UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Cross-Cultural Study of Leadership in Public Relations and Communication Management

Results of a survey in Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Ansgar Zerfass, Ulrike Röttger

Cross-Cultural Study of Leadership in Public Relations and Communication Management. Results of a survey in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

Leipzig, Münster: Universität Leipzig, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, 2012

With special thanks to Katharina Simon, B. Sc., for project management, administering the global online survey and statistical analyses. The questionnaire used in this study has been jointly developed by an international research group headed by Bruce Berger, University of Alabama, and Juan Meng, University of Georgia.

The use of the charts and data from this report in own presentations and publications is permitted when quoting the source "© Universität Leipzig / Universität Münster, www.leadership-survey.net" with every figure and reference.

Digital distribution and publication of this report by third parties is prohibited. This document is available at www.slideshare.net/communicationmanagement.

© April 2012 by the authors. All rights reserved.

Content

About this study 03

Methodology and demographics 06

Important issues for leaders in public relations and communication management 11

Preconditions and abilities facilitating leadership in communication 18

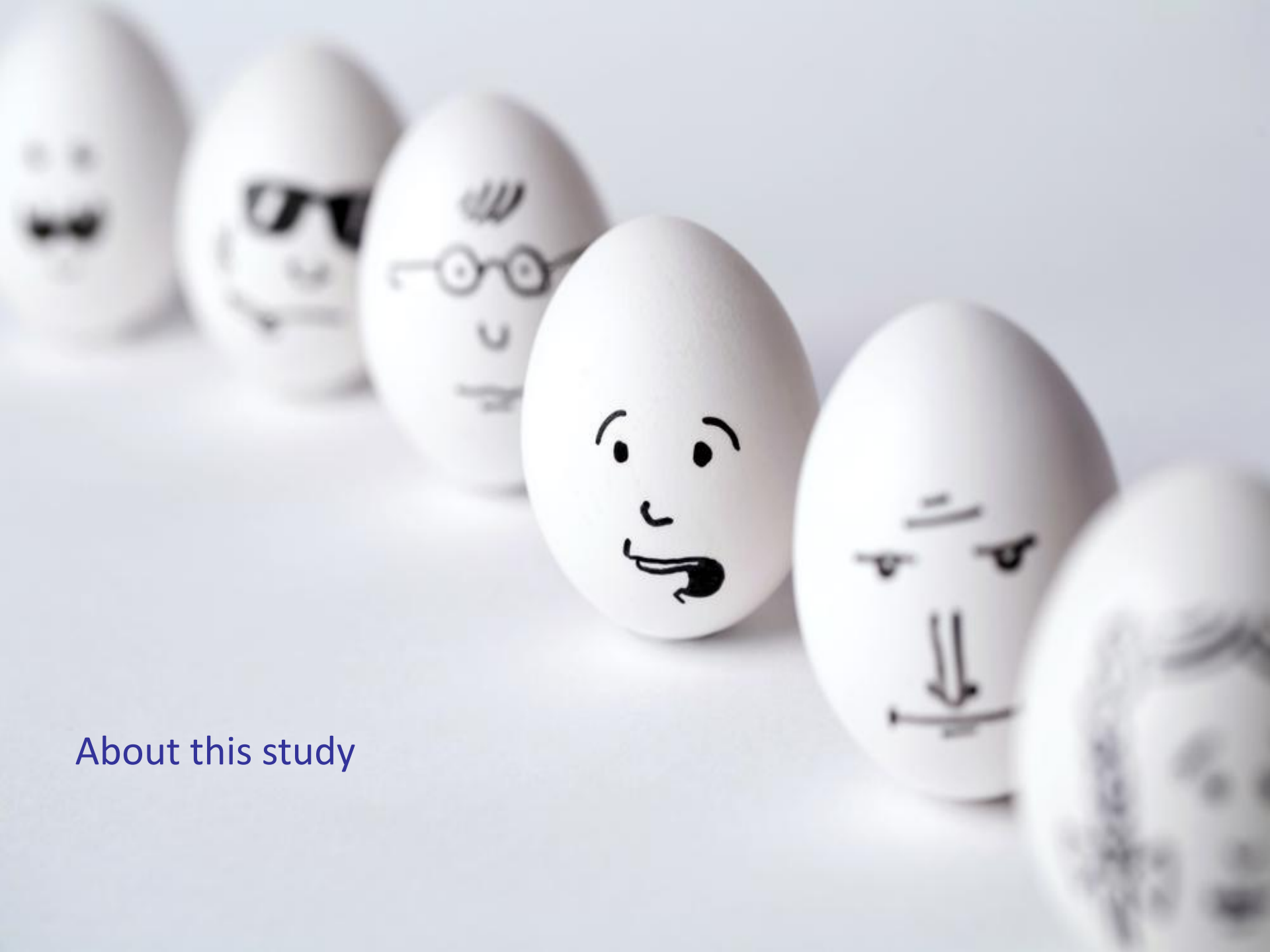
Strategies and actions implemented by communication teams 21

Development of future leaders 28

Personal beliefs and perceptions about leadership 35

Leadership in PR related to country, organization, gender, hierarchy and age 42

Authors and partners of the study 53



About this study

Cross-Cultural Study of
Leadership in Public Relations and Communication Management

Key facts

- Survey among communication professionals and PR managers in corporations, nonprofit organizations (including governmental, political, educational) and agencies
- The study is part of a global research project with quantitative and qualitative methods in 8 cultural regions and 23 countries: Anglo Countries (United States, United Kingdom), Germanic Europe (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), Eastern Europe (Russia, Estonia, Latvia), Latin Europe (Spain), Latin America (Brazil, Chile, Mexico), Confucian Asia (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore), Southern Asia (India), and Middle East (United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt)
- This report includes quantitative results from Germany, Austria and Switzerland (DACH region) and is based on a sample of 1,766 completed questionnaires
- Partners and sponsors: Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations at the University of Alabama, AL; Heyman Associates, New York, NY; IBM, Armonk, NY; Academic Society for Corporate Management and Communication, Germany. Distribution partner: Convento, Neuss, Germany.

Focus and research questions

- Important issues for leaders in public relations and communication management
- Conditions for leadership, leadership abilities and qualities
- Strategies and actions implemented by leaders to deal with important issues
- Development of future leaders
- Personal beliefs and perceptions about leadership

Background and rationale

Our world is characterized by rapid and dynamic changes, including globalization, the rise of powerful social media, newly empowered stakeholders and groups, a 24/7 news cycle and diverse economic, political and social challenges. In such a dynamic environment, organizations need professional communication leaders who provide a vision, build and manage professional work teams, foster employees' commitment, and contribute to aligning communication to organizational goals.

The Cross-cultural Study of Leadership in Public Relations and Communication Management explores major challenges that leaders in this field face, strategies implemented to deal with these issues, prerequisites and characteristics of excellent communication leaders, as well as leaders' and followers' personal beliefs and perceptions about leadership in public relations and communication management.

The terms *communication management* and *public relations* mean the same thing in this study. The term *leader* is used to refer to an individual who is responsible for organizing and leading a communication group, unit or entire function to help an organization achieve its objectives.

The findings will help build leadership theory in public relations and communication management, bear implications for communication practice, and help inform the education and development of future leaders in the field. Thus, the overall project and the quantitative results for Germany, Austria and Switzerland presented in this report expand our understanding of communication leadership globally – to truly break ground in this important area.

Methodology and demographics

Methodology

Method and sampling

- Online survey from November 28, 2011 – January 3, 2012 (5 weeks)
- Questionnaire in German language with 6 sections, based on theory building and previous empirical research in the United States
- Pre-test with 12 communication practitioners
- Personal invitation to 21,400 professionals based in Austria, Germany and Switzerland via e-mail, based on a database provided by Convento, a leading provider of management software for corporate and financial communications in German speaking countries
- Evaluation is based on 1,766 fully completed questionnaires

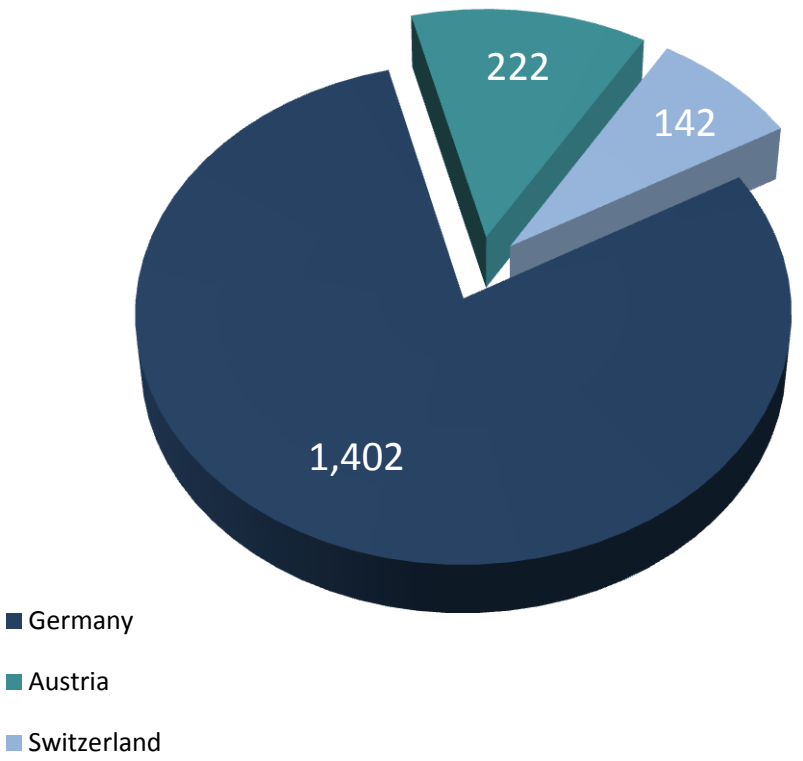
Statistical analysis

- Methods of empirical research, descriptive and analytical analysis (using SPSS)
- Results have been statistically agreed by Pearson's chi-square tests (x^2) and are classified as significant ($p \leq 0.05$) where appropriate
- In this report, significant correlations are marked in the footnotes

Demographic background of participants

Age	
Less than 36 years	19.4%
36 – 45 years	37.3%
46 – 55 years	32.8%
More than 55 years	10.4%

Gender	
Male	52.8%
Female	47.2%



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals from Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Educational background of participants

Highest level of education	
Doctoral degree	11.3%
Master's degree (or Magister, Diploma / University)	65.4%
Bachelor's degree (or Diploma / FH)	11.4%
High school degree or equivalent (Abitur, Matura)	8.2%
Other	3.7%

Major area of study	
Humanities (history, linguistics, literature, philosophy, speech, etc.)	25.5%
Communication and media studies, journalism	18.9%
Public relations, communication management, strategic communication	8.0%
Social sciences (anthropology, political studies, psychology)	11.0%
Business administration, general business, management, advertising or marketing	20.8%
Mathematics or natural sciences (biology, chemistry, physics, etc.), computer science	5.3%
Other	10.4%

Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals from Germany, Austria and Switzerland

Organizational background of participants

Type of organization	
Publicly held corporation (stock ownership)	19.1%
Private or state-owned company	34.0%
Nonprofit organization, governmental, educational or political organization	23.4%
Communication or public relations agency	20.0%
Self-employed	6.5%

Position	
Top leader in public relations	48.4%
1 level below highest ranked communication leader	39.2%
2 levels below highest ranked communication leader	9.5%
3 or more levels below highest ranked communication leader	2.9%

Size of communication unit	
More than 25 professionals	12.3%
16 - 25 professionals	8.3%
5 - 15 professionals	40.2%
Fewer than 5 professionals	39.2%

Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Type of organization: n = 1,822, because multiple answers were allowed. Throughout the survey, data from different respondents has only been used for evaluation and interpretation when appropriate, i.e. responses from agencies are not taken into account for leadership processes in communication departments , self-employed respondents are only relevant for identifying general issues etc.

