

CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SYSTEMS FOR INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - MISSION POSSIBLE!?

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Abstract: *Internal communications are an important element and have a direct connection with the management of an organization. About 60% of the problems in the management of an organisation are due to poor communications. Communication in an organisation is associated with the transmission of certain knowledge about the nature and role of the organisation, implementing and maintaining motivation, organisational cohesion and sense of belonging, inspiring the development of know-how. This leads to increased confidence in the government, and, in turn, it affects productivity and motivation. In the transitional period or at a time of crisis, internal communications play a key role in the transmission of important messages, often preventing incorrect and damaging rumours. If people in the organisation are aware of the rules of communication in times of crisis, the organisation has a chance to minimize interpretations of what happened in the media.*

Keywords: internal communication, human resource management, public relations, crisis

1. Introduction

Internal communications are an important element and have a direct connection with the management of an organisation. About 60% of the problems in the management of an organisation come from poor communications. Internal communications turn employees into the real and adequate person of the organisation [1]. Therefore, organisational information that reaches them should be accurate, complete, timely, properly addressed and presented in a suitable form. On the other hand, the leadership of the organisation needs constant feedback on the opinions, moods and suggestions of employees for effective management. The forms used are varied and increasingly associated with modern information technologies. Thus, there arises the question, "Which communications are more important -

internal or external?" It was found that the downgrading of internal communications demotivates and demoralizes employees. The larger an organisation is, the more communication and relationships among its employees are needed. The necessity of more internal communications is proportional to the size of the territorial distribution of an organisation as the bigger it is, the more difficult it becomes to bring the mission, goals and values of management to employees. The active two-way communication helps to build and maintain a progressive work environment and a climate of trust. To be effective internal relationships, there needs to be established several conditions: Confidence and trust among employees and management; open information to move freely horizontally, vertically and diagonally; satisfactory status and

participation of every person; continuous operation without conflicts and disputes; healthy environment; success in initiatives; Optimism for the future [2].

The fulfilment of such conditions implies a guarantee of understanding the mission and goals of the organisation and integration of common goals with the goals of the individual employee. The balance between employee satisfaction and achievements of the organisation are only an aspect of effective internal communications.

It is wrong to believe that the objectives that should be fulfilled by the inter-organisational communication are related solely to ensuring efficient exchange of information among objects and subjects of management to carry out work tasks, create informational channels for exchange of information among individual employees, teams and coordinating their tasks and activities, as well as regulation and streamlining of information flows [3]. Communication in the organisation is associated with the transmission of certain knowledge, information about the nature and role of the organisation, implanting and maintaining motivation, organisational cohesion and sense of belonging, inspiring the development of know-how. And this leads to increased confidence in the management, and it in turn affects productivity and motivation.

Different organisations rely on rich and diverse forms of internal communications - internal portal that supports all the wealth of information in the organisation, e-newsletter to all employees, information boards, internal conferences, workshops, internal events, etc.

The main goals of internal communications are to inform people, to create certain expectations, attitudes, values and behaviours in them [4]. The people are informed and learn new things in a different way, so the approach towards them must be flexible and provided with various tools.

The means of communication are

developing very dynamically. Their future is in the hands of the employees themselves and in this sense very successful are the channels where the main activity comes from them. Such are forums and blogs. People are focused on the usefulness of the information in them.

Of great importance is the active engagement of its employees working in different departments or units, such as marketing, advertising, PR, administration, sourcing, supplies, etc. This represents a conscious way of thinking and the responsible behaviour of all employees in the organisation [5].

The end result of internal communication needs to improve both the working atmosphere and working conditions in an organisation. The effective internal communication should reinforce the feeling of the staff that they are an important asset.

Through internal communications, an environment where employees know, understand and follow long-term objectives of the organisation by applying its values is created. Maintaining the open dialogue with people from all hierarchical levels and structural departments is used for cooperation and teamwork and increases the commitment of employees towards achieving the objectives.

The communication environment is complex due to the size of the organisation and of structures in it; therefore, it is appropriate to distribute a newsletter that includes information about what happened and what is about to happen on notice boards and via e-mail. It is also a feedback form - questions and answers on current topics. Multimedia editions coming out every week electronically are also used. The weekly newsletter aims to provide current and reliable information about what is happening in the organisation to all employees.

