



World Scientific News

An International Scientific Journal

WSN 104 (2018) 72-83

EISSN 2392-2192

The role of internal communication in business management in the city of Czestochowa

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ABSTRACT

Communication is an indispensable element of efficient functioning of every enterprise. The goal of effective communication is to ensure that every person within the company receives reliable and complete information at the right time. Unfortunately, it often happens that the communication process is underrated in some enterprises. That is a big mistake since it is communication that facilitates an effective transfer of goals as well as motivation. The lack of communication is one of the most serious obstacles on the way to effective business management. Caring for proper communication within the company is the simplest method for achieving success. The purpose of the article is to present the role of communication within an enterprise. The article ends with conclusions supported by research results concerning the importance of internal communication.

Keywords: communication, business management

1. INTRODUCTION

It is a common belief that employees with their knowledge constitute the most valuable resource of every enterprise. In order to spread and share the knowledge within the company, proper communication is essential.

The role of communication inside an enterprise cannot be overvalued. It is the foundation for the functioning of each group and each organization thus having a crucial influence on how employees function and how they feel in the organization.

The role of internal communication is making clever use of employees' knowledge. Dialogue is indispensable to initiate an effective exchange of information between employees and the management. A smart supervisor is aware of the fact that employees must receive clear information about the company on ongoing basis, to prevent situations in which important issues concerning the enterprise will reach the employees from the outside. In a time when almost everyone has access to social networking sites it is quite a challenge.

The effectiveness of work of individual employees as well as teams, their loyalty and dedication to the company all depend on the proficient process of communication. The authors postulate that senior managers who implement this can invest their organisation with a competitive advantage (Balmer John MT, Gray Edmund 1999, p. 171).

2. THE ESSENCE AND DEFINITION OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

The term – communication comes from the Latin verb *communicare* (make something common, connect, share a message with someone) and the noun of *communio* (community, sense of connectedness). Generally speaking, communication is nothing but a transfer of information between the sender and the recipient. The sender and recipient of the information take part in the communication process.

Following Maxwell's words, "everyone talks and everyone communicates, but few can connect. Those who succeed, achieve a completely new level in their relationships with others, both at work and in life." (Maxwell J. C. 2011, p. 12).

Appropriate communication satisfies the need to belong to a given organizational community, triggering a sense of participation in the life of the company. Thus, it becomes an instrument of creating relations and results in the integration of the community. (Rosa G. 2009).

Internal communication is generally defined as the communication flow among people within the boundaries of an organization (Mazzei A. 2010, p. 221-234).

Internal communication is the flow of messages and ideas between people within the organization (Bovee C. L., Thiel J. V. 2000, p. 7). According to Cornelissen, communication encompasses all the tools used by the company for communicating (Cornelissen 2004, p. 189).

In order to put the communication process into effect in an enterprise, there are three basic elements necessary for this process to occur: sender, information and recipient (Figure 1).

sender — message — recipient

Figure 1. Elements of the communication process

Source: The article author's own study.

The person who has to provide some information to another person within the company starts the communication process. The sender chooses a method of providing information, and then the information is transformed into text, words or gestures. The complete communication process should proceed in two directions. On the one hand, the sender transmits his message, on the other, the recipient reacts in such a way that he sends his message back to the sender.

Communication is an indispensable activity in the functioning of all processes, but it is critical in highly cross-functional ones.

Internal communication is part of public relations activities.¹ Its task is to exchange information inside the company. It is one of the most important problems of modern enterprises. Therefore, there is a need to develop the best possible communication process to make the functioning of enterprises as effective as possible.

McQuail created communication levels in the organization (Figure 2).

