

Mahoney, J. (2013). *Strategic communication: Principles and practice*. Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.

Reviewed by: Mimi Hodis

In *Strategic communication: Principles and practice*, James Mahoney makes very good use of his vast experience as a practitioner. Building on his experience, he constructs relevant examples of how to engage in strategic communication. The chapters of the book are presented logically making it easy for the reader to find the needed information. The inclusion of the guided tour of the topics makes the information flow smoothly and naturally, thus making the book easy to understand. Each chapter sets clear learning goals, invites readers to develop specific tasks, and offers ample opportunities for meaningful practice. As a result, the book is a valuable resource for both traditional and distance students as well as for early career practitioners of strategic communication.

Moreover, Mahoney makes a good case for using theory as being important for this area of study. Many people regard theoretical aspects as a rather dry subject and fear that they might not be able to apply it to practice. However, the author debunks this misconception by highlighting clearly the importance of theory in strategic communication and brings the reader on board. Additionally, he stresses that having (vs. lacking) theoretical knowledge is an important distinction associated with practitioners' ability to reflect on their own work. Specifically, drawing from Cornelissen (2000), Mahoney notes that reflective practitioners are able to work out how to adapt to changing circumstances instead of relying on intuition and trial and error (p. 43). This ability is pivotal for being successful in a dynamic field in which challenges and opportunities evolve rapidly.

I found the book both informative and practical. Definitely, James Mahoney knows how to structure the content to make it useful for readers. The fact that throughout the book he is not abandoning his practitioner hat is an additional strength of this volume. Importantly, Mahoney's book scores high on both substantive and pedagogical grounds. With regard to the latter, I found it remarkable that the book prompts readers to think early in their learning journey about a topic of interest and develop their communication strategy as they read through the chapters.

Table of Contents: Strategic communication:

- 1. Introduction: What this book is about
- 2. The nature of strategic communication
- 3. Communication strategy and business planning
- Time out: On the importance of theory
- 4. Elements of a communication strategy
- 5. Analysing organisational communication needs
- 6. Why target publics matter
- 7. Setting the Compass: Communication goals and objectives
- Time Out: On intercultural communication
- 8. Planning effective messages
- 9. Reaching target publics: The role of communication strategies
- 10. Tactics: The things we do
- Time Out: On applying professional practice skills to strategy
- 11. Managing a strategic communication plan
- 12. The Gemini Factor: Evaluating strategic communication projects
- 13. Strategic communication counselling
- Reflection

In conclusion, I found the fact that Mahoney finishes the book with a reflection note as very positive as many times being engaged in all sorts of daily duties and various responsibilities we forget the primary focus of our day-to-day activities. Only by reflection are we able to answer the three main questions: how?, when? and why? we should perform certain tasks.

About the reviewer: Dr Mimi Hodis teaches public relations and research methods at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand. Her research has particularly investigated teaching effectiveness. Currently she is

applying her extensive quantitative skills to the New Zealand delivery of the global GAP (Globally Accepted Practices) survey developed by the Global Alliance for Public Relations and Communication Management.