

THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION - "KEY" FOR THE EFFICIENCY OF MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: At the same time with the growth of the economic-social phenomena's dynamics, the accentuation of the tendency for change in all the domains of activity, a more and more bitter fight for the organizations' survival and development, in the context of a far more stronger competition on the market, it is quite obvious the fact the results achieved are conditioned directly by the quantity, quality and opportunity of the available information, given by the mean of communication.

The enhanced complexity of the managerial processes, the emergence and use of modern and improved means of communication and decision make the information technology to be an indispensable instrument for management, because the manager must be "informed excellently " as Robert Heller said.

Since communication is the base for the achievement of the management's coordination function and, implicitly, of the entire management process, it can be affirmed that one of the "keys" for the efficiency in management is exactly the accomplishment of an adequate communication at all hierarchical levels.

JEL classification: M12

Keywords: communication, communication process, organizational communication, obstacles in communication, feedback

1. COMMUNICATION – COMPLEX SOCIAL PROCESS

The major changes that took place at European and global level under the impact of the informational revolution, the accentuation and diversification of the international interdependencies in all fields of activity generate both the growth of the managerial processes' complexity and the enhancement of the managers' preoccupation for assimilating and putting in practice modern knowledge and management methods, promoting a new type of leadership which has the communication as essential element. In

the context of informational "explosion" and the expansion and improvement of the communication means, the manager's ability to communicate efficiently is a decisive factor in achieving economic and social performance.

The communication is a complex social process, used to make exchange of information between individuals by using a common system of symbols, signs and behaviors [1]. The individuals, as members of certain social groups, communicate between them in various contexts, the communication having the quality to be "the man's main spiritual instrument in his process of socialization" [2]. It represents "the bond between individuals within a community", which offers the possibility to find out their opinions and to achieve homogenization from psychosocial perspective, granting the normal functioning of the community, no matter its nature or dimension.

For management, communication represents the base on which the success of personnel's coordination process and the applying in good conditions of all managerial functions rely, the instrument that "polarize" around it all the others' efforts to achieve together the objectives of the organization. Through communication, the manager "intervenes" to harmonize and synchronize in time and space the decisions, actions, activities, judgments, desires of the personnel and the organization's concrete realities, conferring at the same time cohesion, continuity and dynamism to the management process; all of them are fundamental characteristics necessary to promote an efficient management in present times.

2. MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION – THE ESSENTIAL FORM OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The organizational communication achieved at the level of an organizational structure through communication procedures formally ruled by the organization chart/organogram, but also by informal channels, represents a decisive factor for the survival and development of organizations. It represents a specific form of interpersonal communication, being "a process, usually intentional, of message exchange between persons, groups and organizational levels within the organization, which aims to achieve both the individual objectives and the collective ones" [3].

Within the organizational communication, the primordial role belongs to the *managerial communication* that fulfills the role of catalyst, having both direct and indirect impact on the organization's evolution. It is manifested in all the entity's activities, exerting an immediate impact on the results obtained and on the management's quality and efficiency. At the same time, managerial communication is an important instrument in the implementation process of the organizational change, being crucial for the gradual preparation and development of the enthusiasm for change and for the formation of a favorable attitude in this sense, therefore improving significantly the probability of success.

Managerial communication is a complex process of reciprocal interaction, based on feedback, by the mean of which managers send ideas, feelings and decisions to their subordinates, correlating their efforts in a synergic manner. Based on respecting the norms imposed by the managerial culture and the organization's policy, the *managerial communication is a state of mind and a managerial instrument for the manager in his relations with the surrounding environment* and, by his access to the informational sources, he targets to make operational all managerial functions and to increase individual and collective performances.

A manager's success depends decisively on his ability to communicate, since communication represents the mean by which he coordinates the team he leads. The studies have revealed that a manager consumes, on average, almost 70% of his time at work for communication that has the following structure [4]: 45% listening, 30% talking, 16% writing and 9% reading. This percentage is different depending on the managers' hierarchical position, being higher in the case of superior hierarchical levels. The conclusion is that dexterity in communication, capacity to send and receive convincing and efficient messages are influencing directly the manager's quality of leader and implicitly his career.

3. THE MECHANISM OF COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Because it is a complex social process, the communication process implies the existence of many elements (figure 1), as follows:

The issuer is the person initiating the communication, in his quality of manager or performer, since he detains information, ideas, intentions, objectives etc. He has the most significant role in the communication process because, starting from an idea, he chooses the right language, codifies the idea in a form accessible to the appropriate understanding and establishes the communication mean and the receiver of the message.

