about it because it's good to be passionate about it. In their private moments they're not that interested, that's not saying all but there's a significant number who will publically profess the importance of the environment and, you know, doing things that are good for the environment, protecting the environment. But actually they realise it's more a positioning thing for them as politicians, I don't think it has anything to do with, er policy.

21. Positioning the public persona

When Browns communications advisors tried to change his public persona, he did not appear authentic any more

Greer  
12,13

Chancellor with the money.

Yeah, yeah he looks like that kind of guy and then he became the Prime Minister and he might not have been right for the Prime Minister, I don't think he was the right kind of material. But I think where his advisors got it wrong was they suddenly tried to change him and the issue is always going to be that there's only so much you can change someone. And I said earlier about sort of dialling down the weaknesses and dialling up the strengths and that's really what it's about. Whereas when they actually tried to do all

of this smiling stuff with him and getting him to do that, he was completely unnatural and it came across as not being authentic and that's how the public perceived it. whereas if they'd actually just gone with, you know, this is who Gordon is, he hasn't got a great personality, he's not, you know, he's not a big smiler, he's not, you know, he's not this, he's not that but he is a guy that knows his stuff and in these tough times that's kind of how you do it.

21. Positioning the public persona

An unpredictable, negative event in David Miliband's leadership campaign were Blair's and Mandelson's endorsements	Redfern, 3
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So the main thing for him was not to be portrayed as a Blairite and so, you know, he had a few core messages about the way the Labour Party was going to work going forward and the main one being the movement for change and the need to shift into a community activist model, rather than these horrible [00:10:39] meetings, dreadful thing that no-one ever wants to go to. So a lot of people instinctively signed up to that and a lot of people thought, "This sounds like a good thing," and so it was a clear message, it was a clear message that people got. So I suppose there was a narrative, there was definitely—online there was a narrative which was showing that people backed him, so giving evidence to that and showing that he was not still in the pocket of Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson, which is obviously one of the reasons why it was pretty unhelpful when Tony's book came out at the same time and Peter wade in, then he told—[00:11:25] and not helpful and it really did undermine what he was trying to do and I think he possibly must have been very pissed off about the fact that—

21. Positioning the public persona

in David Miliband's leadership campaign the team was aware of and addressed the weaknesses of his public persona	Redfern, 3,4
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Did you—how can I measure this? You all sat down at one stage early on in that campaign and you thought, what is the profile that he should have or that he's got and—or is there discrepancy, is that [over speaking]?

Yeah, I mean I have to say, I would not overstate the influence that that advisory team had in that, you know. I remember being in brainstorming sessions where we were saying we want to know what David listens to on Spotify. We want to hear David reading a bedtime story online. You know, we were coming out with insane ideas, you know, stupid stuff, but we were trying to get past that accusation that he was not—he didn't do human. You know that—which is when you look at Ed now, I'm not sure that that was ever [00:12:23] out, but, you know, when you see David in action in a room he's so fantastic, you know he does human, he's brilliant but the perception was that he didn't

21. Positioning the public persona

Picking fights about issues as a tool in positioning public persona

Waring, 6

It's easy for colleagues who are out of office who say yes we sometimes ... I thought I shouldn't ask this, to pick fights with colleagues in the Cabinet or specific individuals and you want to disassociate yourself from them in public or you want to highlight your own agenda by, by being in that controversy. Is, is ... Are you aware this is a tool that is being used? Is there anything you would ... can you say something about that?

Yeah, I think it obviously has been used during the, erm, electoral reform campaign. It was definitely used by both parties, erm, in order to appeal to their own voter base and to, to differentiate themselves. Erm, and I think sometimes you can want to pick fights with interest groups on the outside of the government specifically to remind people of-, to highlight something that you're doing. Erm, so, yeah, it can be ... yes, it is used and it can be very valuable.

21. Positioning the public persona

1. Prime Minister Brown received conflicting advice on critical issue

Livermore,  
5

2. Some presentational decisions were not based on research findings

But if you've got this, this years of research and the suggestions that come out of it, did then the advice he was given, did that match that research or was that ... We think people want to trust you and keep the economy in order but still you'd better smile. So how, how did that link?

I don't think he was ... this is ... this is the kind of point about erm, there is a strategy that says 'play to your strengths and be Thatcher' as it were erm, and er, you know, coming after the ... a period in which the public have sort of grown sick of, you know, Blair's great strength at the beginning was his brilliant communication skills, towards the end that strength had been turned into a weakness and it was seen as thin and slightly artificial. So plus you had someone who ... as a leader of the Tory Party in David Cameron who was basically trying to imitate those elements of Blair. So Brown was perfectly positioned to be the antidote to erm –

Er, you know Brown was perfectly positioned with the antidote both to Blair and also a very striking contrast to ... to Cameron, so there was a clear strategy there, you know be the Thatcher type of figure, be strong, be ... be slightly, erm, distant, erm, potentially. But of course, as I say, Gordon, er, perhaps because he's human wanted also to be liked. Erm, and of course there were other outside influences who were saying to him, "Oh, you've got to smile more, you've got to –" You know, so there's the ... I'm sure as you ... you'll hear from lots of people, there's the constant dynamic of, you know, compet- ... competing advisors offering competing advice.

Erm, and I've got no doubt at all in my mind as to which was the right advice. Erm, but of course you've got people saying to him, "Oh, you should smile" you know and ... and it totally ... not only he's not very good at smiling, you know, and always would smile in the wrong place, totally conflicts with the, the core positioning that, that we were seeking to, to try and find as it were.

## 21. Positioning the public persona

Positioning – comparing with someone else

Hazlewood, 2

Though she is Welsh.

Yes.

I find it slightly, erm, ironic that the Western mail has been, not always but on occasion been quite critical of her for being an English MP, for want of a better phrase, even though she spent ten years of her formative years living in Wales, whereas they're very supportive, almost to the point of enthusiasm, of the Australian Prime Minister who left Wales at the age of five. Now I think there's a real contradiction there in their approach to

how they view a politician.

Mm. Did they, did they make that comparison or did you think ...

No, but it didn't go unnoticed by people like myself.

Mm.

You know, I think when, when you've got an opinion forming newspaper falling over itself to laud praise on the Australian Prime Minister and her Welsh links then to be very critical of a Secretary of State for Wales who happens to represent a seat in England, part of the United Kingdom, erm, just because she doesn't live here anymore.

Yeah.

They're entitled to do that of course. It's free press, but I think there needs to be some consistency in their approach. Erm, Cheryl is always going to have that, erm, hanging over her, the fact that she represents an English seat. Erm, opposition politicians have always tried to say that how on earth should she represent Wales when she doesn't live here?

