Listening culture and university governance, new paths to reputation

An internship at the University of Navarra

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Centre for University Governance and Reputation

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Organisational listening is an inherent feature of corporate communication. Through listening, organisations learn about the perceptions of their stakeholders and learn to make decisions based on dialogue and an open relationship. When listening becomes a real and effective habit of governance, institutions assess their legitimacy in the environment and their reputation in the public eye. In the university sector, listening is also an ideal way to seek shared solutions in an already complex institutional context. In this article, the author reflects on the foundations of organisational listening and describes a professional listening practice as applied at the University of Navarre. With its challenges and limits, the case is presented as a reasonable opportunity that can help universities strengthen their relational dimension, assess their reputation and qualify their governance.
1. Personal and organisational listening

Organisational listening is a topic that is not commonly theorised in the field of corporate communication (Macnamara, 2015). However, the abundant reflection on the principles and theories of human communication help to reinforce the concept of listening and to apply it in organisational settings. Knowledge about communication spans several disciplines with theoretical contributions from various fields such as philosophy, sociology and communication.

Philosophy has provided insights into the importance of speaking and listening. In ancient Greece and Rome, Western thought was forged recognising rhetoric as one of the fundamental liberal arts. In the first book of Politics, Aristotle wrote that nature has endowed man, and only man, with the power of speech (Aristotle, 2015). Plato defended dialogue as a way to discover and advance towards truth (Plato, 2012). As a theoretical enquiry, the primacy of speech over listening has endured since ancient times, reinforcing its role in Modernity and, especially after the emergence of Political Science with the birth of liberal democracy.

In recent times, thinkers have paid attention to the concept of listening and dialogue as a way of thinking that involves consideration of the opinions, interests and concerns of others. Philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer (1989) recalls that listening is informed by the concept of openness towards others. Professor Lisbeth Lipari (2015) notes that listening is “focusing on thinking that involves consideration of others”. Listening means, first and foremost, that “one must want to know” what others have to say. Openness requires not just passive listening but also asking questions and allowing others to “tell us something” (Lipari, 2015) and even “acknowledging that I must accept some things that are against me” (Gadamer, 1989).

Listening is the recognition of the other in a space which legitimizes the relationship and reflection. The Austrian thinker Martin Buber (2002) argued that communication is a transaction involving dialogue, not monologue. In theology we also find allusions to the importance of listening that ascends to a higher purpose. The theologian Jutta Burggraf reminds us that truth is never possessed in its entirety, but rather demands from the person an attitude of openness and listening in order to find the truth with others in an exercise of “successive conquest” (Burggraf, 2006).

Listening is a form of recognition that makes one change oneself, both in the biographical sense and as we mature as a subject: dialogue leads to a more intense intention to be even more oneself. If we follow Paul Ricoeur’s terminology (2005), we could say that listening affects identity as idem and identity as ipse: that is, it shapes my life story, my biographical identity, and at the same time, our dialogical encounters lead me to want to be more myself, in terms of commitment and responsibility (Esquirol, 2024).

This evolution towards the consideration of the other has also had a parallel situation in the field of communication. For decades, mass society and the rapid growth of the media have led to the implementation of “sender, channel and receiver” models of communication, consolidating communication as a one-way transmission of information. However, this model has often proved to be limited and not always successful. In fact, some experts perceive this unidirectionality as one of the causes of the loss of credibility of corporate communications and the crisis of confidence in institutions (Edelman Trust, 2022; Gregory and Willis, 2013, 2019).

In recent years, numerous scholars have emphasised that human-to-human communication is a two-way transactional process, not a one-way transmission of information (Craig and Muller, 2007; Griffin, 2009; Littlejohn
and Foss, 2008). Corporate communication, like human communication, is relational and therefore two-way and dialogical. The sociologist John Dewey (1916) reminds us that, “Society exists in communication”. Communication takes up a special role in society and through conversation it is possible to resolve conflicts, build consensus and create communities (Carrey, 2009).

Disciplines such as marketing and public relations have taken these fundamental theories of human communication to advocate practices such as Relationship Marketing and symmetrical two-way public relations that emphasise dialogue and relationship. The popularity of social media reveals human expectations for interactivity and for everyone to have a voice, not just elites in government, politics, business and communication.