The receiver is the person, or group of persons (managers or executives), that receive the information, being the beneficiaries of the informational message. He must be prepared to receive the message, to decode and understand it so to transpose it in action.

The message, respectively the physical form of the information transmitted by the issuer to the receiver, can be oral, in written or nonverbal. In order to guarantee the success of the communication process, it is necessary to make the message's contents and form of expression appropriate to the receiver's state of mind, to his capacity of perception, understanding and listening.

The communication channel means the message's route or way of transmission and it can be (from the perspective of its degree of formalization):

- formal (official) channel, which is superposed on the organizational levels, by its help information being changed between different posts, functions, work departments and hierarchical levels;

- informal (unofficial) channel that derives from the non-formal organization levels, being an additional way that surpasses the barriers related to statute and hierarchy, assuring a far faster movement of information.

The environment or context in which the communication is done represents a secondary component that can influence in a significant measure the quality of communication. It refers concretely to all the elements that can generate distortions, interruptions or confusions in the communication process, such as: sound, temperature, space, time, receiver's psychological state.

In order to guarantee an optimal communication that will assure the right transmission and understanding of the messages, *the means by which the messages are sent* (phone, fax, networks, video and audio technology for teleconferences, closed circuit television etc.) have a direct impact on the exchange of messages, representing the technical support of the entire process and influencing the messages' speed of transmission and accuracy and the communication costs.

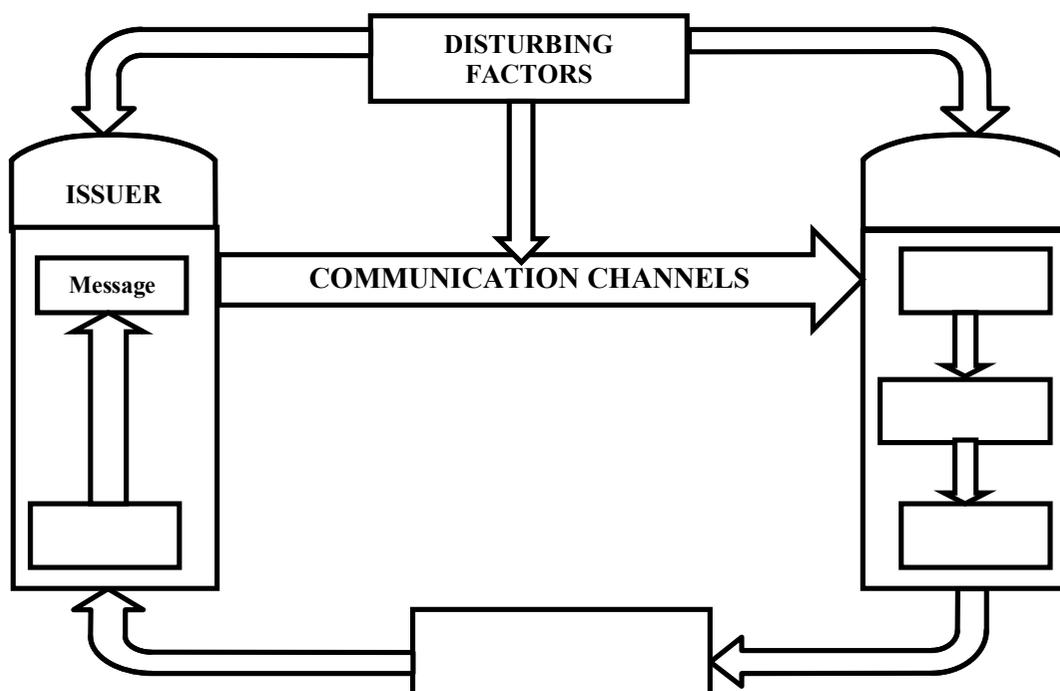


Figure 1. Mechanism of the communication process

Source: Adaptation after I. Ursachi, "Management", ASE București, 2005

4. IMPROVEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

In order to achieve an efficient organizational communication, the managers and the human resources specialists have to be familiarized with the complex forms and mechanisms of communication. Based on this knowledge, they can trace and eliminate the obstacles in communication, the distortion factors intervening in the information's sending process. Knowing and understanding the inherent obstacles in the communication process represent a first step in the attempt to minimize or to remove them and this fact contributes in the end to increasing the efficacy of the communication process.