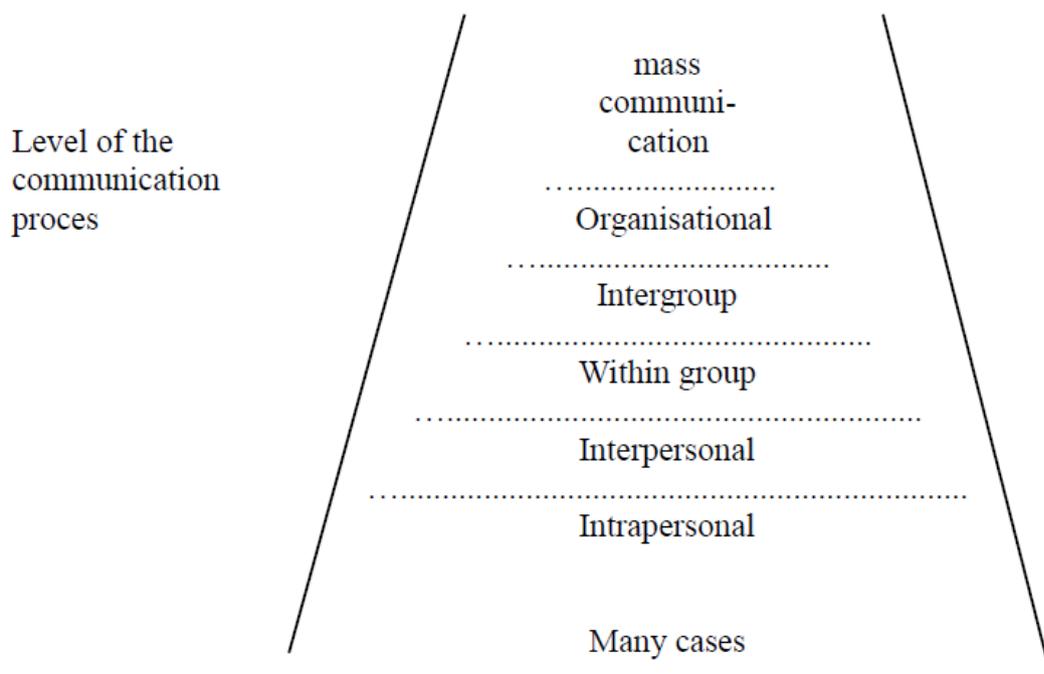


Figure 2. Levels of communication in the organization

Source: D. McQuail, *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 6th Edition, Sage Publications Ltd, London 2010, p. 18.

Analyzing the communication process within the company, it can be noticed that it proceeds basically on two levels: interpersonal and group. The basis of the pyramid is interpersonal communication, which takes place between two or three people, most often in the form of a dialogue. The lower the pyramid's rung, the more and more separate cases of communication are.

¹Public Relations is a conscious, planned and long-lasting nurturing of relations with closer and further surroundings, leading to the acquisition of as many clients, supporters and followers as possible.

Effective internal communication is a prerequisite for organisational success (Ruck K., Welch M. 2012, p. 294). This importance is evident in many recent efforts among practitioners in Europe and the US to seek recognition of this field as an independent domain (Verčič A., Tkalac, Verčič D. 2012, p. 223-230).

Internal communication merits close attention as employees may be the most important audience for a company's organizational communication and corporate branding efforts (Chong, M. (2007) p. 201-212).

2. 1. Directions and tools of internal communication

A well-constructed internal communication system allows to satisfy mutual needs. It also facilitates the transfer of messages not only at the supervisor-employee level, but also employee-supervisor as well as employee-employee (White C., Vanc A., Stafford G., 2010, p. 65-84). Communication on the employee-supervisor platform is considered to be of particular importance.