Recently, academic research on organisational listening has made important strides in clarifying and defining the concept with contributions from - among others - Professor Jim Macnamara (2015, 2022, 2024). In this article, his theories on listening and his proposed definition are taken as a reference: “organisational listening is the integrated set of culture, policies, structure, processes, resources, skills, technologies and practices applied by an organisation to give recognition, attention, interpretation, understanding, consideration and response to its stakeholders and audiences” (Macnamara, 2015, p. 19).

The consideration of these integrated elements within an organisation is what he calls the “architecture of listening”, as illustrated in Figure 1.

![Listening architecture model](source: Jim Macnamara, 2021)
2. Reputation and governance

An institution’s listening to its stakeholders is closely related to its reputation. According to leading scholars of the concept, reputation is the set of perceptions that stakeholders have about an institution to the extent that it brings them value (Fombrun, 2012; Ravasi et al., 2018). Reputation is an intangible resource that stems from institutional behaviour and is expressed in the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of stakeholders (Carreras et al., 2013; Fernández-Gubieda, 2023). An open relationship with stakeholders, dialogue and listening to their opinions are appropriate ways to learn about their perceptions. Two-way communication (expressing and listening) is the natural channel for verifying the reputation of an institution (Fernández-Gubieda, 2023).

As listening implies an “openness” to realities other than one’s own, organisations must be governed and managed according to the principles of two-way communication. Just as in the personal sphere, where listening allows us to explore ourselves more profoundly, organisational listening allows institutions to “get to know themselves” while in dialogue with the people who make up their natural sphere of relationships. We can say that institutions learn to get to know themselves and to mature by engaging others through dialogue and listening.

Juan Manuel Mora (2020) adds a relevant concept for the management of listening and its relationship with institutional governance. In his understanding, listening is defined as the professional and organised activity carried out by organisations to gain in-depth knowledge of stakeholders’ perceptions and the characteristics of the environment, in order to govern with data and make informed decisions that help to improve the institution’s contribution to the community in which it lives.

University governance refers to the way in which academic organisations are directed and operate internally (Hendrickson et al., 2012). It is a method of organisational management by which universities make decisions, distribute authority, build consensus, resolve conflicts, gain legitimacy in the environment and, ultimately, contribute to fostering a sustainable culture for the institution itself (Meléndez et al., 2010). Communication is the means by which all these activities are carried out. Listening to stakeholders, assessing their perceptions and integrating them into the community thus becomes an operational habit of university leaders who apply good governance.

Listening in universities is particularly important because of their very nature: a sapiential community that seeks truth through intellectual enquiry and the rational use of conversation. Truth emerges in a climate of academic cordiality, in formal and informal settings and through different channels of human communication: personal conversations, master classes, academic consultations, interdisciplinary seminars, and work meetings. The university as an organisation of people also needs dialogue and listening to move forward. In all cases, two-way communication will be the natural vehicle for advancing knowledge, integrating the community, solving problems and facing up to challenges.

There are many valuable moments of listening at a university: in the personal academic relationship between professors and students; between researchers and doctoral students; and between managers and employees. Tools such as focus groups and surveys are also applied in areas such as teaching, research and service provision, from which interesting conclusions can be drawn. Although it is true that it cannot be said that listening does not exist in the university, neither can it be ignored how rare it is to find a transversal, multi-stakeholder listening initiative that is constant over time and provides an overall vision. The reality of the university is highly complex, perhaps more
so than other organisations, so that a thorough knowledge of perceptions, which makes it possible to govern on a sound basis, is just as necessary but more difficult to achieve.

3. Progressive listening

Organisational listening should not be confused with a technical procedure. It is the consequence of a corporate culture expressed in good governance, dialogue and empathy. Organisational listening can adopt many different methods and practices depending on the circumstances of each institution. At times, it is appropriate for listening to be exercised in a variety of channels and forms simultaneously such as conversations, interviews, meetings, discussion forums, focus groups and surveys.

While it is true that reducing listening to a procedural practice does not ensure two-way communication. It is also true that having a clear orientation, a defined methodology and well-established phases provide a rational basis for listening and makes it more operational and sustainable towards the achievement of the organisation’s objectives (Macnamara, 2024). It is especially important to structure listening in large institutions with multiple stakeholders and a multitude of people from the community.

