

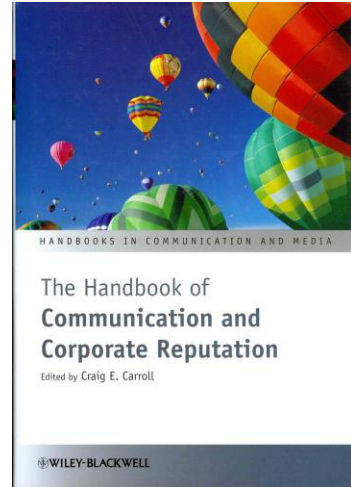
Craig E. Carroll (Ed.), **The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation**, Malaysia: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 656 pp., \$195.00 (hardcover).

Review by

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The Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation, edited by Craig E. Carroll, is a recent addition to Wiley-Blackwell's *Handbooks in Communication and Media* series. The handbook addresses multiple facets of corporate reputation, drawing upon theories and approaches from various disciplines within communication. It fills a lacuna in the current literature and provides a comprehensive view of the latest state of research on corporate reputation from a number of communication perspectives. As a cross-disciplinary piece of work, the handbook provides corporate reputation scholars with new avenues into communication studies that could deepen and enrich their understanding of corporate reputation, while offering communication researchers insights into corporate reputation practices and communication management. The chapters are written in a style that is accessible to senior-level college students and professionals interested in related fields.



In the opening chapter, Carroll offers the rationale for studying corporate reputation from multiple communication perspectives and describes a communication-based definition of the concept. Following that, the guide's more than 40 chapters are organized into five sections, detailing the subdisciplines that investigate communication in relation to corporate reputation. The theoretical perspectives through which corporate reputation can be examined are delineated as are new research domains in current sociocultural context, and ways to measure and evaluate corporate reputation. The final chapter makes suggestions for future research, such as a cross-disciplinary approach to corporate reputation. This book encompasses a comprehensive collection of works from leading scholars in respective fields.

The first section of the book examines how the different subdisciplines within the field of communication can contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of corporate reputation. Van Riel compares the concept of public opinion to corporate reputation and argues that corporate communication managers should avoid any situation when public opinion merges with corporate reputation problems. Rifon, Smreker, and Kim explore advertising effects and cause-related marketing effects on the consumer's perception and behavior, as well as introducing how advertising could enhance corporate reputation. From a public relations perspective, Motion, Davenport, Leitch, and Merlot delineate the importance of sense-making and meaning in understanding and working with corporate reputation and suggest that paradigmatic public relations principles of adjustment, collaborative communication, and ethical behavior could contribute to positive corporate reputation. Carroll points out that research on

corporate reputation from the disciplines of journalism and mass communication fall primarily within the field of media effects and argues that future studies should shift their focus from cognitive, attitudinal, and affect effects to belief, physiological, and behavioral effects. Alessandri examines corporate reputation building from the perspective of visual communication and discusses how strategic visual identity construction could contribute to positive reputation building. Other disciplines, including marketing and management communication, are also outlined. This first section ends with Gower's (chapter 14) discussion about different legal concepts of reputation that can be applied to corporations and how legal issues like defamation, false advertising, and privacy could impact corporate reputation.

The second section delineates both prominent and emerging theories in the field of communication that deepen our insights into corporate reputation. Ragas opens with agenda-setting and agenda-building theories and reviews the linkages between public perception of corporate reputations and media coverage. Murphy and Gilpin apply essential concepts from complexity theory, including interactivity, adaptivity, and constraints to help explain the dynamic of corporate reputation. Romenti and Illia adopt organizational communication approaches to examine the forming of corporate reputation, that is, the "communicatively constituted reputation" (CCR) that focuses on self-structuring, membership negotiation, activity coordination, and institutional positioning. Lammers and Guth review corporate reputation from the disciplinary view of institutional theories and discuss the indications of viewing corporate reputation as an institutional message. Ihlen offers a rhetorical approach and discusses how rhetorical concepts and techniques can contribute to positive corporate reputation. Also, Coombs' piece on situational crisis communication theory—together with Sellnow, Veil, and Anthony's contribution (chapter 21) delineating reputational synergy of success and failure—offers insights into protecting corporate reputation in time of failures or crisis. This second section ends with Luoma-aho's piece (chapter 24) on the emerging theory of social capital and how it explains the dynamic of reputation in practice.