## 22. Media and communications management

Different political offices require distinct reputations which are created through media management

McBride 7

Slightly [inaudible 00.23.18] was, er, also a planned thing which was getting him to do these big set piece visits to America, er, to India, to Africa and other places, um, Israel. So that he could show that he was ready to be an international statesman. Um, and show that he was ready to start dealing with foreign policy and that kind of thing. So those were... and we knew that, you know, that those were images that generally would play very well, the sort of pictures of him meeting, um, foreign leaders and sort of standing at podiums with flags behind him. You know, that was something he needed. I think even, um, er... I mean a small anecdotal example, we'd always gone to Brussels, flown in on the morning having briefed the UK press. He did his meetings, spent as little time there as possible, as little time as to get whatever he wanted done, um and would then go and see a huddle with the UK press only, um and sort of sit around with the UK press, give them a briefing so that they sort of felt looked after, um, and then leave town. And I think in the last year before he became Prime Minister we, you know, suddenly said to the UK representatives out there, "Well could you organise a press conference where he'll do it with the European press?" And they were astonished, why on earth would you want to do

that? And of course the reason you wanted to do that was because, you know, he had to be a statesman now, he had to sort of stand there, EU and UK flags behind him taking questions from the foreign press that was what you do. And so there were lots of different staging posts where we did those kind of things as part of his preparation

22. Media and communications management

Quality of reputation management in part hinges on the ability to cultivate a relationship with the media	McBride 11
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Um, er, you know, going back to the Alan Johnson example. Um, and then I think the other big thing which I don't think was, you mentioned necessarily, but should definitely be on the list is to what extent does the individual cultivate really good media relations? Both themselves and, er, with the people that they have advising them. Because that's almost a different role from the sort of actual advice you get on image.

(...)

Um, but there are certain politicians who, over the years, have had outstanding media relations, um, even while they haven't had a brilliant public image. But have always almost been protected by the media, promoted by the media. Classic example is Tessa Jowell who for years has had superb media relationships, everyone in the newspaper business, most people in the newspaper business, love her. Um, always want to promote her and there were times when I would have, I won't name them, but I would have journalists ring me up when Gordon Brown was planning reshuffles and saying, "You must know it would go down incredibly badly if Tessa was not in the Cabinet or did not keep her position in the Cabinet or did not get a certain job." Whether that had an impact or not, she would have been anyway but nevertheless the power that you've got to get someone to, you know, a senior person in the media to ring up and say that to you is quite big.

22. Media and communications management

Blair worked hard to cultivate a good relationship with individual journalists which would help him when the mood in the media swung against him	McBride 11
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Um, Gordon always had very good media relationships up to the point where, you know, the media turned on him and then almost they got sort of a bit of a bashing from him. Um,

and Tony Blair even in the darkest days, er, when he almost didn't have a single newspaper on his side, um, still managed to cultivate relationships with key columnists who would be able to come out and do sort of cheerleading support of Tony at key times. So, you know, there are some examples there of people that have worked very hard on their media relationships.

22. Media and communications management

David Miliband thought he had to work to cultivate good relationship with journalists, though may not have done well

McBride 11

There are other examples of people that, um, you know, didn't work on their media relationship or you had a misguided view of how they were coming across to the media. Another classic example of that would be David Miliband that, um, I think he was probably someone that always thought that, you know, I get on well with the media, I have really good, er lunches with them, dinners with them and maybe he did with the likes of, um, er, the likes of the Guardian. But, you know, I know for a fact that he would have had encounters with the Daily Telegraph, bad encounters with the Sun. Um, I remember being told a story that, er, at the end of a lunch with the Sun, um, he'd gone around the table sort of shaking hands like that, you know. Um, and you're talking about quite an austere bunch of people. And that was the thing they remembered, that was the thing they remembered from the lunch was what was that idiot doing? Giving us like a New York Yankee sort of thing.

22. Media and communications management

Poor media relations may do harm to a politician's image in this particular public

McBride 12

(when media relations are poor...)And, um, so you know, I think that can have a big effect on things and from that point of view people can then sort of endlessly puzzle about why is the Sun slagging me off, what's that all about? And not realise that well actually you probably did that yourself.



22. Media and communications management

Effective government requires effective communications

Hill 2

But I mean, the fact is that what New Labour did in ... it established in the minds of everybody in Britain who's at all interested that you can't effectively communicate ... you can't effectively govern, er, and you can't effectively maintain your reputation in government, or develop your reputation in opposition, unless you are a good communicator. Communications and the capacity to do politics effectively are interwoven to a degree that had actually been the case for some time, but no one had really recognised it. Er, but it did coincide with the twenty-four hour media and so on.

22. Media and communications management

Critical in reputation management is the ability to predict a news story

Hill, 6

And the absolutely ... and the other absolutely critical thing about this reputation management and about this whole question of how effectively you're communicating is if ... is an ability to be able to say, that story is important. If we don't do something about it now it'll go out of control, it'll be a bad thing. That story has massive potential, we can do something with it. It can be to our benefit, it can fit into our narrative. That story is not worth bothering about. Leave it alone, you watch, it will just disappear. And one of the things you've got to be able to do effectively in the job, and by the job I mean his job, my job, is to be able to say ... I often recognise what matters and what doesn't and you know, and then you'll get press office people wanting ... saying ... shall we do ... no, don't worry about that.

22. Media and communications management

Leaks and dripping of news and trivia cannot be stopped by communicators

Hill, 7

It's a problem. It's a problem that you have in every political organisation, which is that people love talking to journalists, and there is a very strange phenomenon out there, which

is people ... people love the feeling that they've given a story and nobody knows that it was them. And so they like that. No one will ever know that I gave this story, but I know, and that means I've communicated with a journalist and I've also made a journalist, to a degree, beholden to me. But of course in the end, what New Labour and the communications exercise that we ... was put together and we undertook, was about, as much as anything else, was discipline. And it was the discipline that was needed. And I'm afraid in government, when everybody gets themselves into the position when they are wielding some power, that ... whilst they understand the discipline on the one hand, they rather like being players. So there's very little you can do. There's very little ... there's very little you can do about constant drip, drip, drip if you can't establish who it is who is doing it. Erm, but ... and the greatest problem is that the British media does have a love of the trivia and therefore trivial stories can outweigh heavy stories much more easily than they ought to be able to.

## 22. Media and communications management

Paying attention to detail in media management to avoid the pitfalls	Hill, 9, 10
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. And ... and that's really ... and so all of these things are needed. So the answer is, you've got all this ... you've got all ... you've got all your strategy, you've got all your presentation, everything else, but in the end, one of the most vital tasks that the people who work in the communications field with any minister, or the Prime Minister, is, these are your potential pitfalls. These are the things they may ask you which will come at you as a surprise. So every time ... and foreign ... foreign ... I've ... met people ... I mean, the current Spanish ambassador or someone who worked with Zapatero [?] and when Zapatero first became Prime Minister, and, and they would, like so many others ... you know, the Prime Minister sits down with, erm, with his opposite number and there may be two or three key officials by the side, and then they're going to do a press call, about three questions each or something, at which point in I come, perhaps with two other people, and Tony Blair says, so what's going on. And I say, well, they're going to ask you about this, to which you should say that. They're going to ask you ... And these people look ... what's going on here? I mean, you know, the whole thing has stopped. The process of the discussions has stopped. Because they're used ... even ... They're used to the fact that the likelihood is

that the Spanish media will say, now these discussions you had with Mr Blair, what are they ... you know, and you'd have these other things, which are, what have you achieved ... what do you think you have coming out today which enhances the lives of our people, and all this, when you move to another country. But they know, this is a British media doorstep, so it's going to be some ghastly story that's emerged out of the Daily Mail that morning, and whilst ... whilst he will at one stage already know of the story because it ... we've probably raised it with him early in the morning, he's got to remember that, and he's got to think in a way that ... 7.30 in the morning he's going to say, oh, bloody annoying story that is, and he doesn't need to necessarily think about it again. When he gets to an eleven o'clock doorstep after he's met ... meeting with the president ... Prime Minister of Spain, he's got to think about exactly how he expresses himself. And there's no way round it. We've agreed we're going to do the doorstep. He's just got to think ... think, have we got ... we've got to jointly think, in front of these people, how are we going to answer this question? Erm, so that's er ... so there's lots ... the answer to your question ... long winded answer, but I mean the number of different ...

