



A strategy of influence for armies

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Histoire & stratégie

In a world in constant movement and negotiation, in a world of networks, image is a major asset. For Alain JUILLET, "the key to success is to succeed in differentiating the structure by enhancing it. It is no longer a question of communicating about the product, but of acquiring a strong identity through a recurring, top-of-the-range, differentiating and structured discourse? Any living entity, in order to exist, must have an intrinsic difference that makes it not to be confused with others. »

This is why large companies implement influence strategy plans that fall within the sphere of economic intelligence, economic warfare. The armies, for their part, use communication, communication in connection with happy or unfortunate events, but communication that remains framed by political authority, not to say instrumentalized. This is a far cry from the freedom of communication seen in the United States of America or Great Britain.

Other regalian ministries have more freedom of action, not by their respective ministers, but by the freedom of expression of their officials through the various trade unions. The Ministry of the Interior is the archetypal example, with the multiple spokespersons that are the trade union representatives.

For the armies, within the framework of interarmization that smoothes out differences, the choice is simple: continue with traditional communication or innovate. So how can armies differentiate themselves by moving away from the usual patterns of communication? How can they influence the opinion leaders, how can they influence them by offering them a favourable profile through a certain number of themes and vectors?

The strategy of influence, which is at the antipodes of classic communication, is situated

within the framework of indirect and transversal communications. It aims to take the target audience out of its usual thought pattern and lead it towards another thought pattern.

We are not talking openly here about armies or their core business. It is no longer a question of convincing people of the excellence of the services provided and the missions accomplished, but of attracting the attention of opinion leaders through a recurring discourse, constantly establishing a link between the values that armies wish to reflect, the identity traits they highlight and current issues. The aim is to gradually establish itself as THE source of reference in its sphere of activity, as a speaker who delivers meaningful messages whose content is of interest and worthy of being relayed. To be different is to position oneself in a strategy of influence that highlights the immaterial capital of armies.

The implementation of a strategy of influence is decided at the highest level and is long-term. It requires communicating beyond technical know-how and emphasizes the identity that one wishes to be perceived.

It is therefore necessary to confirm whether or not it is necessary to undertake this type of approach and, above all, to check that the top management agrees to assume this dimension of influence by respecting certain basic criteria:

- To be "not correct", by distinguishing oneself from soft communication.
- Do not be afraid to assert your difference.
- Work on emerging ideas by being pro-active if possible.
- Work in a network.

Once the decision has been made to embark on a strategy of influence, the next step is to :

- Highlight the identity traits retained.
- Define how they will be exploited.
- Select and prioritize targets (opinion leaders, opinion multipliers, public and private decision-makers, internal and external stakeholders).

The structure in charge of the practical implementation of the influencing strategy is then set up to establish a permanent back and forth between the selected identity traits and the facts, data and current events in order to confer legitimacy and strength to the messages delivered and published in writing and orally.

In conclusion, to quote Alain JUILLET, "Influence is bringing the person you want to

influence to change his or her paradigm of thought, to modify its fundamentals... Because influence calls on the listener's analytical capacity, who must sort out between what he usually thinks and the new elements that are submitted to him, whose validity it is up to him to measure. Any sound argument put to the auditor may thus lead him or her to reconsider his or her judgment, and thus his or her position. It is from there that the process of influence begins".

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