The most important and frequent *obstacles in the way of an efficient communication* are [5]:

The organizational structure influences decisively the communication process's structure and content by the number of hierarchical levels, formalization degree, the centralization level of the authority and responsibility, the method of control etc. All these elements can favor or curb the information exchange between the manager and the subordinates and vice versa, as well as the quality of the message the receiver has received, understood and accepted.

The effect of the function's status is reflected in some managers' tendency to put almost no value on their subordinates, manifesting an attitude of contempt toward their ideas.

The conflictual challenges of the role of leader are the consequence of the fact managers has to achieve a balance between their work's two sides: the coordination and control of subordinates and, at the same time, the attention given to the desires and

emotional needs of those subordinates which imply a higher complexity due to its powerful socio-emotional character.

The differences of personality and perception, which make the same message to be understood differently, by each person due to the inconsistencies existent between the education, knowledge, experience, system of values and interests of the persons exchanging the information. For this reason, a continuous feedback is necessary to assure a higher quality and accuracy of the messages and to solve in due times the eventual misunderstandings.

The emotional reactions: of love, fear, hate, anger, frustration etc. influence the quality of the messages send by the issuer and received by the receiver. If the work environment is characterized by tensions and the employees feel threaten (by losing their job or their good name i.e.), they will have either an aggressive or defensive behavior, depending on their personality, which obviously will be reflected in the contents of the organizational communication.

The bias can make the message to be understood just in one manner, in concordance with the signification the dialogue partner have already assigned to the message.

The tendency to evaluate is specific to human being; he always has the tendency to make value judgments by which approves or disapproves a person's affirmation before even listening them.

The filtering effect is manifested by the tendency to avoid communicating the bad news to the others. This aspect is frequently met when the managers or executives avoid rendering the bad news they are responsible for.

The differences between sexes influence the communication process, because men and women have different styles in communication. During communication, women require information, trying to establish relations of friendship and cooperation, creating an intimate climate of collaboration, being more polite but also more reluctant. On the other hand, men use the "report style in communication, based on emphasizing their own knowledge and aptitudes, they are more direct and domineering, their style being oriented more on action and having the control.

Time is a serious obstacle in communication, especially nowadays, in the "century of speed", when the time allocated for communicating is more and more reduced, and the problems must be solved promptly and with maximum efficiency.

By knowing the principal obstacles in the way of an optimum communication, their particularities and the manner in which they can affect the informational message, the managerial team can adopt the most efficient and advisable ***ways for the improvement of the organizational communication***, respectively [6]:

Setting the orientation of the organizational culture and choosing the type of organogram that will facilitate the organizational communication and overcome the eventual obstacles in communication.

Though it is considered to be "invisible" by numerous specialists and is neglected by a series of managers, the *organizational culture* has a serious impact on the modern enterprises' functionality and performances, representing the "key" for excellence in an organization. The organizational culture can be considered a "social binder" that shapes and determinates the behaviors, attitudes and actions of the organization's members, reflecting the mix of personalities and leadership styles put in practice.

Many more organizations are aware now of the "force" the organizational culture incorporates; this force is representing an important strategic instrument used to guide and

raise the people towards common goals. Therefore, it is a significant element that must be taken into account when changes intervene in the existence of the organizations, a lever favoring or breaking the innovations. It is necessary, at the same time, to reproject *organizational structure*, aiming to reduce the number of hierarchical levels, to simplify the communication process, without affecting the quality of the messages sent and received. More and more organizations prefer the circular structures, where the horizontal communication is dominant, as well as the network structures, which are oriented on the team and encourage the communication between the employers, offering them a lot more responsibility and autonomy.

The continuous improvement of employees' abilities to speak and listen represents an important method for the improvement of the organizational communication because the practical reality points out the fact there are serious deficiencies present in the manner in which messages are transmitted and received, that "there are many speaking and a lot fewer listening".

Choosing the most adequate transmission channels for messages, an action a manager must approach depending on the actual situation, the problem that emerged, the persons involved in the *communication* process etc.

Capitalizing on the multiple valences of informal communication, considered a dissemination vector of the organization's values. It is a general rule that informal relationships between employees must be accepted and exploited as a source of long term competitive advantage and, therefore, they must be encouraged.

Promoting on a large scale of the modern means of communication available due to the information technology: internet, intranet, wireless, videoconferences, teleconferences etc.