22. Media and communications management

In opposition an effort is made to manage the news agenda and pursue policy issues a day	Eustice, 8
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We used to plan ... I mean in opposition, and I can only talk [0:28:21] but in opposition we ... we used to have ... we used to aim to have two agenda setting items a week, which is about as much as you can do. And typically that would involve a big speech on a Monday or a Tuesday from the party leader, which you would trail in to the Sunday papers. And you would have the message you are trying to deliver up there, usually quite straight, usually un-messed-around-with, and you would project the message you wanted to ... And then we would try and maybe to do something a little bit later in the week that would be a second order smaller one on maybe a Thursday.

22. Media and communications management

Message and amount of coverage seem to be a trade off	Eustice, 9
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And the message ... I'm just a huge believer that message matters most. And erm, it's better to have less coverage but actually the coverage you've got is, is projecting a consistent message. That is better than having lots of noise and being all over the papers but not, not actually saying anything.

22. Media and communications management

Cons party media advisors usually don't help politicians to manage their reputation

Macrory, 1

but, in terms of you take politician A and say how are we going to project this person forward, I would say that doesn't happen very much. We-, from here, that's not how we think of politicians. Our job from here at the centre is to project policies, to do damage to the other side, to get stories out there. We will pick the most suitable politician to help us do that but we won't take a politician who's-, we think is either very promising and say let's sort of do something for his image and nor equally on the whole if someone's got a very bad image will we particularly step in to try and help him sort it out. That's up to him frankly.

22. Media and communications management

Cons party HQ won't help MPs to work on their reputation – they won't use those who have a bad image

Macrory, 1

We haven't really got the time or the resources to do that. We just won't use him on television. I mean for instance last night one of our new back benchers appeared on a television programme (I better not say which one in case you work out who it is) and one of our press officers last night who was monitoring this programme watched her and was-, thought it was awful and he put out an email to me and one or two others saying I think you should see this chap, see him on television because he's dreadful. Actually, I watched it this morning. I didn't think it was quite as bad as he-, but I'm not going to do anything about it, you know. I might if I see the chief whip say perhaps you should have a word with this chap and tell him that he didn't come across that brilliantly but the way I would approach that problem is not to sort of suggest that we do something with this chap and start projecting him and changing his image. I simply just won't use him.

22. Media and communications management

An important part of pol communications is technical advice	Beattie, 2
<p>That gives you a visualisation of a story that exists anyway.</p> <p>Yes, but that ... [0:09:26.2] are unavoidable to ... they don't necessarily reinforce, they open it up to be worse. So some of it is technical in that sense and a good press officer, media [0:09:38.9], television advisor [0:09:41.1] and they are ... they will tell you [0:09:46.3] when they're filming for an interview. They make sure the set is [0:09:51.5]. Some of it again is the choreographer. I've seen political leaders walk down corridors and they have them in the middle [0:10:02.6] side, and ... or they haven't even had an entourage, and you think, well, that's just wrong. These things seep into people's conscious, and if you are a leader you act like a leader. And if you want to be a leader you act like you want to be a leader, so those are technical. I think the other side again is much more [0:10:30.3] and that is how you do plan out what the media strategy is going to be to avoid as many negatives as possible.</p>	
22. Media and communications management	
Limitations of government media management	Beattie, 3
<p>How do you use them?</p> <p>I'm in a slightly easier situation to some of my colleagues because I work for a very strong left wing paper with a very clear agenda, so I know what I want and I don't want. Can it work? Yes, it can. A lot is very personality driven. If I like the person who is [0:14:28.9] me and I know I can trust them, and they have a nice genial manner, on a really bad story I can be more lenient towards them than I will otherwise, but it's not going to knock me off course for what I'm going to write. And actually generally I find I will tell them "Look, you're going to get the usual bio you always get from my paper 'cause that's what I do for a living." But on saying that they can have an influence.</p>	
22. Media and communications management	
Pol communications staff build relationships with journalists who set the political news agenda	Beattie, 8

The reason I'm asking is, if you're a media advisor you would think now who is the limited number of people I would essentially have to influence and build up relationships, and be aware of what they do tomorrow and ...

Yes, that's what the good ones do.

That's that they tell me. That's what they do. This only works really if there's ... in concentric circles you follow the adhesion, [0:43:45.3].

That is exactly what happens.

Whereas the counter strategy would be that there's so much online media that you wouldn't need journalists. Do you feel side-lined, increasingly?

That's a bigger question. At some point, I don't know whether it's going to be in 10 years or 30 years, or 40 years, at some point the online will take over as being the most influential way, but they don't have the mass community we still have. And although that's diminishing year by year it's still enough to make sure we are the ones who set the agenda. On a day to day basis the online is much, much better.

## 22. Media and communication management

Media relations management

Stacey, 3

Do you notice any differences between the way you're being approached by communicators when you dealt, almost exclusively with the energy departments, economic, trade and industry and so forth, and Downing Street 10 now? Is there more... is the kind of how you're being approached, the quality, the intensities are any different?

Absolutely very different. Well I think it's a difference between political and corporate reporting. Corporate reporting is much more official, you have to go through the right channels, there aren't very many... once you get into an industry you start having more interesting conversations but you don't have very many background or off the record conversations with press people or advisors. They'll always give you the line, they'll always give you the line and they can stonewall you very effectively. Here their spinners are touring the press gallery and they'll just come into your room and they'll just have little chats and they'll whisper in your ear and you'll sit down and you'll go and have coffee in Portcullis House and go out for lunches. It's a much more matey kind of atmosphere and there's a lot more gossip being traded back and forth.

22. Media and communications management	
Blair and Thatcher's strategy was persistent communication in order to convince key publics	Price, 10
<p>You know there was an uphill battle. But you didn't give up on communications. Erm and Clinton used to say to Blair never stop communicating. It doesn't matter how difficult it gets. Never stop communicating, never stop trying to connect with the public, and you have to be able to do that. And Margaret Thatcher, even when she was hugely unpopular, she was still an immensely different communicator. And, and she may have been wrong and her views may have been out of line with the public, erm, although she may have been unable to carry her party along with her, she still went out there on a daily basis making the argument that she believed was the case and I think Blair did as well.</p>	
22. Media and communication management	
Presentational style and management	Stevenson, 2
<p>I mean, for instance, for Mr Brown, there is a particular problem, because he is blind in one eye, so a lot of time is spent thinking about how best to position him and light him and, and things like that. I mean, for instance, the eye that is good is this one. They eye that is bad that is that one, so you would always light him so that this eye was in shot and [0:04:32] and you'd try and move round so his nose obscured the other eye. I mean, that's the sort of ... but that's the bread and butter of putting him across. There's nothing ... I don't think there's anything particularly difficult about that. I'm sure Mr Cameron has exactly the same issues and I'm sure Ms Merkel the same as well. You have to think about how you will get your presentation across. I mean, surely, from your background and experience you know that, erm, that the, the presentation of the message is a skill and a, a technique, and you're teaching it all the time, presumably, both in ... just in terms of written communication, but also when, when it's mediated by an individual, how you best present that. I don't think we should be surprised about that. I think it's just part of what politics is. But it would be true of business as well, I think. The chairman of Audi or something like that, you know, he has</p>	

to have the training, he has to have the ability, he has to have the capacity to present stuff to the shareholders, but also to the wider world, you know, to big business.