This article describes the modus operandi that the University of Navarra has endeavoured to follow in order to listen to its stakeholders in a consistent, stable and rigorous way. Presented as a business case, it describes the principles that guide the listening process, the phases that comprise it, the main findings and the limitations that have been encountered.

The origin of this project is to be found in a process of reflection on university reputation and the implementation of various measures for its cultivation. The journey of this adventure began in 2013 and matured over time during different stages such as this listening initiative, which emerged five years later. Hence, in 2018, the Rector’s Office of the University of Navarra, through an initiative from the Vice-Rector’s Office for Communication, commenced a process of “intentional” listening with all its strategic stakeholders.

Each year, the project has incorporated one new stakeholder group, and currently (July 2024) ten groups are included, which in total represent more than 50,000 people. The figure is significant if one takes into account that the University of Navarra has around 13,500 undergraduate, master’s and doctoral students, 2,600 employees (both teaching and administration staff) and some 139,000 alumni.

The objectives of the project are threefold: a) to understand the perceptions of the University’s stakeholders; b) to make university governance decisions based on the qualified information that comes from the listening process; and c) to implement processes of improvement and innovation in the university experience based on its findings. The University’s leadership team thus set out to understand university reputation at the most profound level: it wanted to grasp and accept public scrutiny in the belief that perceptions can only be changed by improving reality.

This is a cross-cutting project that affects the entire university, from the rector’s office to the centres and central services. During the preparation phase, several multidisciplinary working groups were set up, led by the University’s Reputation department and with the participation of numerous professionals from different areas of governance and stakeholder management. The Institute of Data Science and Big Data carried out much of the analysis as described in the findings.

1 Data from the Clínica Universidad de Navarra and the IESE Business School are not taken into account.
4. Method and phases

Professor Jim Macnamara argues that listening is much more than hearing and collecting data (Macnamara, 2022). His research proposal is based on what he calls the seven canons of listening in organisations: a) acknowledging others who have a right to be heard; b) confirming that the message has been heard; c) paying attention to what others say; d) interpreting what others say fairly and in good faith; e) trying to understand others’ perspectives; f) taking into consideration what others say; and g) responding in some appropriate way.

These seven canons have inspired the project’s method. Organisational listening can be carried out using different methods such as focus groups, in-depth interviews and surveys. The first two are mostly qualitative while questionnaires are typically quantitative. Each method should be used according to the objectives of each organisation, but a combined methodology of different listening methods is often recommended. In the case of the university’s project, surveys and focus groups were used. The seven canons materialised in a seven-stage listening process, as shown in Figure 2.

Each of the phases is explained below:

4.1. Identification of audiences

Reputation is a multi-stakeholder consideration, i.e. it is not limited to the perceptions of a single stakeholder group. It is therefore necessary to know the perceptions of as many stakeholders as possible, both internal and external to the institution itself. To identify the groups it is useful to analyse each of them and establish a clear hierarchy of relationships with the university.

Mitchell, Agle and Wood’s (1997) model helps to deepen the relationship between stakeholders and the institution. According to these authors, a stakeholder is defined by three attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency. The power variable is the ability to influence the organisation or another stakeholder to do something that affects the organisation; the legitimacy variable explains whether their influence is justified and occurs in accordance with the right thing to do; and the urgency variable refers to the requirements they place on the organisation in terms of urgency and timeliness.

The three attributes can be depicted as three circles joined in such a way as to create overlapping regions in the form of a Venn di-

![Figure 2. Phases of the listening project at the University of Navarra](image-url)
agram (see Figure 3); Each of the eight resulting regions represents one of the three attributes that the model considers, corresponding with the characteristics of the stakeholder relationship based on what it has and what it lacks.

Those with only one of the three attributes present in the diagram are called latent stakeholders and are divided into:
1. Inactive: Those who only possess power.
2. Discretionary: Those who only possess legitimacy.
3. Demanding: Those who only have urgency.

However, because combinations of these are also found, other types of designations arise. Expectant stakeholders are those who have two of the three variables mentioned in the model and are referred to as follows:
4. Dominant: Those who have power and legitimacy but lack urgency.
5. Dependent: Those who have urgency and legitimacy but lack power.
6. Dangerous: Those who have power and urgency but lack legitimacy.