Communication inside the enterprise can proceed in four directions:

- from top to bottom – it is most often used in an enterprise. Its beginning is set by supervisors who want to communicate their expectations to employees. It is important not to provide subordinates with an excessive number of messages, as this may bring about confusion and uncertainty. There is also the danger that the information will reach the employee in a distorted form, as it often has to go through several organizational levels along the way,
- from bottom to top – it is initiated by an employee who wants his message to reach his superior. Usually, the subject of such a message is the desire to justify his absence from work, provide information about progress or unexpected difficulties at work. The employee also has the possibility of reacting to a message previously received from the superior. Since employees fear that excessive openness can cause problems, they often limit themselves to communicating merely the content that the superiors would like to hear. That disturbs the communication process. The inaccessibility of the superior, often caused by his physical distance, stands in the way of effective communication between the employee and the supervisor, thus significantly impeding the transfer of information up the hierarchy.
- horizontally – this form of communication takes place between people who function in the enterprise in similar positions, for example between managers. The main goals of this form of information exchange is cooperation between units, solving problems or building relationships between employees.
- diagonally – it takes place between employees at various levels. It is worth noting that this form of communication usually takes place on an informal basis. It is particularly visible during integration events as well as unofficial meetings. While formal communication proceeds vertically: between a supervisor and an employee, informal communication takes place horizontally - among employees of the same status. It takes place mainly in the smoking room and the kitchen, where corporate rumours and opinions circulate, not always in compliance with the company's policy. It is very important that both forms of communication are complementary. Otherwise, the company brings on confusion and chaos.

The internal communication tools are as follows:

- information guidebooks for employees,
- noticeboards,
- company bulletins,
- letters to employees,
- posters,
- brochures,
- radio broadcasting centre,
- hot line,
- permanent information service,
- meetings,
- competitions,
- training courses,
- integration events,
- a magazine for employees,
- e-mail,
- intranet,
- www pages,
- local media,
- creation of opinion-forming circles,

Some of these communication tools are used more often, others less often. It is important that the communicated messages be at the appropriate level – both factual and formal. The subject literature distinguishes different communication channels in the company.

One of the forms of communication is:

- formal communication – it consists in the transfer of information by a method adopted by the organizational procedures, mainly by e-mail, telephone and usually proceeds vertically from top to bottom and bottom to top,
- informal communication - develops horizontally among employees.

Another form of communication is:

- verbal communication – occurs both in oral and written form. The basic tool used for verbal communication is language. Speaking, listening, writing and reading belong to the sphere of verbal communication. The term verbal derives from the Latin word *verbalis* = verbal. Verbal communication methods are used for communicating information, while non-verbal ones signalize the attitude of the sender of the message to its content.
- non-verbal communication – is commonly used. It plays an important role in the communication process at work. Non-verbal messages are created and often sent unconsciously. Quite often we also receive them subconsciously. In other words - we do not control this form of communication in contrast to intellectual communication, which is conscious and intentional. Non-verbal communication is probably the oldest way of communication between people. It is responsible for about 2/3 of the whole message. Emotions, feelings, attitudes towards the interlocutor as well as true

intentions are expressed through body language. Very often, if the verbal and non-verbal signals received by the recipient are consistent, the content of the message is considered to be reliable. Otherwise, we often give priority to non-verbal communication.

The direction dimension of internal communication, as well as the channel dimension is important. While email is efficient for information exchange, the preference for communication among all groups of employees is still face-to-face interaction. Interpersonal, dialogic communication remains important to employees at every level of the organization.

Traditional communication in an enterprise is one-sided – from the management to employees. It is an incorrect type of communication as the sender has no confirmation that the information has reached the recipient and how it was received. A more appropriate form of communication in a company is undoubtedly bilateral communication, in which the sender has the opportunity to verify whether the information has reached the recipient and whether it has been received properly. Communication based on dialogue between the employer and employees allows to recognize the needs and expectations. Transparency and unambiguity of message content, especially on the employer-employee line, increases the opportunities for participation in the processes taking place in the organizational space (Woodruffe Ch. 2006) and for building partnership relations (Macey W. H., Schneider B. 2008, p. 15).