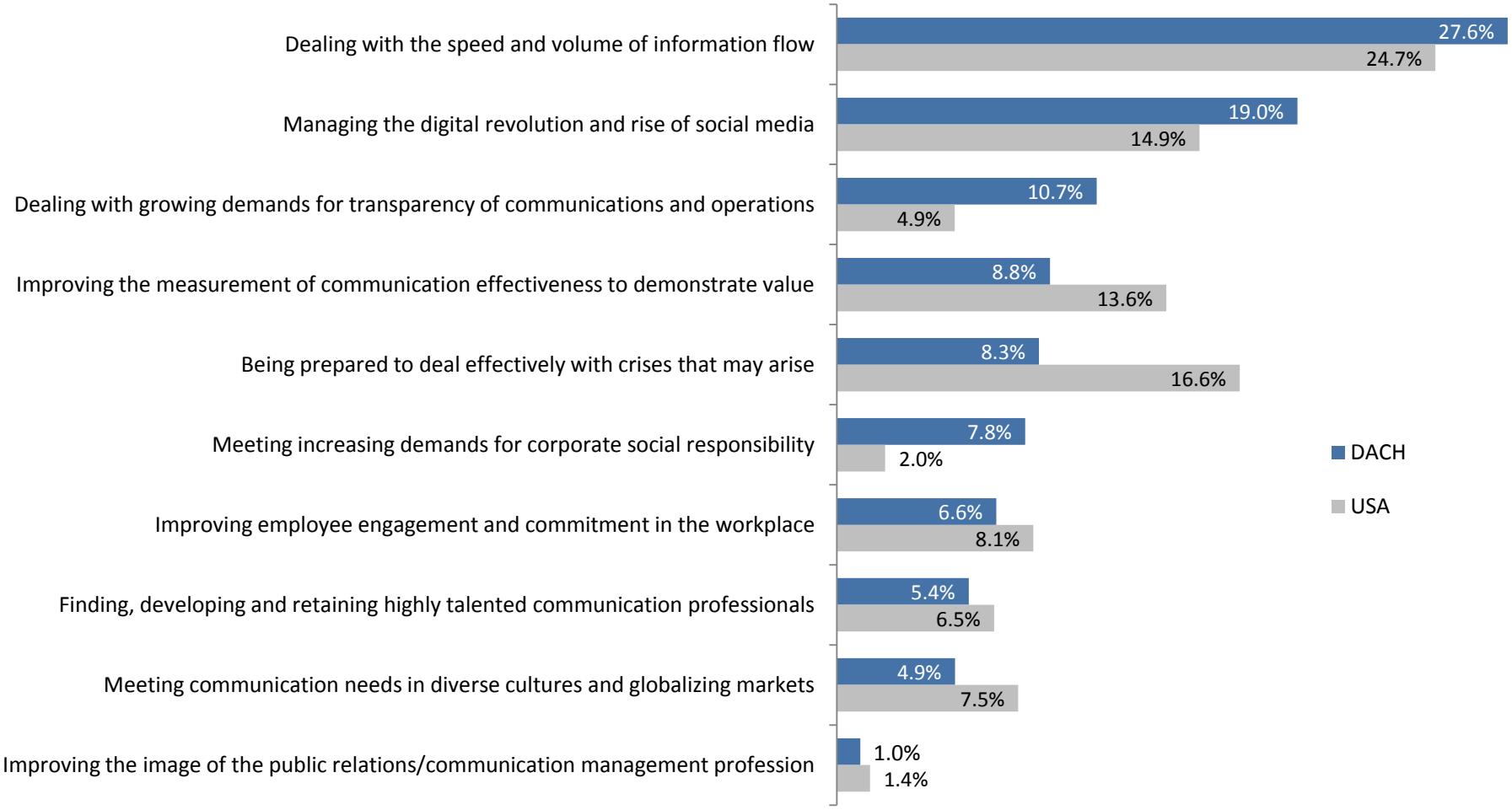
Important issues for leaders in public relations and communication management

Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow is considered the most important issue by more than one fourth of the PR professionals

Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow	27.6%
Managing the digital revolution and rise of social media	19.0%
Dealing with growing demands for transparency of communications and operations	10.7%
Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value	8.8%
Being prepared to deal effectively with crises that may arise	8.3%
Meeting increasing demands for corporate social responsibility	7.8%
Improving employee engagement and commitment in the workplace	6.6%
Finding, developing and retaining highly talented communication professionals	5.4%
Meeting communication needs in diverse cultures and globalizing markets	4.9%
Improving the image of the public relations/communication management profession	1.0%

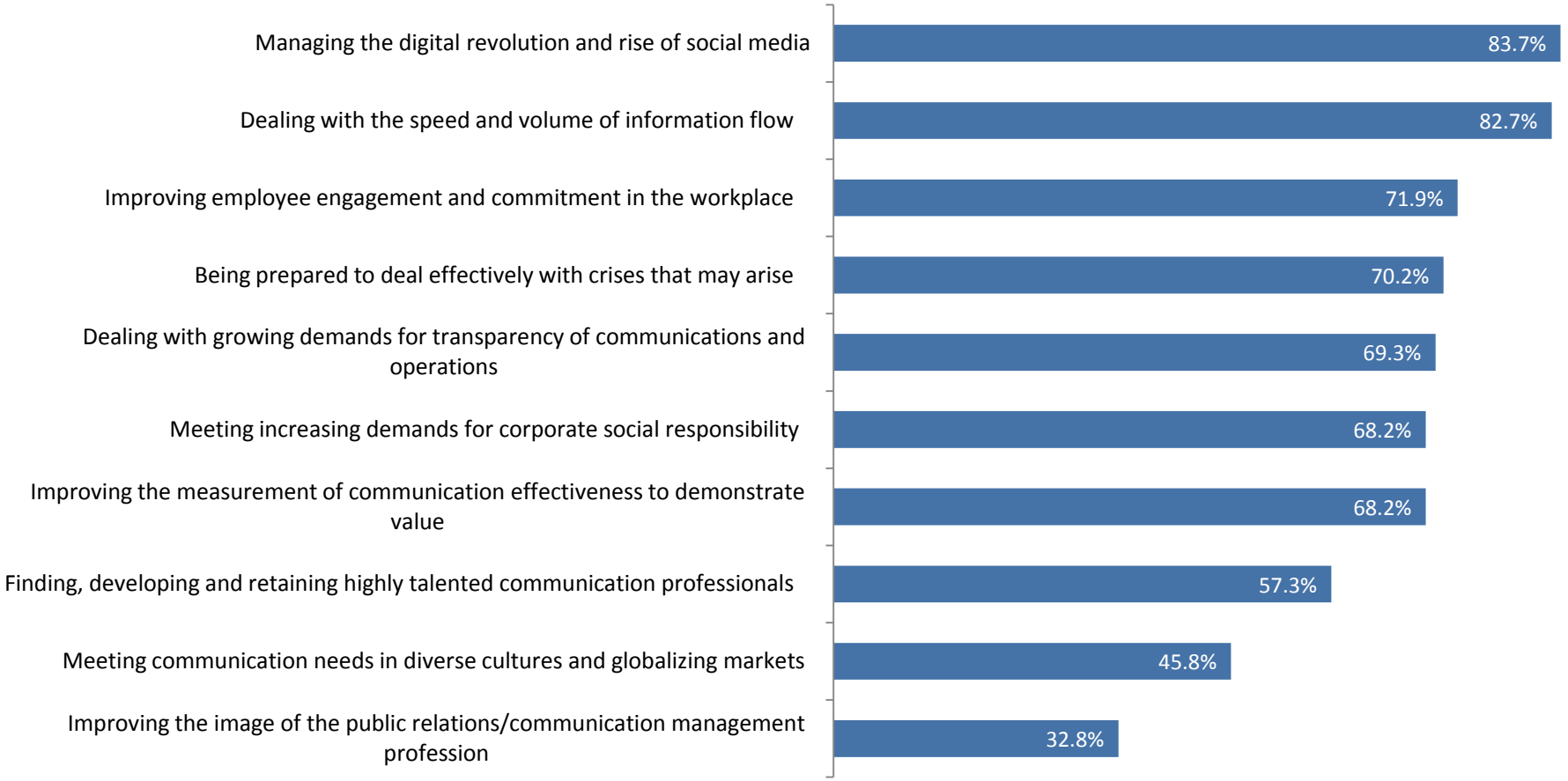
Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals from Germany, Austria and Switzerland / Q: Please indicate which one of these 10 issues, in your opinion, is the most important issue for your communication leader (or you, if you are the leader).

Most important issues differ around the world: Transparency and CSR are more relevant in the DACH region, crises and measurement prevalent in the USA



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals from Austria, Germany and Switzerland; n = 803 PR professionals from the US / Q: Please indicate which one of these 10 issues, in your opinion, is the most important issue for your communication leader (or you, if you are the leader). Significant differences between the countries ($p \leq 0{,}05$).

Overall importance of issues for leaders in PR and communication management in Germany, Austria and Switzerland



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree that each of the following issues is important to your communication leader (or you, if you are the leader) in your organization today. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the issue is important.

Leaders in the DACH region and the United States judge the overall importance of strategic issues differently

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland	USA
Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow	82.7%	81.1%	84.5%	91.0%
Meeting increasing demands for corporate social responsibility	67.5%	74.8%	64.8%	62.8%
Managing the digital revolution and rise of social media	83.7%	84.7%	82.4%	88.2%
Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value	68.0%	71.6%	64.1%	82.3%
Being prepared to deal effectively with crises that may arise	**68.6%**	**76.1%**	**76.8%**	**91.4%**
Dealing with growing demands for transparency of communications and operations	68.8%	71.6%	70.4%	74.2%
Meeting communication needs in diverse cultures and globalizing markets	**45.0%**	**48.6%**	**48.6%**	**69.0%**
Improving the image of the public relations/communication management profession	32.0%	42.8%	24.6%	46.6%
Finding, developing and retaining highly talented communication professionals	**57.4%**	**58.6%**	**54.2%**	**78.2%**
Improving employee engagement and commitment in the workplace	71.8%	76.6%	64.8%	78.2%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR Professionals / n = 1,402 (Germany), 222 (Austria), 142 (Switzerland), 804 (United States) / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree that each of the following issues is important to your communication leader (or you, if you are the leader) in your organization today. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the issue is important. Significant differences between the countries ($p \leq 0{,}05$).

Overall importance of issues in different types of organizations

	Publicly held corporation (stock ownership)	Private or state-owned company	Nonprofit, governmental, educational or political organization	Communication or public relations agency
Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow	81.1%	81.7%	84.1%	82.2%
Meeting increasing demands for corporate social responsibility	70.1%	66.6%	65.2%	68.6%
Managing the digital revolution and rise of social media	79.0%	84.0%	81.2%	88.7%
Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value	68.0%	66.4%	62.6%	74.9%
Being prepared to deal effectively with crises that may arise	75.1%	70.7%	64.3%	68.6%
Dealing with growing demands for transparency of communications and operations	71.0%	67.2%	68.4%	69.8%
Meeting communication needs in diverse cultures and globalizing markets	**57.1%**	**45.1%**	**29.7%**	**51.7%**
Improving the image of the public relations/communication management profession	32.0%	29.3%	28.5%	37.9%
Finding, developing and retaining highly talented communication professionals	**55.9%**	**51.1%**	**45.2%**	**78.0%**
Improving employee engagement and commitment in the workplace	71.9%	69.7%	65.9%	78.8%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals / n = 338 (public corporation), 601 (private corporation), 414 (nonprofit, governmental etc.), 354 (agencies) / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree that each of the following issues is important to your communication leader (or you, if you are the leader) in your organization today. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the issue is important. No calculation of significances because respondents were allowed to assign themselves to multiple types of organizations.

Top-level communication leaders focus on information speed, social media and employee engagement

	Top leader	1 level below top leader	2 levels below top leader	3 or more levels below top leader
Dealing with the speed and volume of information flow	**87.5%**	79.1%	74.8%	74.0%
Meeting increasing demands for corporate social responsibility	69.3%	64.4%	72.4%	60.0%
Managing the digital revolution and rise of social media	**85.2%**	81.8%	82.2%	82.0%
Improving the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value	68.6%	66.8%	70.6%	52.0%
Being prepared to deal effectively with crises that may arise	71.5%	68.3%	66.9%	70.0%
Dealing with growing demands for transparency of communications and operations	70.9%	67.4%	71.8%	50.0%
Meeting communication needs in diverse cultures and globalizing markets	44.7%	43.2%	50.9%	52.0%
Improving the image of the public relations/communication management profession	32.6%	28.3%	39.9%	32.0%
Finding, developing and retaining highly talented communication professionals	57.8%	55.0%	57.7%	50.0%
Improving employee engagement and commitment in the workplace	**75.0%**	69.6%	69.3%	52.0%

