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**MANAGING INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN THE MEDIA:
THE NEW PARDIGM**

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse and explain the objectives of the internal communication in the media sector in Macedonia. The emphasis is put primarily on communication between leadership and employees, and also on the role of communication through different stages of companies and media outlets, promotion of media services and elements of communication at an internal level as well as influence on an external level – public audience. Internal communications (IC) is the function responsible for effective communications among participants within an organization and internal communications strategy, plans and programs are essential for successful development of any company, this is also valid for the media. The primary intention is to show the value and importance of internal communication and to explain how this should be improved within organizations, namely in the media in Macedonia. New trends might be considered as a paradigm of internal media functioning that leads to less listening of the employees (journalist) and to more implementing of the attitudes of management.

Key words: internal communication , strategy communication , media
JEL classification: M12, M29, M54, J50

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Introduction

Internal Communication is an extremely important tool within any organization and is considered as the core of successful work. In the media business, internal communication helps create a positive working atmosphere, providing more efficiency through a common debate and strengthening the confidence between journalists and editors. Exchanging views, brainstorming and joint meetings help the media to maintain basic values and principles of freedom of expression, to tell the truth, to present news in a balanced manner; to be a dogwatch in society and to mark all negative states and situations in the society.

Smart organizations understand the value in maintaining an ongoing dialogue with their employees, with the right strategies and tactics these dialogues can yield value of feedback from employees and can help foster a sense of belonging and investment in the company. Employees are more important today than ever before as their ability to interact with each other, customers, prospects, media and the general public, increases with each technological advance. Developing and managing ongoing strategic internal communications programs provide a wide range of benefits and can help deliver results that can positively impact a company's bottom line. Historically internal communications programs have focused on top down delivery of information from leadership to employees, with an emphasis on outcomes. However, today the current and project focus is more on achieving measurable outcomes, a pattern we see developing across the public relations industry, albeit slowly.¹

1. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN THE MEDIA BUSINESS IN MACEDONIA

The process of developing two-way and efficient communication, which is considered as an imperative of modern public relations in all spheres, also impacting the work of the organizations themselves, is not typical for a large number of media organizations in Macedonia. This phenomenon is practically becoming a sort of a trend in media organizations, not only in this country and the region, but also in societies that are far more democratic and which show increasing examples of abandoning the practice of constant,

¹ <http://study.com/academy/lesson/internal-communication-in-an-organization-definition-strategies-examples.html> (17.08.2017)

comprehensive and direct communication between the employers (editors) and journalists and having internal communication that runs solely in one direction.

The parallel, i.e. the comparison that we can make with the way in which the media functioned in the early 1990's, the early 2000's and up to 2010/11, points to the fact that things are changing, however not in a way that benefits the improvement of internal communication, rather the opposite – worsening it. The media sector is faced with one-way communication that mostly comes down to implementing assigned tasks, in the absence of wider editorial debates that were common in the past; discussions were held, opinions were developed that were 'for' or 'against' a certain occurrence, event or issue. Although in the past too it was the editor's point of view that prevailed in the end, which was reflected throughout various journalistic genres in the given media outlet, it is more than evident that in some segments the freedom of expression on different levels was more present, especially in specific time periods when a more liberal societal climate was dominant.

The practice in the past was to have daily staff (editorials) meetings; first between the editors and journalists, meetings within the specific sections, then the editor of each section held meetings with the managing editorial team of the newspaper or the electronic media outlet (radio/television), and the information was passed on in both directions and followed each line. After finalizing the editorial staff meeting, the section editor always passed on the decisions to the journalists. If there were some dilemmas, a problem or a misunderstanding, another staff meeting would be held at which the disputable opinions would be discussed.

The dynamic time we live in as well as the way of communication that favours new technologies – Internet, websites, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, mobile telephones – Viber, WhatsApp, Skype – have imposed a new trend in the manner in which the media are organized and in which they function. The desire to save time, to streamline a procedure, to speed up a process, have all directly impacted the way internal communications function.

Compared to the past, instead of obtaining higher quality, more openness and transparency, respect of different opinions, diverse attitudes towards some issues that should be defended exclusively with sound, specific and precise facts and arguments – we are now faced with the prevalence of one-way communication. The message from management reaches the editorial management team and is then transferred to the journalistic staff, while much less attention is paid on feedback.