The improvement of the organizational communication must represent a priority and a permanent concern for any manager, due to its direct influence on the work environment and the efficacy of the actions taken. Choosing the most adequate directions of action depends on the manager's vision and the organization's possibilities of evolution at that respective time.

5. FEEDBACK: THE INSTRUMENT OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication represents one of the most difficult aspects of a manager's work, its efficiency being directly conditioned by the mutual understanding of its message and by the impact it has on employees. The most important method by which the correct understanding of the sent messages' signification can be verified is feedback, representing an essential instrument for the achievement of interpersonal and managerial leadership.

At the same time, feedback is a significant element in attaining higher performances from the employees, by putting in practice some behavior change programs that are relying on supplying the information necessary for taking charge of the tasks. Based on this intelligence, the manager sets the measures meant to stimulate the achievement of these performances, as well as the recognition and reward means. The efficacy of this process is determined mostly by the way in which the employees are trained to identify by themselves the methods to enhance their own performances.

The managerial practice has pointed out the fact a communication is not complete if its effects on the receiver can not be controlled. By the mean of feedback, the issuer can verify the manner in which the sent message has been decoded, the receiver's attitude toward the communicated subject, identifying the means through which the difference between the messages sent and the message received can be reduced.

Since feedback is an important component of the communication process, the specialists have determined some of *its* characteristics [7], respectively:

- Feedback's target is the correct understanding of the message by the receiver;
- Feedback should be based on the trust existent between the issuer and the receiver;
- Feedback should have more of a specific character, with recent examples, avoiding generalizations;
- Feedback includes, from the contents' point of view, those things that are part of the receiver's attributions and he is able to perform them during his activity;
- Feedback should be offered at the moment the receiver is ready to accept it.

The complex character of organizational communication determines the need to approach feedback from more perspectives:

a) *From contents' point of view*, there are three types of feedback:

- Descriptive feedback, based on the description of facts, behaviors and objective elements (the issuer sets forth the facts, without providing their interpretation);
- Evaluation-based feedback, which represents an assessment that can be accompanied or not by descriptive elements (the issuer emits a judgment and entrusts the receiver with assuming the entire responsibility, without allowing a dialogue);
- Experience-based feedback, consisting in the description of the receiver's personal feelings, sometimes being described even the fact that generate them (the issuer describes the impact of the other person's behavior, assuming the responsibility for those reactions).

b) *From quality's point of view*, feedback can be:

- Positive feedback, the stress being put on the presentation of achievements and the enhancement of certain behaviors that should be repeated in the future;
- Negative feedback, which points out the negative aspects of the behavior in order to ameliorate it.

The practical experience emphasizes the negative feedback is predominant in many organizations, the managers having frequently the tendency to criticize employees. The negative feedback becomes however a motivator for the improvement of professional performances and it represents a confirmation of the management style adopted as far as the managers are concerned. It induces a feeling of satisfaction, trust and mutual respect for both parties involved in the dialogue that will contribute greatly to the creation of a work environment propitious for achieving superior performances.

The issuer targets most of the time to obtain by feedback a change of the receiver's attitude or behavior, therefore it has to be constructive and balanced. Constructive feedback encourages people to express opinions, favoring the emergence of an environment characterized by openness, fairness and creativity. Balanced feedback puts the stress on the positive aspects of an idea, opinion or action, the issuer mentioning the aspects he would like to modify in this process.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In the present context, when innovation and change represent the dominant characteristic of business environment, under the impact of technical progress and informational technology, it is necessary to rally all physical and intellectual capacities so to assure a viable evolution of the organizations, which imply the amplification of organizational communication. Present to all managerial levels, organizational communication is done on all levels of hierarchy and in-between them, both on the

horizontal and vertical of the management system, being a sine qua non condition during the process of determining the most elementary human relations as well as the creation and exchange of messages within a relational system of interdependencies that characterize the modern organization. An efficient communication is done "when people receive in due time the right information" [8], which implies that, in a space-time universe, a biunivocal relation between the issuer expressing a thought and the receiver having to understand the respective message is established.

In any organization, the managers behave as leaders, symbols or "contact agents" of the organization, in their relations with the subordinates, collaborators, and representatives of the clients, suppliers, unions, financial structures and banks, both inside and outside the company. This is in fact the reason why an efficient communication is a key competence of any successful manager. Referring to this aspect, Malcolm Peel said "managers are like spiders in the center of their web and have to communicate in all directions: with the employees, the head managers and the clients. If we fail to communicate, the chances to succeed as a manager are very few." [9]

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