## 22. Media and communication management

Management of messages is a long term and increasingly multi-faceted process

Stevenson,  
3

mean ... well maybe ... speeches aren't a very good example, because nobody ... nobody listens to speeches now. Sometimes people read them, but, you know, they rarely get done. What you have to watch out for is what will the Six O'clock News take as the sound bite. You know, so there's more of a ... there are lots of things going on in a package. You know, some of it will have been presented a month beforehand, saying, you know, be aware that a month from now the Prime Minister will speak on this, and then two weeks before and then a week before and then a day before, stuff will be fed out to the journalists and the press will be whipped up to excitement, you know. I mean it's a ... it's a more complicated arrangement. It doesn't change the principle of what you're trying to say, but, but there are many ways in which presentations are made, and we just have to be aware of it, you know, and each have their own particular models. I mean, we're talking about a particular thing, but I mean ... a few years ago you would never have thought about Prime Ministers or senior politicians going on daytime television, speaking on web chats or using U Tube or Facebook or Twitter These things all have come because of the way in which the world and the media has changed, and you have to feed in to different levels and different types of things all the way through and in turn that affects how you present yourself to people.

## 22. Media and communication management

Media relations are planned and managed and more intense than in past years

Stevenson,  
3,4

you've raised this news cycle of twenty-four hours. Is it still [0:09:43] plan the way ... maybe a presentation, maybe an announcement, and you would announce, or you would give hints to journalists a week before, a day before, a month before, you would plan the process up to the point, the run up to it. Is it ... can it be planned? Or to what degree ... Yes. Of course it can. I mean, what changes I think is actually immediately before and



immediately after the delivery where you then watch where's it going. Is it going up, is it dropping, is it ... is it going this way, is it coming to you. And then you might do some more stuff to try and direct it again the way you want it to go. So you ... you have a much more intense and a longer media management process than you would have done say five, ten years ago.

22. media and communications management

Pol com in opposition is easier as you are less under attack and can attack yourself

Stevenson,  
7

you ... I'm sure you're following the, the presentational issues that the current leader of the labour party has got. If you compare that to being in power, where would you see in presentational terms the biggest ... difference.

In some ways it's easier, because, journalists hate being told a story. What they want is the reaction. So actually, in a curious sort of way, you get more chances to attack and to deploy your points, and less aggression, less difficulty from the press about it, because they want a reaction. ... The job of the opposition is to oppose, it's not to be creative or to put up alternatives. It's much more fun for a journalist to say well, we've heard from the Minister, now tell me what I can say that will give me more coverage. So you have a slightly easier job in some ways.

22. Media and communication management

Jack Straw felt he could not select questions and themes in interviews, but had to answer when asked

Davies, 7

. I mean Jack didn't try and stay away from anything and I didn't really. I mean there were times when I would say to him "Look, you don't really want to get involved in that" for sure. Sometimes he would listen, sometimes he wouldn't. I mean sometimes he just took the view that, you know, I've got it, you know. He was, he always used to apply a sort of test. "What am I going to say if I get asked? If someone sticks a microphone in front of me, what am I going to say? I have to say ... I have to be able to say something. I can't just walk away, so let's look at it that way rather than say to stay well clear." Look at it a different way. How do we deal with it if the question comes up. So his approach ... I mean I'm

biased. He's a brilliant politician. But his approach was to face up to those sorts of things on the whole.

## 22. Media and communication management

Jack Straw selected media engagements on grounds of personal preferences as well as authenticity

Davies, 9

Journalists accept it if Jack Straw did not want to talk about his family. Mostly, yes. I mean sometimes people would try and push it but he was just very clear. He said "Thanks for trying but I'm not, I'm not going there" sort of thing. And his line always was they didn't choose ... They didn't go into politics. I went into politics. They didn't, you know ... His kids were just like born [laughs] and didn't make a choice about it, so they make their own choices about what they do, you know. So he would never ... he was never up for trying to sort of use the, the family thing at all. I mean most people wouldn't know ... I can remember going ... his wife occasionally used to come on trips with him. She didn't really like it but she used to occasionally come on trips with him, and journalists wouldn't even notice that she was there because she would keep, you know, very low profile because she didn't want to do it either and that was her choice. You know, she'd been a senior civil servant. She's a, you know, got a very impressive career in her own right. She didn't need to sort of be – didn't want to be seen as a sort of, err, a political wife sort of thing. And, erm, you know, and fair enough. So he ... I know ... There's different levels, isn't there, of, of would he have done some of the stuff that Brown did? Did Brown do Piers Morgan, didn't he? And he did ...

He did, yes.

And he did various things like he went on the ... did he go and present an award on the X Factor or something like that, that sort of stuff? I mean I would have just "Don't do that" because ultimately Jack's politics was about authenticity. And if you ... if it's like up his street and it's authentic, and it fits then do it, but if it's like talking about something that you literally know nothing about and have to be briefed about it in advance, well, authenticity has gone out of the window, hasn't it?

How ...

Jack wouldn't know what the X Factor was, probably.

[Laughs] If you lead that sort of lifestyle you wouldn't sit at home and watch the X Factor.

Well, yeah, Jack ... I know for a fact he wouldn't do that. I mean he does watch tele but he

wouldn't watch the X Factor, you know.

## 22. Media and communication management

Jack straw's communications advisor used media relations to bridge the gap between the public persona and the identity

Davies, 11,  
12

I guess the way an individual is in politics really is the identity is not – can't be known to the public because they occasionally appear on television and newspapers ...

Yeah, yeah.

They can't know the breadth and depth of the personality.

Yeah.

There's always a gap between that the person is like and how the person is perceived.

Yeah.

How big can this gap be and when does it crack and people find that it's not authentic, and honest, and sincere anymore?