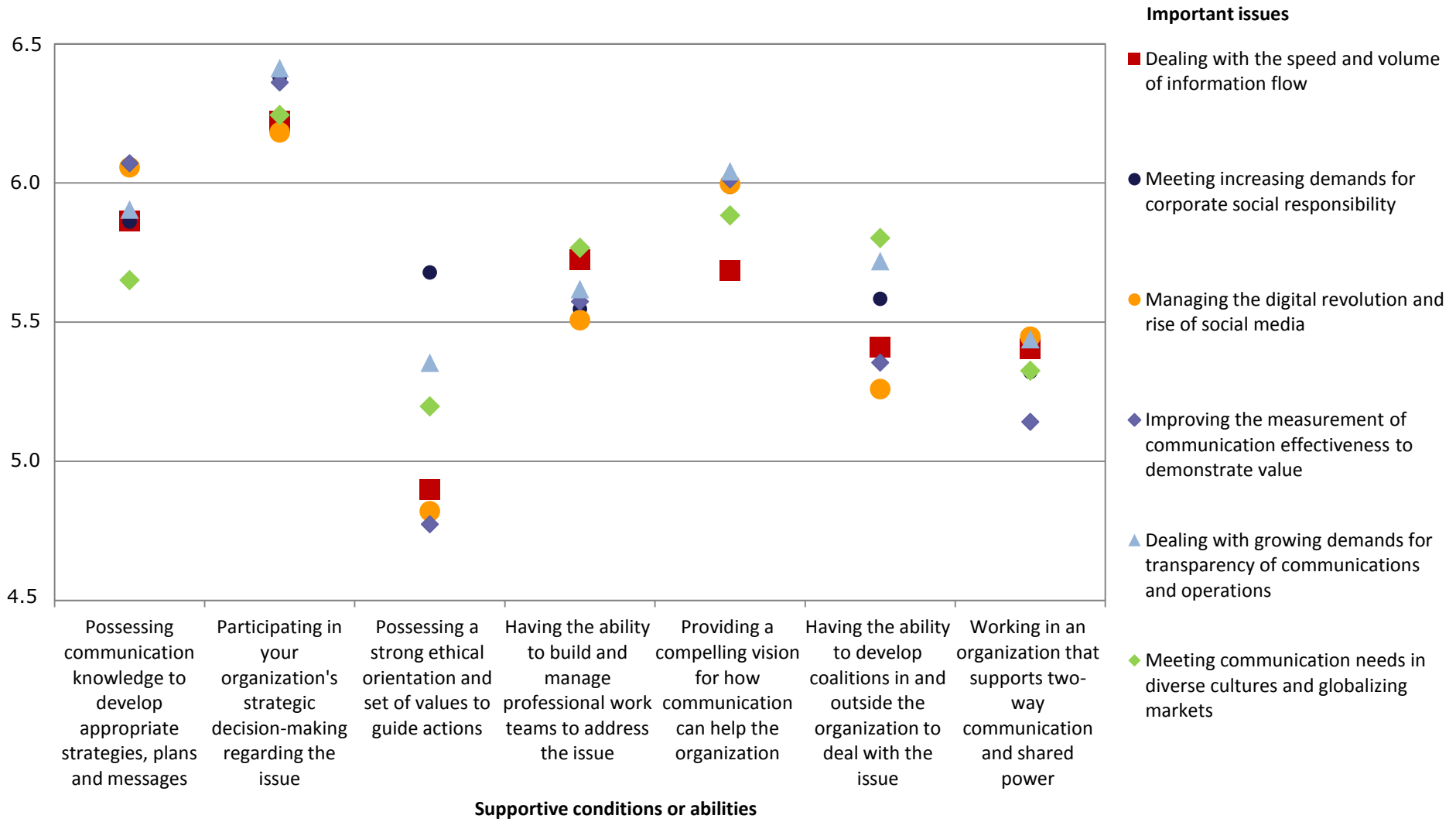
Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / n = 855 (top leader), 691 (1 level below), 168 (2 levels below), 51 (3 levels below) / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree that each of the following issues is important to your communication leader (or you, if you are the leader) in your organization today. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the issue is important. Significant differences between the groups regarding items 3, 4 and 10 ($p \leq 0{,}05$).

Preconditions and abilities facilitating leadership in communication

Participating in organizational decision making is the most important precondition for PR leaders to deal successfully with major challenges

Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals / Q: For this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent you agree that each of the seven following conditions or leadership personal abilities or qualities is important in helping your communication leader deal successfully with this specific issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the condition or ability is important.

A strong ethical orientation is especially important to deal with CSR issues and demands for transparency

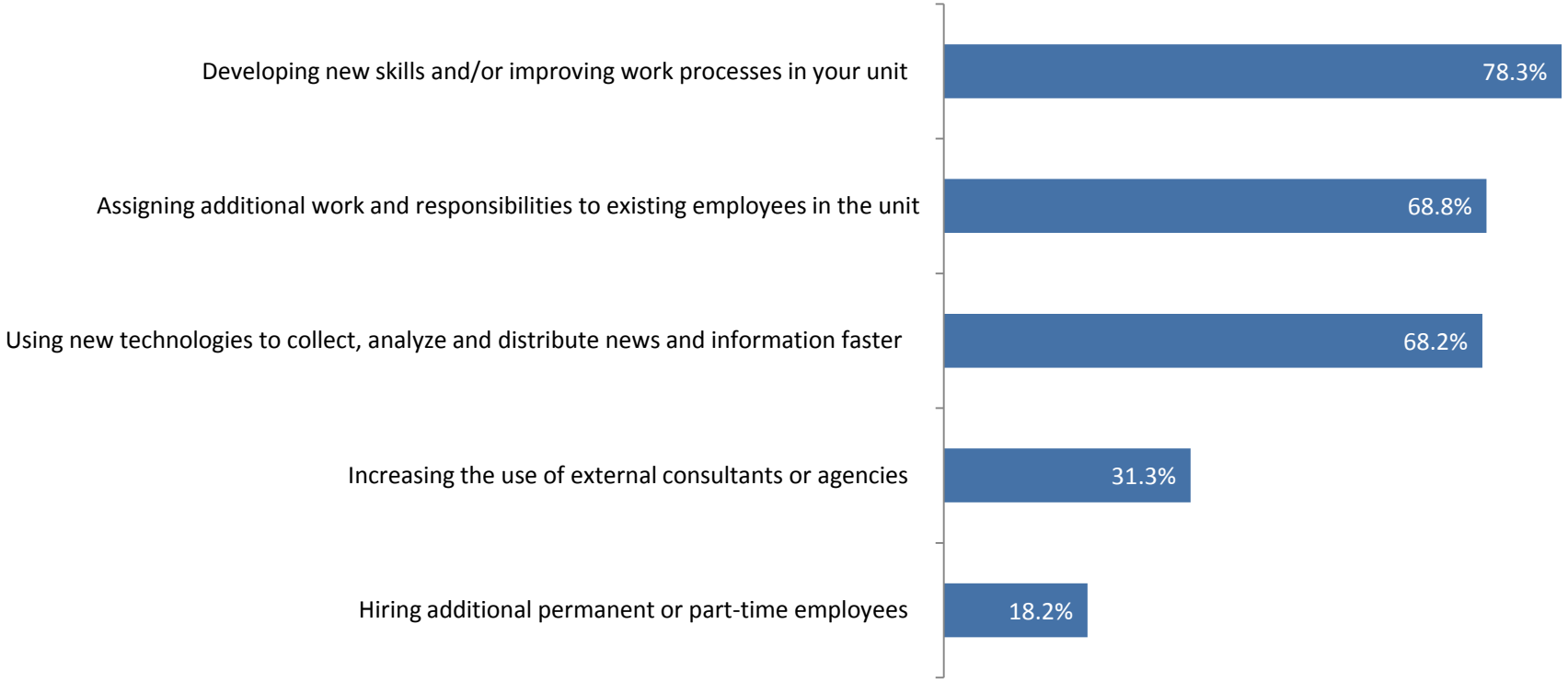


Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals / Q: For this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent you agree that each of the seven following conditions or leadership personal abilities or qualities is important in helping your communication leader deal successfully with this specific issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal); mean values.

Strategies and actions implemented by communication teams

Communication departments rely on advanced skills, processes and technologies to handle the rising flow of information

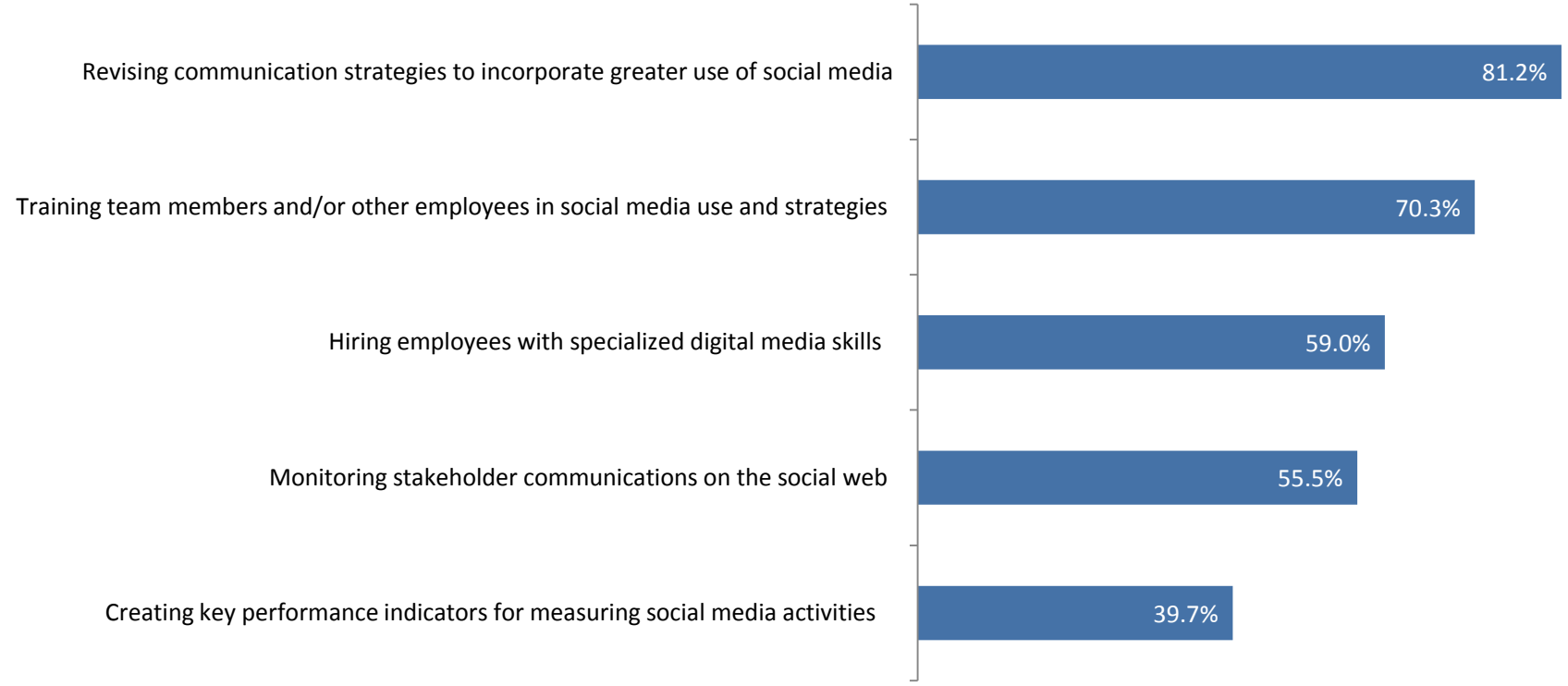
Strategies or actions implemented to deal with the speed and volume of information flow



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 368 PR professionals working in communication departments / Q: Continuing with this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent your communication team or unit is implementing each of the five strategies or actions listed below to help your organization deal with this most important issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that their team implements the strategy.

The challenge of social media has stimulated new communication strategies and training programs, but most organizations have no indicators to measure success

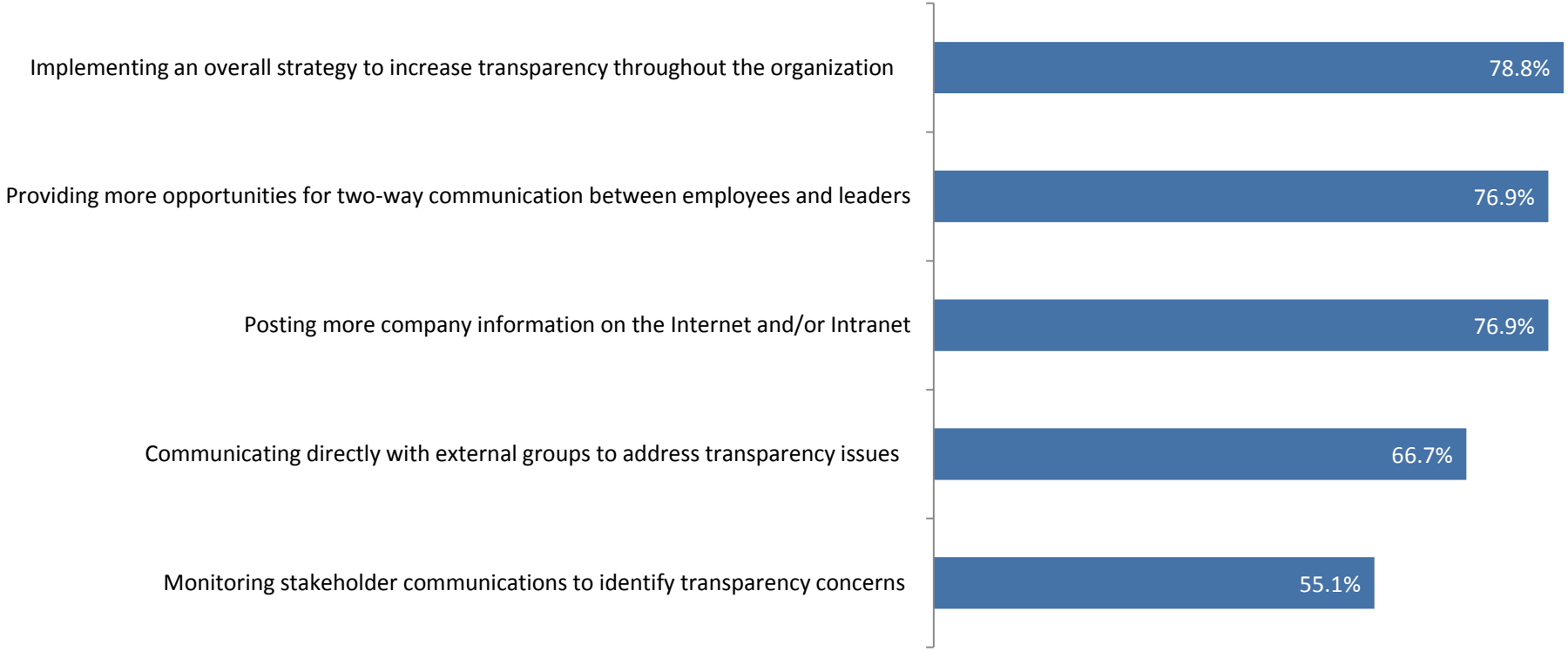
Strategies or actions implemented to manage the digital revolution and rise of social media



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 229 PR professionals working in communication departments / Q: Continuing with this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent your communication team or unit is implementing each of the five strategies or actions listed below to help your organization deal with this most important issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that their team implements the strategy.