The other two regions are divided into definitive stakeholders and non-stakeholders. The former are those who have legitimacy, power and urgency, and are a top priority for the organisation. Non-stakeholders are those who do not have any of the three characteristics, so they are not considered within the organisation.

Following this model, the University carried out its own stakeholder analysis, resulting in a list of relevant audiences whom they felt it was a priority to listen to. The list of stakeholders was as follows:
1. Prospective students: students who are candidates to study a degree, both those who only apply for information and those who finally enrol.
2. Undergraduate students: both national and international.
3. Postgraduate students: both national and international.
4. Families: fathers and mothers of undergraduate students.
5. Alumni: former students of the university (excluding the business school).
6. Teaching and research staff: teachers and researchers
7. Administration and services staff:
8. Employers: companies that hire alumni of the university
9. Industry: companies contracting research services
10. Donors: companies and individuals who are part of the regular donation to the university

These groups are located in different regions of the Venn diagram but they all share a strategic relationship with the University of Navarra. The relationships are diverse and extensive and, therefore, this list may vary according to the particular circumstances of each university. The listening process must be adapted to the needs of the University in each circumstance and allow for the incorporation of listening to new groups.

4.2. Themes of the conversation

The topics of conversation were identified after an analysis of what the University’s priorities were for each group. The analysis was carried out through working meetings and focus groups with the centres and services involved in stakeholder management. In identifying the issues, both the university’s strategic objectives and the expectations that these groups have of the university had to be taken into account. For example, if the university has set counselling as one of its training priorities, it will be useful to know the students’ perceptions of performance in this area, but also other issues that are within the sphere of influence and the public’s interest.

The themes of the conversation were referred to as thematic variables. Each of the variables is made up of a subset of linked topics and each variable will often have three or four questions (or more) related to the line of enquiry.

In any project with a reputational perspective, each stakeholder group should have a set of common questions on concepts linked to corporate reputation such as satisfaction, trust, recommendation, bonding and esteem, for example. The resulting map of perceptions will be relevant to check which stakeholders have a more favourable view of the organisation and which, on the contrary, have lower perception indexes. The gaps between reality and perception are undoubtedly one of the most significant outputs of this listening project.

The thematic variables and the number of questions that the university decided on for each stakeholder group are outlined below:

› Prospective students (25 questions):
  - Decision factors
  - Brand analysis
  - Admission process
  - Commercial network (support and follow-up)
  - Event organisation (effectiveness and satisfaction)
  - Comments

› Undergraduate and postgraduate students (15 and 14 questions, respectively):
  - Quality of teaching
  - Organisation of teaching
  - Advice
  - Student welfare
  - Quality of services and facilities
  - Overall satisfaction and recommendation
  - Negative comments or weaknesses
  - Positive comments or strengths
  - Suggestions for improvement

› Families of undergraduate students (29 questions):
  - Decision factors
  - Student training
  - Information received from the University
  - Admission process
  - Economic considerations
- Satisfaction, trust and recommendation of the University
- Comments

› Alumni (28 questions):
- Academic background
- Training needs
- Employability
- Overall assessment
- Linking and engagement
- Collaboration
- Recommendation
- Comments

› Teaching and research staff and administrative and service staff (25 questions):
- Satisfaction with the University as a place to work
- Work motivation factors
- Corporate culture values
- Commitment to the University
- Perceived trust in the University
- Internal communication
- Negative comments or weaknesses
- Positive comments or strengths
- Suggestions for improvement

› Employers (25 questions)
- About the University’s graduates
- On the role of the employer
- Brand attributes
- Satisfaction, trust and recommendation
- Comments

› Donors (30 questions)
- Decision factors
- Beneficiary projects
- Information received from projects
- Strategic projects
- Expectations for collaboration
- Satisfaction, trust, transparency and recommendation
- Comments

4.3. Indicators

The next step is to establish indicators that will help us monitor perceptions and assess possible changes over time. The indicators are extracted after a detailed analysis of the variables in the questionnaire. There must therefore be a direct relationship between a variable and its indicator(s).

Indicators facilitate the design of an operational scorecard that provides governors and managers with quantitative information on findings and qualitative information for decision-making. The indicators are specific to each stakeholder group.

