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Agility in corporate communications – but how?

New publication conveys the basic concepts of agility and presents case studies and research findings

- **The trend towards agility brings new opportunities for communications and can strengthen the department's role within the organization.**

- **Researchers at Leipzig University have identified six dimensions of agility that need to be aligned in order for communication departments to become more agile. These are structures and processes, culture and people as well as tools and technologies.**

- **The latest issue "Fast and Flexible: Corporate communications in agile organizations" is part of the publication series COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS and presents key findings of the research project "Corporate communications in agile organizations" initiated by the Academic Society for Management & Communication. The publication is aimed at practitioners and is available free of charge at www.academic-society.net.**

More and more companies are experimenting with agile concepts to become faster and more efficient. "By implementing agile structures and processes companies can better react to the changing expectations of stakeholders. This helps them to keep pace with new competitors", explains project manager Dr. Lisa Dühring from Leipzig University, Germany. Jan-Peter Schwartz, Head of Corporate Communications and Brand Strategy at OSRAM, an international lighting company, confirms: "Agility is a key concept that we have to deal with. Its implications will continue to occupy us for the next years, maybe decades. If we don't meet this challenge, we will disappear from the market in a very short time."

But many communicators remain skeptical and struggle with this trend. "For this reason, the Academic Society launched the research project one year ago. We want to support communicators in their endeavor to become more agile, present best practices and convey knowledge," says Professor Ansgar Zerfaß of Leipzig University. As a first step, almost 40 senior communication managers from leading German and international companies were interviewed about how they deal with agility. These insights have been supplemented by case studies.

The transformation into an agile organization can help communication departments to strengthen their role within the organization: Firstly, by communicating the changes internally and externally; secondly, by transforming their own departmental structures and processes; and thirdly, by supporting and enabling other departments.

To make departments more agile, six dimensions have to be aligned:

- Structures and processes, including flatter hierarchies and more cross-departmental collaboration;
- Culture and people - with the need for a new openness and flexibility among employees, a new leadership culture and more transparency;
- Agile tools and technologies that support this new way of collaboration.

The study also reveals different approaches that companies have taken to transform structures and processes. Some companies created "islands of agility" others made more radical changes, and for others agility is currently not relevant.

If you want to learn more about this study: The findings are presented in the current COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS issue "Fast and Flexible". It also features case studies from two German corporations that are leading the way: comdirect and B. Braun Melsungen AG. The publication is aimed at practitioners and can be downloaded free of charge at www.akademische-gesellschaft.com/en/service/publikationen/communication_insights.
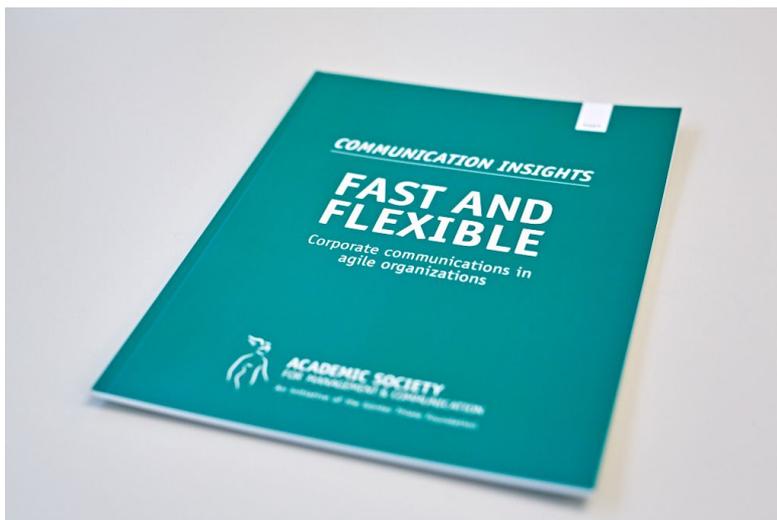
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About the research project:
The research project "**Corporate communications in agile organizations**" is composed of three modules that research different aspects of agility. While the current issue of COMMUNICATION INSIGHTS deals with internal structures and processes and the role communication departments in agile organizations (Leipzig University), the other modules focus on the effects of agility on collaboration with consultancies and service providers (University of Münster) and on content management (University of Vienna).

The study was initiated by the **Academic Society for Management & Communication**, a joint initiative of businesses and science with the aim to further develop and professionalize corporate communications through studies and the exchange of experience. It was founded in 2010, and today is supported by six universities and nearly 40 German and international corporate partners.

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