I mean I used to think that the gap ... on the whole, I think the way Jack was and is sometimes characterised in the press is so far away from the reality of what he's actually like. You know, when you read stuff like Straw's up to this, Straw's up to that, I just think this is like extra... I always remember him doing a party conference and he has detectives who follow him round because obviously he's protected person, and he did this thing at a party conference where he was talking about, err, in a much more expansive way about his life and his political career and things like that, and he was very, you know, as he always was, engaging and interesting, very warm and authentic. And I remember one of the detectives turned round to me and said "This is brilliant because everybody here is getting to see the Jack that we all know every single day" erm, and I thought that was really, you know, it was spot on that because the Jack that we all know is a very different sort of Jack to the one that you often see perceived-, presented, rather, in the newspapers, and it used to frustrate me intensely and I ... as a result, it's certainly true that I tried to get him to do more interviews which would try to bring out the, the human side of him, so he did a big, he did a big interview with the Daily Mail one time, err, the sort of, you know, feature type of interview which went over about three or four pages where journalists came up and followed him round Blackburn for a day and that worked really, really well. And he did one

with The Guardian, the G2 section of the Guardian, which was the cover and much more, you know, was done by a guy called Stephen Moss and it got really into ... or Stephen Bates. It got right sort of a bit under his skin and got into sort of what he's actually like because ... and I was really pleased with those ones as a sort of media [0:34:58.8], I was really pleased because those ones helped to create a degree of authenticity about what he's really like, erm, because there was a side that always used to frustrate me that often, if you read the sketch columns, or the, you know, cynical bloody common pieces, it was all about Straw's doing ... you just used to think "For God's sake." It's just like so frustrating, erm, because it wasn't the real person at all. Erm, and, you know, everyone who worked for him had this extraordinary sense of loyalty towards him, and, err, warmth towards him as well, you know, that often ... His public image didn't always reflect that sort of ... Does that make sense?

## 22. Media and communications management

Communications advisor selects media opportunities

Davies, 16

And then of course you also had ... I mean you had different, different groups trying to get him on for different reasons. So the party would sometimes want him to do ... You know, the classic was the party would want him to do the full Millbank run, you know, start ... We want you to go to Sky at 7.00am, BBC Breakfast at 7.15am, you know, the Today programme, and then Five Live, and then go and do this, that and the other, and he'd be like ...

So that's party press office.

Yes, and they had ... their role was to get as much coverage for whoever the minister on duty was that day or whoever the minister doing whatever policy was that day, and I would sometimes think, yeah, but, you know, it's a bit below Jack to do all of that. He's a big player. He'll do the Today programme and ... and also there's also a point about you also have to protect Jack or your minister as well, so the party would tend to regard them as a bit of ... I don't think they do it maliciously, they don't. They have a job to do.

To some extent they see him as a commodity. We can get Straw on there. We can get Straw on there and we can get him on there. But I see him as a human being and it's like "yeah, but hang on a minute, you're asking him ... He's just come back from a vote last

night at 11.30pm, and you want him to be up at 6.00am to go and do, err ... that's not going to happen. And he had an ISDN line in his house so he could do the Today programme. If they rang him up, he would just do it there and then. He didn't have to leave the house, you know. So in some ways that was part of the role was protecting him as a human being, if you like, err, and sort of telling people what he would do and what he wouldn't do, and having to sort of push people back basically. It was a protecting mechanism as much as a, erm, as much as, you know, trying to, erm, I don't know, push the brand.

22. Media and communication management

Media criticism about politicians' image is inevitable and cannot be managed	Richards, 2
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Yes, I think you have to look at it in the round. So I think for example, there're certain commentators and columnists in the British media who will always, you know, attack politicians for their appearance let's say or for their tone of voice or for their mannerisms and sketch writers-, it's-, that's their job. So you can't do much about that because they'll always pick on something

22. Media and communication management

Ministerial media relations are often reactive, its hard to make them proactive	Richards, 3
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the job of the advisor is to try and push that back and to break through that and try and have a sort of positive aspect of the sort of projection of the character as well and so you would say what we need to do is a speech or an initiative or do a visit or just try and get on the front foot and do something. So you always try and do that but the idea-, I mean most of your time is spent being battered about by external forces and reacting to things or crisis management when things go wrong so suddenly a big health issue will blow up and you've got to react to it and that blows whatever plans you may have had out of the water.

22. Media and communication management

Government information flow to the public is politicised	Jones, 18
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Well because I mean the point is that Britain we're the... I mean they were absolutely gar, gar with Campbell's sexed up dossier, they thought this is great, nobody's ever written anything as clear and as great as this. I mean they loved it all because that's what we're

capable of doing, you see, that's what we do in a way... we have a politicisation of the flow of information from the state to the public

22. Media and communication management

Politicians grant access and agree to coverage of private life because journalists are keen on it

Jones, 1

So my own opinion is I've been conscious of the fact that yes journalists are suckers for this in the sense that we love this access, these-, the-, you know, these familiar family scenes; they are great for the media but there is also undoubtedly in my mind this residual thought that politicians have always tried to exploit these opportunities.

22. Media and communication management

Perceived personality traits can be revealed through technical decisions – rather than policies

Jones, 15

What changed them in the past? Gordon Brown presided over unprecedented economic boom.

What changed it for Brown was his failure in 2007 to immediately have gone and got his new mandate. I mean there was no doubt about it, he had a mandate.

Was it the dithering itself that made him look...?

Yes I think it was his... well he was presented as bottler Brown and that suddenly... that was the Tory attack and that stuck.

(...)

That's right. Well I knew instantly the minute... because I was being interviewed and Brown said, "Oh no, no," he wasn't going to go and the thought was it would be left open until... or he might decide next year. And I knew instantly that once he'd bottled it then that he would be like other politicians, he would hang on to the bitter end. You see that's what happens, Callaghan took over from Wilson midterm, he hung on to the bitter end and ended in defeat. And that to me, I think we know when they haven't got that killer instinct. You see if it had

been Thatcher, she would immediately have gone to the country and absolutely wiped the floor.

So you're saying that was not about a policy issue that was about a personality issue.

Conviction and politician, yeah.

Brown didn't change his policies that autumn, he just displayed his un-decisiveness.

Exactly and we picked it up, we picked it up, we knew.

Who...

And we knew that he hadn't got the killer instinct you see and of course bearing in mind that the media would have been pleased if he had gone for it.

## 22. Media and communications management

Journalists and political communicators need each other and have a collusive relationship	Jones, 11, 12
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So you know, there is this-, I mean woven into the fabric of British politics is this collusive relationship between the media and the politicians and, you know, they need each other. So I mean to get back to where we started, you know, who comes first, I think in a way-, you know, in a way I'm happy to accept that, you know, it is in many ways a balanced relationship as events unfold but because of the fact that the political strategists know that the media marketplace is often the deciding-, going to be the deciding factor, they are in on the case much earlier on in the process of establishing a new leader.

## 22. Media and communication management

Media management of policies is pre-emptive	Jones, 9
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that policies are managed through the media in Britain to a very, you know, very fine degree in my opinion and of course I think they're very good at it because of course what the State's-, the State realises in Britain is because we have this very very crowded market place, if you're going to be heard, you have to try to manage the stories in this very proactive way and that's what PR is in Britain. It's so pre-emptive.

22. Media and communication management

The perception of the leaders in the campaign – and he leadership debate – was contingent on preparation and presentational training.

Jones, 16

They'd been completely knocked aside by the fact that Cameron had gone into that first debate overconfident in a way that he could somehow handle that type of event. I mean he thought, as he said, his mistake was he thought his mistake was that he thought that he was at some sort of open meeting where he would be able to relate to the audience. But in actual fact the technique there was completely different. Your friend, the only person you were talking to was your nearest camera, forget the audience. Clegg got that immediately because he had been trained to do that. Cameron thought he was talking at a public meeting that the audience was important. Whereas in fact it was the viewer at home that was important. So it was a sort of technical, tactical mistake.