Indicators must remain unchanged over time in order to obtain standard, objective and traceable metrics over time. For this project, indicators were classified into two distinct groups: perceptions of university performance and perceptions of brand sentiment.

The former refers to the objective and tangible performance of the university, while the latter refers to the emotional impact the university has on its audiences: admiration, esteem, satisfaction, recommendation and support.

4.4. Drafting of questions

After identifying the audiences, the topics of conversation and their indicators, it is time to properly draft the questions. This is a critical phase of the project. It requires a lot of time to think through the objectives and to devise clear questions, avoiding ambiguities, repetitions, irrelevant questions and taking care, especially, not to introduce biases that lead to a particular orientation in the answers.

The questionnaires have three types of questions: a) general introductory questions (gender, age, origin...); b) specific questions with a leaning towards a quantitative response in the form of a checkbox, rating scale, drop-
down menus, ranking, etc.; and c) qualitative and voluntary response questions where respondents can write positive or negative comments and suggestions for improvement.

Surveys must be and appear to be completely anonymous and must give the respondent the assurance that his or her identity can never be identified. They are conducted in an online format to be answered on the Internet, without registering the user’s IP, which is especially important for surveys with internal audiences (teachers, administrators, students). They have an annual periodicity and should be sent at the most appropriate time of the year for each audience (avoiding exam time, months of excessive workload, etc...). Not all questions should be mandatory.

In order to maintain proper communication, it is important to know and apply the 5 C’s rule. The questionnaire should have the following characteristics:

- Clear: The questions have to be precise, so that the receiver understands immediately, without the need for any explanation, translation or second readings.
- Concise: A message is concise when all the necessary information is expressed in as few words as possible. A concise message is at the same time complete.
- Correct: The message and the questions should reflect reality or express what you want to achieve with it.
- Complete: All information necessary to perform the appropriate actions should be included. Sometimes questions can be incomplete because important information is omitted: date, time, name, number, etc.
- Courteous: Communication should help to strengthen the relationship. It is important that both the survey and the welcome and thank you messages reflect respect between the institution and the respondent, and that the rules of politeness are maintained.

4.5. Analysis of findings

It is important to obtain a sample that is as representative as possible of the population surveyed in order to obtain reliable data with a low margin of error and thus ensure the legitimacy of the results obtained. Decisions should be made to encourage high participation rates, such as choosing the right launch dates, regular reminders and even organising some kind of lucky draw among participants.

Experts in statistical analysis should analyse the surveys in order to obtain answers to the hypotheses put forward. The analysis should be as complete as possible including the collation and integration of quantitative information based on the statistical analysis of the results and qualitative information through the semantic analysis of the comments. The reading of the results should follow the same logic of identifying variables and indicators, and through the segmentation applied in the initial questions, namely about gender, age, nationality, degree, and year, among others. The analyses should provide information about causal relationships and correlations between variables in order to explore listening in depth and to discover findings that are not intuitive at first sight.

In a project of this nature, a good analysis should identify two things: on the one hand, a map of perceptions about university performance and brand feelings and, on the other hand, the “blind spots” of the organisation that deserve to be reviewed and improved if necessary. In addition, the study makes it possible to verify whether the university is adequately connecting with its different stakeholder groups where strategic changes are possible. The analysis is, in short, the phase where the university checks the effectiveness of its communication.
4.6. Decision-making

Decision-making is the most important phase because it is responsible for verifying and legitimising the listening process. If the university listens but then does nothing, stakeholders will be disappointed and reluctant to participate in further surveys. Nothing drives participation in surveys more than confirmation that they are worthwhile. If people feel listened to, they will participate.

To make decisions, the university has to take the findings seriously and to translate them into action for the university community. It must be possible to link the results of the survey with the results of change in the organisation. The university’s decisions can be of different types, for example, they might be corrective in operational performance (correcting errors, providing services, improving facilities, etc.) or evolutionary in performance (new services and products). Among the latter, it is worth highlighting those critical decisions that involve some kind of innovation and organisational improvement and that offer new solutions to community problems.

To exemplify the model, Table 1 provides a series of findings from the listening, with associated improvement actions and expected outcomes.