2. IMPORTANCE AND MODELS OF COMMUNICATION

Efficient internal communication is an especially important part of operations and an inseparable part of successful management of an organization and it is also an important part of successfully managing a media business organization. Conveying messages, processing and exchanging information, the way in which management assigns and receives tasks and in which it cooperates, are all part of communicating and without this communication the media could not function. It is the manner in which this communication is organized – one-way – when management assigns tasks that the journalists fulfil without objection, regardless of whether they agree with them or not, or two-way – when the employees and management talk, debate and align their opinions – that decides how the media organization will function and what kind of an image the public will create for that organization.

The basic types of communication are: verbal, written, non-verbal (contact) and e-communication.²

In communication, a large role is played by the value of information. It is clear that information have been of great significance, both for management and for the decision-making process.

Each governing and managerial function is based on information, both within and outside the organization. In order to be relevant in the decision making process, each piece of information must be: of high quality, significant, up-to-date, timely and complete. The information quality depends on how real they are. The more real a piece of information is the higher its quality, which provides higher work efficiency.³

² <http://hip.novi-liber.hr/index/keyword=komunikacija> (20.08.2017)

³ Pavlović Marko 1 Marković Jovica 2 Marković Dijana 3, Istraživanje odnosa sa klijentima u bankarskom sektoru EKONOMIJA, TEORIJA i PRAKSA, VIII • nu. 1, p. 47–66

Seven requirements that are important for harmony in the workplace have been detected:⁴

- Complete and truthful information that has a normal upward, downward and sideway flow
- Building trust between employers and employees
- Healthy and safe work conditions
- Fair and honest payment of the earnings
- Continuous conflict-free work
- Each employee should feel content for most of the working hours
- A feeling of pride for the company and confidence in its future

Experience has shown that many organizations, especially economic companies make mistakes in their relations when it comes to internal communications, because they are unaware of its importance and role or because they do not recognize the need to implement it correctly.

Good internal communication consists:⁵

- Open and objective communication
- Clear, jargon-free, succinct language
- Consistent and regular communication
- Two-way dialogue
- Understanding the audience and what appeals to them
- Using good verbal, non-verbal and written communicators
- A communication identity that people recognise and use
- An accessible medium.

Successful internal communication is believed to contribute to successful performance of external communications and to building a positive image, which is conducted on several levels. Efficient internal communication comprises three stages of functioning. The first one is at the very beginning – starting with recruitment, when the initial interview is held with the candidates for a certain job position and when all relevant data concerning the profile of the organization/company, its culture and tradition are shared. Then comes

⁴ Pavlović Marko¹Marković Jovica² Marković Dijana³, Istraživanje odnosa sa klijentima u bankarskom sektoru EKONOMIJA, TEORIJA i PRAKSA, VIII • nu. 1, p. 47–66

⁵ <https://www.hrzone.com/community-voice/blogs/johnslvester/the-importance-of-internal-communication> (18.08.2017)

the stage when all employees should be permanently informed about the work of the organization, as well as about all major events within the organization and those outside it which could impact its work or its public image. The final stage is the relations during the termination of employment due to some restructurings in the organization, a surplus of employees, downsizing, illness or retirement. Experience shows that some companies apply the practice of informing without prior notice, i.e. when the decision is final and cannot be changed. The justification for this is the efficient realization of set goals, but on the other hand, however, the employees are put in an unpleasant situation accompanied by stress. These has a strong impact on those who continue to be employed there, which consequently leads to disorganization, lack of confidence, uncertainty, fear, a decreased motivation to work and especially a drop of concentration and commitment to the job position. This is reflected in poor outcomes of the work, i.e. working just to get the job done – without bringing new ideas and innovativeness.

- Professor Daniel Quinn Mills from Harvard University has detected six internal communication problems that can have a severely negative impact on the work of the organization, of-Good internal communication consists of:⁶
 1. Management that is too commanding, and does not listen enough
 2. A very small part of what is being communicated is understood
 3. The content mostly refers to management, and not the staff
 4. Most of the announcements are propaganda
 5. There is very little sincerity
 6. Communications cover only a minor part of the possibility for changes.