While transparency is a big issue, every third communication department does not communicate directly with stakeholders or monitor their concerns

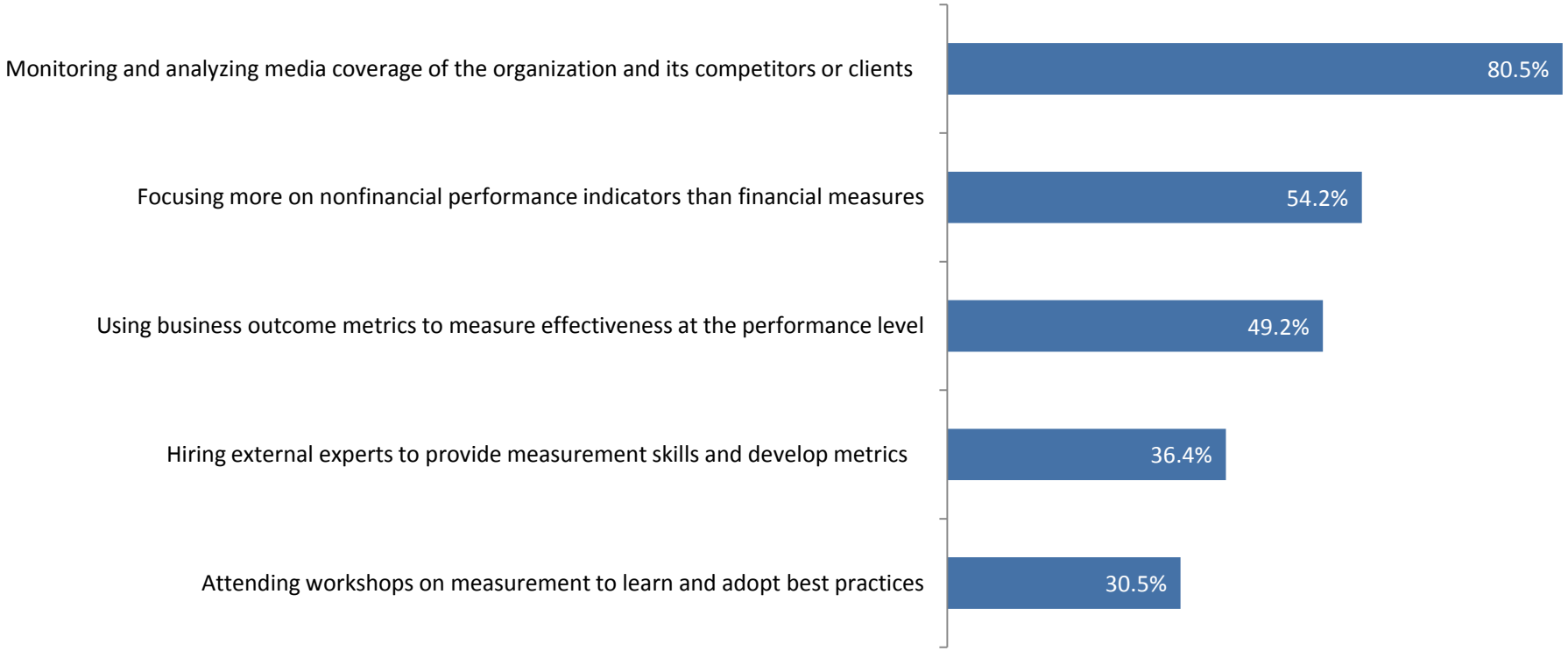
Strategies or actions implemented to deal with the growing demands for transparency of communications and operations



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 156 PR professionals working in communication departments / Q: Continuing with this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent your communication team or unit is implementing each of the five strategies or actions listed below to help your organization deal with this most important issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that their team implements the strategy.

Most communication teams rely on media coverage when trying to demonstrate the value of communications; only every second uses business metrics

Strategies or actions implemented to improve the measurement of communication effectiveness to demonstrate value



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 118 PR professionals working in communication departments / Q: Continuing with this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent your communication team or unit is implementing each of the five strategies or actions listed below to help your organization deal with this most important issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that their team implements the strategy.

Organizational leaders are a key target group for communication teams dealing with the demand for corporate social responsibility

Strategies or actions implemented to meet increasing demands for corporate social responsibility

Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 103 PR professionals working in communication departments / Q: Continuing with this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent your communication team or unit is implementing each of the five strategies or actions listed below to help your organization deal with this most important issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that their team implements the strategy.

Communication departments favor a combination of centralized and decentralized strategies in international communication

Strategies or actions implemented to meet communication needs in diverse cultures and globalizing markets

Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 63 PR professionals working in communication departments / Q: Continuing with this most important issue you just selected, please indicate to what extent your communication team or unit is implementing each of the five strategies or actions listed below to help your organization deal with this most important issue. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that their team implements the strategy.

Development of future leaders

Strengthening conflict management, change management and listening skills are most important when developing future communication leaders

Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,766 PR professionals / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the relative importance of each action below that might be taken to improve the development of future leaders in the field and enhance the communication profession. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the action is important.

Several approaches to develop future communication leaders are valued differently in German speaking countries and the USA

	Germany	Austria	Switzerland	USA
Increase cultural understanding and sensitivity	**56.5%**	**54.5%**	**59.2%**	**73.6%**
Improve the listening skills of professionals	73.1%	80.2%	73.9%	82.1%
Develop training to enhance the emotional intelligence of PR professionals	57.1%	65.3%	54.2%	63.4%
Urge professional associations to work together to develop leaders	**29.5%**	**41.9%**	**26.8%**	**47.3%**
Strengthen the business/economic component of communication education programs	64.2%	70.7%	66.2%	77.6%
Enhance conflict management skills	77.3%	89.2%	73.9%	75.5%
Develop better measures to document the value and contributions of public relations	65.5%	70.3%	62.0%	79.7%
Require professional accreditation or licensing	28.6%	39.6%	23.2%	21.6%
Impose tough penalties on ethical violators	**30.8%**	**48.2%**	**26.1%**	**59.3%**
Develop a core global education curriculum	31.8%	38.3%	23.2%	41.2%
Enhance professional skills in coping with work-related stress	**71.5%**	**68.0%**	**55.6%**	**51.5%**
Strengthen change management skills and capabilities	76.2%	76.6%	74.6%	83.1%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR Professionals / n = 1,402 (Germany), 222 (Austria), 142 (Switzerland), 804 (United States) / Q : Please indicate to what extent you agree with the relative importance of each action below that might be taken to improve the development of future leaders in the field and enhance the communication profession. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the action is important. Significant differences between the countries ($p \leq 0,05$).

The support for different leadership development actions varies between various age groups of communication professionals

	< 36 years	36 - 45 years	46 - 55 years	> 55 years
Increase cultural understanding and sensitivity	**51.3%**	**52.2%**	**60.3%**	**69.0%**
Improve the listening skills of professionals	**68.2%**	**72.5%**	**76.6%**	**82.6%**
Develop training to enhance the emotional intelligence of PR professionals	57.1%	53.7%	60.2%	66.8%
Urge professional associations to work together to develop leaders	**35.6%**	**28.2%**	**28.8%**	**38.0%**
Strengthen the business/economic component of communication education programs	**74.3%**	**65.9%**	**59.7%**	**63.0%**
Enhance conflict management skills	**77.0%**	**75.6%**	**80.0%**	**87.5%**
Develop better measures to document the value and contributions of public relations	71.4%	66.8%	62.9%	60.9%
Require professional accreditation or licensing	**34.4%**	**28.7%**	**26.0%**	**34.8%**
Impose tough penalties on ethical violators	30.0%	31.7%	33.4%	38.0%
Develop a core global education curriculum	37.0%	32.6%	28.3%	31.5%
Enhance professional skills in coping with work-related stress	72.3%	69.3%	67.9%	72.8%
Strengthen change management skills and capabilities	72.9%	76.2%	76.4%	81.0%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals / n = 343 (< 36 years), 659 (36 - 45 years), 580 (46 - 55 years), 184 (> 56 years) / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the relative importance of each action below that might be taken to improve the development of future leaders in the field and enhance the communication profession. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the action is important. Significant differences between the groups regarding items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 8 ($p \leq 0,05$).

Important actions to improve the development of future communication leaders as perceived by top leaders and team members

	Top leader	Follower
Increase cultural understanding and sensitivity	56.7%	55.7%
Improve the listening skills of professionals	74.8%	72.1%
Develop training to enhance the emotional intelligence of PR professionals	58.2%	56.2%
Urge professional associations to work together to develop leaders	29.8%	30.8%
Strengthen the business/economic component of communication education programs	67.4%	63.2%
Enhance conflict management skills	80.0%	76.8%
Develop better measures to document the value and contributions of public relations	64.7%	67.0%
Require professional accreditation or licensing	27.5%	30.8%
Impose tough penalties on ethical violators	31.0%	33.6%
Develop a core global education curriculum	**28.5%**	**34.2%**
Enhance professional skills in coping with work-related stress	70.0%	69.7%
Strengthen change management skills and capabilities	78.6%	74.5%

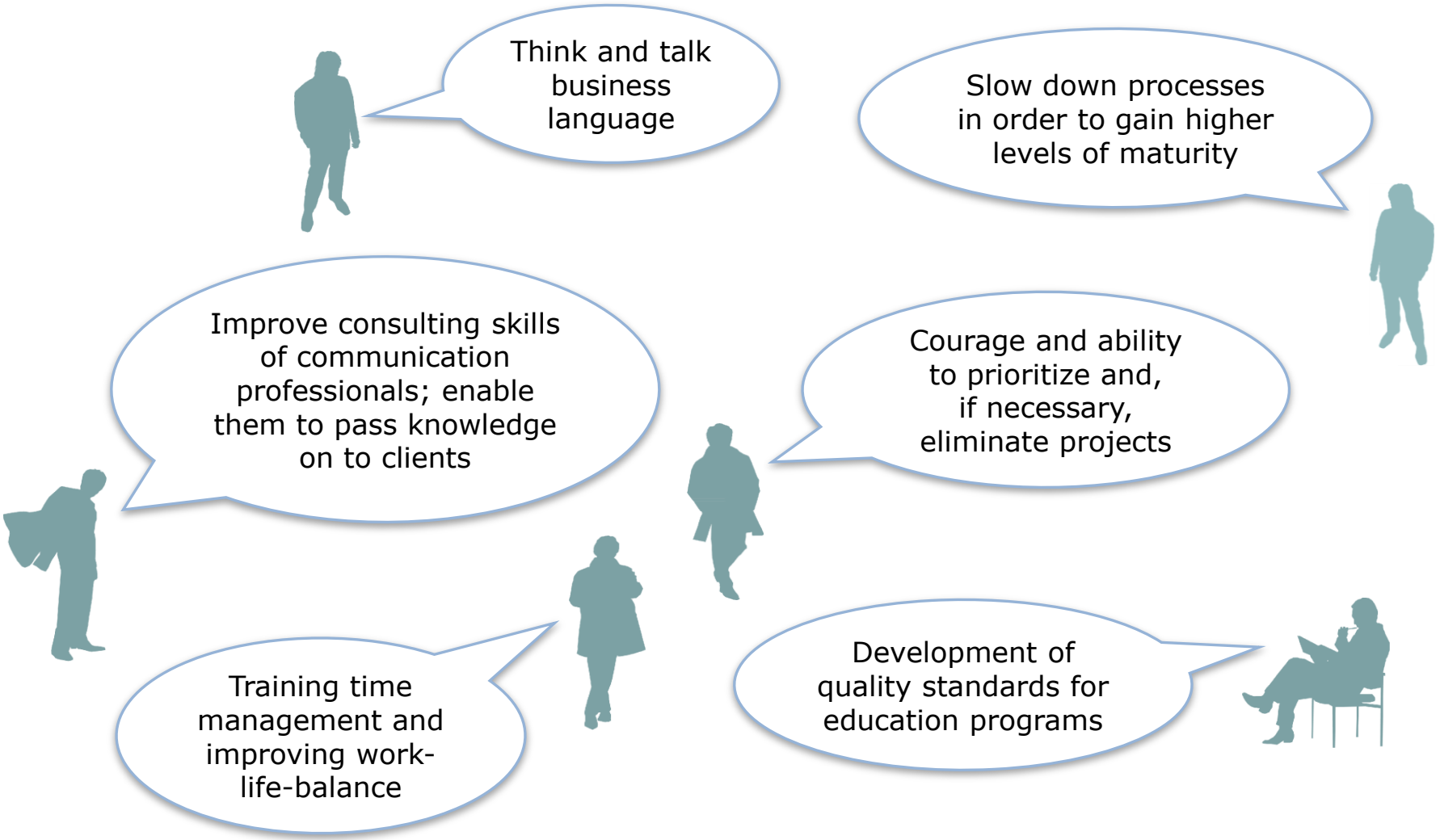
Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organisations or agencies/ n = 771 (top leaders), 884 (followers) / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the relative importance of each action below that might be taken to improve the development of future leaders in the field and enhance the communication profession. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Percentage values indicate scale points 5 – 7. Significant differences regarding item 10 ($p \leq 0{,}05$). Top leader: 0 levels between own position and the highest ranked communication leader in the organization; Followers: 1 or more levels between own position and the highest ranked.

