Available online

http://lumenpublishing.com/journals/index.php/lumenpses/index

e-ISSN: 2284–5968; ISSN–L: 2284–5968

Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies

2017, Volume IV, Issue 2, December, pp. 5-14

Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator

Antonio SANDU

DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

Covered in:
Google Scholar; Index Copernicus; Ideas RePeC; Econpapers; Socionet; CEEOL; KVK; WorldCat; CrossRef; CrossCheck; HeinOnline; ERIH PLUS; J-GATE

©2017 The Authors & LUMEN Publishing House.
Selection, peer review and publishing under the responsibility of LUMEN Publishing House.

How to cite: Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies*, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator

Antonio SANDU[1]

Abstract: Public communication is the type of communication intended to accompany the work of public institutions, with the primary purpose of satisfying the general interest. In general, the messages transmitted within this type of communication include public utility information designed to make citizens aware of the existence and work of public sector organizations. In the communication, information on the functioning and attributions of public organizations, the legality and the appropriateness of the decisions taken are communicated to the public, ensuring the transparency obligation of the public institutions. The article presents a theoretical synthesis on the role of the institutional communicator in public institutions.

Keywords: Institutional communicator, communication, audiences, trustful eputism.

Introduction

The institutional communicator operates with the organizational imaginary elements, the public identity of the organization manifesting as symbolic productions, history, myths of the taboo subjects, generically reunited under the name of organizational culture (Damaschin, *Comunicarea instituțională*). This article argues the importance of the institutional communicator in public institutions, a function which should replace the classical function of the spokesperson, thanks to the changes in the audiences the institution should address to.

The Public Communication

The public communication (Damaschin, *Comunicarea instituțională*) represents a part of the institutional communication destined to disseminate the information of public use, or considered as such by the communicating organization. Public communication is formal when regarded as an obligation to disseminate information of public interest, and non-formal

[1] Professor PhD, Stefan cel Mare University from Suceava, Romania, antonio1907@yahoo.com.

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

when it is desired to state the specific position of the organization in relation to their target audiences (Sandu, 2017, p. 88).

The public communication has the main role of convincing that the public institution, both through the implemented institutional policies and the adopted decisions, pursues the achievement of a general interest. By means of institutional communication, the citizens' adhesion is aimed. The citizen should be kept informed about the existence and functioning of public services. Also, the citizen should be listened to, when he wishes to express his / her point of view on the public policies of the institution, respectively, when expressing dissatisfaction with the services received from the public institutions, taking into account, as much as possible, the wishes and needs of the citizen (Damaschin, *Comunicarea instituțională*).

Institutional communication focuses on presenting the institution and its activities in order to assert its identity and public image. Public communication should normally accompany the institution's policies, making it explicit to both the internal and the external public.

The functions of the institutional communication are:

- To inform the target audiences about the organization's activities, values and scopes;

- Receive feedback from target audiences - receive information about the expectations of the beneficiaries, and their opinions;

- Facilitating the public debate on the normative acts issued by the organization, its policies and programs;

- Placing the organization in the public consciousness - informing and forming the public opinion about the organization;

- Ensure transparency of the organization - ensure the target audience on meeting the goals of the organization (Damaschin, *Comunicarea instituțională,* p. 89).

From the perspective of the organization, target audiences may be favourable, appreciating the work of the neutral organization, who have no position towards the organization and hostile audiences who declare themselves against the organization, adopting a critical or challenging attitude. From the perspective of the actuality between the organization and the public, one can distinguish the traditional audience that has long been in relation to the organization, and the future public which needs to be attracted to the communication relationship with the organization (Damaschin, *Comunicarea instituțională,* p. 27.

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

Regarding the various audiences of the organization, the most important role of the institutional communicator is to show that the organization values the target groups, caring about them. Any institutional communication that does not accompany the direct message with an indirect one, about the importance of the target audience for the organization, will fail to attract the traditional audience's loyalty and attract new ones (Sandu, 2017, p. 90).

The channels used to send the organization's messages to the public are:

- Media, through conferences and press releases;
- New media through channels such as blogs, Google, including commercial ads on Google, the Facebook page, the YouTube channel;
- Direct relationships with the public by organizing events such as conferences, seminars, product launches;
- Video and multimedia presentations available online or featured in various events;
- Sponsoring of social, cultural or sports events of a wide audience;
- Promotional products or services associated with the organization's message;
- Direct communication with the public via traditional or electronic mail;
- Acquisition of advertising space in traditional or online media;
- Displaying posters, banners, etc.;
- Printing of informative materials: flyers, brochures, catalogues, etc.;
- Participation in fairs and exhibitions (Irimieș, 2017, p.28).