22. Media and communication management

Attention to detail in media management helps avoid risks and damage to reputation

Greer, 4

But having said that we can see, you know, time and time again where politicians are thinking very specifically about the detail. I mean two examples of that was, um, you know the Bigots gate situation. With Tony Blair that would never have happened, the reason it would never have happened is because, as I'm sure you know, they... Tony Blair's team had a radio mike for him, they had their own radio mike that they controlled. They weren't relying on outside broadcasters so they had complete control there and that gives you an indication I think of the level.

In fact I'll give you two more examples. Um, one in the US, if you look at the debates last time round, the presidential debates, McCain and Obama, both camps when it came time for the debates requested the glasses that the candidates would be using to drink their



water out of so the candidates could practice with those glasses while they were practicing debating. So they got used to the weight of the glass, the feel of the glass so they wouldn't sort of pick it up and it was unexpectedly lighter or unexpectedly heavy. Now that's a ridiculous level of detail, it's probably completely unnecessary because anyone can generally pick up a glass and have a drink out of it...

Unless you're extremely nervous.

Yeah, exactly. But it sort of shows I think the kind of detail obsession that politicians have.

## 22. Media and communications management

Using social media to set the agenda and bypassing journalists

Redfern, 6, 7

I've been told by a number of interviewees that clearly you want to determine and set—and shape the agenda, what's been talked about, there's some issues that are more in your favour and some issues you'd rather not mention for various reasons. Now if it is journalists who set the agenda you can try and somewhat influence them to pick up issues that you're interested in. When you use the internet and social media, to what degree did you have a bigger impact on the agenda setting than—well, would you use that to set the agenda?

Yes totally, absolutely. I mean that's the great thing about it, it's unedited, so it's a propaganda tool, but it's only in as much as it's credible and authoritative, so you can't—you know, you can't just pump out nonsense, it has to be founded on some sort of basis and fact and also you have to have a following. You have to a lot of people who think this is a great thing, so the Facebook stuff, you know, in terms of getting people to like it and follow it. David had a brilliant high level number of followers on Twitter before we'd even started. I think he had 29,000 before we'd started and it ramped up to sort of well over 100,000. That becomes a really, really useful channel. I mean, you know, to speak to 100,000 people like that [clicks fingers], that's amazing. You don't have to worry about what the journalists are saying and I think that it's so significant.

I think even then it was still in the early days, I think we'll see the next election, certainly after the presidential elections in the States, we'll start seeing social media used properly in election campaigns, but in terms of talking to Labour Party members it was absolutely brilliant. You can't fault it and you know, what David would do is he would set his agenda for the day. He could say the issues he was going to be dealing with but he could restate his core five policy areas, particularly around moving for change and all of that stuff as well and

just keep restating it and restating it in different ways. I think he did it really well because he took advice and he wasn't a massive Twitter lover, I suspect, but it was clearly him that was doing it. It wasn't Jess or anybody else, he was genuinely engaging with people and he was answering questions and that is as much as you can possibly ask for from a politician I think, in terms of using Twitter. People like Ed Balls use it really well. Ed Miliband is awful. If you look at his tweets, they could be written by anyone, they're bland, they don't say anything and he doesn't really engage with people [over speaking].

## 22. Media and communication management

The success of reputation management depends on the ability to be in control of communications – as Blair was during his time in opposition and Brown while he was Chancellor

Livermore,  
6

For ... or put this way, for a number of years with Blair for instance it seemed to be erm, the exercise in managing the perception ... that the perception of Blair seemed to have been very successful then it stopped being as successful as it used to be, erm, with Brown perhaps as the chancellor it, it was, it was less of an issue than it was when he was prime minister. Is it a matter of, of personnel, the quality of advice, resources, the amount of money you have to do research, what are the resources? And what is the, you know, the, the support that is needed to do successful reputation management advice?

Erm, well I think that your description of both shows that it's more than about resources. So, you know, Blair started out erm, as you say, very strong and tailed off. Likewise Brown was very strong as chancellor and then tailed off as prime minister. I think it goes back to what I was saying before that, you know, Blair's reputation essentially was created in opposition. An opposition is not dissimilar to what I described about erm, Gordon Brown's time as chancellor. In opposition you have control of your own agenda; you're not forced to keep responding. So again, in an environment in which you have control over the projection of the individual, you can I think create a very strong reputation. Now, so that was created for Blair in opposition very, very effectively. It lasted through initially a government because he was incredibly dominant; there was no real strong opposition. He had a very clear agenda, so was able to stay, as I say, on that kind of front for a proactive place. And as soon as he got on the defensive, started making some extremely unpopular decisions etc., erm, you know, very hard to maintain, likewise for Gordon, had not been ...

in his opposition as it were in, in, in, in the Treasury, could do all those things to remain in control.	
22. Media and communication management	
The communicator can buy time that allows the policy machine to step back and think	Kelly, 5
<p>So, you know, you're right to say that the pace of events is such that the time for thinking is much shorter, but that's precisely why you have to be very disciplined and you have to get into the mental habit of stepping back. Yes, dealing with the day to day event, but stepping back and giving yourself time to think "Where are we going? What are we doing? What are we trying to say? How's public mood changing around an issue?" And that's where the communications person can give you some time to do that thinking by saying, you know "Look, we're not going to give a running commentary. We're not going to be rushed in to the decision, etc., etc." but at the same time the communications person then has to be saying to the leader of the policy machine "I'm buying you this time precisely so you can do your strategic thinking on this. Don't think that you can just get away by doing day to day handling. You're not going to do it." And part of the knack is to recognise when you need to ask the questions of the policy machine, which, however [0:19:12.5] you're being asked publicly, but you're not answering publicly because you're trying to give the policy machine time to catch up, but it has to catch up, and that is, I think, the bit of the job that the people don't see.</p>	
22. Media and communication management	
Examples of failed media management	Wood, 3
<p>He was seen, I think by the... he's become to be seen as, I think in many respects he really is, which is a very straight talking, down to earth, unemotional, no nonsense, wise cracking [0:12:07.7]. I mean that's not completely who he is but it is, I think, much more what the public have come to be used to with William Hague. I think there's a greater sense of that today than there was in 1997 or 2001 and the attempt to portray him as young and cool, which if you had it that's how you would interpret baseball cap and Notting Hill Carnival, it didn't work. In fact it not only didn't work it made him an object of ridicule. I mean there</p>	

was an attempt, the famous 14 pints interview, which was with GQ Magazine and did backfire. The reason why that backfired, well there were a number of reasons but, it was too early in the process and it looked like he was sort of showing off or boasting about how much he could drink. He didn't I don't think it was but just it came out that way. Um, so that was in a way another, um, sort of stunt that didn't work. Um, that was much more his fault than anyone else's, no one advised him to say that at all, he just happened to say it, talk about his time when he was a delivery boy, basically a delivery boy.

## 22. Media and communication management

Media management in opposition

Wood, 9

There's part of me, you're right what you said earlier that you're in opposition all you can do is talk, you're not running anything. And one of the worst things that happens in opposition is just to be ignored or make no impact. Because that then leads people to say they don't stand for anything. When people say they don't stand for anything what they're really saying is we haven't heard from you. I mean it may be true they don't stand for anything, that's possible but it's more likely really what they're saying is we getting no clear sense of what you're about, we never seem to hear from you, you're just sort of there. Um, so that was one, yeah.