Perceptions on leadership development in communications are quite similar in different types of organizations

	Publicly held corporation (stock ownership)	Private or state-owned company	Nonprofit, governmental, educational or political organization	Communication or public relations agency
Increase cultural understanding and sensitivity	64.8%	54.6%	49.3%	59.3%
Improve the listening skills of professionals	72.8%	72.2%	76.3%	73.7%
Develop training to enhance the emotional intelligence of PR professionals	53.8%	57.2%	57.5%	59.9%
Urge professional associations to work together to develop leaders	25.1%	31.4%	34.1%	28.5%
Strengthen the business/economic component of communication education programs	69.2%	66.4%	57.0%	68.6%
Enhance conflict management skills	75.1%	78.0%	79.0%	80.2%
Develop better measures to document the value and contributions of public relations	70.1%	66.1%	61.4%	68.4%
Require professional accreditation or licensing	30.5%	28.6%	26.6%	33.3%
Impose tough penalties on ethical violators	33.7%	30.9%	31.2%	34.7%
Develop a core global education curriculum	32.0%	32.4%	26.3%	35.0%
Enhance professional skills in coping with work-related stress	67.5%	68.9%	74.4%	69.5%
Strengthen change management skills and capabilities	83.4%	77.5%	72.9%	72.3%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals / n = 338 (public corporation), 601 (private corporation), 414 (nonprofit, governmental etc.), 354 (agencies) / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the relative importance of each action below that might be taken to improve the development of future leaders in the field and enhance the communication profession. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who clearly stated that the action is important. No calculation of significances because respondents were allowed to assign themselves to multiple kinds of organizations.

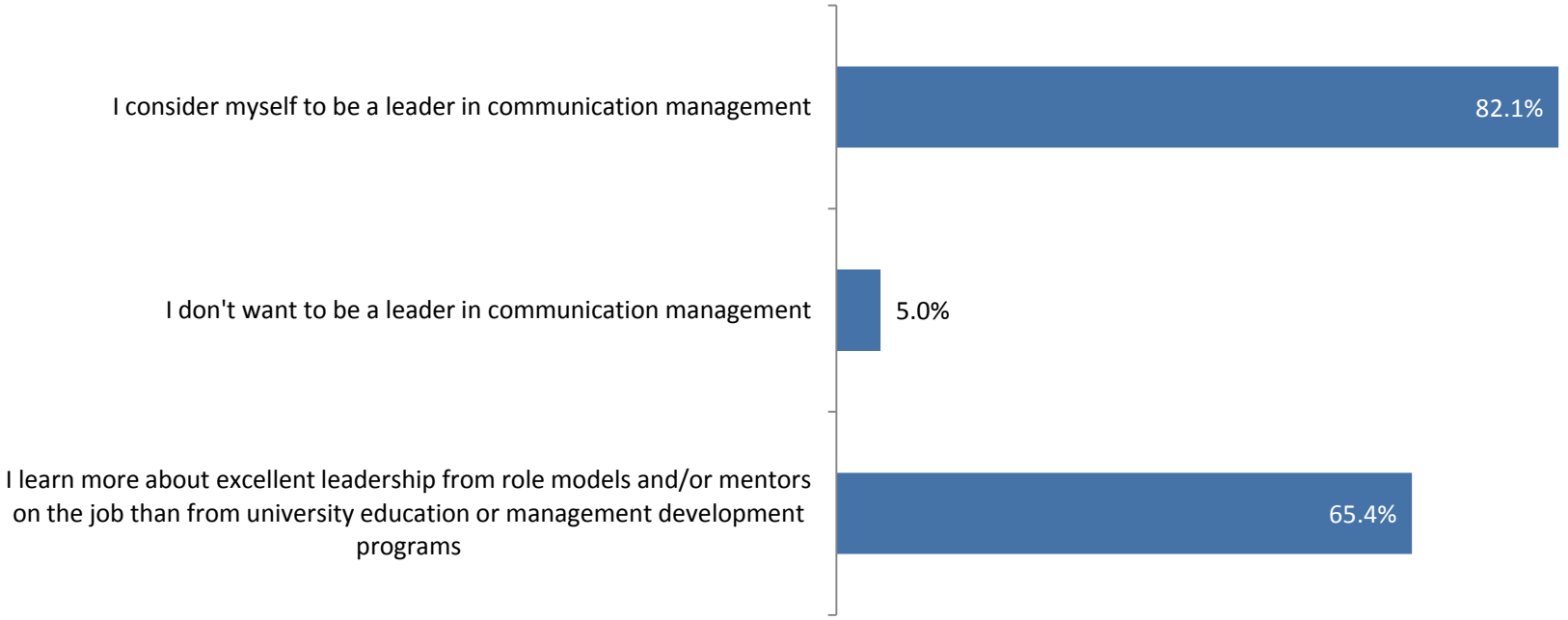
Further important actions mentioned by respondents to improve the development of future communication leaders



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals / Q: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the relative importance of each action below that might be taken to improve the development of future leaders in the field and enhance the communication profession. Scale: 1 (A little bit) – 7 (A great deal). Open question, qualitative evaluation; figure shows examples of statements for most relevant topic areas.

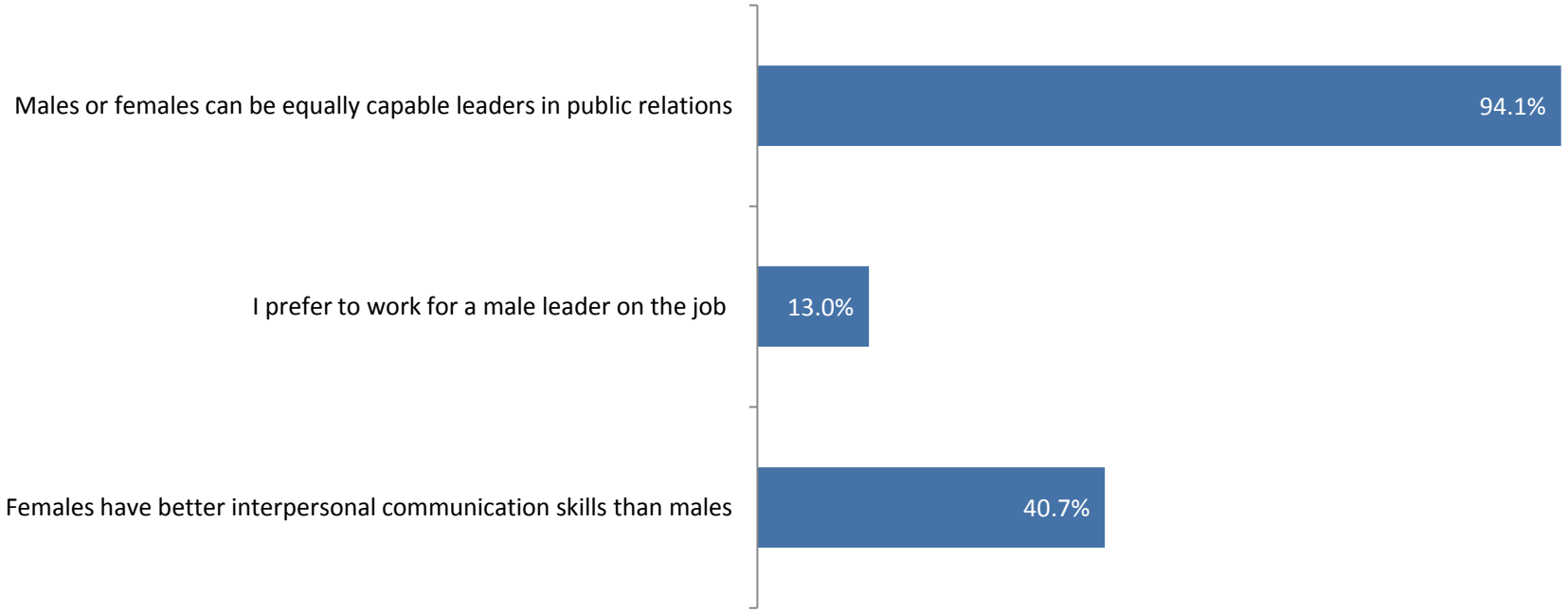
Personal beliefs and perceptions
about leadership

Self perception as a leader: Eight out of ten practitioners surveyed consider themselves to be a communication leader



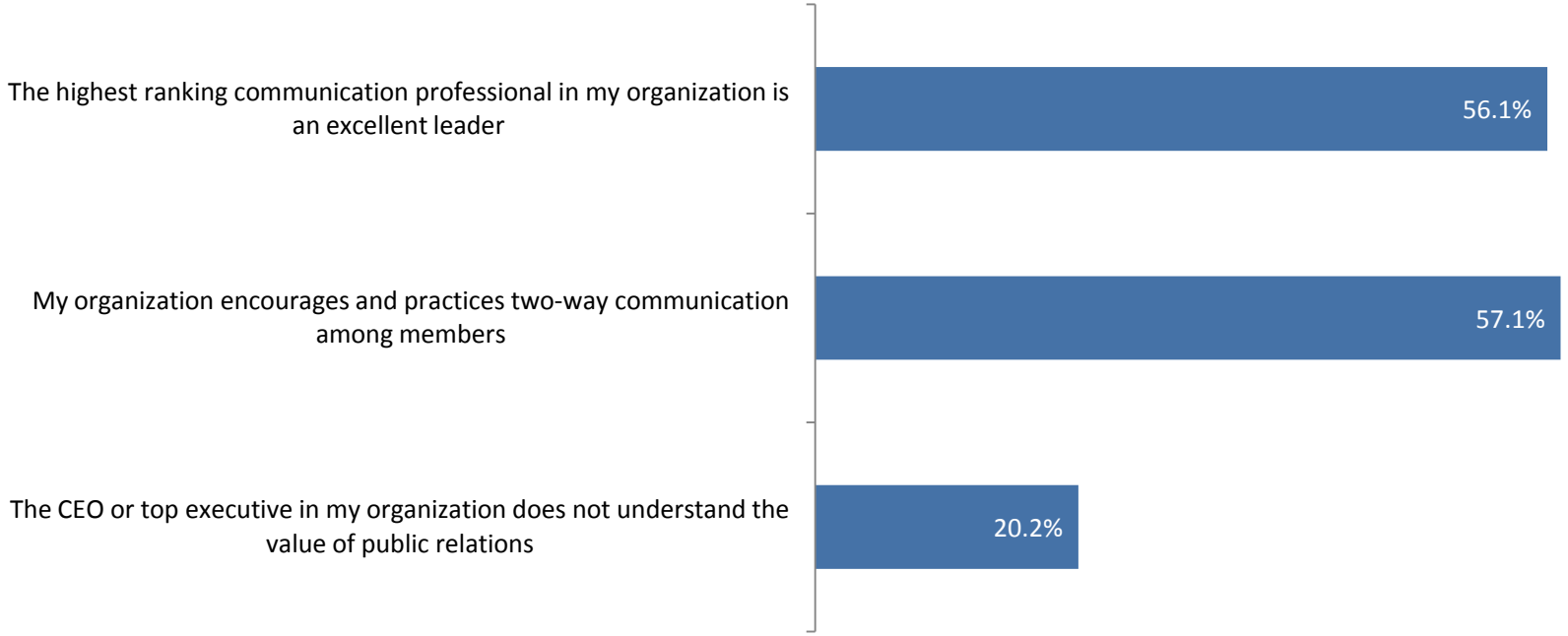
Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement.