Of all these channels, the most extensive activities of the institutional communicator are generally focused on the relationship with the media and, more recently, on the direct relationship with the public through the new media.

The Institutional Communicator

The position of the institutional communicator in the organization is different based on its dimension, but also how the decision factors are understood regarding the importance of their position in relation to their target audiences.

The traditional role of the communicator is that of spokesperson. This definition comes from the restrained understanding of institutional communication in media communication, although for most organizations,

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

the communication through media remains the main channel of public relations. The activity of the institutional communicator is expanding more and more in the sphere of new media, capable of reaching the individual recipient of the communication with a personalized message he or she is responsive to, and comes from channels considered by the receiver to be trustworthy. The victory in the presidential election of right-wing candidate Klaus Iohannis, based on an exceptional mobilization of his supporters, was made possible through the Web 2.0 communication channels, and especially Facebook. As such, the role of the institutional communicator, and especially of the communication teams, gradually changes, the communicator becoming a professional in creating and transmitting the message, being a key character of the modern organization (Sandu, 2017, p. 93).

As far as the relationship with the press is concerned, this is considered to be the most widespread, easier and cheaper way to develop the public image. For a relationship with the media to be effective, there are a number of terms that the spokesperson needs to meet:

- There should be no inconsistencies between the message sent by the institution and the "reality";
- The "Institutional reputation" - the institution is regarded as trustworthy by the public;
- The proactive attitude of both the institution and the communicator towards the media;
- The spokesman's professionalism, it should be a person with studies and skills in the field.

As far as the spokesperson's individual qualities are concerned, he should demonstrate:

- Integrity - be a person of moral character and lack of tolerance for unethical practices in communication;
- Credibility - the communicator's previous practice needs to have been honest and the messages sent to have been true and appropriate. The credibility of the communicator is a key factor in the credibility of the message, and indirectly on the institution it represents - impartiality and equidistance. The communicator must interact with the media representatives equidistantly, without letting them understand the predilection for one or other of the media institutions. Also, the message must be sent with sincerity and objectivity, even if it is intended to put a positive light on the issuing institution, this must not be done by distorting the reality or by denigrating other organizations.

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

- The ability to respond in real-time - the communicator must be able to give information to the media as soon as possible, in relation to the event and the moment when it is requested by the media.

- The ability to communicate with journalists - The message must be communicated in such a way as to be accessible and of interest to the journalists, to provide them with sufficient information so that they can write their news or press article. The communicator must be ready to respond to the journalists' request for additional information, and also be willing to partially adjust his/her communication agenda according to the media requests.

- The capacity of event analysis and communication synthesis. The institutional communicator must be able, on the one hand, to transmit the information without incorporating his / her own opinions into the content of the news and, on the other hand, he / she must be able to give credible opinions to the content of the information, and also provide adequate replies to any criticism. The exposed information should be synthesized so as to attract the attention of journalists and the public without allowing equivocal interpretations by the media or the public, and without omitting important information.

- The ability to negotiate communication situations. Beyond the pure informative aspect, the communicator must be able to manage the communication space, the time and the specificity of the message, the context of the communication and the interpretation of the message, the presentation form, etc. The negotiation in communication also means the ability to identify and clarify the meaning of the message by making its recipient receive information as close as possible to the communicator's intent to communicate. The communicator must also be able to answer uncomfortable questions from the media and guide the communication to give a favourable touch to the issuing institution.

- The ability to manage the image crises. The communicator must be able to communicate in case of image crises by rebuilding the credibility and positive public image of the organization, explaining to the audience the causes that led to the crisis, the ways to overcome it and the positive elements that make the organization credible despite temporarily facing a difficult situation; (Irimieş, 2017, p. 30; Sandu, 2017, p. 95)

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

Notoriety - the notion of being famous, being known to many people; reputation, fame (Scriban, 2013).

The concept of notoriety is an indicator of the efficiency of the communication, based on the number of clients who know about the existence of the company and/or its products and services. Brand reputation is the level of recognition or popularity of a brand or company, including a public institution, among the public. Notoriety is a measurement of the celebrity of the organization, or its brands. Notoriety as an indicator is expressed as a percentage of the total population that recognizes the brand/ company /personality. In the case of public institutions, the issue of notoriety takes the form of public awareness of the services the Public Institution offers, and the audience can benefit from. In general, public institutions such as the City Hall, the General Directorate for the Protection of Child's Rights or the Finance Directorate are known to the public as such, the entire community being aware of their existence. However, the services that these institutions provide to the public either directly - which can be directly invoked by citizens, for example the Community Centers of Services that are under the subordination and coordination of the City Hall, whose services can be accessed directly by citizens, and indirectly through other activities - for example, the development of the local regulatory framework, investments, etc.

