Communication Management within the Organization

Ionuț-Adrian GHIBANU¹

¹ Valahia University, Targoviste, Romania,
ighibanu@yahoo.com, 0722-275-045

Abstract: Communication is very important in any organisation, whether it is internal communication between the various organisational structures of an institution or communication with other institutions or with the media in general. Organisational success depends on the quality of communication; therefore it is one of the most significant organisational processes. That is why it should be given high-priority attention. Our article aims at presenting the effective and efficient means and strategies of organisational communication, adapted to the new contemporary context of transmission, processing and understanding of information. When an organization is in a major crisis that threatens its reputation, both the leaders and the PR structure are subject to great stress.

Keywords: *communication; management; organizations; crises; imager;*

How to cite: Ghibanu, I.-A. (2018). Communication Management within the Organization. *Postmodern Openings*, 9(4), 16-23. <https://doi.org/10.18662/po/41>

1. Introduction

When an organization is in a major crisis that threatens its reputation, both the leaders and the PR structure are subject to great stress. The problems related to a massive request for information on behalf of the internal and the external publics are added to the economic, financial, legal, technological or any other nature problems.

The public wants to know what, when, where it happened and who is guilty for what happened. And, as usual, mass-media will pose themselves in the spokesman of a public craving for correct, opportune and complete information.

2. Theoretical Background

The problems related to a massive request for information on behalf of the internal and the external publics are added to the economic, financial, legal, technological or any other nature problems. If the organization is not able to communicate its own messages, then this function will be taken over by an external source (mass-media or other opinion leaders) that will inform the public according to its own interests and, most of the times, to the detriment of the organization in difficulty (Westcott Alessandri, 2001).

Communication is an important component of our world and efficiency and efficaciousness very much depend on the quality of communication. Specialised studies emphasise the need for fast, accurate, exact and well-accomplished communication. At the same time, those who communicate and the sectors of organisational activity must be specialised in what they do (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). The development of technical means of communication and the specialisation of communication have entailed an unprecedented advance of this field (Daly, Teague, & Kitchen, 2003). Then, we must take into account that many errors, organisational failures, economic or political losses are due to faulty communication, unprepared people, a weak communication infrastructure or one that is unable to even cope with informational abundance or various competitive programmes of manipulation (De Ridder, 2003). An organisation is strong not only in terms of its leaders but also in terms of every human resource engaged in its running, while those involved in the communication space are the first line in presenting the company's desired image outside, while inside communication is that which both the efficiency and the efficaciousness of work done depend upon (Grunig, 1992).

Specialised literature emphasises precisely the need to prepare those engaged in the organisational work, particularly in the field of communication, of accurate and efficient communication. Lack of communication, insufficient or defective communication lead to the emergence of serious issues in terms of both management and image, which can even bring the collapse of an organisation (Hargie & Tourish, 2009).

The novelty of our study refers, on the one hand, to a synthesis of the latest breakthroughs in the field of organisational communication, the essence of which we have systematically presented, and, on the other hand, to a deepening of the need to optimise communication internally, organisationally, in order to achieve the maximum efficiency in the specific field of activity, and externally to promote the best possible image of the organisation (Koschmann, 2008). We have presented the premises we have started from, the fact that one is not yet well aware of the need for an organisational communication, especially in terms of the internal functioning of the institution, as well as the need for continuous improvement of those involved in the act of communication.

3. Argument of the paper

Two big companies, Johnson & Johnson and Exxon Corporation, which have passed through major crises, can be taken as examples for the two types of communicational behaviors. Johnson & Johnson Company, a victim of the criminal action in the case of the Tylenol ("B-M's Tylenol", 1983) drugs, was appreciated for the manner in which it managed the crisis. On the contrary, the Exxon Corporation met with a PR disaster and was blamed by the public for its behavior.

The success of the Johnson & Johnson Company is the result of the communication policy open to the public, through the development of a sustained public information campaign during the whole duration of the crisis, through the friendly, partnering relationship with the mass-media and the credo: *"The consumer's security before everything else"*. The campaign opened with a videoconference in New York, to which 30 cities were connected. There were sent by email 2500 invitations for the mass-media. The invitation was answered by 500 press representatives. Two-way phone connections were established in Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington, for the reporters to ask live questions to the representatives of the company in New York. The reporters from other 25 cities could hear the questions and the answers. The teleconference lasted for 90 minutes. During the conference, James E. Burke, deputy C.E.O. and other members of the

company's management made presentations and answered questions. The new packaging of the Tylenol drugs better protected against adulteration and a video cassette with the support statement of the Minister of Food and Pharmaceutical Products.