Communication inside a company plays a significant role in the field of motivation. It inspires, encourages, properly directs and stimulates an employee's own initiative. Supervisors, aware of the role of communication in effective business management, often praise and encourage the employee to action. Therefore, it seems crucial that the communication tools are appropriately used. Employees expect to be informed about what is happening in the company, about its situation, goals, successes and failures. Dialogue with employees about the difficulties an enterprise must face, helps to build motivation in the team. What is more, employees feel that they constitute a part of the company.

According to H. Fayol, the art of communicating with people is one of the managerial skills at the level of anticipation, the ability to develop an action plan, organizational skills and the ability to unite and direct the efforts of many people as well as the ability to have control over their activities. Communication is effective only when people who interact are competent in a given situation.

The manager's competence depends on his attitude to work, experience, diligence and skills as well as knowledge development (Fayol H. p. 906). Employees who are aligned with the company's values can help their organization attain a sustainable competitive advantage by giving external stakeholders experiences of these values. Thus, 'employees represent significant brand value and an organization's leadership has a responsibility to marshal this opportunity (Hardaker S., Fill C., 2005, p. 365-376). Increasingly, organizations and their public relations professionals are recognizing the importance of strengthening internal communication with employees. Internal communication is important for building a culture of transparency between management and employees, and it can engage employees in the organization's priorities. Executives employ a variety of communication methods, including face-to-face communication, to communicate with employees. The executives' chosen communication strategies aim to build trust and engagement with employees. In doing so, public relations executives find themselves in an expanded role of fostering employee engagement (Mishra K, Boynton L, Mishra A., 2014, p. 183-202).

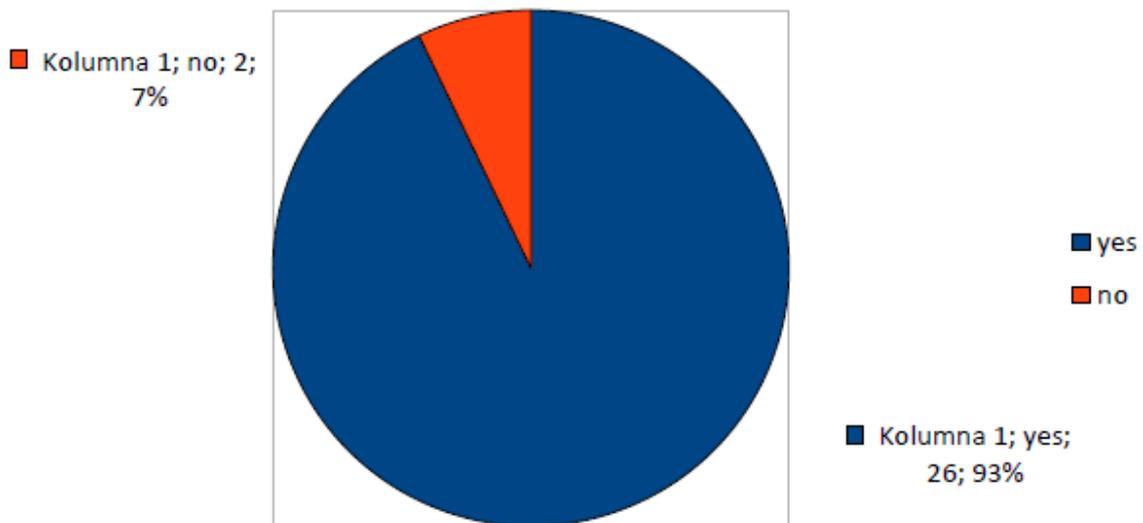
Effective communication is the factor shaping the image of the company (Boynton M. K. 2014, p. 183). It is an image of consciously created identity that the organization presents outside and wants to be perceived as such. Internal communication, on the other hand, determines the efficiency of employees' actions and, in this respect, the form and content as well as the frequency of the message should also be included in a certain framework of principles facilitating mutual and effective communication.

