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THE GATHERING – PREMISE OF EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract: *Currently, the fluidity and quality of information are among the favoring factors of the organization's competitiveness. In this sense, a working group becomes innovative and creative when it is able to effectively capture the information presented in gatherings. The purpose of this study is to contribute to the achievement of correct, efficient and effective information both vertically and horizontally, in order to create, under optimal conditions, internal and external requests in accordance with the established organizational objectives. For this, in the process of managerial communication, a number of fundamental communications needs of work groups, but also of each individual employee, must be satisfied. One of the priority, dominant forms of internal organizational communication is "gatherings." Based on the information received during the gatherings, the managerial staff / decision-making group can perceive whether it is moving towards the set objective, or it is deviating. At the same time, in a gathering, information is vital for the performance of the group for the quality of the decisions made. Therefore, the manager who exercises the role of gathering moderator must have initiatives to increase the fluidity and quality of information by disseminating and facilitating the circulation of information.*

At the same time, the promptness of information circulation was and continues to be a determining element of decision-making efficiency and effectiveness. This is influenced by the pace of changes, especially in the field of technologies that allow/ensure an informational transit. In conclusion, we affirm that the success of a gathering is conditioned by the ability of the participants to communicate pertinently and with a positive decision-making impact.

Keywords: communication, competence, competitiveness, dissemination of information, group performance, meeting, gathering.

JEL Classification: F52, I21, I25, P36

Motto:

*"If a problem requires many meetings,
they eventually become more important than the problem."
(Hendrikson's law)*

Introduction

The economic development of society has continuously generated new organizations, so today it can be said that society is a gathering of organizations. The organization is the result of a process of organizing a group of people, with the aim of achieving common objectives,

which, due to their scope and complexity, cannot be achieved by a single person. Organization is a human creation that developed together with the industrial revolution, from the need to produce goods in much larger quantities than craftsmen could do in their small workshops (SCRIGROUP Int., 2022).

The semantic dynamics of the concept of organization and the different perspectives from which it was used by specialists, naturally led to the formulation of a real spectrum of definitions from which we choose a few. E. H. Schein believes that "an organization is the planned coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of common, explicit goals or objectives, through the division of labor and activity, and through a hierarchy of authority and responsibility." (E. H. Schein cited by SCRIGROUP Int., 2022) And M. Vlăsceanu states that "an organization is a structured system of interaction of people in order to achieve common and specific objectives." (M. Vlăsceanu quoted by SCRIGROUP Int., 2022)

In this last definition, by introducing the lexeme "structured", we want to specify the fact that it is a functional, formal entity, with explicit goals and with a precise delimitation of the norms, positions, roles, or relationships between the members of the institution. In such an entity, organizationally and functionally structured, there is a series of written and unwritten rules, which make possible the distribution of decision-making power and responsibility in order to achieve specific objectives. Regardless of how the above definitions were formulated, it can be said that "the organization is a system that is characterized by a certain functional structure and a certain process through which certain common and specific objectives are achieved." (Vlăsceanu, 2003), pp.45-89) In this rationalistic approach to organizations is emphasized their function of transforming input quantities into output quantities satisfy certain social requirements or needs through the newly created value.

Content

In an organization, the manager is the person vested with the authority to exercise the functions of the management process. He uses his authority and ensures the coordination of the group's efforts towards the achievement of a set of objectives considered as 'defining' for an organization. To achieve such objectives, the manager foresees, organizes, coordinates, motivates and controls "what" and "how" the group does a certain activity. As a result, mutual understandings are established between the manager and the group members. "The finished products of management are decisions; their adoption is determined by the collection and processing of information, the identification of solutions to achieve the goal and their implementation". (Stanciu S., 2001, p. 5) Trading mutual understandings with the help of symbols defines the process of managerial communication. This process, in essence, consists in the display of a behavior.

Specialists in the field identify two types of communication behavior: "behavior oriented towards solving the task and behavior oriented towards maintaining good relationships in the group."(Constantinescu, D., Gârboveanu, S., 2011, p. 209)

The manager, in his capacity as a leader and administrator, must be aware that any work group needs both behaviors in order to be efficient and effective. The manager's role is to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved. It has been determined, through various

studies, that the manager has the need to mobilize his collaborators by managing a balance, which we consider the balance of rewards. Each member of the group has its own balance; on one hand there are the group member's contributions (time, energy, intelligence, skills) and on another hand there are the rewards (salary, social identity, training, work recognition, job security). When the balance is stable, the group members will have the feeling of being rewarded. Conversely, when the balance is unstable, i.e. because one group member feels that he is doing more than he is getting, then the manager will have difficulty in mobilizing that group member to solve the task and maintain good group relations. Thus, the appropriate balance between task-oriented behavior and behavior oriented toward maintaining good group relations is dependent on ensuring the balance between what each member of the group gives and what they receive. Ensuring balance can also be achieved by avoiding information distortion. "Messages are distorted by filtering as they pass from one organizational or departmental level. According to a study, only 63% of the information sent by the board of directors reached the vice presidents, 40% - to the store managers and 20% - to the workers." (materiale.pvgazeta.info, 2022)

Managerial ethics are of particular importance in ensuring the stability of the balance. In this regard, it should be noted that in the process of communication there are situations when managers distort information. Unintended distortion of information due to human nature is a factor that needs to be considered ethically. The messages are not in themselves ethical or unethical. What determines a message to be ethical or not depends on the intention of the sender of the message.