Likewise, during the teleconference, Burke thanked the press for the correctitude and responsibility with which the journalists presented the sickening and death cases due to the cyanides from the Tylenol drugs. Very rarely did the reporters hear such a public compliment. The praise was also useful for the long-term relation of the Johnson & Johnson Company with the mass-media.

In the other case, the failure of the Exxon Corporation was due to the leaders' obstructive attitude who did not accept, from the very beginning, to brief the public by means of the press, to the generation of a tense relation with the federal government and the governments of the states implied in the crisis, that generated the idea of a careless, non-cooperating, warlike company, to the inexistence of a crisis plan for the risk of accidental oil discharges. Later on, in an interview for *Fortune* magazine, Lawrence G. Rawl, C.E.O. of Exxon Corporation accepted the idea that *"From the public relations' point of view it would have been better if I had been there"* (on the spot, in Alaska).

Asked then what advice he would give to other managers who were supposed to manage such a crisis, he said that *"one must always have a PR plan, even if it's difficult to accept the idea of a chemical plant's explosion or of an accidental oil discharge"* (Theberge, 1982).

4. Arguments to support the thesis

Case study: *McDonnell Douglas CD-10 rouses waves of loyalty*. In the aftermath of the crash of McDonnell Douglas DC-10 airplane on the Chicago airport on May 25, 1979, all the 275 airplanes of this type were forbidden to fly. The event drew the mass-media and the public opinion's attention, creating a lot of rumors and speculations which made the manufacturer company *"top the bill"* for a long time in the metropolitan press.

Officially, the trust crisis in the DC-10 airplane came to an end with the report made by the *Federal Aviation Agency* in January 1980, when they reached the conclusion that *"it was demonstrated that the DC-10 airplanes meet all the air security standards and the interdiction from flying was unjustified."* [G. W. Corrick. J. S. Detweiler. (1980). *Involving Community Leadership and Citizens*". In *"The Nonprofit Organization Handbook"*, Tracy D. Connors, New

York. McGraw-Hill]. But the eight months of uncertainty left traces in the public conscience and several categories of public and media began to relate to other two accidents, of the same year, which implied DC-10 airplanes, even if the accidents were not produced due to the design errors or the construction of the plane.

Under these circumstances, the first objective of the manufacturer's PR department was "*to restore the travelling public's trust in the DC-10 airplanes*" [G. W. Corrick. J. S. Detweiler. (1980). *Involving Community Leadership and Citizens*". In "*The Nonprofit Organization Handbook*, Tracy D. Connors, New York. McGraw-Hill]. The restoration of the travel agencies' trust through ticket – sellers, crews and passengers depended on the attitude of the transportation airlines, more precisely on their continuing to purchase the DC-10 airplane.

The company cars abounding with labels expressing their trust in DC-10 airplanes have become common in a city of 80.000 inhabitants working for McDonnell Douglas. But the employees were not the only public rallied to the company during the crisis. A specific category of opinion leaders – the ticket-sellers, who sold 75% of the airplane travel tickets on all airlines, was also involved in the fight.

Another important public, employed as a real and efficient communication channel, was the employees of the air transport companies, a basic factor in the tentative of restoring the trust in this kind of airplane.

The whole range of communication channels was used (interpersonal, printed and electronic) in order to provide all information required by the employees, selling-agents, mass-media, investors, transport airlines and all the others interested in this matter.

One of the most efficient means used was a very concise brochure, edited under the "question-answer" format. In this brochure, the PR department underlined the scientific grounding of the data provided as answers to the questions and explained why it was necessary to raise for discussion this matter again: "*These are facts not opinions. They were established by independent teams of experienced and respected technical experts, using rigorous methods... But good news rarely travels so far and so fast, as bad news does. An airplane vindication, even when it is based on thousands of pages of mathematic calculations, cannot be a story as dramatic as a calamity bringing forward the entire global system of air transportation*" [G. W. Corrick. J. S. Detweiler. (1980). *Involving Community Leadership and Citizens*". In "*The Nonprofit Organization Handbook*, Tracy D. Connors, New York. McGraw-Hill]

5. Arguments to argue the thesis

If the organization is not able to communicate its own messages, then this function will be taken over by an external source (mass-media or other opinion leaders) that will inform the public according to its own interests and, most of the times, to the detriment of the organization in difficulty. More than under normal situations, communication during the crises gets a powerful emotional degree that meets with the public's worries.