Table 1
An extract of the findings, actions and results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Findings</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy emotional well-being among students</td>
<td>Implementation of a comprehensive student guidance and welfare service.</td>
<td>Improving the student’s emotional well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for improvement in different areas of Alumni</td>
<td>Designing a corporate strategy focused on alumni priorities</td>
<td>Connecting with alumni priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several shortcomings in the management of the admissions process</td>
<td>Improvements to the University’s admissions process</td>
<td>Enhancing the prospective student’s experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information deficit among students</td>
<td>Student communication plan</td>
<td>Close, constant and transparent communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems in facilities and improvement of equipment (classrooms, laboratories, cafeterias, sockets, microwaves...)</td>
<td>Troubleshooting services, facilities and products</td>
<td>Improving the student’s overall experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortcomings in student counselling</td>
<td>Changes in the organisation and training of counselling</td>
<td>Improving the student’s all-round education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Areas for improvement in corporate culture</td>
<td>Working groups to improve different aspects of corporate culture</td>
<td>Improving the satisfaction of professionals (Both teaching and admin).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: own
It is important that the actions are driven by working teams made up of, the rector’s office and the centres or the services most involved, depending on each finding. The teams analyse the findings, evaluate the most relevant actions to guide the situation and propose measures for change and new policies. Follow-up is a fundamental part. Actions must be evaluated to confirm that the action has been carried out and that the expected result has been achieved.

In certain situations, decision-making often slows down or does not happen at all. This is because stakeholder perceptions are rooted in problematic or controversial issues that are not easily and quickly solved. A demand for organisational change sometimes requires a new reorganisation, the establishment of a new service or the acquisition of new premises.

Of course, there are also contradictory perceptions, and even perceptions that do not correspond to reality for various reasons such as the lack of information, or because of approaches that are impractical to implement. It is also worth noting that sometimes the wisest decision is not to take any decision at all; either because perceptions need to be confirmed in other ways, or because more time is needed to consolidate opinions.

As can be seen, the decision-making phase is the most critical and complex of all because of the different nature of the findings resulting from the listening process.

4.7. Communication of results (and decisions)

The last phase is the fair play of listening. It is the loyal, sincere, and correct, behaviour by which the institution is accountable for the results of the listening and, consequently, for the decisions taken. Communicating the findings legitimises the listening, builds trust and reinforces participation in subsequent meetings.

Each survey should have its own communication plan with clearly defined audiences, objectives, messages and channels. Whenever possible, a website should have open access to the results of the different series of surveys carried out. The website can also be a good channel for reporting on the decisions taken and the improvement actions carried out after the listening process.

As the surveys are annual, it is advisable that days before sending the questionnaire to the target audience, the project is informed, and a brief assessment is made of the actions carried out during the last academic year. In this way, participation and the usefulness of taking part in the survey are reinforced.

In short, the seven canons of listening are patterns of corporate culture. The main challenge is to accept the firm and demanding precept that underlies this culture, which is that listening is a praxis of good governance. The fact that the university has faced this challenge does not mean that listening has been successful in all cases, nor that all stakeholders have always and at all times felt that they have been listened to. It only means - and this is not insignificant - a commitment to strengthen its style of governance and a willingness to systematise listening, which with other informal systems had already been practised in the community for some time.
5. Opportunities and challenges

The culture of listening presents opportunities and challenges in the context of any organisation. The will to listen to stakeholders introduces the university to a scenario of significant advances in both governance and university management. At the same time, it brings to the surface difficulties and challenges that do not always have a solution at hand. Accepting and living with institutional dissonance (all those imperfections that every organisation has), is an exercise in realism of great formative value for all members of the community.

An organisational listening project presents three fundamental opportunities: a) it favours a cultural change that strengthens institutional cohesion and trust on the part of stakeholders; b) it provides tools and scorecards that help to operationalise listening; and c) it helps to introduce dynamics of change in the organisation.

Organisational listening introduces a cultural change in organisations and a predisposition of their top management to openness and public scrutiny. Listening humanises the relationship, facilitates transparency and increases empathy towards the institution. If listening is real and effective, it facilitates the integration of the different audiences within the university community. It brings benefits in the intangible performance of the organisation: it cultivates a sense of belonging, strengthens links and predisposes to greater closeness and commitment among the members of the community. Listening confirms the existence of a community that feels recognised by the organisation.

Monitoring a method makes it easier to operationalise listening. The project should provide scorecards and tools to identify the organisation’s blind spots: those areas where there is a contrast between what the organisation does and what stakeholders perceive the organisation to be doing. The scorecard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scorecard on listening to undergraduate students (ratings on a scale of 1-5)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorías</th>
<th>Año / Media</th>
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<td>2019</td>
<td>2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asesoramiento universitario</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bienestar de los estudiantes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calidad docente</td>
<td>4.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organización de la docencia</td>
<td>3.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfacción general</td>
<td>3.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Servicios</td>
<td>3.84</td>
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</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparación centro</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Año / Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asesoramiento universitario</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bienestar de los estudiantes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calidad docente</td>
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<td>Organización de la docencia</td>
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<td>Satisfacción general</td>
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<td>Servicios</td>
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Source: own
sets out indicators on perceptions of university performance and brand sentiment. As Table 2 shows, the scorecard includes analysis tools to identify areas for improvement among stakeholders and performance areas, namely the organisation of teaching, student experience, quality of services and facilities, among others. This method prevents people’s input from falling on deaf ears.

Listening moves the organisation to introduce mechanisms for change. This project can either result in the organisation’s leaders closing their ears, or it can open them by accepting strengths, weaknesses and suggestions for improvement. With the help of the people listened to, we can correct errors, improve services, introduce innovations and, in short, open up innovation processes thanks to the social intelligence that results from internal listening.

In recent years, the University of Navarra has undertaken projects in which listening has played a decisive role. Some of these changes have included a new student orientation and welfare service; a reorganisation of teaching with new timetable management; improvements in student counselling; working groups to cultivate and improve corporate culture and internal processes; changes and expansion of facilities; provision of new services in countless areas such as cafeterias, leisure and relaxation areas, study areas, reprographics systems, electrical outlets, among others. Culture is legitimised both by words and - even more so - by the actions of the organisation.

Naturally, a listening project also faces challenges that are worth being aware of. The risks can be summarised in three: a) reducing the listening culture to a technical process of surveys; b) being inhibited by the consequences of listening; and c) not completing all phases of the project because of a discomfort regarding the findings, scepticism with the final result or simple institutional fatigue.

As we saw in Figure 1, the architecture of listening affects the entire organisation, name-
6. Conclusions

As we have seen, organisational listening points to a panorama full of pending challenges. Listening has both a head and a tail: it is a substantial and, at the same time, a forgotten part of communication. Its absence in organisations perhaps explains one of the causes of the lack of maturity of corporate communication. As a final reflection, and in line with Elena Gutiérrez-García, it is worth concluding that listening strengthens the relational and communicative dimension of institutions, and only in this way can it be understood that listening is a habit of leadership and governance, open, inclusive and participatory, which strengthens the understanding of its institutional identity in terms of the relationship with its social ecosystem.

In today’s complex and changing environment, leaders need to learn to govern by integrating the social and contextual component. Listening is a sensible behaviour for managing social intelligence in organisations. When constructive criticism is received with an open mind and without resistance to change, leaders exercise prudence and renew the orientation of their approaches. Listening introduces patterns of participation, opens up formulas for collegiality and, in short, qualifies government.

From this perspective, the relationship between listening, governance and reputation is sustained. Listening allows us to understand perceptions, cultivate relationships and integrate contexts; and in the long term, it cultivates the legitimacy and reputation of the institution among its stakeholders. Listening is also an opportunity for transformation and advancement of the profession of communicator. Listening strengthens the role of the reputation guardian, both within the organisation (internal consultative figures) and externally (trusted advisors and context observers). Without being pretentious, we could say that listening legitimises the communicator as a political actor who advises and influences decision-making.

Stephen Covey states that feeling understood is the deepest psychological need (1990). Dialogue is also essential for the smooth running of organisations; but not as an exercise in window-dressing, but as a true exchange of diverse nuances to gain a better understanding of reality. For dialogue to be fruitful, it is important to listen to the other with the intention of learning, not contradicting, with a desire to listen to their reasons, not to refute them. Listening can be channelled in many ways: in formal or informal settings, with a single method or a combination of several, individually or collectively. Without a doubt, listening is the difficult art of recognition. Hopefully, the story told here of our listening project, will open the way to inspire other universities to follow suit and find their own way of rationalising listening and bringing it to life in their organisation.
7. Bibliographical references


