



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

**UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO  
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI E RICERCHE AZIENDALI  
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The role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in  
corporate communication and corporate reputation  
management. A web survey in italian context

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## **Abstract**

The research aims to analyze the role of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in corporate communication and his degree of involvement in corporate reputation management through the opinions and activities of CEOs in Italian context. Furthermore, the study aims to investigate the relationship between corporate reputation and CEO reputation.

In relation to the above objectives, the research is organized along two main directions: the first, theoretical-general, intends to analyze literature review; the second, empirical-exploratory, aims to verify the field of study through a web survey and a quantitative approach. The research questions analyzed in this work are the following:

1. which role does CEO play in corporate communication? What activities does he carry out? What activities does he delegate?;
2. what communication means does CEO adopt in relation to the different stakeholders?;
3. which role does CEO play in corporate reputation management? What activities does he carry out? What activities does he delegate?;
4. according to the view of CEOs, is there a relationship between corporate reputation and CEO reputation?.

From the methodological point of view, the research's analysis unit includes CEOs of 150 companies in Italian territory, considered in Mediobanca's 2013 report on "The Main Italian Companies" in industry and services, banks and insurance sector. The temporal context of the survey refers to the year 2013 (from May to October), period in which the research was conducted.

The study, analyzing the results of web survey, essentially confirms the main findings of literature review in the field of investigation, highlighting specific issues in Italian context.

The research's data reveal an appreciable commitment of CEOs in corporate communication activities: the majority of respondents plays an active role, showing significant attention especially to the institutional and internal communication. In relation to the commitment in communication activities, the research has identified three distinct CEO profiles: 1) CEO corporate

communicator (pro-active leader); 2) CEO moderate; 3) CEO delegator. CEOs adopt different means of communication for different stakeholders involved; in particular, CEOs are still reluctant to the adoption of personal social media.

Furthermore, the survey confirms that CEO is the main responsible in corporate reputation management. He is engaged in spreading the corporate vision to stakeholders (leadership), monitoring the achievement of corporate financial performance (performance) and motivating employees (workplace). Also relating to the commitment in corporate reputation management, it is possible to distinguish two types of CEO: 1) Chief Reputation Officer (CRO); 2) CEO moderate.

The web survey shows a significant relationship between the degree of commitment of CEO in corporate reputation management and the degree of engagement in communication activities: the Chief Reputation Officer are also corporate communicator and conversely. The results confirm, therefore, the idea that corporate reputation management requires a constant commitment in communication activities.

Finally, the evaluation of the answers provided in web survey shows the presence of a influence relationship between CEO reputation and corporate reputation. The majority of respondents says that CEO, with his behavior, communication flows and the construction of personal reputation, strongly influences the corporate perception by stakeholders and, therefore, these factors have a strong impact on corporate reputation. CEO reputation is a key factor for long-term success and survival of a organization.

The research, conducted to investigate a field of analysis unexplored in italian context, offers interesting insights for the development and implementation of additional quantitative and qualitative surveys.