Some organisations issue a quarterly edition as it reflects happenings and events related to the way of mutual work. The

main categories are: questions to managers, new products, events, awards, profiles of people or teams, talents in the organisation, congratulations, organisational issues and others.

When it is necessary to communicate important messages from the management, the mode of communication is more different [6,7]. A letter from the management of any significant event which is going to happen is prepared. Senior management shall transmit the information “face to face” to middle managers, and they in turn have a commitment to bring information to workers and employees. Supervisors also have a commitment to share attitudes and issues of people immediately after they are informed about an important decision. Feedback is obtained through meetings with focus groups of workers, which are organized periodically. Different information requires a different approach to its dissemination. The main message is to be specific, clear, give information about what directly affects people and to be spread in time. Internal communications should follow the needs of the organisation and the dynamics of what is happening in it. Of course, of crucial importance are the decisions taken in an organisation, and then comes the process of communication.

Besides content and specificity of messages, better understanding and overcoming the key barriers to communication within the organisation are relevant to its effectiveness. Damaged communications are barriers in conversations [8].

2. Internal communications - a tool for a successful exit from the crisis

In the transitional period or at a time of crisis, internal communications play a key role in the transmission of important messages, often preventing incorrect and damaging rumours. Organisational structures, on the other hand, can support aspects of the specialisation of individual units [9]. The increased commitment to

work due to efforts to save the workplace and lower incentive because of limited career prospects as a result of the crisis, suggest new challenges for internal communications, which should be overcome through innovative methods. They can also be used as a very handy tool for team management after a period of recession, which in many cases requires restructuring of departments and organisational change strategies. According to various surveys successful communication starts from within [10]. Building and maintaining a positive image and reputation in society requires complex efforts, professionalism and perseverance. The image is a combination of all positive and negative impressions of society or the particular audience to an organisation, person, country, etc. The power of image is that it is a major psychological value that is being built in the process of communication through mass media or other PR-activity. So the image that the audience is building about an organisation, person, party, even idea becomes the core of the willingness of the public to communicate. Very often, and as in this case, personal perception is used by the media to build the image. No orthodox formula to build a good image is available, but there is no way to build a positive image in society unless there is a good one within the organisation. Employees appear goodwill advertisers for the organisation. And in today's stage of development of the Internet and especially social networks and media, their role is increasing.

The crisis affects the intensity and style of communication between employees. The main communication channels used during the deepening economic crisis are personal conversations, general meetings with staff, internal network (Internet), inter-organisational newsletter, telephone and information boards for staff. The active communication dominates over the passive one (information boards, bulletin). This does not mean that inter-organisational

newsletters and notice boards have no effective implementation. They are mainly applied in organisations employing over 250 people. Therefore, the increase in the scale and complexity of the organisational structure, the sense to use these forms of information with maximum efficiency is on the same level with the more active and direct channels [11].

For the term “crisis” there are different and diverse interpretations. In the public sphere it can have large and small dimensions and it can be identified as a sort of change or restructuring of the organisation. No organisation which is protected from this type of impact that disrupts the daily rhythm of work of the organisation. Depending on the type of crisis there are formed different communication styles. An important aspect during such a critical phenomenon is the developed internal communication. It creates preconditions for:

1. Greater confidence in the competence and responsibility of the leadership to deal with problems. This in turn can be called a kind of precondition for an easier exit from the situation.
2. More calmness. There is no panic that hurts workflows dramatically.
3. The open dialogue determines the individual performance of employees on issues where it is not uncommon to receive rational proposals.
4. Decisions taken by management will be more easily and seamlessly perceived.
5. People are receptive to new ways of action.
6. The crisis can be seen as a turning point in the life of the organisation and to mobilize resources.

What is also important is the type and scale of the crisis from the public focus that it generates. During the crisis the relevant

organisation or institution immediately falls under the focus of public opinion. In this regard, the manual on communication in times of crisis is of great benefit to institutionalize information flows and there are no conditions for rumours. When the critical period for employees comes, they are not to receive the bad news about the organisation from the media or from the site. If people in the organisation are aware of the rules of communication in times of crisis, the organisation has a chance to minimize interpretations of what has happened in the media.