Some authors distinguish between communication and effective communication. Effective communication - interactive two-way communication process resulting in an action or decision (even if it is not the intended action or decision); effective communication can be distinguished from communication (two-way exchange of messages without action), and informing (one-way sending of messages) (Spence W.R., 1994).

Internal communications has an important role in organisations given the evidence that companies with effective communications strategies are usually successful, while others tend to fall short of optimal performance (H. Kalla, 2005, p. 302-314).

Internal communication underpins organisational effectiveness since it contributes to positive internal relationships by enabling communication between senior managers and employees. Paradoxically, internal communication can also pose a threat to organisational relationships, as poor communication can be counter-productive. Internal communication underpins organisational effectiveness since it contributes to positive internal relationships by enabling communication between senior managers and employees. Beneficial internal communication relies on appropriate messages reaching employees in formats useful and acceptable to them. Paradoxically perceived inadequacies in the communication process could inadvertently damage internal relationships (Welch M., 2012, p. 246-254).

2. 2. The results of own research



Graph 1. The role of internal communication

Source: The article author's own study.

The object of the study was one of the companies based in the city of Częstochowa, operating in the automotive industry. The group of respondents included 28 employees employed at various career levels. The survey used a questionnaire. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and gave their consent to it. There were 21 men and 7 women. The data obtained after the study allowed to make a detailed analysis of the influence of internal communication on the functioning of the company. The respondents could choose multiple answers.

The respondents were asked if they think that internal communication affects the quality of work, almost all of them gave a positive response (Graph 1).

In the next question, the respondents were to assess the factors affecting internal communication. They were asked to mark one answer on a five-point scale, where the following options were given: very often, often, rarely, hardly ever, never (Table 1).

Table 1. Evaluation of the communication process in the enterprise

	Very often	Often	Rarely	Hardly ever	Never
Superiors provide clear information	4	17	3	3	1
Employees communicate with each other in a formal way	4	4	2	4	14
Efficient communication creates a positive atmosphere in the workplace	11	16	1	0	0
Efficient communication has a motivating effect on the work of subordinates	7	19	2	0	0
Employees communicate with each other in an informal way	25	3	0	0	0

Source: The article author's own study.

The employees were asked to assess the effectiveness of various communication tools. Their answers are presented in Table 2.

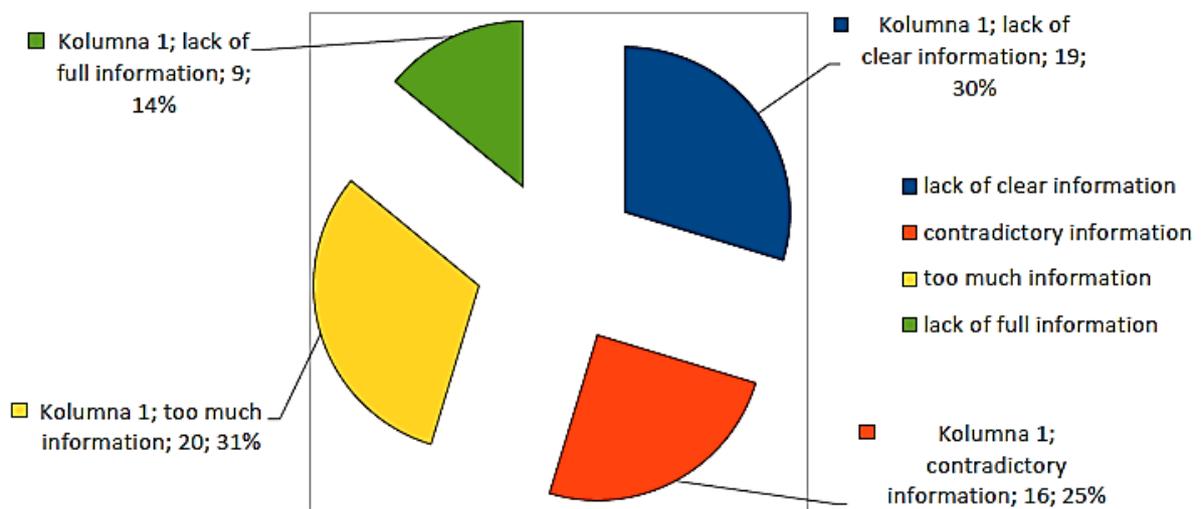
Analyzing the results of the conducted survey, it can be stated that the vast majority of respondents consider internal communication to be important, having a significant effect on the quality of work. The most effective communication tools within the company were: e-mail, telephone, intranet, meetings and noticeboards. Face-to-face talks received the worst rating. Direct communication is extremely valuable because it allows to obtain not exclusively factual information. Importantly, the sender of the message can also observe the recipient's reactions, gestures or attitude. Eye contact allows to get more information than, for example, by telephone. During personal meetings, it is also possible to focus more on the interlocutor and the problem.