In the analysis of the notoriety, there are two levels of an organization's notoriety identified**:**

- the spontaneous notoriety, the number of persons who spontaneously mention a brand,
- the compared notoriety, the number of persons placing a brand among the first places in a list of similar brands,
- the identified reputation, the number of persons who can identify the brand in a series of more or less similar brands;
- the associated notoriety, the number of people who are able to provide additional elements: the advertising message, the slogan, the logo, the object of the company, the brand positioning, etc. (www.comunicatedepres.ro)

Coming from the field of conceptual marketing, the concept of notoriety extends to the institutional communication, measuring the overall impact that institutional communication activity has on target audiences. The institutional communicator has to adapt the land of the particular depublic type to which it addresses, and the outlook of the notoriety of the

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

organization it represents. When the City Hall spokesperson announces an event organized by the City Hall, it starts from the premise that the public to whom it is spoken knows the existence of the institution it represents, and is at least familiar with its work. On the other hand, the institutional communicator, which is a newly established public institution whose activity is poorly known, such as probation services, then a significant part of the communication effort is aimed at creating the public reputation of the organization. Maintaining public attention on the organization is also an objective of the institutional communicator.

The Management of Impression

Impression management relate the various strategies for controlling information sent by individuals or organizations outside to improve the opinions of others. The control of the impression that individuals leave to others can refer to rice from clothing brands, political positions to personal presentation, as Goffman calls it in the book Everyday Life as a show (Goffman, 2007). Sociologist Erving Goffman (2007) promoted his conception of "life as a show". In day by day, individuals act to create the desired impressions on others, thus playing a series of roles in the way the theatre actor plays to the audience. The resemblance between the management of the impression the individuals play, and the acting game shows, according to the sociologist, the international and duplicity nature of the individuals' game.

The term of social actor presents the individual both as a person acting in the society, but also playing an assumed and intentional role in producing an impression management. A series of more recent research shows that individuals are involved in impression management activities without being aware of it. A number of risks are associated with image management activities, namely the identification of the subject, and the temptation to manipulate the audience, respectively to identify themselves with the mask created and the authenticity of the individual." (Goffman, 2007) Impression management is often commonly used in social life, in favour of friends (Boncu, 2005). People describe their friends so they can support the self-desired and projected images of their friends. The scope of impression management is to create a certain identity (Ivan, 2003) which leads to the social construction of the relationship, allowing to achieve certain results in the social interaction through the positioning process. Anticipating the needs of others allows the construction of appropriate

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

behaviours, either for the purpose of creating friendship relationships or exercising public functions, etc. (Leary & Kovalsky, 1990) Impression management is a conscious activity, rational behaviour or, on the contrary, an automatic activity (Oros, 2012). Controlled self-regulation occurs when performance is considered particularly important to the actor, especially when it anticipates obstacles to achieving desirable outcomes.

Organization Impression Management (Oros, 2012) is classified based on the targeted organizational objectives, in:

- tactical - short-term objective,
- strategic - long-term objective.

From the perspective of the institutional communication, impression management is a constructive activity of public image, and positioning the organization in front of its audiences. The institutional communicator should show concern for the expectations of the public and convey the message in such a way as to create a stronger impression among the public, an impression that represents a communication anchor that allows creating and maintaining a positive image of the organization (Stancu, 2008). Impression management strategies applied to individuals can be transferred to organizational image management, for example by organizing events that place the organization at the centre of public preference (Neculai, 2007).

Instead of conclusions

Public communication is that form of communication intended to accompany the work of public institutions, with the primary purpose of satisfying the general interest. In general, messages transmitted using this type of communication include public utility information designed to make citizens aware of the existence and work of the public sector organizations. In the communication, information on the functioning and attributions of public organizations, the legality and the propriety of the decisions taken are communicated to the public, thus ensuring the transparency obligation of the public institutions. Also, the public communication process aims at knowing the needs and desires of the population, allowing the public organizations to fulfil them.

References

*** (2017). Definiţie Notorietate a mărcii. Retrieved from: http://www.comunicatedepresa.ro/notorietate-a-marcii/definitie/

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

Anderson, N. (1971). Integration theory and attitude change. *Psychological Review, 78,* 171-206.

Barney, J.B., & Hansen, M.H. (1994). Trustworthiness as a source of competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal, 15,* 175-190.

Boncu, Ş. (2005). Procese interpersonale. Iaşi, România: Institutul European Publishing.

Bradach, J.L., & Eccles, R.G. (1989). Price, authority, and trust: From ideal types to plural forms. *Annual Review of Sociology, 15*, 97-118.