The third section explores representative corporate reputation attributes and examines what the discipline of communication offers to enrich our understandings of the subject. Einwiller details how direct and indirect experiences influence an individual's awareness, associations, and assessment of the attributes of a company. Jiang looks into the workplace environment and details the three dimensions of this attribute, namely internal communication management, corporate culture, and attraction to talent. Schultz challenges the traditional assumption that corporate social responsibility (CSR) positively contributes to corporate reputation and argues that CSR is a symbolically mediated, communicative event that could just as easily lead to dysfunctional effects. Laskin introduces financial performance as an attribute of corporate reputation and looks into the ways that corporations can elevate corporate reputation through managing stakeholders' perceptions of financial performance. Health draws from the discipline of issues and risk management to suggest that strategic protocols and commitment to corporate social responsibility could protect and advance corporate reputation. This third section ends with Smudde and Courtright's examination of the function-form synergy of corporate reputations' messages and communication discourse, indicating that message design for reputation management is the catalyst of a corporation's communication.

The fourth section introduces new research domains for corporate reputation. Manheim and Holt are concerned with the increasing volume of anticorporate activism and its growing sophistication in its

conceptual underpinnings, strategic tactics, and organizational structure. Molleda and Jain discuss the associations among corporate identity, perceived authenticity, and corporate reputation as they outline how organizations could build a unique and positive reputation through demonstrated consistency in claims, behavior, and decisions. Karmark illustrates the linkage between corporate branding and corporate reputation, arguing that corporate reputations can bring paradox, ambiguity, and dualities rather than always being an asset to the organization. Waymer and VanSlette examine the intersection of corporate diversity and reputation management and suggest that proactive measures for encountering diversity are necessary for building favorable corporate reputation. Mitra, Green, and Dutta take a critical and culture-centered approach as they look into the concepts of corporate reputation in the ways that emerging markets are constructed and suggest alternative frameworks. McCorkindale and DiStaso explore the increasing impact of social media on corporate reputation and propose that companies integrate social media channels in communication strategies. Barlett, Pallas, and Frostenson introduce accreditation and rankings as assessments of corporate reputation and explore their operative mechanisms and interactions with social actors. In the last chapter of this section, Scott demonstrates what he calls hidden organizations and their unique issues regarding reputation.

The fifth and final section discusses methodologies of measurement and the evaluation of corporate reputation and its management. Stacks, Dodd, and Men examine previous evaluation methods and advance a public relations/corporate communications function that emphasizes social reputational variables. Kim and Yang then explore the connection between corporate reputation as public relations value and its contribution to the bottom line as evaluated by return on investment (ROI).

Overall, this handbook is a good attempt to grasp the intersection between communication and corporate reputation. It provides a comprehensive collection of sources on the application of different theoretical perspectives and their contributions to the study and management of corporate reputation through investigations of empirical studies situated in current contexts. The majority of chapters begin with succinct reviews of key literature in the particular field of communication and how it is related to corporate reputation; that is followed by at least one case study so that readers can see how applicable and relevant the communication perspective is in real cases. Most of the handbook's chapters end with suggested research questions and issues for future study.

The *Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation* is accessible to readers who don't have an academic background or practical experience in the corporate arena. To ease one's introduction to its contents, there is a brief summary at the beginning of each chapter that makes the book very easy to refer to. Having said that, it should be noted that the summary for chapter 36 is missing and that some summaries do not accurately reflect the content of a chapter.

It is notable that the authorship of this handbook is international. There are authors from the United States, the UK, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Australia, and others whose contributions add freshness and diversity. The handbook is also very forward-looking, particularly in the way that dominant communication theories and emerging ones are paralleled in the second section, which focuses on alternative frameworks for the examination of corporate reputation. Also, new research domains, brought into relief by the technological and cultural changes in society, are addressed in the fourth section, which

keeps this collection current and relevant. Its brief examinations of anticorporate activism, social media, and emerging markets offer timely insights into these issues from the intersection of communication and corporate reputation. As much as I enjoy the variety of disciplines examined in the *Handbook of Communication and Corporate Reputation* collection, I think it would be even more helpful if connections between different subdisciplines were drawn and discussed to create a more organized and multidimensional understanding of corporate reputation based on interrelated disciplines within the field of communication.