Some organizations react truthfully, openly communicating the difficulties they pass through and show their worry towards the public's benefit. Others try to avoid the storm, staying far away from the mass-media and the questions of the public and denying the existence of problems. They create the impression that they place their own interests above the public interest (Gioia et al., 2000).

Few organizations had to learn such an expensive public relations lesson. After lasting studies, George W. Corrick (researcher at the University of North Florida) and John S. Detweiler (researcher at Gainesville University, Florida) reached the conclusion that the crisis situations may contribute to mobilizing the local community forces. *"Many times, the citizens' actions are determined by the crises. Numerous nonprofit organizations and citizen action groups emerged following the occurrence of tragic events. Publicity done in the case of children abuse, for example, determined many communities to initiate protective actions for them. Likewise, the public appeals for helping people suffering from rarely encountered diseases may stimulate new initiatives in the health field. Presentation in the press of the inadequate conditions a lot of people live in may stimulate the creation of pressure groups in the field of dwellings. Many movements linked to the justice reform have started as such. Many groups acting in the field of environment protection were born and developed rapidly during the periods of sharp controversy over the utility of industrial programs and the danger they represent for the community's natural resources or for the tourism value of the areas affected by such projects"* (Corrick & Detweiler, 1980).

6. Dismantling the arguments against

The manner in which the organization succeeds in managing the difficult situations and communicate efficiently both inside and outside shows its level of preparedness for all the crises situations. In other words, it is not enough to make all efforts for solving problems with negative impact on the functioning of the organization, on products quality and market rendered services or regarding the people and the environment (Grunig,

1992). The actions taken must also be made known to the public and the public must become part of the efforts for solving out the problems.

7. Conclusions

The principle of the two may be extended, without difficulties, beyond the sphere of nonprofit organizations. The PR experts may develop objectives meant to monitor the mobilization of the organization's or the entity's internal public, aimed at amplifying the feeling of identification with the organization and the more efficient communication with their employers during the crises (Hargie & Tourish, 2009).

More than under normal situations, communication during the crises gets a powerful emotional degree that meets with the public's worries. More than under normal situations, communication during the crises gets a powerful emotional degree that meets with the public's worries.

References

- W.Corrick, J. S. Detweiller. (1980). *Involving Community Leadership and Citizens*". In *"The Nonprofit Organization Handbook*, Tracy D. Connors, New York. McGraw-Hill ***. (1983). B-M's Tylenol Videoconference Makes News History. Burson-Marsteller Viewpoint. January 1-2.
- Corrick, G. W., & Detweiller, J. S. (1980). Involving community leadership and citizens. In T. D. Connors (Ed.), *The nonprofit organization handbook*. New York, USA: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Daly, F., Teague, P., & Kitchen, P. (2003). Exploring the role of internal communication during organizational change. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 8(3), 153-162. doi:10.1108/13563280310487612
- De Ridder, J. (2003). Organizational communication and supportive employees. *Human Resources Management Journal*, 14(3), 20-30. doi:10.1111/j.1748-8583.2004.tb00124.x
- Gioia, D. A., Schultz, M., & Corley, K. G. (2000). Organizational identity, image, and adaptative instability. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), e63. doi:10.2307/259263
- Grunig, J. (1992). *Excellence in public relations and communication management*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Hargie, O., & Tourish, D. (2009). *Auditing organizational communication*. New York, USA: Taylor & Francis.
- Koschmann, M. A. (2008). *Communication in collaborative interorganizational relationships: A field study of leadership and stakeholder participation*. Doctoral thesis. Austin, USA: University of Texas. Retrieved from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/37257147_Communication_in_collaborative_interorganizational_relationships_a_field_study_of_leadership_and_stakeholder_participation

Theberge, L. J. (Ed.). (1982). *TV Coverage of the oil crises: How well was the public served?* Washington, D. C., USA: The Media Institute.

Westcott Alessandri, S. (2001). Modeling corporate identity: A concept explication and theoretical explanation. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 6(4), 173-182. doi:10.1108/eum0000000006146

Biodata

Lecturer PhD **Ionuț Adrian GHIBANU**. I am an university lecturer at Valahia University of Targoviște. I also work as a diocesan vicar at Archdiocese of Targoviste and I am Vicepresident of Association Diaconal Center „CHRISTIAN HOUSE” of Targoviste. I participated in scientific events and working groups, national and international. I was a member in groups of authors of specialized works: Macharian Work (2008-2012), Church Almanach (2000-2016), Missionary brochures. Targoviste Encyclopedia, Liturgical, Theological an Historical volumes. I am author of studies and specialized articles in various publications. The most relevant domains of interest and publication are theology, history, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, social science and politology.