

Excellence Theory Vs. Contingency Theory

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The Definitions Of Excellence And Contingency Theory

The Excellence Theory is a technique that has been practiced by public relations specialists. It's used to have an impact on how organizations improve by having a better method that categorizes their efficiency and environmental surroundings to ensure that the company is productive and successful.

The Contingency Theory is a premise that gives the idea of not having the "right" way to structure a company or be an authoritative leader to make decisions. Cancel et al. (1997) explains the idea that the application of public relations is too flexible to be put into just four boxes like the Excellence Theory. Cancel et. al (1997) also suggests that there are too many external factors that can interfere with the structure of a company such as threats, environmental situations such as political, social, cultural issues, and any issues with consumers.

In addition to researching this theory, it was determined that an organization can decide what type of structure works best for their company based on 86 different factors. Shin, Cameron, and Cropp (2006) revealed that although not all 86 factors have been revealed, some of the factors that can determine the better structure for organizations are based on external and internal variables. These external and internal variables can be the size of the company including the employees' behaviors in the surrounding environment, the leadership roles implemented, and how the company modifies to certain changes. This affects the public relations specialists because it allows the organization to see how employees adapt to advocacy or accommodation in order for the business to be successful at tasks and goals that are set. If the employees adapt to the advocacy role, the organization's marketing methods are more likely to promote itself instead of the accommodation role which supports the public interests more instead of their own. "... the purpose of this study is to offer an effort toward developing a tool that bridges that gap by

building a structural framework based on the Contingency Theory of Accommodation (Cancel et al., 1997) and applying the principles and mechanics of decision and game theory to analyze multi-faceted problems faced by public relations professionals. (Cameron, Strasburg, Tham, n.d)” These different variables are categorized in an effort to give simplicity in how management and structure work in an organization, this is called Occam’s Razor (Shin, Cameron, Cropp, 2006. P. 282). “A scientific and philosophical rule that entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily which is interpreted as requiring that the simplest of competing theories be preferred to the more complex or that explanations of unknown phenomena be sought first in terms of known quantities (Merrian-Webster, n.d)” The problems with the Contingency Theory is the lack of communication can switch the organizations’ methods to something they aren’t aligned with. For example, if there’s no management - employees will lack direction and will make the company something that it’s not which can result in a negative reputation or can make the company have financial losses, etc.

The Comparability

While the Excellence Theory and Contingency Theory are quite different from one another, there are some similarities. Similarities can include the linking of advocacy in both theories as it’s understood within the industry and by the public. Huang-Horowitz (2012) states that both theories have longevity and a substantial collection of work in the public relations industry as they are used in all organizations. Oldenbanning (2013) adds to the similarities between the theories by explaining that, the Contingency Theory is an analytical addition of the Excellence Theory in the public relations industry from the limitations standpoint and the foundation of both theories.

The Contrast

Since these two theories do share some similarities, they are vastly different. The Excellence Theory has variables such as the theory having characteristics and attributes that were judged on three different tiers, which were the program, department, and organization tiers to a company. Another difference that the contingency theory doesn't feature is that the Excellence Theory is a model for large corporations and it doesn't necessarily support smaller businesses. Huang-Horowitz (2012) writes that this model includes a public relations unit, a structured marketing strategy, a dominant coalition, and has more than one public relations specialist. Small businesses do not have luxuries like this as they are more limited and could be using that money towards their services and/or products.

Other differences between the Excellence Theory and Contingency Theory are the difficulty of the Excellence Theory and how it fits too much in a structured box. "... researchers and practitioners had difficulty with the excellence theory because it was purely descriptive and inapplicable for public relations practitioners in real-life situations. The Contingency Theory of Accommodation was promulgated as an alternative to the normative theory of excellence in PR (Oldenbanning, 2013. P. 15)." Unlike the Excellence Theory which is mainly pure advocacy, the Contingency Theory is pure accommodation. Yarbrough, Cameron, Sallot, McWilliams (1998) agree that the contingency theory attests for pure accommodation while presenting features that impact the location of a company on that pure accommodation at any time regarding the public. For example, small businesses are more pure accommodation as they are providing the public and the environment around them, trying to help their community out and make their lives better in a way that pure advocacy can't. Small businesses have limited resources as it is so putting a lot of money into marketing resources can be risky for them if they are worried about other aspects.

Pure advocacy is helping the organization make its image look better. It's still trying to help the communities but it's more so about gaining more and expanding the company even further which they can do as they have more resources available to them.

Differences within the theories point out how a company decides which route to take regarding the contingency theory and excellence theory. "Contingency theorists do not argue that tactics excellence theory traditionally approve - such as accommodation and collaboration - are without use; merely that their use, as the use of any tactic, is situationally limited. Moreover, like excellence theorists, contingency theorists also stress the important function public relations plays in a relationship-building (Browning, 2010. P. 75-76)."

The Likeable Theory. The theory I prefer better is the Excellence Theory because you have more of a "guideline" on how to structure a marketing strategy. It's also better because it's used to organize a company and its environment. Unfortunately, yes an organization will need funds for a bigger marketing department to achieve success with their strategies and how they present themselves to the public but they have multiple ways to communicate to their targeted audiences about what they are serving and what their message is. "The excellence theory assumes that organizations are large enough and have sufficient resources to have public relations departments that include at least one person whose sole responsibility is to practice public relations [...] They found that a proportionate number of public relations practitioners to the size of the organization is a more important excellence factor than both the absolute number of public relations practitioners and the overall size of the organization (Huang-Horowitz, 2012. Pg. 15)."

My reasoning for choosing the Excellence Theory is that there's two-way symmetrical communication between the business and the general public. The public can constantly stay up to

date about new launches for the company, how the business can help them, and what they offer. The Excellence Theory, also, helps build a relationship between the business and the public as it allows people to feel like they're being heard. "Research emphasizes that the value of communication, in PR, is of pivotal importance for building connections with the organization's publics. Moreover, studies articulate the importance of communication in relationship building; which results in a contribution to an organization's reputation (Oldenbanning, 2013. P. 27)."

I don't think the Contingency theory can work as it's so "fluid" and has more room for error in a marketing strategy. A marketing strategy needs to have at least some structure. Browning (2010) agrees with the fact that the contingency theory has instability and instability leads to a wider scale of practicing public relations which can become unethical practices.

The Conclusion. I chose the Excellence Theory as it is organized and aligns with having a structure as it's easy to go off the rails with marketing strategies and how a business connects with the public. It allows them to build long-lasting relationships with their consumers as well.

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