Gender and leadership: 94 per cent state that men and women can be excellent communication leaders



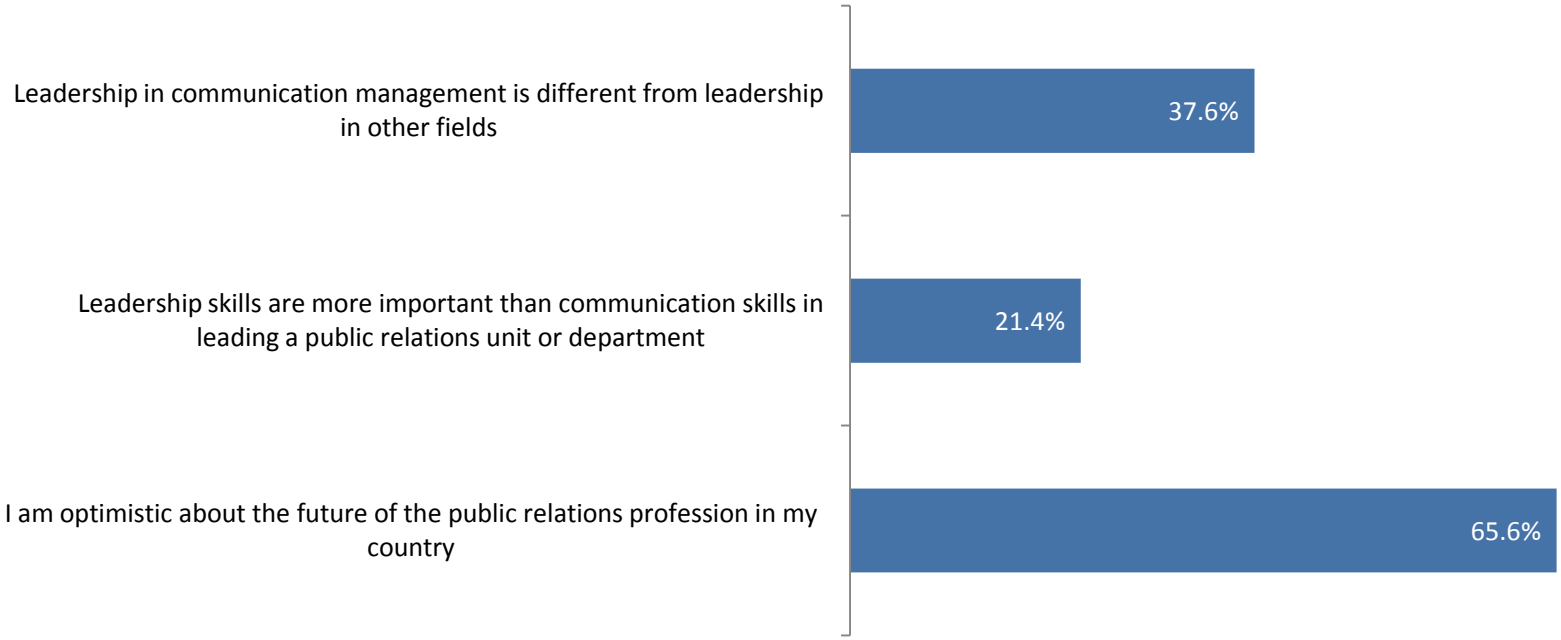
Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement.

Organizational conditions: While 8 out of 10 agree that their CEO values PR, only 56 per cent rate their top communication professional as an excellent leader



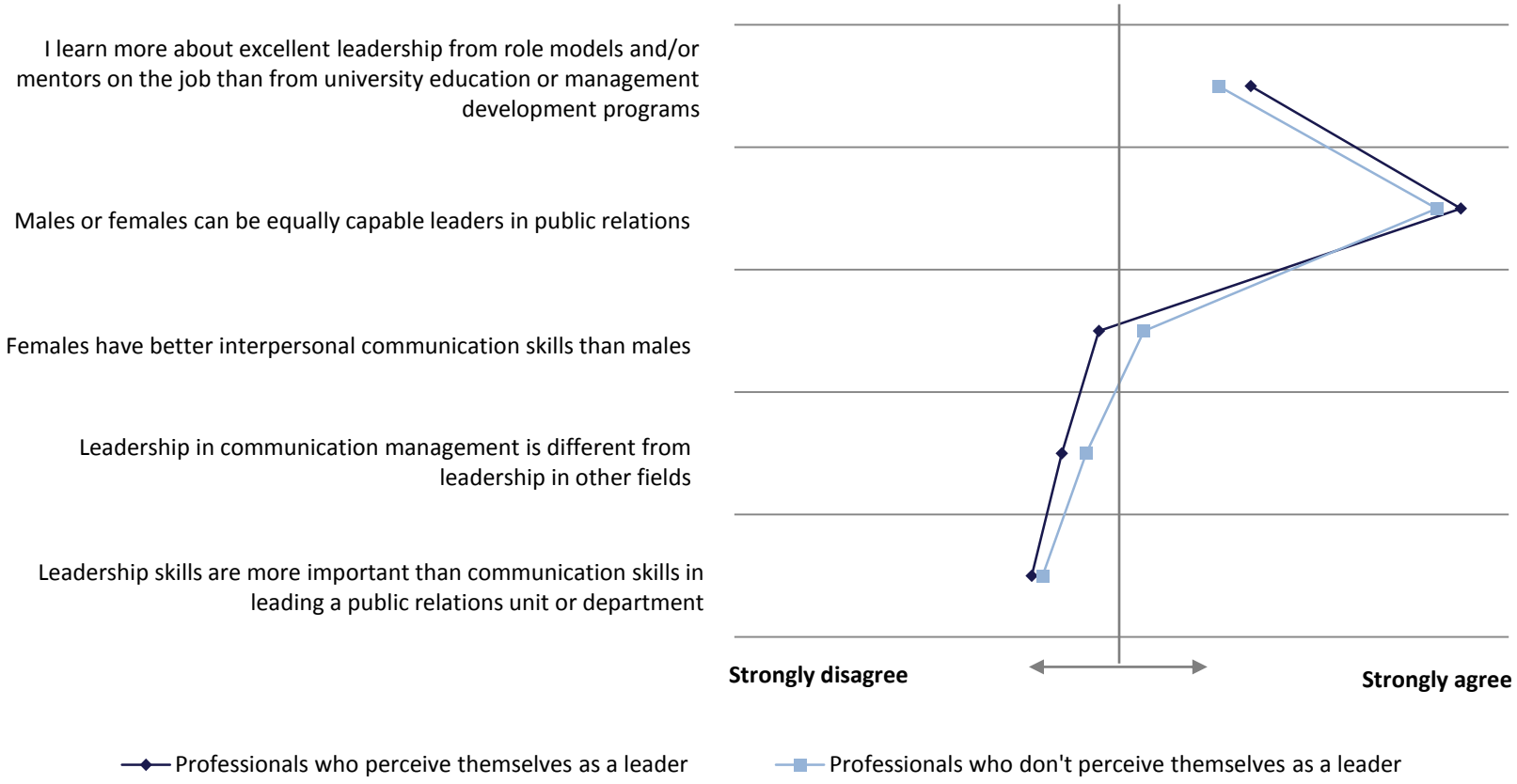
Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement.

Professional impacts: Only two out of ten practitioners consider leadership skills more important than communication skills in leading a PR department



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Bars indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement.

Self perception as a leader influences how communication professionals view various leadership issues – leaders don't think leadership in PR is very specific



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale:1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Graphs indicate mean values. Professionals who perceive themselves as a leader: agreement (scale points 5 – 7) to the statement "I consider myself to be a leader in communication management"; professionals who don't perceive themselves to be a leader: disagreement (scale points 1 – 3). Significant differences between the groups for items 1 and 4 ($p \leq 0,05$).

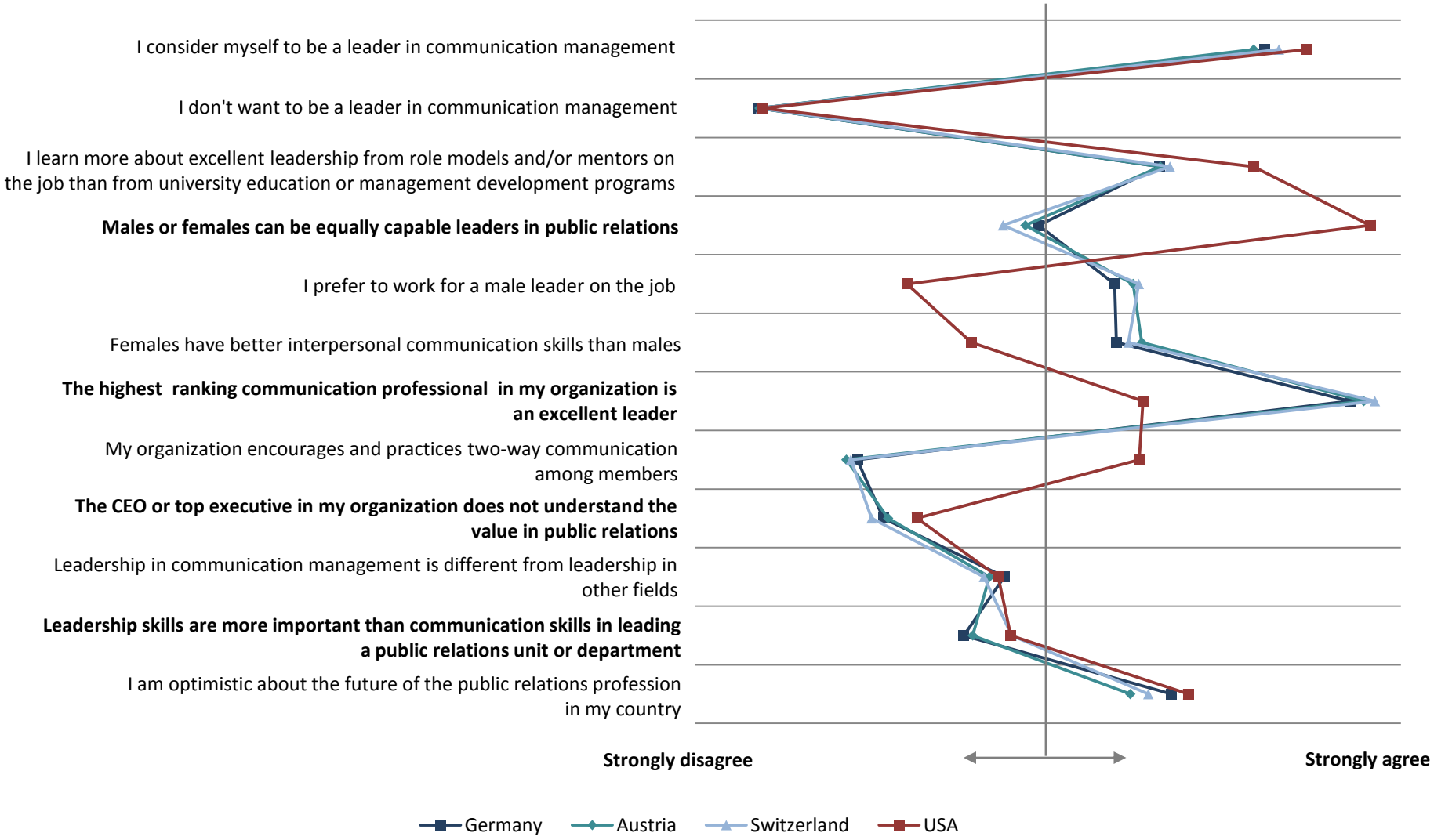
Excellent top communication managers act as role models for leadership in their organizations

	Professionals who consider the top communication professional in their organization to be excellent	Professionals who don't consider the top communication professional in their organization to be excellent
I learn more about excellent leadership from role models and/or mentors on the job than from university education or management development programs	**70.5%**	**58.6%**
Leadership in communication management is different from leadership in other fields	39.4%	35.3%
Leadership skills are more important than communication skills in leading a public relations unit or department	22.0%	21.2%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / n = 929 (consider excellent), 425 (don't consider excellent) / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Percentage values indicate scale points 5 – 7. Professionals who consider the highest ranking communication professional in their organization to be an excellent leader: agreement (scale points 5 – 7) to the statement "The highest ranking communication professional in my organization is an excellent leader"; professionals who don't consider the highest ranking communication professional in their organization to be an excellent leader: disagreement (scale points 1 – 3). Significant differences between the groups regarding item 1 ($p \leq 0{,}05$).

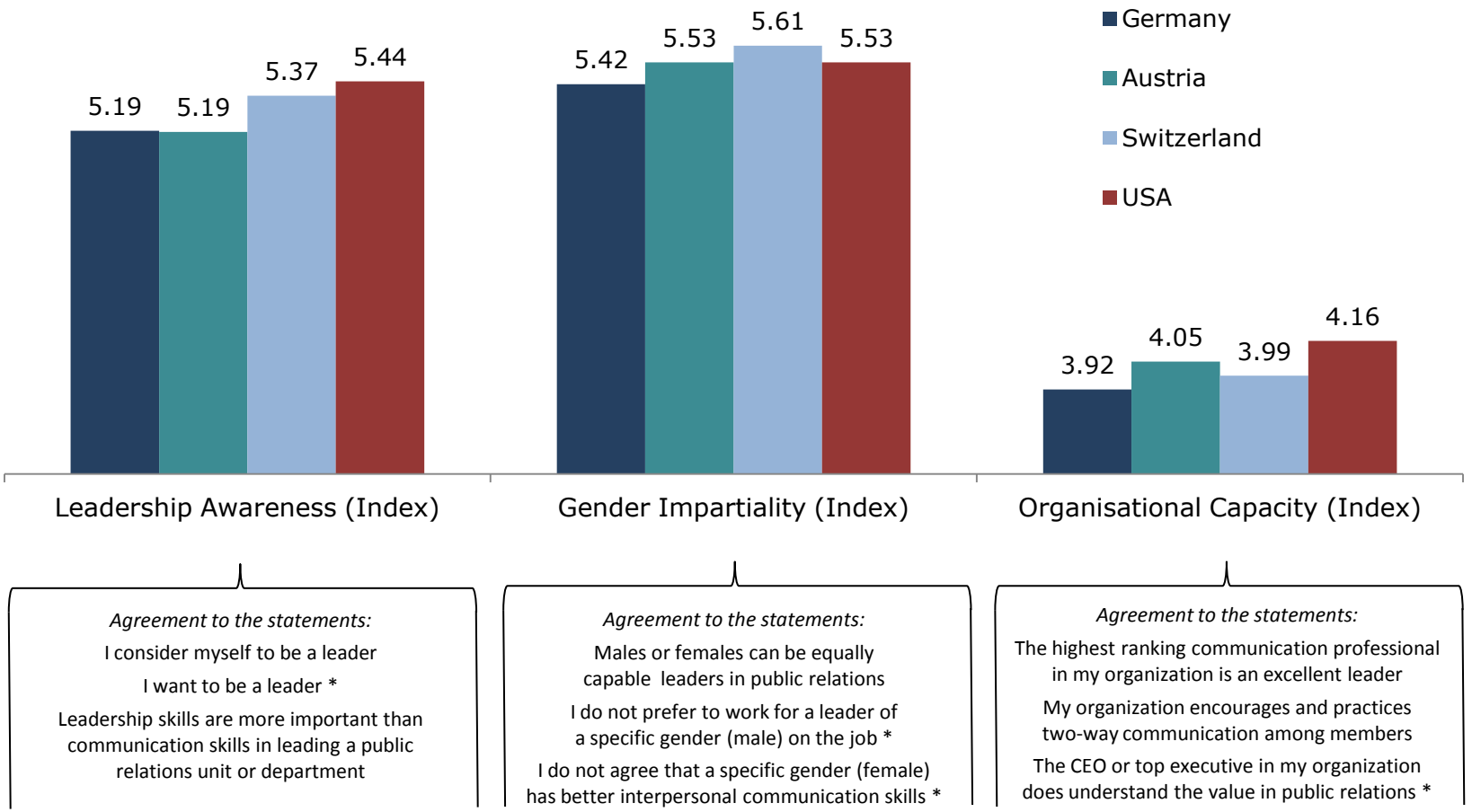
Leadership in PR related to country,
organization, gender, hierarchy and age