Unfortunately, this manner of communicating has been particularly applied in certain organizations in Macedonia however a comprehensive analysis has shown that this is also becoming a trend in much more developed and democratic societies. Open communication, transparency of work, communication among the journalists at regular weekly or monthly meetings or annual informal gatherings in many foreign media houses has almost disappeared. This is caused by the growing trend of informal collaborations, using services of freelancers or stringers, who do not involve

⁶ Sem Blek, *Odnose s javnoscu*, Clio, Beograd, 2003, p.150

an obligation for more appropriate internal communication. New technology has also contributed to this situation, because all shapes and forms of mass communication, Internet portals and blogs now prevail, along with the potential for fast access to information at all times and anywhere in the world, which is a huge advantage in this modern world in which we live. On the other hand, in this type (kind) of published information, quality is often lacking, as well as literacy and truthfulness of what has been said / written by persons who may or may not be part of the media business. Changes have also been introduced in internal communication between the journalists and the superior editors, although this mostly depends of the personal efforts put in by the editor-in-chief or the regional manager that has an immediate or direct impact on the work and the results from it. The essence of the problem rests in the dismissive attitude towards the journalists on a local level, which is encouraged by the concentration of power that comes from the head office, regardless whether this concerns the functioning of a media outlets in the Republic of Macedonia where power is concentrated with certain political or business elites or if it is a media organization outside the country borders.

3. THE PROBLEMS OF ONE-WAY COMMUNICATION AND DOMINANCE OF RUMOURS

The problem with one-way communication with the employees is not noted only in the media sphere, but also in the work of other companies, and it is especially perilous for the success of the company/media organization when it comes to incongruence between the information that the employees need and what management is telling them. This is especially evident in companies/media organizations that are facing some hurdles in their work or which are faced with financial troubles that may determine whether they will continue to exist or not. According to the latest research in companies/media organizations in which there is a shortage of information and inappropriate internal communication, rumours reign supreme. Rumours in these cases are detrimental for the company / media organization and they reflect very negatively on the working atmosphere and on the work itself.

Even well-planned communication designed to reach across all levels and sectors within a company can become blocked or made inefficient, and when it does, informal networks, rumours, and uncoordinated messages often fill the void. The result is a nightmare scenario observed repeatedly

during times of crisis or in reorganizational situations, in which employees become more actively engaged in the acquisition of valid information than they are on their actual work.⁷

The management team that only sends messages containing work instructions, without getting relevant and truthful feedback concerning the actual work and events in the collective, is lacking realistic information. It is not aligned with what is really happening in the media organization. It is not rare for management to rely on persons / journalists who convey a distorted image of the state of the company, and this is most often done to score personal points and benefits or due to a lack of professionalism, lack of knowledge or due to inability to estimate the situations. This occurrence leads to wrongful decisions made by management, which inevitably leads to disintegration, i.e. a collapse of the organization or to many years of artificially supported functioning which once again will lead to nothing other than self-destruction.

Rumours, as a ‘method’ and a ‘tool’ are most commonly present in internal communication in a negative sense and they lead to misinformation – because being well informed excludes misinformation, which is not the case here. It should be avoided at all costs for employees in a company, regardless of the field in which it operates, and in this example it is a media organization, to find out through other media or other communication channels for instance that their company is facing a crisis, or about the ownership status (whether there are changes or not), whether the organization is being sold or shut down.

4. THE NEED TO DIRECTLY COMMUNICATE WITH THE JOURNALISTS

In order to obtain comprehensive knowledge about the atmosphere present in the company, the approach the journalists have towards their work and to obtain information about potential problems, various methods and tools as well as different forms are used. The most common shapes and forms of internal communication are:

⁷ <https://staffbase.com/blog/why-an-internal-communications-strategy-is-important-for-companies/> Published by Frank Wolf in Digital Leadership, Internal Communications App (22.08.2017)

- Direct meetings (greetings, introductions, conversations)
- Telephone conversations
- Written communication (e-mail, Internet, Intranet communications intended solely for the staff)
- Lectures and presentations
- Organizing trainings related to the work of the company (media organization)
- Listening and providing positive signals
- Communicating through questions and answers and taking notes

Analyses show that the people would be glad to participate in the planning of the work of the organization. In case of reorganization and major changes in companies, like for instance if a newspaper is undergoing a reorganization, the employees believe that they should jointly decide whether the newspaper should maintain the same profile, layout and sequence of sections after the reorganization, whether the format should be changed, whether it is better to continue to be published under the same name or if a new name should be created, in line with the changes. If the situation refers to a company or a firm, the questions whether the company should get a new corporate name, a new logo as well as whether the way of work should be changed and how it should be changed, and if there is a need to redefine corporate values should be answered. At the same time, in this process it is very important to carefully choose how and when these changes will be announced, how they will be justified and explained, and tasks and roles should be assigned to individuals, while emphasizing why that is being done and what the benefits will be.