Burlacu, M. (2008). *Suport Curs Formatori*. Romania: Centrul de formare 10 plus.

Butler, J.K. (1991). Towards understanding and measuring conditions of trust: Evolution of a conditions of trust inventory. *Journal of Management, 17,* 643-663.

Cummings, L.L., & Bromily, P. (1996). The Organizational Trust Inventory (OTI): Development and validation. In R. Kramer & T. Tyler (Eds.), *Trust in organizations* (pp. 302-330). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Damaschin, I. (***). *Comunicarea instituțională,* [Suport de curs pentru învățământ la distanță]. Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/7344659/Comunicare_Institutionala?auto=download

David, G., & Mircea, D. (2015). *Partea plina a paharului. O introducere în tehnicile și campaniile de relații publice*. Iași: Editura Lumen.

Deutsch, M. (1958). Trust and suspicion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2*, 265-279.

Dholakia, R., & Sternthal, B. (1977). High credible sources: Persuasive facilitator or persuasive liabilities. *Journal of Consumer Research, 3,* 223-232.

Goffman, E. (2007). *Viața cotidiană ca spectacol.* Translated by Drăgan, S., Albulescu, L., Vlăsceanu, L. Bucureşti, România: Comunicare.ro Publishing.

Holmes, J.G., & Rempel, J.K. (1989). Trust in close relationships. In C. Hendrick (Ed.), *Close relationships* (pp. 187-220). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Hovland, C., & Weiss, W. (1951). The Influence of Source Credibility on Communication Effectiveness. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 15,* 635-650.

Irimieș, C. (2017). *Instituția purtătorului de cuvânt* [Curs la Facultatea de Ştiinţe Politice şi Administrative, Universitatea Babeş Bolyai].

Ivan, L. (2003). Managementul impresiei. In S. Chelcea & P. Iluț. (eds.), *Enciclopedie de psihosociologie* (pp.218-219). Bucureşti, Romania: Editura Economică.

Leary, M.R., & Kovalsky, R.M. (1990). Impression management. A literare review and two-component model. *Psychology Bulletin, 107*(1), 34-47.

Luhmann, N. (1979). *Trust and power.* New York: Wiley.

Nae, D. (2017). *Managementul impresiei*. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/document/205159919/Managementul-impresiei

Neculai, D. (***). *Managementul identitatii de marca si rebranding-ul.* Retrieved from: http://www.upm.ro/facultati_departamente/ea/onm2007/SECTIUNEA%202/NECULAI_DANIEL.pdf

Newsom, D., & Carell, B. (2005). *Pr–forma și stilul*. Iaşi: Polirom Publishing.

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and Validation of a Scale to Measure Celebrity Endorsers' Perceived Expertise, Trust-worthiness and Attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising, 19*(3), 39-52.

Oros, D. (2012). *Managementul impresiei- arta de a provoca impresii pozitive. Conexiuni.* Retrieved from http://e-conexiuni.ro/archives/440

Rawlins, B.L. (2007). *Trust and PR Practice.* Institute for Public Relations, Department of Communications, Brigham Young University.

Sandu, A. (2017). *Relații publice*, Curs pentru învăţământ la distanţă. Romania: Universitatea „Ştefan cel Mare" din Suceava.

Scriban, A. (2013). *Dicționarul limbii românești. Etimologii, înțelesuri, exemple, citații, arhaisme, neologisme, provincialisme.* Bucureşti, România: Saeculum I. O. Publishing.

Stancu, V. (2008). *Strategii si tehnici de relatii publice.* Retrieved from: https://www.academia.edu/1832768/Tehnici_si_strategii_de_Relatii_Publice

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W.K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(4), 547-593.

Tschannen-Moran, M., & Hoy, W.K. (2000). A multidisciplinary analysis of the nature, meaning, and measurement of trust. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(4), 547-593.

Ursatti, A. (2008). *Valoarea încrederii în practicile de Relații Publice*. Retrieved from http://www.pr-romania.ro/articole/reputatie-si-incredere/82-valoarea-increderii-in-practicile-de-relaii-publice.html?showall=1

Zaheer, A., McEvily, B., & Perrone, V. (1998). Does trust matter? Exploring the effects of interorganizational and interpersonal trust on performance. *Organization Science: A Journal of the Institute of Management Sciences, 9*(2), 141-59.

Zand, D.E. (1972). Trust and managerial problem solving. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 17,* 229-239.

Sandu, A. (2017). Perspectives on the Activity of the Institutional Communicator. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty, Section: Political Sciences and European Studies, IV(2), 5-14. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenpses.1