Leadership perceptions in different countries



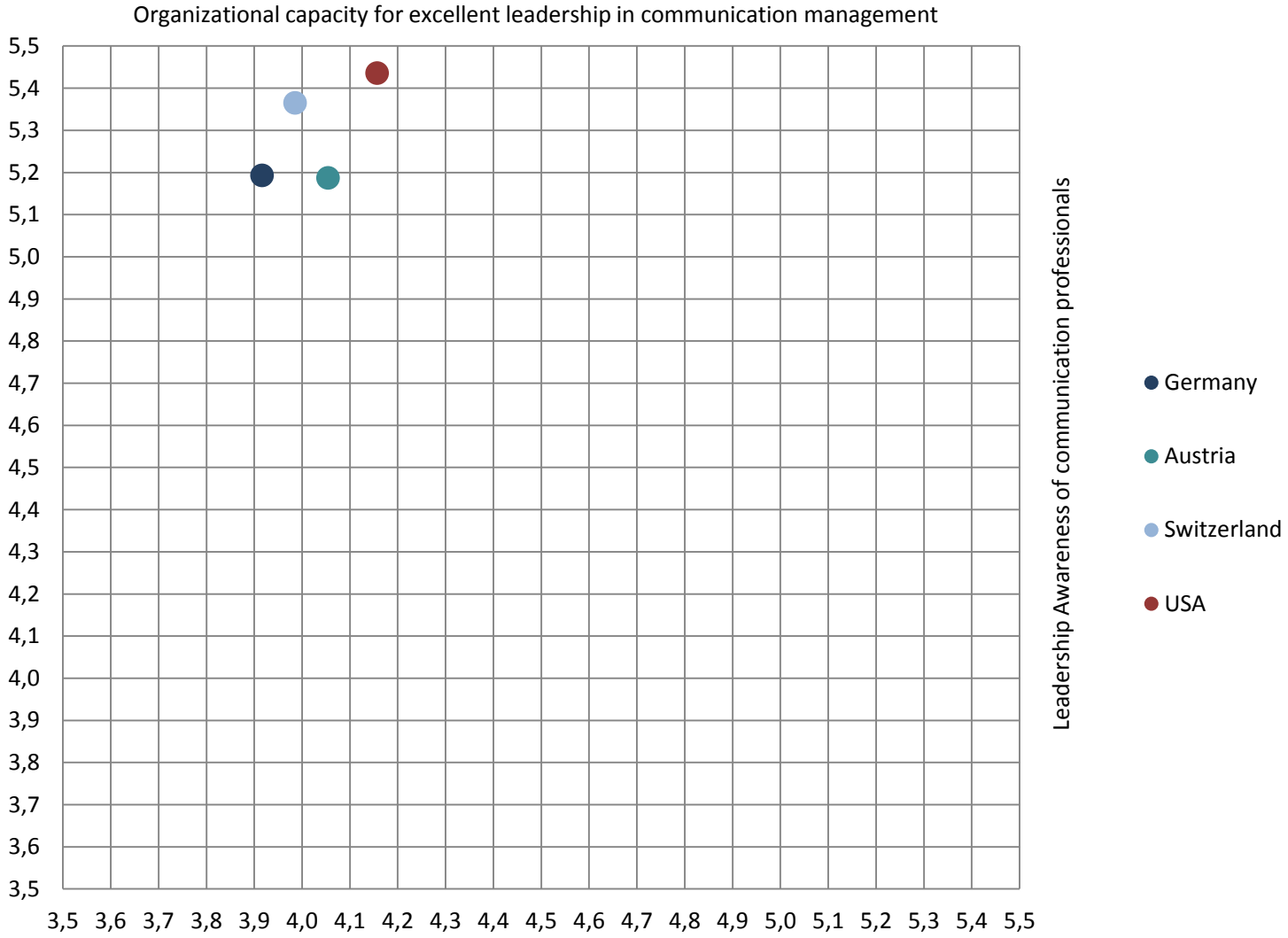
Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / n = 1,317 (Germany), 203 (Austria), 136 (Switzerland), 725 (USA) / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Graphs indicate mean values. Significant differences between the countries regarding the items 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 12 ($p \leq 0,05$).

An index-based comparison of leadership in communication management in different countries



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies from Austria, Germany and Switzerland; n = 725 PR professionals from the USA / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Statements marked * were phrased contrarily in the questionnaire and reverse coded for index construction. Indexes have been calculated as the average of the mean values for all statements included.

Combining personal awareness and organizational support for leadership in communication: Germany is lagging behind



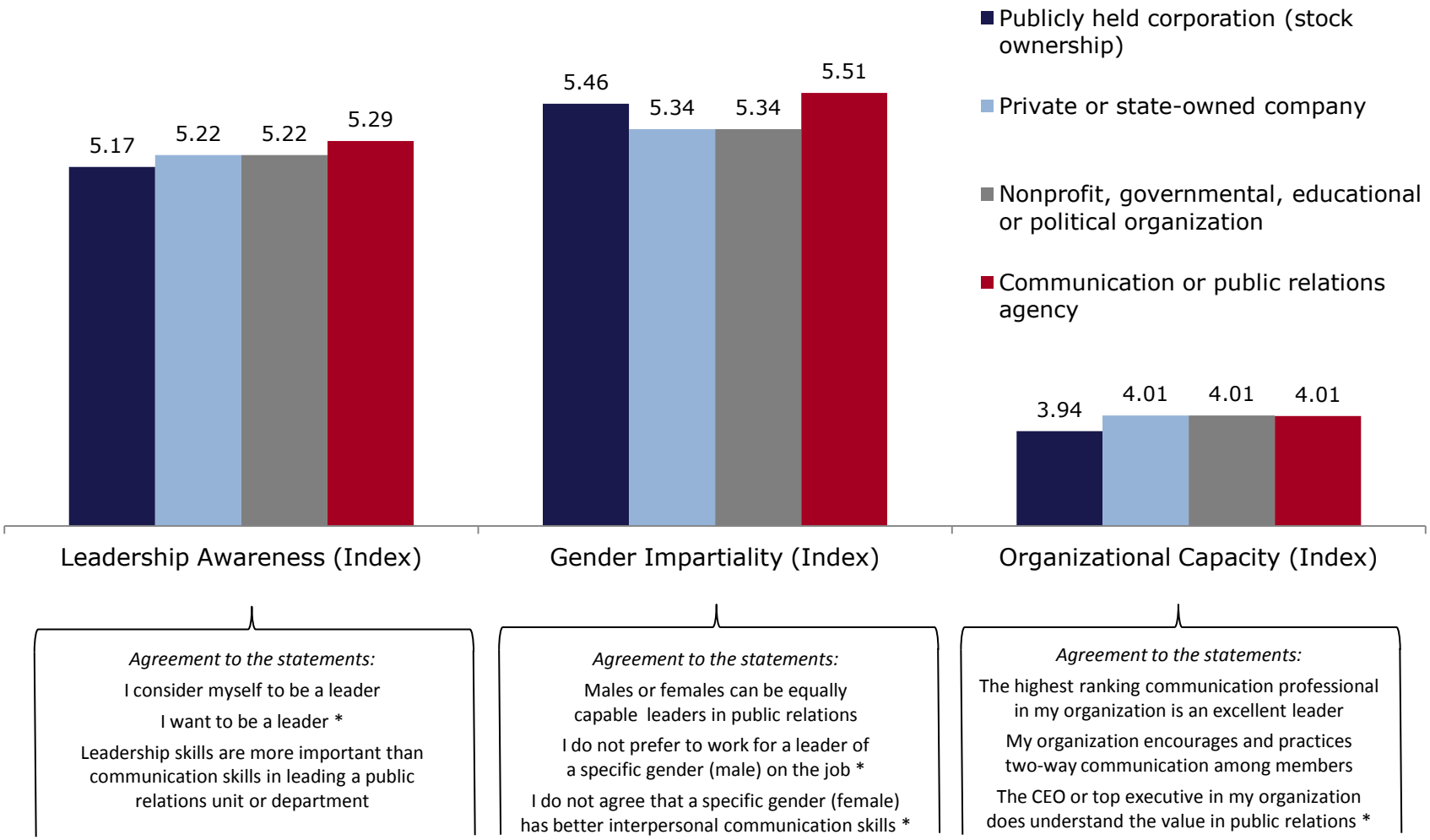
Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,656 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies from Austria, Germany and Switzerland; n = 725 PR professionals from the USA / Figure displays index values for leadership awareness and organizational conditions (scale 1.0 to 7.0). See page 44 for details of the index construction.

Leadership perceptions in different types of organizations

	Publicly held corporation (stock ownership)	Private or state-owned company	Nonprofit, governmental, educational or political organization	Communication or public relations agency
I consider myself to be a leader in communication management	77.5%	83.0%	81.4%	85.9%
I don't want to be a leader in communication management	5.9%	5.5%	4.3%	4.5%
I learn more about excellent leadership from role models and/or mentors on the job than from university education or management development programs	**72.8%**	**65.6%**	**55.8%**	**69.5%**
Males or females can be equally capable leaders in public relations	93.5%	92.8%	94.4%	96.0%
I prefer to work for a male leader on the job	**17.8%**	**15.1%**	**8.2%**	**10.7%**
Females have better interpersonal communication skills than males	35.8%	40.8%	41.1%	44.1%
The highest ranking communication professional in my organization is an excellent leader	54.1%	57.4%	53.1%	58.5%
My organization encourages and practices two-way communication among members	**56.5%**	**54.2%**	**44.9%**	**75.1%**
The CEO or top executive in my organization does not understand the value of public relations	21.6%	23.6%	21.5%	11.9%
Leadership in communication management is different from leadership in other fields	37.0%	38.9%	40.3%	32.8%
Leadership skills are more important than communication skills in leading a public relations unit or department	22.5%	19.8%	21.0%	23.7%
I am optimistic about the future of the public relations profession in my country	70.1%	66.6%	59.9%	68.6%