In parallel to this process, it is necessary to redefine corporate values as much as it is necessary to clarify and explain why changes were necessary. The basic thing in reorganizing is to clearly specify and define the tasks, the role and responsibilities of individuals, as well as the potential benefit that might result from them. The media, as well as other entities are often faced with various types of communication that also involves problems, conflicts and reactions from citizens. It is worth mentioning that while in the business communications of the banking sector, for instance, the primary objective in recent years is to promote internal communications in order to increase efficiency this is not the case in the media sector.

In comparison, unlike in media organizations, in some companies that are part of the banking sector the main objectives of internal communications are:⁸

- corporate culture,
- coordination and exchange of information with the bank,
- motivation of the employees,
- loyalty of the employees and
- bank's image

In banks in which internal communication is of good quality and at a higher level, the employees belong to a system in which they, along with their management team, are working on realizing the work goals. The objective of good communication is for all employees to perform their tasks as well as they can, in a process that integrates work culture and the ability to communicate.⁹

Poor internal communication can lead to various problems in the functioning of the company and it is imperative to know how to communicate with superior officers, with colleagues and with customers.

5. INTERNAL STRATEGY AS ESSENTIAL PART OF THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Internal strategy for internal communication development within the organization/ media is helping to achieve specific goals and creates a sense of community and trust among employees which helps the business to be successful. On the other hand internal strategy is providing several benefits:¹⁰

1. Employees understand the big picture and how they fit in. They feel valued, listened to, and like an important part of the team and the organization.
2. Employees are more productive and there is meaning to their work. As a result, they contribute more and feel better about their contribution and the organization so they stay on the job and help move the business forward.

⁸ Pavlović Marko¹Marković Jovica² Marković Dijana³, Istraživanje odnosa sa klijentima u bankarskom sektoru EKONOMIJA, TEORIJA i PRAKSA, VIII • nu. 1, p. 47–66

⁹ Petković, M., Janičijević, N., Bogičević., *Organizacija*, Ekonomski fakultet - Beogradu, (2002) p. 422

¹⁰ <http://bit.ly/lbg41> (17.08.2017)

3. Better leaders. Communication isn't just tactical anymore; it's about strategy. In this context, leaders are better able to understand employee needs and how to meet those needs to motivate, inspire and engage them.
4. Vigilant managers who have an ear to the ground.
5. A culture of communication. Communication is not an "event." It is a continuous process.

Organizations that understand the benefits of good communication, prioritize and constantly strive to achieve better internal communication are a breed apart. They achieve trust and credibility. They enable employees to do their jobs better. In accordance with the internal strategy is a plan for good internal communication.

The goal of creating a strong organisation, with a unified workforce, engaged in a common mission can only be achieved when a quality two-way internal communications plan is executed, functioning and implementing. For the new internal communication plan to be adopted and implemented with energy and commitment, it is important that key stakeholders are consulted. To be truly effective, your internal communications plan must include and reach everyone, allowing them to respond on a level they are comfortable with. There should be no part of the organisation that is ignored or considered unimportant, although there may be areas that require different tools to enable involvement in the communication plans.¹¹

Conclusion

The analysis of the state of the media business shows major changes, especially in recent years, not only in the Republic of Macedonia, but also globally. Historically speaking, the process of development of media and media business has always been directly and comprehensively linked with technological development and newly introduced processes in societies. Thus, today, when the world is living in an era of speed and IT technology, with a so far unseen dynamic, journalism is transforming, trying to find its path. In this surge of daily changes, new trends and a new paradigm in the media sphere, internal communication remains at the core of good functioning of companies/media organizations, and the need for information that is as clear, precise and comprehensive as possible - is essential, following all lines in the system of media functioning.

¹¹ <https://insights.staffbase.com/blog/> www.https://interack.intranet (22.08.2017)

Research has shown that for successful work it is necessary to build trust, to develop team work atmosphere and cooperation and to foster the feeling of belonging in the media organization where one works, to foster the spirit of self-respect and to support cooperation that leads to work satisfaction.

The fact that an inseparable part of internal communications are internal strategy and planning should not be overlooked, since their precise implementation leads to timely and detailed informing about the work and all potential changes in the structure of the media organization and they facilitate the functioning of the organization. This helps to avoid rumours, spreading lies, manipulations and it decreases the concern the staff may have about the events within the organization, which directly impacts the work and its efficiency. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that the employees are both internal and external audience. Their voice is passed on, which impacts the image, reputation and the perception created of the organization by the public. According to this, the conclusion would be that without well-organized communication channels and correct placement of functional internal communication, no organization can conduct its work professionally and successfully.

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