The researchers note that "from an ethical point of view, the issue is quite complicated and there are no general or ideal solutions. The consciousness of each of us, the power of analysis and free will are the only ones that can give an answer and generate a certain mode of action, a certain kind of behavior." (Constantinescu D. et al. 2011, p. 210) Supporting what has been stated, we will consider that managerial ethics generates a personal image in front of subordinates. Therefore, for managers, honest communication is not only the most appropriate behavior, but also an open way of communication.

In an organization, ethics are created and supported by organizational culture, organizational politics and, of course, the individual ethics of managers. As far as managers are concerned, their ethical behavior must be continuously manifested, especially in the following situations: providing information necessary for the functioning of the group, gathering information and how to work with information.

Ensuring the balance between communication behaviors it requires the group manager to be apply a correct, professional approach to interpersonal, informational, and decision-making roles. As we analyze the problem of organizing and moderating meetings, we will focus on the interpersonal role of the moderator of a meeting.

Before moving on to the actual approach to this topic, we will clarify, on one hand, the rejection of the term "ședință" (translation: meeting) in Romanian, while on the other hand, we will announce our option for the term "gathering".

Today, in the Romanian-speaking area, the term "ședință"(translation: meeting) is 5.5 times ahead of the term "meeting". However, we believe that at the semantic level "ședință"

(translation: meeting) presents a certain imprecision due to its root in the verb „a ședeă” (translation: to sit). This verb fueled, in an exaggerated way, the "generation" of jokes and anecdotes. Two jokes circulate with great frequency. The first joke: "A meeting is where several people make minutes and waste hours" and the second joke: "A meeting is a group of people who, separately, can do nothing, and together decide that there is nothing to be done".

Naturally, the two jokes satirize the faulty way of organizing and conducting meetings. Satire is justified and is not grounds for rejection. What we accuse is the semantics of the term, i.e. the poor meaning which, in turn, can be perceived as lacking synergy. By comparison, the term "gathering" suggests the existence of an appropriate framework for interpersonal communication, achieved by bringing together several people. "Gathering" suggests the activation of forces, and "staying" their inactivation.

To the extent that the gathering promotes brainstorming norms, it generates a relational system suitable for achieving performance: the value of the group exceeds the sum of the individual values of the group members. This result indicates success, a high level of synergy, effectiveness, and efficiency. "In principle, the meeting is one of the tools that managers have at hand through which they manifest their leadership act. It should be noted that meetings are resource consuming (time, money, energy). A meeting that achieved its goal brings profit to the organization while a meeting that did not achieve its goal is a waste of money” (hqm_web, 2020).

Cândeă&Cândeă professors consider the meeting (gathering) as a specific process of communication within the group. Of course, in an organization a gathering usually defines the set of interrelationships between managers and the groups they lead. Gatherings play an important role in the management process. The importance of a gathering can be explained by its functions such as:

- defines the group, its unity, and gives members the sense of collective identity;
- supports the group to revise, add knowledge, experiences, judgments and habits;
- enriches the collective mind;
- helps all group members understand common goals and how everyone's work can contribute to the group's success;
- satisfies the desire of group members to be consulted;
- transforms the relational framework into an "arena" for displaying the role of individuals. (Cândeă&Cândeă cited by Constantinescu et al., 2011, p. 211)

In order to respect and fulfill the functions of the gathering, the managers of the organization must take into account when the role of moderator, information and communication interferes.

The information. Among the favoring factors of the organization's competitiveness, today and especially in the future, specialists place the fluidity and quality of information. In this sense, it is argued that "a group becomes innovative and creative when it is able to capture information from the environment. Based on the information, the group can know if it is progressing towards the set goal. Then, by interpreting the information, for example about the market, the group thinks and chooses the best alternative for positioning on the market." (Constantinescu et al., 2011, p. 212)

In a gathering, information is vital to group performance. Therefore, the manager exercising the role of moderator of a gathering must have initiatives to increase the fluidity

and quality of information by: disseminating and facilitating the flow of information. We recall that the process of effective identification of information goes through two stages: categorical identification and individual identification. (Tarnovschi A, Tacu J, 2017, p.27)

By *disseminating information*, the manager puts the group members in relation to the facts, with the data useful in their activity and development. If the manager broadcasts too much information, group members may not have the time to understand and process it. Furthermore, the relevance of information may decrease as the volume of information increases. Conversely, if the information is disseminated sparingly, there is a risk that the manager will be accused of censorship. Therefore, the objective to be achieved is to disseminate internal and external information necessary for understanding and piloting the activity carried out by the group members.

In relation to the dissemination of information, managers are advised to opt for a certain amount of information and to give meaning to the information disseminated.

In terms of the quantity of information, it is oriented towards one of the directions: to select the information or to be exhaustive.

In the first case, the manager selects the useful information needed by each member of the group or each subgroup to quickly make it available. Selectivity is not to the liking of all group members. Some members want to be provided with details to make a connection between their personal contribution and the group's results, or between the group's contribution and the organization as a whole.

When the manager chooses the exhaustive path, he makes available to the group parts of the total information at his disposal. In this case, the manager is forced to create a "library" corner where he stores the information on the themes. This time, the group members want to have access to all the information. It seems that lately managers are using modern means of broadcasting that facilitate the intelligent circulation of information (in meeting rooms more group members are seen with their phones or laptops connected to the Internet).

Regarding the meaning of information, the manager knows that one of his essential tasks is to "manufacture" meaning for group members. In other words, the manager, through the proposed project, provides the group members with a perspective, because he disseminates information both for himself and for the each group member in part. The main concern of the manager is to convey the results of the organization and to select the information that makes "sense" in relation to the project proposed to the group. The project contains dashboards that put the numbers into perspective.

A well-functioning group is "irrigated" by an amount of information that flows both vertically (downward and upward) and horizontally. The amount of information a group needs is influenced by the speed at which it travels. That is why managers, in order to ensure the "health" of the group, take actions to facilitate the flow of information. The faster information flows, the less pressure there is on managers to disseminate more information.

The speed of information circulation was and continues to be a determining element of the efficiency and effectiveness of the group. The speed of information circulation is influenced by the pace of changes, especially in the field of technologies. New technologies allow greater fluidity of information. It is, at the same time, vital to differentiate between what

is truly urgent and what is not. Therefore, the management must therefore see that the information is relevant and that it is useful to circulate quickly. It seems that speed is more important than reliability.

Members of a group end up having more information than their manager because a manager cannot limit himself to providing information only to the group. This situation turns into a motivating factor at the group level to complete their received information. Blaming a lack of information, group members are forced to accumulate additional information. In turn, the manager initiates the movement of information from the top down and, most of the time, has no problem getting the information passed to him.

Another way to provide the group with information results from the manager's attitude toward the group. In this sense, the manager must tell the group what interests them in the direction of maintaining the quality of being listened to and showing early while doing with the information received from the group. If the group feels that it has listened to the manager but never understood it, the group will one day stop providing useful information. The group agrees, in this case, to show that the manager is no longer at its center regarding the flow of information.

To increase the amount of information, the manager must encourage group members to exchange information directly, without it going through the manager. It is his responsibility to check whether any member of the group knows the needs of the others and, if necessary, to immediately redirect the information to a good recipient.

In general, the gathering is one of the tools that managers have at hand and through which they manifest their leadership. It should be noted that meetings are resource consuming (time, money, energy). A meeting that has achieved its purpose brings profit to the organization, otherwise it is a waste of money.

The quality of a meeting significantly influences the quality of management because it is directly involved in the exercise of managerial functions: forecasting, organization, coordination, motivation - training and control - evaluation.

So, the organization of a meeting must have a well-defined purpose and must follow a certain pattern (a certain standard).

Depending on the purpose, specialists in the field (De Visscher, P., Neculau, A., 2001) classify meetings as follows:

Informative meetings - its purpose is to facilitate communication between members of the organization. These can be meetings during which decisions adopted by the management of the organization are transmitted, during which the opinions of the participants are collected (their feedback); meetings during which organizational changes or changes in the company's personnel structure are communicated - the occasion when the new team member is introduced, meetings during which changes to the normative documents governing the company's activity are communicated; meetings during which commercial and/or financial results are communicated etc.

Analysis meetings - their purpose is to determine the degree of achievement/progress, at a certain reference date, of ongoing projects, performance indicators, the income and expenditure budget etc.

Operative/harmonization meetings - their purpose is to inform or organize in the event of the appearance of disruptive factors in the organization's current activity; these are summoned with a random frequency; the heads of departments, heads of divisions, commissions or other involved persons generally participate.

Decision-making meetings - their purpose is obviously to adopt some decisions related to the operational activity or the organization of the company.

Heterogeneous sessions – those that bring together two or more types of meetings previously presented.

Depending on the method, meetings can be organized offline or online. Online meetings also require some preparation to go well. (Upromania editorial team, 2022)

Any organization is like a mechanism, and its good functioning depends on the efficiency of each individual part, that is, on that of each employee.

For a team to function and be productive, its members must have common goals, support each other, communicate, collaborate. Only in this way will the team be able to reach its goal, and each member, as part of the team, will be able to enjoy the success.

Therefore, the work group represents "a collective formed on the basis of division and cooperation that performs work together, in order to achieve a common objective." (Goian, 1995, p.139)

The group, as a fundamental element in the structure of an organization, must be carefully managed by the manager, and the implications of communication are essential aspects.

British researcher and theorist Meredith Belbin became famous for the team role model, developed in the late 1970s. Belbin demonstrated that balanced teams, made up of people with different abilities, outperform unbalanced ones. This model is currently used by more than 40% of successful UK businesses, as well as thousands more internationally.

The Belbin ‘team role theory’ is a human-resources management tool, and the best results are obtained when the specialized staff of an organization are aware of the facilities offered by this tool and use it actively. The support offered by all managerial levels of the organization is also very important, as is the motivation of employees to use the obtained information so as to improve their individual performance and contribution to the level of the teams they are part of.

Initially, Belbin identified a set of eight roles that, when present within a team, are supposed to provide balance and increase the chances of success. Another role was added to the eight, the role of the expert. It must be emphasized that there is no such thing as a good or bad role, each role is important to the success of the entire team. But Belbin states that some roles have a more extroverted attitude and others are more introverted, although today this dimension is not important.

Each of these roles is valuable to the team and there are no primary or secondary roles. However, it is not absolutely necessary that each team consists of nine people, just that the roles are present. In small teams, one person may have more than one role.

By analyzing member behavior and team performance, it was found that this concept of team roles can lead to considerable improvements:

- In the case of low score achievements, a good coordinator or finisher is needed.
- Conflicts require a strong teammate or coordinator.

- Mediocre performances can be improved with the help of a resource investigator, innovator, or trainer.

- Teams prone to errors need a monitor - evaluator.

Different roles are useful in different circumstances:

- New team members need a good trainer.
- Competitive situations need an innovator with good ideas.
- A good evaluator is needed in risky situations.

Therefore, the team analysis must include both the roles of the members and the skills needed in the team.

The information about team roles obtained for individuals and for the positions they occupy helps us to build a balanced team. Team balance is a very important concept in team role theory, as research results have shown, balanced teams are the ones that have the best results. This implies that the team has those roles required by the nature of the objectives and the context in which it finds itself, at the same time, that there are not too many roles of the same type within the team that may come into conflict. Successful teams are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, maximize their strengths, and avoid engaging in areas they do not master, or seek alternative solutions to address these areas.

In the process of forming and developing a team it is advised to consider several types of information regarding the candidates competing for a vacant position or a newly created one. The first type of information refers to the eligibility of candidates expressed through: education, qualification, work experience, references, impression following recruitment interviews. The second type of information relates to the candidate's match to the nature of the job's activities and the team's contribution requirements. This match is given by the skills, flexibility, the results of the candidate's behavior and personality tests, but also by the need to achieve a balance of roles within the team.

In management processes, the communication process means perception, interpretation, evaluation, and selection. The greater the number of participants in communication, the more different are the goals pursued, the level of culture and training, mentalities, habits, personalities, the more obstacles appear in the way of communication. The problem of management is not whether to communicate, but in what way and with what results the communication is carried out.

Organizational communication, as a specific way of manifesting the management process, takes on the individuality elements of the organization. Wider or narrower, depending on the dimensions of the activity, more stereotyped or more diversified, pronounced, formal or unrestricted by written rules, facilitating or obstructing interpersonal relations, communication represents for modern management a process with multiple meanings and implications, even if they are not visible and quantifiable.

Conclusion

The success of a meeting depends on the ability of the participants to communicate pertinently and with positive decision-making impact. However, communication occupies a central place both at the level of the management process and at work gatherings, experiencing

a spectacular evolution, from an authoritative, prescriptive communication to a relational and democratic communication.

Communication is a decisive factor that contributes to the effective implementation of change within the organization because employees must receive timely information about the reasons for the change and its consequences, whereas the reduction of uncertainty caused by the change can only be done by providing the correct information through official channels and clearing up rumors.

Effective communication within the organization contributes to the creation of a motivating organizational climate, and the barriers that appear (language, perceptual, contextual barriers) can be overcome by taking measures to improve the quality of communication.

Undoubtedly, communication leaves its mark on the efficiency of the activity of the members of an organization. Being encouraged to communicate freely and openly, employees once again gain awareness of their own value, are stimulated to perform, and put all the energy they have in order to achieve the proposed objectives.

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