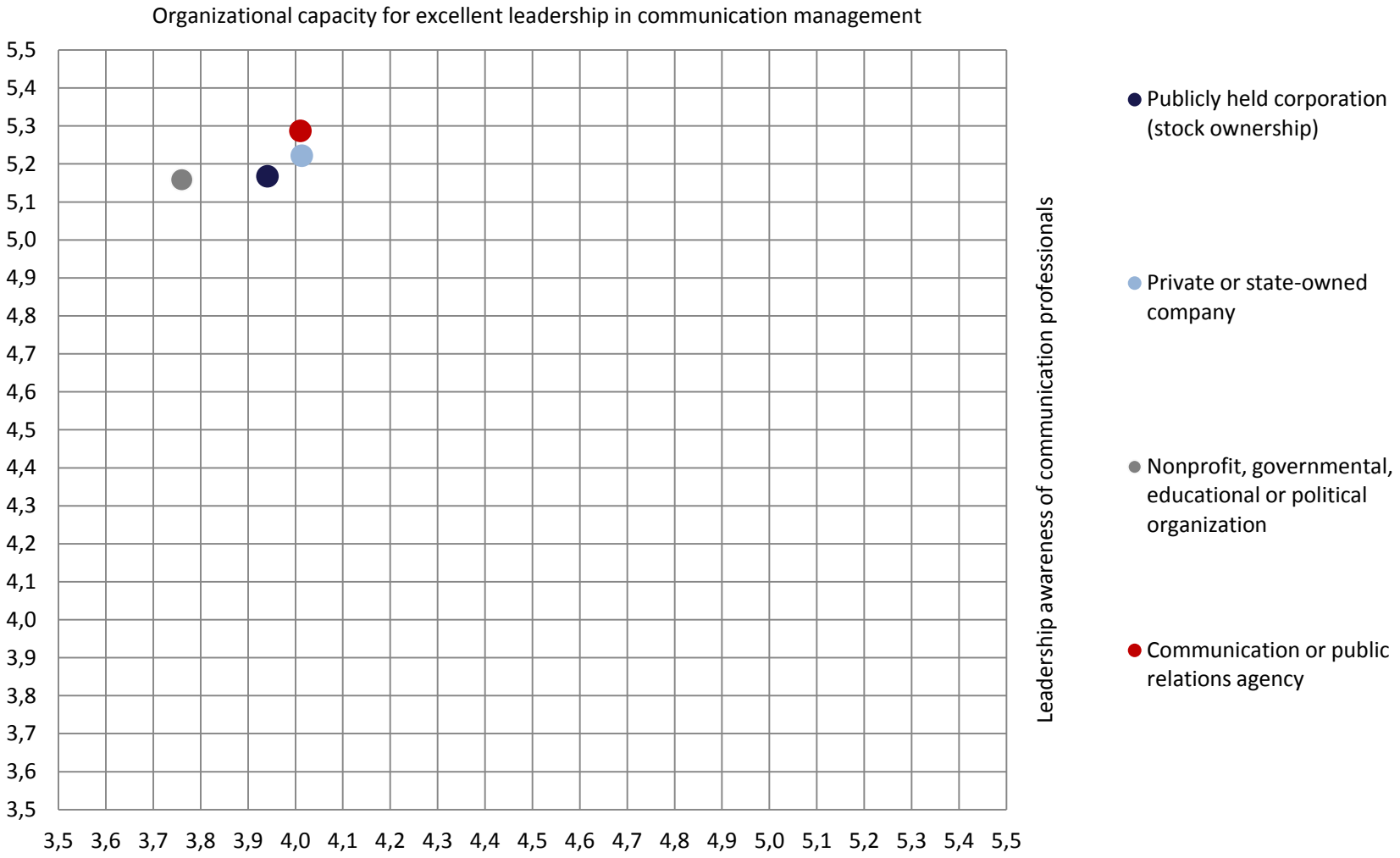
Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / n = 338 (public corporation), 601 (private corporation), 414 (nonprofit, governmental etc.), 354 (agencies) / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement. No calculation of significances because respondents were allowed to assign themselves to multiple kinds of organizations.

Index for leadership perceptions in different types of organization



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,707 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies from Austria, Germany and Switzerland / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Statements marked * were phrased contrarily in the questionnaire and reverse coded for index construction. Indexes have been calculated as the average of the mean values for all statements included.

Professionals working in the governmental sector report about weaker preconditions for leadership in public relations



Leadership Survey 2012 / n = 1,707 PR professionals working in organizations or agencies from Austria, Germany and Switzerland / Figure displays index values for leadership awareness and organizational conditions (scale 1.0 to 7.0). See page 47 for details of the index construction.

Leadership perceptions and gender: Less female PR practitioners consider themselves to be a leader, and a smaller percentage wants to take this role

	Female	Male
I consider myself to be a leader in communication management	**75.2%**	**88.2%**
I don't want to be a leader in communication management	**7.2%**	**3.1%**
I learn more about excellent leadership from role models and/or mentors on the job than from university education or management development programs	64.1%	66.5%
Males or females can be equally capable leaders in public relations	**92.0%**	**96.0%**
I prefer to work for a male leader on the job	12.6%	13.4%
Females have better interpersonal communication skills than males	**52.6%**	**30.2%**
The highest ranking communication professional in my organization is an excellent leader	52.2%	59.6%
My organization encourages and practices two-way communication among members	**51.4%**	**62.2%**
The CEO or top executive in my organization does not understand the value of public relations	22.5%	18.1%
Leadership in communication management is different from leadership in other fields	**33.7%**	**41.0%**
Leadership skills are more important than communication skills in leading a public relations unit or department	20.3%	22.4%
I am optimistic about the future of the public relations profession in my country	62.3%	68.6%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / n = 778 (female), 878 (male) / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement. Significant differences between men and women regarding the items 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 , 10 and 12 ($p \leq 0,05$).

Female professionals work significantly more often on lower hierarchy levels

	Female	Male
Top leader	38.7%	53.5%
1 level below top leader	46.7%	35.1%
2 levels below top leader	10.6%	9.2%
3 or more levels below top leader	4.0%	2.2%

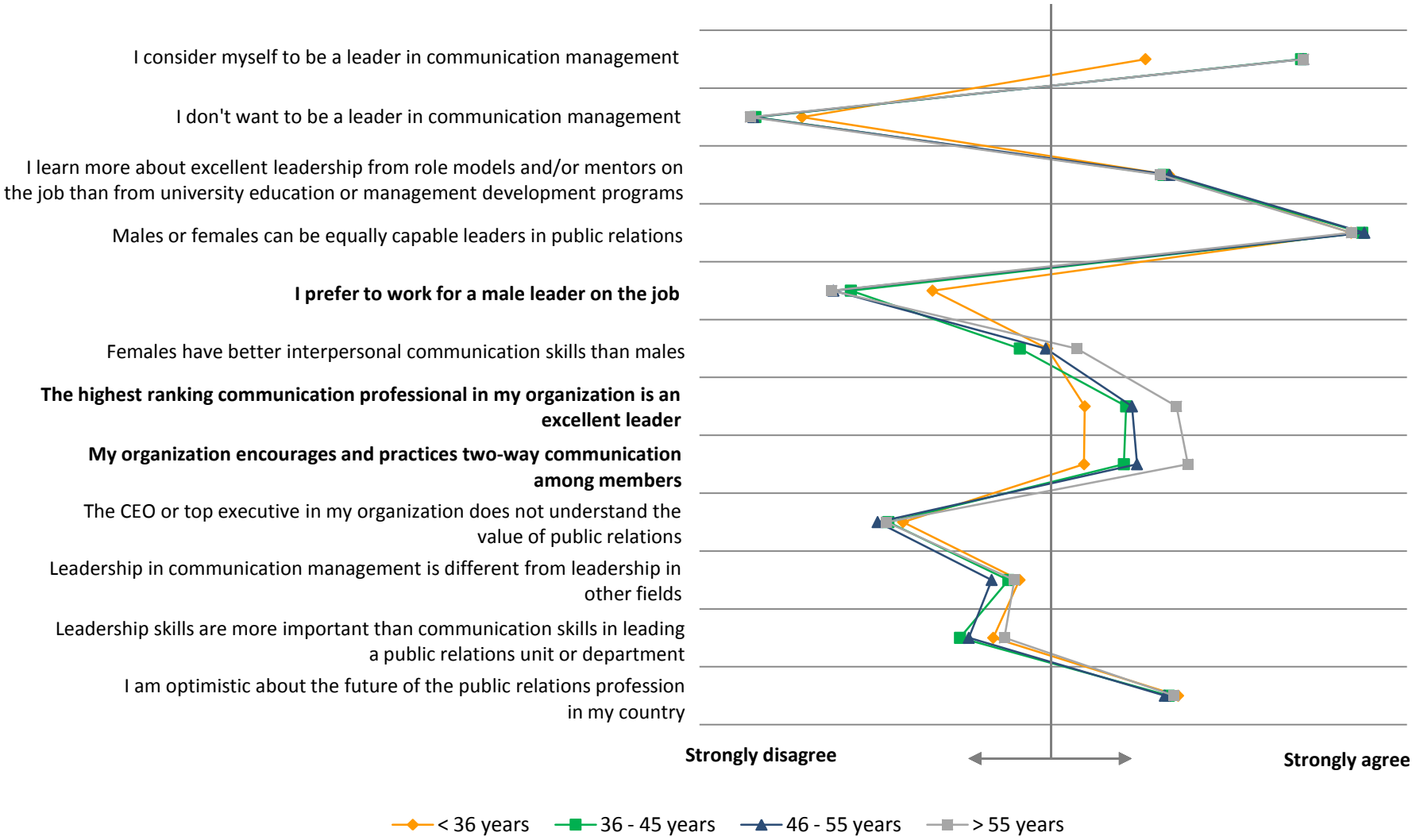
Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies from Germany, Austria and Switzerland / n = 778 (female), 878 (male) / Significant differences between female and male respondents ($p \leq 0{,}05$).

Leadership perceptions and hierarchy: Top level communication professionals have a stronger belief in existing two-way communication and CEO's support

	Top leader	Follower
I consider myself to be a leader in communication management	**97.7%**	**68.4%**
I don't want to be a leader in communication management	2.1%	7.6%
I learn more about excellent leadership from role models and/or mentors on the job than from university education or management development programs	66.3%	64.7%
Males or females can be equally capable leaders in public relations	95.6%	92.9%
I prefer to work for a male leader on the job	10.5%	15.3%
Females have better interpersonal communication skills than males	41.0%	40.5%
The highest ranking communication professional in my organization is an excellent leader	**69.1%**	**44.8%**
My organization encourages and practices two-way communication among members	**64.1%**	**51.1%**
The CEO or top executive in my organization does not understand the value of public relations	**16.5%**	**23.4%**
Leadership in communication management is different from leadership in other fields	37.6%	37.6%
Leadership skills are more important than communication skills in leading a public relations unit or department	22.2%	20.8%
I am optimistic about the future of the public relations profession in my country	67.1%	64.5%

Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organisations or agencies/ n = 771 (top leaders), 884 (followers) / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Values indicate the percentage of respondents who have marked scale points 5 – 7, i.e. who agree with the statement. Significant differences between the groups regarding items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 ($p \leq 0{,}05$). Top leader: 0 levels between own position and the highest ranked communication leader in the organization; Followers: 1 or more levels between own position and the highest ranked.

Younger professionals judge top leaders more critically than older age groups



Leadership Survey 2012 / PR professionals working in organizations or agencies / n = 314 (< 36 years), 619 (36 - 45 years), 542 (46 - 55 years), 155 (> 56 years) / Q: In this section, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Scale: 1 (Strongly disagree) – 7 (Strongly agree). Graphs indicate mean values. Significant differences between the groups regarding items 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11 ($p \leq 0,05$).

Authors and partners of the study

About the authors

Prof. Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Universität Leipzig

Ansgar Zerfass is a professor of communication management at the University of Leipzig, Germany, executive director of the European Public Relations Education and Research Association, Brussels, and editor of the International Journal of Strategic Communication, Routledge Publishers, USA. He has published 28 books and more than 140 journal articles and book chapters on corporate communications and public relations. Ansgar Zerfass holds management and leadership responsibilities in several organizations and has been member of the management board of a state-owned company during his previous career in the business world. Since several years, he has been engaged in cross-national research projects in the field of online communications and social media, measurement and evaluation, communication trends and competency building for communication managers.
www.communicationmanagement.de | zerfass@uni-leipzig.de

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Röttger, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Ulrike Röttger is a professor for public relations research at the University of Münster, Germany, and managing director of the institute of communication. She is also member of the executive board and former president of the German Communication Association (DGPuK). Ulrike Röttger has worked at several universities in Germany and Switzerland during her academic career and published on a broad range of research topics including public relations theories, public relations consulting, corporate social responsibility, trust and public relations, campaigns, issues management and internal communication/corporate media. She is author of the first German textbook on public relations and has edited several seminal volumes contributing to the large body of knowledge of German PR research.
http://egora.uni-muenster.de/ifk | ulrike.roettger@uni-muenster.de

Research partners and sponsors

Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations

The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations seeks to advance leadership values and skills in public relations and bridge the gap between education and practice. Established by the University of Alabama in 2005 and led by a national advisory board of distinguished educators and practitioners, the Center uses a variety of approaches and activities to support its mission. These include awards and recognition programs, scholarships, speaker programs, publications, scholarly and professional papers, workshops and symposia, research grants, and the collection of histories and papers of leaders in the field. The Cross-cultural Study of Leadership in Public Relations and Communication Management initiated by the Plank Center is supported by Heyman Associates and IBM and conducted by 27 researchers from universities and organizations across the globe, headed by Prof. Dr. Bruce Berger and Dr. Juan Meng. >> www.plankcenter.ua.edu

Academic Society for Corporate Management and Communication

Anchored in the Association for the Promotion of Science and Humanities in Germany (Stifterverband), the Academic Society is an initiative by leading research universities and global corporations who have joined forces to shape the future of corporate communications by establishing a strong platform for the exchange of knowledge between practice and research and by funding leading-edge research in the field. The Academic Society has initiated a research program on Leadership in Communication Management at the Universities of Leipzig and Münster, including stipends for Ph.D. researchers and supporting several projects like this study. >> www.akademische-gesellschaft.com

Convento

For almost 20 years, Convento has been a leading service provider for management software in the field of corporate and financial communications in the German speaking countries. It helps professionals in public and investor relations to establish effective contact and relationship management systems. Convento has more than 1,500 clients in 300 companies. Services include distribution, automatic processing of responses, implementation of campaigns, and integration of press clippings. Convento has generously supported this survey in Germany, Austria and Switzerland by inviting participants using their database. >> www.convento.de

© 2012 | www.leadership-survey.net

UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster