

PhD THESIS ABSTRACT

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION – A PREMISE FOR
ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

PhD Supervisor,

Prof.dr. Liviu Ilieș

PhD candidate,

Zelter (Zagan-Zelter) Christine-Diana

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KEY WORDS

Organizational Communication

Organizational Efficiency

Organizational Effectiveness

Management

Information

Communication Strategies

Communication Audit

Focus group

Interview

Survey

Introduction

Communication represents the key to efficiency within an organization, along with motivation and professional competence. All the members of a company spend most of their time communicating in a form or another, no matter their position within the hierarchy of the company. Due to the fact that nowadays the number of employees from services and offices is bigger than the number of production workers, a need for improving communication has been noticed because it is necessary to have a deeper collaboration between work colleagues and the hierarchical levels as teamwork has been spreading. Working in a team can't be efficient without collaboration between all the members. Moreover, technology changes have brought new trends in the structure and activity of the organizations. That's why communication practices and technologies have become more and more important for all types of organizations. Furthermore, the role of the manager in the organizational communication process has increased; on one hand, the manager is the one who is dealing with processing internal and external information, and, on the other hand, the manager communicates this information to his / her subordinates (he / she is a disseminator) and to the ones outside the company (he/she is a spokesperson). In this context, on the road towards an increased efficiency, an organization needs to handle continuously internal and external communication with the aim of improving and perfecting it.

The study of organizational communication is relatively a new one and recently it has been given recognition as an academic field as well, being included in the curriculum of many universities and business schools. The study of organizational communication clearly shows that within an organization there is much more than just the ability of the manager to be a good communicator and to have good interpersonal communication skills. Furthermore, it has been proved that all types of organizations, not only commercial companies have communication needs and have to face challenges in this field.

The main aim of this research is to highlight once again the importance of these aspects throughout the presentation of the theoretical approaches in the field, grounding some basic concepts and using them, on one hand, when studying managerial communication and on the other hand, when studying different communication forms and types within an organization. All these will be detailed when presenting the case studies and the results of the survey developed on this topic. The main idea we have been trying to demonstrate is the importance of

communication as a vital factor in achieving maximum organizational effectiveness and efficiency. The final purpose is to raise the awareness of the responsible ones that it is necessary to train more the actual and potential communication managers. Moreover, it is mandatory to develop communication skills both when being a student and at the workplace, the same preparation being necessary for the employees from the local companies who need an improvement of communication competence due to their position or required by their activity. Researching specific communication problems that Romanian or foreign companies that have subsidiaries in our country have to face, we will try to provide solutions and recommendations to improve the communication effectiveness with implications on the organizational performance.

The first stage of this research reflects a historic approach based on the development of communication theories focusing on organizational communication through the study of specialized literature. The same literature will be used for presenting the functions and dynamics of organizational communication. To all these, we are going to add practical examples and case studies as in the case of the part that describes the managerial communication and different types of internal communication. We are going to highlight specifically the communication planning and organization within the company, the need of developing and implementing communication strategies in large organizations and the importance of the personnel/ department responsible for internal communication. Assessing internal communication is an essential thing when determining its quality and role in maximizing organizational performance. The internal communication audit is the main way to identify not only the good practices but also communication problems within companies and to come up with solutions. The final part of this research will focus on a few case studies made at well-known and successful companies from the industry field. The audit model which will be used is based on the specialized literature, on consulting professionals in the field and on personal studies. As a result of all these we will try to identify the key directions for improving internal communication, positive and negative communication experiences, examples of good practices in order to analyze the way in which internal communication is a key factor for the organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

Research Aim and Objectives

This paper attempts to analyze the way in which internal communication within organizations influences the organizational efficiency and effectiveness, as well as the organizational performance. The study of specialized literature helped us demonstrate the importance given to this field by researchers. As it will be shown in the methodology part, organizational communication is a relatively new research field; a lot of studies in the field have appeared recently, but in our country their number is limited. However, there is an up-growing interest because this is a fashionable field nowadays due to the increasing number of multinational companies that have subsidiaries in Romania and the stronger impact of information technology on communication.

Communication, as compared to other management components and organization as a whole, has specific features that do not allow its research in the same way as in the case of other managerial or organizational issues. First of all, communication is ubiquitous in all company's activities; its study can not be made in isolation, but in an organizational context with direct involvement in the managerial functions.

Secondly, the degree of generalization in researching organizational communication is lower than in the case of other fields. Communication is specific to each and every company; every company has its own communication system depending on the field, size and most of all, organizational culture. There are common elements, but the communication climate of each organization is determined by the specific elements of each organization.

On the other hand, Romanian companies don't have much experience in this field. The ones that are subsidiaries of large multinational companies from abroad benefit from the expertise of the mother company and they use the same rules, models, policies and practices that need to be adapted to the local needs. Large local companies are trying to set up their own rules and communication systems, but this is not a priority in all cases.

Taking into account all the aspects mentioned above, our main aim is to develop a model for the analysis of internal communication within organizations based on specific literature in the field. This analysis model will help us measure the impact of communication on the organizational efficiency and effectiveness and on the company's general performance. This model was applied in some representative companies from the industry, market leaders in their

branch, through case studies based on which we have tried to achieve the specific objectives respectively:

- to identify communication experiences with a positive or a negative impact on the organizational climate and on the organization performance in the companies we focused on;
- to identify good practices in the field of internal communication, which can be used as examples by other companies from the same field and not only;
- to identify the factors that determine internal communication effectiveness as a premise for organizational effectiveness;
- to identify the key directions for improving internal communication in the analyzed companies, with the possibility of being used by companies with similar systems or situations;
- to elaborate a set of measures meant to improve the quality of managerial communication and interpersonal communication in the analyzed organizations, with the possibility of being used by companies with similar systems or situations.

Based on these general and specific objectives, we have set up the following work hypotheses for the practical research:

1. Adequate communication within an organization has a positive impact on organizational efficiency and effectiveness.
2. The design of the internal communication system of an organization is greatly influenced by the size of the company and its activity field, besides other factors.
3. Communication effectiveness within an organization depends on the quantity and quality of the information given to employees during the working process.
4. Adequate internal communication which is aware of quality issues determines organizational efficiency and effectiveness, as well as organization performance concerning work productivity, costs and the satisfaction of the external clients as well as of the internal ones (the staff of the company).

CHAPTER 1 – THE STUDY OF COMMUNICATION THEORIES

The first chapter represents a historic approach based on the study of specialized literature which presents the most important communication theories with an emphasis on organizational communication theories and on the models proposed by the specialists in the field.

Situated at the crossroads of several disciplines, the communication process has raised the interest of different sciences such as philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, ethnology, economy, biology, cibernetics or the cognitive sciences. The history of communication is deeply connected to the history of human evolution and the development of social and economic relations. Thus, the first theoretical steps in the field of communication are linked to labour division and Adam Smith's work. In his opinion, communication contributes to the organization of collective work and structures the economic spaces.

Meanwhile several theories and communication models have appeared starting from Laswell's Model (Sender – Message – Means of communication – Receiver – Effect), a primary model which omits the feedback and which was perfected afterwards. According to Jean Lohisse (2002), one can distinguish two generations of research in the field of communication. The first generation is situated on the analytical line and has four research directions:

- Data theories (Shannon și Weaver)
- Sign theories (Saussure, Jakobson)
- Behavioral theories
- Broadcasting theories

The second research generation is characterized by an emphasis on relation in rapport with objects. There are two different trends here:

- The systemic trend, with an interest in cybernetics, organization and constructivism;
- The psychological and psycho-clinical pragmatics (The Palo Alto School) ;
- The antropological and sociological trends which put an emphasis on the social approach of interaction;
- The linguistic pragmatic theories (adapted from Lohisse, 2002: 22)

The general communication theories can be applied to organizations under different forms. In this respect we mention organizational communication which refers to managerial and internal communication in general, respectively institutional and operational communication, media communication, product communication, social communication, public relations. The

purpose of this research is to underline the importance of communication inside the company, respectively the managerial communication with all its dimensions, interpersonal communication, in groups and teams, and all the advantages deriving from the effectiveness of communication for the effectiveness and the efficiency of the organization.

The study of organizational communication has been among the preoccupations of researchers and practitioners for a long time. Starting with classical theories and finishing with the modern ones, almost all thinkers referred in some way to the role of organizational communication. For Taylor, communication was extremely important in the hierarchy whereas, for Fayol horizontal communication was essential. If for both of them communication between superiors and subordinates was really important, for the representatives of the relations and human resources trend (Mayo, McGregor, Likert) the most important became the communication relations inside the group, opening the way for the study of informal communication. Modern theories bring an integrated perspective in the study of communication, which is extended at the level of the whole organization. Newer orientations (postmodernism, critical psychology, feminism) propose alternatives for the organizational life, centred on emphasizing power and domination, but also flexibility and self-management. The development of theories and ideas about organizational communication is strongly influenced nowadays by the actual context of the information society in full process of globalization. Current research define organizational excellence as “the ability of people to use technology for creative solving of complex problems” (Zlate, 2004: 495). However, we cannot achieve organizational excellence without communication. The new informational technologies have radically changed the communication means and ways at all organizational levels, this is why the majority of recent works in the field emphasize these aspects, leaving aside the sensitive aspects of communication inside the company.

We can distinguish three theoretical perspectives in the study of communication:

- The technical perspective (based on Shannon and Weaver’s information theory)
- The contextual perspective (which focuses on the larger context of communication, both verbal and non-verbal)
- The negotiated perspectives (Lazega) which shows that the feedback process can be seen as an interpersonal negotiation.

Based on these theories some organizational communication models were built, such as:

- Stanley Deetz's model
- Pamela Shockey-Zalabak's model
- Tuuli Tukiainen's agenda model.

The second model preserves the basic elements of communication (sender, receiver, message, channel, noise), the processes (coding, decoding, feedback), but it adds the interaction of the fields of the sender's and receiver's experiences, the organizational communication context and the communication competences. The author considers four such competences: the knowledge competence (the ability to understand the organizational communicational environment), the sensitivity competence (the ability to infer correctly the meanings and the feelings of the other members of the organization), the skills competence (the ability to analyze correctly the organizational situations and to initiate and consume correctly the organizational messages), the values competence (the ability to take responsibility for effective communication).

The model is important due to the introduction of these competences (which are essential for a manager) and to the emphasis on the role of communication in the organizational context. However, beyond any theoretical model, we could assert, each organization builds its own communication model based on its organizational culture, the specificity of the company and the perception of its members about communication.

CHAPTER 2 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION – GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this chapter we continued to define the conceptual framework by detailing the communication process, placing communication among the other activities inside a company and especially in the managerial activity and presenting the main forms of communication inside the organization.

Traditionally, communication has been seen as a linear process comprising a sender who sends a message to a receiver, a message which is understood, internalized and used as basis for action. The research in the field of organizational communication has concentrated on the way this process can be managed as to improve performance, productivity and profitability.

Based on the theories and models enumerated in the previous chapter, communication and the communication process in organizational context can be defined in various ways, the emphasis being on the well-known elements: sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback.

According to Russu (2001: 46): “communication represents the process of transmitting information from a person to another through symbolical messages – sounds, letters, figures, other signs, face expressions, gestures – which serve for the mutual understanding of the persons in order to achieve their individual objectives and the common ones at the scale of the whole organization.”.

Modern management emphasizes more and more the role of communication in managerial activity. Thus, it is considered that managers spend between 60 and 80% of their time communicating (Luthans&Larsen, 1986, quoted in Hargie & Tourish, 2009). Studies show that efficient managers spend a great deal of their time in communication-based activities. Even as early as 1973 Mintzberg showed the ubiquitous nature of interpersonal communication in the management activity. More recent leadership studies assert the fact that effective leadership at the workplace involves the constant use of communication instruments in order to create sense, share vision and build a common purpose. (Sims & Lorenzi, 1992, quoted in Hargie & Tourish, 2009)

Regarding the situation from Romania, it has been noticed that there are few studies referring to the managers’ communication activities and the evaluation of internal communication in companies. Generally, the situation of the communication is analyzed in the organizational climate studies. It is necessary that the research in the field should be focussed strictly on the study of internal communication from the flow of information to managerial communication and it should use the qualitative and quantitative methods which would identify the communication problems and contribute to finding adequate solutions.

The organizational efficiency and effectiveness greatly depend on the managers’ ability to send messages inside and outside the organization with maximum efficiency. Certain skills and abilities were identified, which can contribute to the increase of communication effectiveness. The managers, as senders, should possess the following abilities:

- To send clear and complete messages;
- To encode the message in symbols that the receiver will understand;
- To select the most adequate environment for sending the message;
- To select an environment that the receiver monitors;
- To avoid filtering and distorting the information;
- To make sure the feedback mechanism is incorporated in the messages ;

- To offer precise information in order to make sure that rumours do not spread.

(adapted from Jones&George, 2008)

Managers must become efficient and effective as receivers as well. In this respect, the following abilities are considered as essential :

- To pay attention (no matter how busy they are, managers should pay attention to all the messages they receive);
- To be good listeners (to refrain from interrupting the others, maintain visual contact, ask clarification questions after receiving the message in order to clarify the confusing elements, to paraphrase or rephrase the most important points as feedback form);
- To manifest empathy;
- To understand the linguistic styles by being aware of cultural differences.

(adaptat din Jones&George, 2008)

Nowadays, communication is unanimously recognized as “the key to organizational excellence and effectiveness” (Grunig, 1992). No matter how strong a company is it cannot function properly without a good communication system. Communication holds a company together and makes it work. The communication effectiveness is vital for the effectiveness of the whole organization.

As in everyday life, in organizational communication we refer to two basic categories :

- *Verbal communication* (written, oral and lately, electronic, with the remark that there are authors who consider that this type of communication should be taken separately ; the common element with the other two is the use of the word as the fundamental element) ;
- *Non-verbal communication* (which owns in fact a great proportion of the quantity of transmitted messages, almost 70% and which has such forms as gestures, mimics, the tone of the voice or punctuality)

The communication process inside a company can be divided in the following categories :

1. *Operational communication* includes the whole range of messages which connect the members of the organization in their actions of achieving its operational plan, respectively the range of procedures meant to achieve the specific activity objective. Operational communication includes : orders and instructions given by supervisors to

workers ; oral dialogue about work-related issues ; all kinds of documents drawn up by the operational staff in different fields – production, sales, finance, stocks, maintenance etc. through which work tasks are reported on.

2. *Institutional communication* is defined by specifying the optimum manner in which the communication system functions : who communicates with whom, which structures have a central place and which are marginal in the communication process.

By *formal communication* we understand all the information exchanges which take place through formal, official channels in both directions : *upward and downward*.

Downward communication

As direction, it refers to the information which is mostly put into practice. The messages leave from a certain hierarchical level and are sent to the lower levels.

As means, it refers to:

- Written and electronic communication means : newsletter, posters, memo, e-mail, manuals, internal policy directions, internal documents which regulate work practices and behaviour;
- Oral means of communication: phone, conversations, formal interviews, discourses, formal meetings or briefings, work groups etc.

As function, downward communication is a classical management instrument, being used in order to form, inform and direct the staff.

Upward communication

As direction, this type of communication takes place from bottom to top, from the lowest hierarchical levels to the highest ones.

As means, upward communication is expressed through : group meetings, interviews, suggestion systems (for example, suggestion boxes), rewards for good suggestions, surveys, posters etc.

As function, this type of communication is fundamental for finding out the aspirations of the staff and for solving potential work conflicts and tensions. It is a factor of a good social climate and a means for ameliorating the company performance by offering real feedback on the current situation.

Horizontal communication

As direction, in this case there is no hierarchical notion ; it is an exchange between equals, between different sectors, services or departments.

As means, horizontal communication, takes place naturally inside small structures : everybody knows everybody, the opportunities for dialogue are a lot ; however, it should be based on a more serious organization at high level : meetings between departments, means of open information (newsletter, notice board etc.) and electronic communication through the intranet.

As function, horizontal information gathers the staff in order to form “the spirit of the house” and to coordinate indirectly the production process.

The formal communication system is complemented by *the informal communication network (the grapevine)*, the unofficial system which is made of all the messages which are transmitted without an official purpose, for example conversations between colleagues during breaks or informal occasions such as company anniversary, parties, picnics etc.

Interpersonal communication plays an important part in any professional communication system. The members of the system relate permanently and not only professionally ; in this context, we could say that interpersonal communication is part of informal communication. However, it also interferes with the formal communication system as the interpersonal element can be felt almost unawaresly in an official communication act as well.

Communication plays a vital part in the effective implementation of change within the organization because employees must receive in time the information about the reasons for the change and its consequences, and uncertainty reduction can be achieved only by providing correct information through official channels and by eliminating the rumours.

Effective communication inside the organization contributes to the creation of a motivational organizational climate, and the barriers which appear (language, perceptual, contextual barriers) can be overcome by taking measures which will lead to the improvement of communication quality (an open managerial style, clear communication rules, appointing a communication responsible and elaborating a communication strategy, including training programs for developing the communication skills).

CHAPTER 3 MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

Chapter 3 is dedicated to managerial communication and its role in exercising the management functions. As part of the leading process (Henry Fayol placed communication next to planning, prevision, organization and command as one of the basic management elements), through which the manager understands the employees and makes himself understood by them, managerial communication is oriented towards not only the transmission of messages, but also the change of mentality and the psychological adaptation to the enterprise objectives.

“The purpose of managerial communication in any organization is to achieve correct and effective information, both vertically and horizontally, in order to accomplish in good conditions the internal and external requests according to the managerial and organizational objectives “ (Niculae, 2006: 66)

An important part of the managerial communication is the direct communication between superior and subordinate. In order to see how good this communication is, we must assess the extent to which the superior and the subordinate agree on work issues and how sensitive each of them is to the other’s point of view. Problems appear when the perception differences are extreme and persistent, not when there are insignificant disagreements. Research shows, according to Johns (1998: 329) that superiors and subordinates perceive differently the following aspects :

- The way subordinates use their time compared to how they should use it ;
- How long it takes to learn something;
- How important the salary is for the subordinate;
- How much authority the subordinate has;
- The subordinate’s professional capacity;
- The subordinates’ performance and obstacles in its way ;
- The superior’s leading style.

Appreciations play an important part in in the relationship between the superior and the subordinate. Incorrect appreciations lead to discontent. Subordinates generally wish that their superiors should be sensitive to their desires and aspirations, receptive to their ideas and suggestions, and to show respect towards those they work with. They do not reject critical observations on condition they are pertinent, at the right place and the right moment.

The connection between leadership and communication is also linked to managerial communication. Communication can be developed on 4 essential dimensions for leadership : support (defining a person's behaviour which intensifies the other's feelings towards themselves), facilitating interaction (the behaviour through which the members of a group are encouraged to develop relationships), the emphasis on purposes (the behaviour which stimulates enthusiasm for achieving the group scope) and facilitating the activity (the behaviour which helps achieve the purposes of an activity : planning, coordination etc.). Without effective communication, a leader cannot support his/her team, cannot help the team members to establish relations, to work together for the same purpose and accomplish the purposes of their activity. The leader's mission is to use communication in such a way as to raise people's enthusiasm to work together for the benefit of the organization.

Communication also plays an important part in staff appraisal. If a manager doesn't communicate closely and regularly with the employees, he won't be able to understand their needs and evaluate their performances correctly. Moreover, excessive strictness and criticism create a stressing atmosphere inside the organization and the employees will start rejecting communication for fear of punishment or as precaution. Lack of communication between management and employees may lead to the decrease of performance and even conflicts with the unions. The appraisal interview is the situation in which communication is essential because it involves short informal discussions between the manager and the employee in order to create a positive climate, their preparation for the interview by taking an open attitude towards suggestions on both sides and discussing the employee's performance starting from positive aspects, explaining the reasons for the negative remarks and listening to the other's point of view.

CHAPTER 4 INTERNAL COMMUNICATION, A STRATEGIC TOOL IN MANAGEMENT

As any company activity, communication must also have a planned dimension ; it can't take place randomly, it needs a plan, a strategy, rules and procedures. In other words, communication should be institutionalized and included in the strategic plan of the company. The question is : is communication an activity to be planned ? The place of communication in the firm is not clearly defined yet ; in fact, in many companies, communication doesn't have the

place it deserves. It is part of Human Resources or enters the attributions of the general manager. Large companies understood the role of communication, so they created rules and procedures , they elaborated plans and strategies and also created the position of communication manager/responsible and a communication department. Such an organization is essential for large companies, for the multinationals and so communication may and must be a planned activity. In the case of small firms (as seen in the case studies), although such a structure is not necessary, communication plays an important part and employees feel the need for rules and plans.

A communication plan will aim at reaching certain objectives by ensuring the coherence of the communication actions in the company. It will offer a global scheme where communication has its role and place. At the level of an organization, this plan can be achieved by putting together the internal and external communication actions or by making two different plans and a common strategy. In our opinion, the second possibility is the most suitable, especially in the case of large companies, because internal and external communication have different categories of public, which leads to the necessity of making plans which are focussed on the needs of each category and setting specific objectives for the internal and the external public, separately. Even if the general strategy may combine the two dimensions, the particularities of internal communication need separate planning ; if the objectives of internal communication are not achieved at the level of the internal public, then this internal public will not be able to achieve the objectives of external communication for the external public.

The internal communication plan integrates the internal communication function in the company strategy and places it at the same level with the other functions. It must be articulated on the firm's strategy and organization and adapted to the needs and the objectives of the time, that is realistic, precise and pragmatic. The internal communication strategy represents a fundamental element in the general communication strategy of large companies. Nevertheless, not all companies choose to draw up such a document, but they introduce the communication plans and objectives within other organizational plans and strategies. We consider that it is necessary to separate the internal communication strategy both in theory and in practice and to define it in a separate document, which is vital for large organizations and especially for those undergoing change. In this respect we presented the internal communication strategy of BCR România, member of Erste Group, a strategy which is the task of the Department of Internal

Communication and Community and of its manager and which contains the basic elements found in specialized literature : context, objectives, target groups, approach, internal communication tactics.

We next referred to the organization of communication in BCR and Lafarge România, to the differences and similarities between The Department of Internal Communication and Community BCR and the Communication and PR Department Lafarge. In the first case we speak about a department specialized on internal communication, and in the second case the communication department takes care both of internal and external communication. We analyzed the job descriptions of the communication managers in both cases mentioning the common points such as the elaboration and implementation of the communication strategy, the coordination of the internal communication mechanism, directing and distributing the internal publications etc.

The main difference is the target public, the one from the banking sector and the one from the industrial sector. In the first case we talk about an educated public, who is more receptive to the messages they receive, who encourages direct and active communication and doesn't need a simplified expression of the message. Although the same in both organizations, the communication instruments must be adjusted to the target public.

In the case of Lafarge and the industrial sector, the public is heterogeneous from managers, university graduates, engineers to workers in factories or drivers on trucks. As it is an industrial company, Lafarge is confronted with specific communication issues which are influenced by the territorial spreading of the company from the headquarters in Bucharest to the plants in Hoghiz, Medgidia, Târgu-Jiu and the concrete stations in various parts of the country. Due to this structure, the staff is diverse as ethnicity, education and professional preparation. Thus, the information must be transmitted in a language which is accessible to all categories of personnel from workers to managers. The communication manager and her collaborators must make sure that information reaches all geographical locations, that all employees are equally informed and the basic elements and the communication style are adapted to the situation. It can be said that in such a company, communication becomes mainly technical, based on numbers. The training in the field is a necessity ; thus, the communication manager has the obligation to offer the staff in executive positions the possibility to improve their communication skills periodically.

Besides the organization and the planning of communication inside the company, it is necessary to evaluate periodically the way in which communication functions. This evaluation should be made through the internal communication audit. The communicational audit is seen as part of a package for assessing the organizational effectiveness, identifying the good practices inside and outside the organization and creating a climate for applying these practices.

The International Communication Association identified a few key problems to be evaluated in the communicational audit:

- The quantity of information (deficit or surplus) referring to the most important subjects for the organization, the sources and the communication channels;
- The quality of the information communicated between various sources;
- The communication relations, including interpersonal trust, support, sociability and work satisfaction;
- The operational communication networks (including rumours, social and work-related messages) and how they compare with the formal network;
- Information problems and restrictions;
- Positive and negative communication experiences;
- Organizational, group and individual structures of real communication behaviours connected to sources, channels, subjects.

The problems identified through the internal communication audit may be :

- Information deficit;
- The power of rumours;
- Poor upward communication;
- Poor communication channels;
- Unproductive meetings.

The stages in implementing the internal communication audit are :

- Selecting the topic/subject;
- Specifying the problem in terms of criteria and standards;
- Discussing the standards that the management team considers necessary to be adopted;
- Identifying the persons who will function as the connection between the company and the audit team.

Data collection will be made in two stages :

- In the first stage, a small number of preliminary interviews will familiarize the audit team with the opinions of the staff and of the managers. There can also be a focus group in order to find out aspects that will be discussed later in other focus groups or approached in the questionnaire ;
- In the second stage, a pilot test will be vital for detecting the problems involved in drawing up and implementing the questionnaire. More focus groups can be organized in order to supplement or test the information from the questionnaire. Then, the questionnaire can be sent by mail and so can the answers be received. After that, the analysis and interpretation is made and a report is written. It is useful to see if the results from the questionnaire analysis match those from the focus group discussion or if there are differences.

The results of the audit will be presented orally and in writing , in a report, to the top management.

CAPITOLUL 5: A STUDY ABOUT THE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION UPON ORGANIZATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS. CASE STUDIES.

The empirical research is presented in chapter 5 through three case studies at 3 companies of different sizes from the industrial field. We chose to use an integrated research method such as the case study because we consider that in the study of communication it is necessary to use both qualitative and quantitative methods. Moreover, we consider that the contribution of qualitative methods is higher in this case than in other research areas. When we speak about internal communication we have to distinguish very clearly between what can be quantified and what cannot. As we saw in the theoretical part about the communication audit, quantifying the quantity of information which is sent/received from/to various sources, through various channels is necessary because this is in fact an indication of the efficiency and effectiveness of communication. On the other hand , what the employees think about the communicational climate in the company and the way they communicate with each other and with their managers will result more clearly from discussions, interviews, direct observation or focus group.

On the other hand, internal communication is a field which does not lead to massive generalizations as it is the case of other research fields. There are common elements concerning

rules, instruments, channels which function in several companies and which can be generalized. However, internal communication is something typical to each company, depending on the activity field, the size, the management style, organizational culture, the general context. This is why we consider that, though an audit analysis of a company we can obtain relevant information for that company, but also examples of good practices which can be generalized for companies in the same field or of the same size.

The three analyzed companies come from industry, have multinational character and different sizes :

- Lafarge România (part of the Lafarge Group, the market leader in cement, the aggregate and concrete producer) has around 1200 employees in Romania and 580 in the cement division which comprises the plants from Medgidia, Hoghiz, Târgu-Jiu and the headquarters from Bucharest.
- CSI România (production of logistic systems and equipments for third parties) has around 200 employees ;
- Rehau Cluj-Napoca (part of Rehau Grup, prestigious brand in the field of polymer-based solutions and system offers) has around 30 employees.

In order to analyze these companies we used the audit model proposed by Hargie și Tourish which involves the following methods :

1. Qualitative methods : the analysis of the documents which regulate communication inside the company, interviews with the communication manager or the general manager, organizing a focus group in each company with office staff in order to discuss issues related to upward, downward, horizontal and interpersonal communication.
2. Quantitative methods : questionnaire-based survey. We used the questionnaire proposed by the International Communication Association which was adapted to the current needs of the companies after discussing with their managers. For example, in the Lafarge case, we added a part about Health&Safety Communication because there had been a work accident at the Medgidia plant and the management wanted an evaluation of the communication on this side as well.

For Lafarge we analyzed both the communication documents at group level and the communication guide for Romania. In the Rehau case, we analyzed the organization of

communication at the group level and the corresponding documents, and in the CSI case we presented the communication rules from The Internal Order Regulations.

The interviews with the Communication Manager Lafarge România, the general manager of CSI România and the manager of Rehau Cluj-Napoca showed the concern of the management for increasing the efficiency of the informational flow, the desire to create an open communicational climate through a democratic management style and the intention to take clear measures for improving managerial and interpersonal communication. The focus group activities showed common problems, but also good practices. The same things resulted from the application of the questionnaire which was first pre-tested on small groups from the respective companies. The questionnaire refers to the following areas :

- Receiving information
- Sending information
- The reaction to the information sent
- Information sources
- The timeliness of the information received from key sources
- Communication relationships (communicational climate)
- Organizational outcomes
- Communication channels

and it is an instrument of large dimensions. In the original questionnaire, the timeliness of the information and the organizational outcomes are marked by the respondents in only one column, which gives them the opportunity to give their opinion about that specific item. The other areas are assessed by the respondents on two columns, which allows them to express how they feel about that aspect at that moment and how they feel it should be (the ideal situation). We used a Likert scale from 1 to 5 (1-very little, 5 – very much) for all the sections. In addition to this questionnaire, we used a short questionnaire to assess the link between communication and hierarchical structure. This questionnaire contains affirmations that the respondents should rank on a Likert scale again from 1 – total disagreement to 7 – total agreement.

In order to determine the sample, we used the Taro Jamane method, which starts from the volume of the total population without considering the population characteristics and it is recommended for small collectivities. We used an error of 5% and the number of valid applied questionnaires was : 264 (Lafarge), 102 (CSI), 26 (Rehau).

The results of the qualitative analysis correlated with the quantitative results showed a high degree of communication effectiveness inside the company in the Lafarge and Rehau cases (with small problems in certain sectors) on the basis of an open climate supported by a democratic management style and a real preoccupation for improving communication in the case of CSI.

Thus we identified *common problems* in the field of communication for all the companies analyzed in the case studies :

- Poor interdepartmental communication;
- Insufficient information about “sensitive” subjects such as salary and benefits or promotion opportunities in organization;
- The same barriers in the way of proper communication: education, lack of time, mentality;
- Insufficient feedback vertically and horizontally.

In this context we elaborated and argued a set of proposals for solving these problems which were presented in each case study and were sent to the companies in question and even applied (at Lafarge).

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

By analyzing the three companies we identified *common features of communication in organizations from industry*:

- Communication has a numerical-technical character;
- Communication about Health&Safety is an essential part of internal communication;
- The internal public is heterogeneous from the point of view of education and culture, so the communication instruments must be permanently adapted in order to answer the needs of each category of employees ;
- In production companies operational communication dominates.

The size of the organization is also important in projecting the communication system and choosing the adequate channels and instruments. Thus, in a small firm like Rehau Cluj-Napoca oral, face-to-face communication dominates. In the case of CSI, a medium-sized firm, the phone is mostly used, but there are also many face-to-face meetings, either formal or

informal. In Lafarge, the most effective communication form is the electronic one, mostly the e-mail, given the large number of employees and the geographical spreading.

Organizations of Lafarge or BCR size need a formal organization of communication, a specialized department and an adequate strategy. These elements determine a good circulation of the informational flow which contributes to the increase of efficiency in the staff activity. To perform their activity properly, the employees need to receive enough information from key sources and through adequate channels. The analysis of the results from the survey showed a balance between the quantity of received information on various subjects and the quantity of necessary information on the same subjects and through the same channels in the case of Rehau and Lafarge which demonstrates that managerial communication functions well both when it comes to sending information but also for the feedback part.

Through these case studies we identified *a set of good practices* in the analyzed companies which can be used by other companies as well :

- Adapting the communication procedures from the group to regional specificity by elaborating special communication procedures for the subsidiaries in Romania, as in the Lafarge case;
- Elaborating clear rules for professional and official communication (e-mail, notes, reports etc.);
- Creating specialized newsletters for each activity field (social, human resources etc.) and adapting them to local needs;
- Performing voluntary activities to improve informal and interpersonal communication;
- Using more frequently the suggestion boxes as feedback form;
- Creating a special phone line for telling problems and organizing special days for discussing personal issues;
- Organizing interdepartmental meetings more frequently for mutual information of departments with common activities;
- Orienting communication towards Health&Safety as well.

The degree of novelty of this research is given by the elaboration and application of an internal communication audit model based on specialized international literature, as in the literature from our country there are few relevant studies in this respect. Thus we made a diagnosis of current communication practices and we identified directions for improving internal

communication in such companies as Lafarge which can be considered a model in its approach to communication as key to organizational excellence. Through this study, we identified the factors which determine effective communication as premise for organizational efficiency and effectiveness, we emphasized good practices in the field of organizational communication which can contribute to the increase of organizational efficiency and effectiveness and we elaborated a set of measures for each company in order to improve their communication system and practices.

We consider it useful for all large companies to make an internal communication audit every year in order to evaluate the way in which the internal communication system works.

This research can be extended in the future through the investigation of other companies from other fields of activity (services, for example, as we have already started an investigation at BCR but only at the level of documentation, interviews and focus group) and we can make comparative studies between activity sectors.

Through the studies from this paper we want to emphasize the importance of internal communication for the fulfillment of organizational scopes and objectives. The examples of good practices should be used by the Romanian firms which do not have yet a well-organized communication system and should increase the efficiency of their activity by elaborating rules procedures and measures meant to improve managerial and interpersonal communication.

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2. Grup Lafarge – Codul de conduită în muncă
3. Grup Lafarge – Group Communications Policy
4. Lafarge România – Ghid de comunicare
5. Social Newsletter iunie 2011
6. Orion Newsletter martie 2011
7. Crescendo (internal magazine) May 2010
8. Pulse (the magazine for Lafarge employees) November 2008
9. Sustainability and Development Report 2009

DOCUMENTE INTERNE REHAU (via Intranet)

1. Corporate Communication – structures, tasks, competences, responsibilities
2. Use of communication media and information technology at Rehauf: The use of e-mail
3. Internal Communications Media

DOCUMENTE INTERNE CSI

1. Regulament de ordine interioară

DOCUMENTE INTERNE BCR

1. Strategia de comunicare internă (aplicație HR Club)

SURSE ELECTRONICE

1. www.lafarge.com
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