## 22. Media and communication management

Media relations – organising stunts

Hazlewood  
8, 9

## 23. Staff- resources

In government more support in terms of staff is available to organise communications

Eustice, 8

Yes, I think it's a double-edged sword. Erm, in government you've definitely got more staff, and talking to people, erm, who used to work, you know, in opposition and, and now are in government, erm, it's clear that they're, they're under far less pressure generally. Not

always; sometimes when things go wrong it's just as much. But as a general rule, erm, there's the civil service machinery around you which are used to dealing with problems and lots of things take care of themselves. Whereas in opposition you know that unless you're doing it, it's not being done.

23. Staff – resources

Prime Ministers are given a considerable number of specialised staff to maximise the effectiveness of their communications

Macrory, 4

and then there's the more sort of routine advice from civil servants and press officers who will sort of handle the day to day stuff and will actually sort of take say a policy announcement which the Prime Minister is going to make and look at ways in which it can be projected to the maximum possible advantage, you know. So the Prime Minister's going to make a speech let's say next Monday and you work out segments of the speech which he might give in advance to the Saturday papers and another section to the Sunday papers and try and maximise the potential you get so third parties are involved; they're lined up to speak up on the government's behalf when the Prime Minister makes the speech so that they're not caught by surprise. I mean it's a very big operation in order to take something the Prime Minister's going to say and get it off to a really good flying start and it can take a lot of people a long time to work out the logistics of something. So I mean let's take an example. The Prime Minister says I want to make a big keynote speech on let's say welfare so one team (the events team) will say, right, okay, well, where should we do this. So they find some suitable place so they'll sort out the place and they'll line people up. Somebody else will sort out third party people so that if somebody's called, you know, a pressure group and they say what do you think of the speech, at least they'll have had our input into it in advance. Somebody else will decide which newspapers he might want to give an interview to or where he might want to write an article for. So there's-, a lot of that goes on but that's not his-, about his personality. That's about projecting his message.

23. Staff-resources

Number of communications staff and quality of staff determine effectiveness of reputation management

Beattie, 6,7

Someone I talked to last week was in the David Miliband camp for the leadership election. Before that, when Miliband was still in the cabinet, he did this Guardian interview which caused a lot of stir.

Yes, I remember it.

And he said the reason why it was so poorly handled after the interview, they could have controlled it better, is that as a cabinet minister you don't have the resource. You don't have the personnel and staff to handle big news stories adequately. Is there anything in ... I mean two special advisors ...

Yes, one of them is policies and the other is press. I mean it was interesting with the Chris Hulme scandal and that blew up recently. He had one fall guy – a very nice bloke. He just couldn't answer the volume of calls he was getting, so that's got an element of that, but actually I disagree with Miliband on that one. He lifted a lid on a story and then [0:38:57.1] by going on the Jeremy Vine show and then watched the whirlwind, and then said "I couldn't handle it." Of course he could handle it. I take Lansley as a good example here. One of the reasons Lansley is in trouble is because his press team wasn't good enough. [0:39:13.8] it was the person in charge of Lansley's press didn't come round and talk to the journalists, didn't do enough to [0:39:20.4], but that's not the volume of staff. That's the skill of the staff. That is an issue. I mean we're talking about talent pools. There's not that many people who are good at understanding how we think and what we do.

### 23. Staff – resources

Personnel: Communications resources PM and ministries by comparison	Stacey, 3
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Is there... when you compare the departments you dealt with before, in the context of energy, just a random example because that's what you've been reporting on and Downing Street now? Do you see any difference between... the reason I'm asking is I was astonished to see how little resources cabinet ministers have in terms of polling and special advisors compared to Downing Street.

I don't know how many you would expect them to have.

Two or three.

They have two, yeah two or three special advisors. That seems like a reasonable amount, they've got the whole press office for the departments as well bear in mind which has ten or

fifteen people whatever. I guess maybe you would expect them to have more, they certainly all work very hard. I mean in terms of media usually only one of those special advisors will do it and that person is often working very hard. Downing Street doesn't have that many I wouldn't say. Downing Street really you've got one or two people at the very top level. I mean it used to be Andy Coulson, it's now Craig Oliver who will deal with the editors and the political editors and all of the strategic stuff. Then you've got, below that, Gabby Bertin and on the Tory side you've got Alan Sendorek and then on the Lib Dem side you've got Lena Pietsch who looks after Nick Clegg and then Sean Kemp, James McGrory. So I guess there are a few more there but they're not all doing David Cameron stuff, like the Lib Dem ones will do the Clegg stuff on the Nick Clegg side. So really from the Tory side of Downing Street they've only really got two media people who are just constantly talking, Alan Sendorek and Gabby Bertin are the ones who are out there constantly doing the media briefing and whatever else which is relatively similar to what a cabinet minister would have. I'm not sure that he's got huge support resources at his fingertips.

23. Staff – resources

Lack of strategic reputation management may have to do with lack of appropriate staff	Price, 1
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John Major, certainly didn't have that sort of approach at all, erm, and one of the reasons that he was an unsuccessful Prime Minister was that he didn't have a strategic overview. He didn't have people working on thinking about his image in a strategic fashion

23. Staff- resources

Brown is example that illustrates that the best resources cannot make up for lack of strategic thinking - vision	Price, 6
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Erm, but, so, I mean, you know, he is almost a textbook example of how having the best research available doesn't solve your problems, erm, having loyal staff doesn't solve your problems, err, there has got to be a thinking behind it, which in his case was always absent.

23. Staff - resources

Ministers have very limited personnel resources for political communications advice	Richards, 2
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Cabinet ministers, yes, absolutely. It's a very impoverished system compared to let's say America where the idea that the Cabinet minister has only two political staff who are doing their media, their speech writing, their policy advice and that's it-, you know, obviously, inside the Civil Service, they would consider that crazy, wouldn't they? They have rooms full of advisors and staff and all the rest of it. So yes, it's a very impoverished system and they don't have a political budget to spend on their own personal advisors. They are officers of the Crown, you know.

23. Staff - resources

Lack of resources and events make ministerial media relations reactive

Richards, 3

So you know, it's-, the lack of resources and the pressure of external events mean that the space for proactivity is small actually.

23. Staff - resources

The importance of resources for high quality media relations

Greer, 5

Now that level of detail requires, um, certain resources in terms of money, staff, the qualification of the staff you can find and pay for. And if all of that feeds into the ability to manufacture reputation, where would you see differences in terms of the resources if you compare people in government, opposition? Um, depending on what ministry you're running, is there. Does that make a difference?

Oh yeah absolutely it does. I mean if you look at the election clearly the party with the best resources was the Conservative party and they... I mean the amount of money that they had and indeed the amount of money that was wasted at times, um, on things that were just not getting off the ground, um, is incredible. Versus, say, the Liberal Democrats who never had much money who... they don't have rows and rows of press officers and opposition research people and things like that. So it very clearly does make a difference because it's that classic thing of rapid [inaudible response 00.15.54] for example. The Conservatives were very good at that during the elections. The Liberal Democrats were terrible at it. The Conservatives got their message out literally as it was happening, it was that class speed



kill thing. The Labour party had the advantage of sort of the, um, of real experience over years in government and the sort of 1994 to 1997 period. So a lot of big players who knew how to do that job and that in some sense compensated for a lack of resources. Um, so that helped contribute to their sort of preventing the Conservatives from, um from getting an outright victory.