As noted by Prof. Arabadzhiyski, PhD, “Public management does not hold the flexibility of business management. It does not adapt easily and quickly to the political, social, economic and other changes” [12]. This specificity should be regarded in the context of seeking solutions to develop effective communication strategies in organisations of the public sphere.

Finally, when change is needed, this can not happen successfully if employees do not understand exactly “Why?” and “How?”. If managers want competitive performance of the market organisation, they need well-built internal communications. “Medieval” attitude to communication among employees will lead to “medieval” results [13].

3. Online tools application and development of internal communication.

There are three easy steps that organisations can undertake to begin to effectively use opportunities provided by online tools for internal communication [14]. First, communicators should consider creating a blog, second - to build forums for customers and employees. Thirdly, there should be a use of tools to collect and publish videos made by employees in the organisation.

There is a practice for team members in some organisations to create short films to explain why they work there. The key to understanding social media is the social

part. What is published online should be a reality in everyday life.

In dynamic times of financial stagnation, organisations reduce their costs. Often these are marketing and HR items which are related to the field of internal communications. Online is much cheaper than printed editions or “face-to-face” communication. When you need to cut costs, for example, by reducing corporate events, many managers choose online communication to send their messages. The internet has many handy tools that allow great achievements with a small investment.

“Online communication is not only a useful addition to the communication policy of the organisations, but it is also an integral part of it. It provides new ways to build communities, it allows many people to be socially connected, eliminating various restrictions and obstacles that exist in real life.” [15]. Online communication with employees can be realized through:

- E-mail - to send notification letters, documents and briefings, which are necessary for the daily work, greetings on the occasion of professional and personal holidays.
- Electronic billboard – in this way each employee will be familiar with the developments in the corporate life, this reduces the sense of isolation and increases their loyalty.
- E-newsletter - the equivalent of print media, but “greener” without additional financial expenses. It may contain any type of information.
- Online training - this is a very good method to improve the skills of employees.
- Electronic polls – for a regular survey of the opinion of inner audiences on various issues related to both work and the need of information.
- Online teamwork - applicable in many professional fields.

Videoconferencing is a useful and effective tool for consultation among employees to discuss projects and decision-making in companies whose offices are

around the world.

On the occasion of *Grapevine Awards 2010*, Mrs. Anne Coleman, with over 20 years of experience in branding, marketing, employee engagement, outlined a clear link of employee engagement with internal communications: ***“Internal communications are an important aspect of employee engagement, but this aspect alone is not enough to make an organisation committed. Internal communications must go through “telling” and “selling” toward “inclusion” and “doing together.” To increase engagement it is needed less “telling” and more “doing together” [16].***

As it has become clear, the link between internal communication and employee engagement is important for internal communicators for the following reasons:

- Efficient use of internal communication to engage employees will result in better outcomes for both employees and the organisation.
- The referral of employee engagement to organisational culture, theories of management and communication theories allows the internal communicator to provide effective strategic advice to senior managers.
- Increasing levels of employee motivation due to elevated levels of positive organisational and communication climate within the organisation.

Studies of the European Association for Personnel Management derived the following forecasts regarding the management of organisations:

- The management will be carried out under conditions of increasing complexity and instability;
- Expectations for technological changes will increase;
- International dimensions of business will increase;
- Formation of strategic alliances and partnerships, etc.;
- The need for understanding and

responding to the issue of environmental, social and ethnic problems, international terrorism and others will sharply increase [17,18].

The idea to develop a system for internal communications in organisations from the public sphere is extremely challenging in the coming years. Where the importance of this is realized, in a short term results will inevitably rise, and most of all, will significantly increase the level of employee motivation [19].

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we sincerely believe in the words of Stephen Covey: "It is important to focus on what seems easy ...

Do those few things in which you are strikingly better than others and which you love the most ... To love your career is just as important as using your talents, which takes me to the category of passion ... Never underestimate passion. It is what fills you with satisfaction ..." [20].

The establishment and development of systems of internal communications in organisations from the public sphere can be the tool to bring back passion and motivation in public administration and to become the "fuel" on the way to transforming the administration into a partner of citizens and businesses.

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