Table 2. Evaluation of communication tools in the enterprise

	Definitely good	Rather good	Definitely bad	Rather bad	I do not use it
face-to-face conversations	8	9	7	4	0
telephone	17	7	4	0	0
intranet	16	6	0	0	4
e-mail	19	2	3	0	4
meetings	12	17	0	0	0
noticeboards	15	11	0	0	2
integration events	12	12	0	0	4
Informal staff meetings	11	1	1	0	15

Source: The article author's own study.

The respondents were asked a question about the biggest flaws in the communication process in their workplace. The answers are presented in Graph 2.



Graph 2. Main flaws of the communication process

Source: The article author's own study.

In order to obtain satisfactory results, it is necessary to provide correct factual and formal messages. It is also worth bearing in mind how important it is to deliver them in a timely manner and with the right tools. The use of appropriate tools in the communication process with employees should be fully aware. Some of the tools can be used only after using others. Too much information delivered at one time was considered to be the largest barrier in communication within the company. Another problem is also unclear and contradictory information as well as the lack of complete information.

Everyone admitted that employees most often communicate with each other in an informal way. Such a form of dialogue makes them confess with more ease and openness what is clear to them and what constitutes a problem in their daily work.

Most employees believe that efficient communication often has a major effect on the motivation process and also contributes significantly to a better atmosphere in the workplace. A good working climate, problems being solved, uncertainties and doubts explained on an ongoing basis will certainly contribute to the effective performance of tasks.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Efficient communication in an enterprise is a factor that determines to a large extent its development. It is an inseparable element of effective business management. The way in which supervisors and employees communicate with each other has a significant impact not only on their mutual relations, but also on the quality of their work. Effective communication inside a company increases the commitment of employees and reduces their resistance to change. Employees who know what is happening in the company feel appreciated and taken seriously, which is why they have a serious and positive approach to the tasks they perform.

Due to the important role of communication in the functioning of a company, it is important that managers can effectively manage the communication process. Supervisors increasingly notice that properly conducted internal communication translates into a good relationship with employees. This, in turn, brings on not only better results, but also a better understanding of the strategy and purpose of the business by the team.

Communication inside an enterprise influences the process of building a company's organizational culture and counteracting internal crises. Caring for a positive image of the company in its close and distant surroundings is not the only responsibility of the management staff. A company's image should also be shaped among its employees, because the way they assess their company has a huge impact on their attitude. Employees who have a good opinion about their workplace tend to identify themselves with it more willingly.

Internal communication has been recognized as a strategic focus for business communication, second only to leadership concerns. Employees can be an organization's best ambassadors or loudest critics, depending whether and how they get information. Effective internal communication can enhance corporate reputation and credibility, since employees are viewed as particularly credible sources by external stakeholders (Dawkins, J., 2004, p. 108-119). Employees are the face of an organization and have a powerful influence on organizational success.

The lack of effective communication is one of the most common causes of inefficient work. The slogan "There is no efficient organization without effective communication" has lost nothing of its relevance.

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