But I mean resources are tremendously important because ultimately you pay for what you get. You know, the best people are going to want to work in the biggest departments, the best people when it comes to party politics you can only afford to work for not much money for so long. Whereas the Conservatives for example actually pay quite well. You know, people often say you can't make a good living in politics, well actually that's not true. There are plenty of people in CCHQ who make a decent amount of money and they're not even that senior. So, you know, you pay for what you get.

23. Staff - resources

Lack of pol communications advisors impacts on quality of reputation management/media relations	Redfern, 5,6
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but I think with David he—the key moment for him was when he wrote that Guardian article. I think it was back in 2009 and what was interesting for him at the time and I think it's changed in the leadership election, was that at the time I think intellectually he would write—he wrote that piece but he didn't have a machine around him, at all, to deal with the fallout and follow up from that piece. So what you found was Gordon had every bloody spinner imaginable out there after that piece briefing, briefing, briefing, briefing, day in, day out. So Damian in particular I would imagine, would have been all over that, all over that and had been putting journalists in headlocks and various over things.

David did not have a machine at all so, you know, he lobbed the grenade into the middle of politics, it went off and then he just retreated because I think what he wants and it would be really interesting to see whether we find out more about this when he writes his memoirs or something. But I think he has a pure idea that he believes in and he thinks that that idea is strong enough on its own to be out there and to gain traction in its own right, because that is how it should work but actually what needs to happen is there needs to be people that are dirty and horrible and unpleasant that go out and push it so hard down journalists throats and they cover it well and I think that that's probably where, in the early days, he fell

down, because he didn't have the message stuck to him in a way that it should have been. Whereas in the campaign he had a lot more of that so there was a better machine, there were good people, really good people around him. You know, Jim Godfrey is fantastic. Andy Bagnall is amazing. You know, the team, you couldn't fault it and the online strategy I think [00:19:41], it was really good. You know, we had collateral, people knew where to go.

23. Staff - resources

Resources – numbers of staff impact on quality of media relations and strategy

Waring, 8

do you think a lack of confidence or nervousness on the part of a politician would-, could ... you know, someone who's nervous and concerned with the headlines and, and push their staff and special advisors to react to it much more intensely than someone that's more laid back and worry about the news today.

Yes. Yeah, oh definitely, yeah, but you usually have ... I mean, for example, in Downing Street you've got people that do all of that. They do both of the things, so you've got people that do the day to day fire fighting and then you've got the people that are thinking about the next two weeks and people thinking about the next two years, so I think politicians kind of acknowledge that that happens and they need to do a bit of everything.

Do you think you could do a better job with perhaps more communications staff?

Erm, well there's an enormous press office here, but the one thing that I've really been persuaded of [laughs], erm, since I came into Government is I look-, I think there's a lot more to be said for the American system of far more political appointment. Not the Congress [0:22:38.7] but, erm, more political appointments would shape government's message far better than all these civil servant press officers and two special advisors for a department of this size with a budget of £16 billion, you know. It's just ...

Because the civil servant doesn't share in the agenda.

No, doesn't share the agenda. All the civil service wants to be seen as in each department is competent and, erm, and to have sort of promote good news stories. When there's a bad news story their instinct is to hide. When you're a politician, I think your instinct a lot of the time is to go out and fight it or my instinct is to certainly go out and fight it properly, and they just kind of like "Mm, I'm not really interested" and always slow to react.

23. Staff resources

Resources – communications staff number

Wood 9, 10

Yeah and the last one is to do with numbers. I've been given the example of, um, David Miliband who made this article in the Guardian and didn't mention, I think Gordon Brown's name, the future of the party. And there was loads of media interest which his limited staff in the ministry of... his special advisors, couldn't handle. And, um, I was being told that the way it turned out so negatively for him that he was so much criticised for that article is that, um, he didn't have the staff to handle all the media requests. So to what degree in your position is the limited amount of resources and staff are proper in media relations?

Well I think it is. I mean although, I mean when I was doing the job we had, in the so called war of 2000/2001 it got a little bit bigger as he went to the election in 2001. We had around 40 or 50, um permanent staff, combination of researchers and media officers and some people were doubling up as both. Er, and then we'd have, well Iain had a small policy unit, people on secondment probably about half a dozen of them. Er, so we had... however, I mean obviously government has got thousands of press officers, thousands, I mean government departments have kind of 50 to 100 press officers each.

23. Staff - resources

Resources – staff numbers

Hazlewood,  
8

The downside of it is limited resources, are there situations where you think media relations would be better if there were more than just the three you have?

I don't think in a department of fifty and two ministers you can justify more than three press officers.

No, no, I am not saying were they justified...

No I...

Again an example to highlight what I mean, there was the article in the Guardian by David Miliband whilst they were still in government and he didn't mention Gordon Brown when he wrote about the future of the party and there was a lot of media attention and his media advisor couldn't handle it at the time. And one argument is that the reason why it backfired

against David Miliband was there wasn't enough staff who would explain what he really meant. So do you ever encounter the last twelve months or the years before similar situations where you'd say we would have been better had resources been different? Erm there is always things you could do more of I mean background is the previous job I ran the press office in Wales pretty much on my own for most of the time for six years, before that I was a journalist for eleven years. You could end up doing too much, err I know there is this clamour to have Facebook and Twitter and all these things, now they can be very useful, however they can be a real hindrance as well. I mean the number of times I have had to pull candidates and politicians out of the mire because they have put something daft on Twitter and Facebook and it has caused a huge storm in the paper and that trashes your reputation, you can do a whole week of good news and then somebody posts some daft comment and then the whole thing comes tumbling down. Erm so I always try to keep a very narrow focus on what we did within the press office, which is focus on the policy, get the key message out there, what are we trying to do, chat within the welsh context before the general election, challenging UK government and the welsh government here about where it is failing and why it is not doing X and Y, showing there is an alternative. Those were the areas that I think we should focus on and I think there is a danger that you can be distracted by some of the other social media that I don't think add a great deal of added value to work that we are doing.

23. Staff - resources

Resources – staff numbers

Hazlewood,  
12

Err I am looking at the process, I am looking at what are you actually doing, what are your colleagues really doing, what is, almost you know how do you do your job. I am less interested in specific politicians, I am more interested in the communicating.

Well I mean my job has certain challenges because there is only one of me and I have to be in two places at once most of the time. I need the focus on what is happening in the assembly and what the welsh government is doing and how that impacts on UK government and what is happening in Westminster and when parliament is sitting most of the week I am in London and not here. So it is sometimes difficult to get a feel and plan for what you want to do in Wales when you are 150 miles away. Erm a hazard of the job I

know, colleagues in Scotland have similar challenges, less so in north of Ireland but northern Ireland a very different case I suppose. Erm but I like to think that because I come back here every week I still get a feel for what is important, what is leading the news agenda, erm what matters and what we can do to try and influence that. It is all too easy to get trapped in that Westminster bubble.