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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE MANAGERIAL PROCESS

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Abstract: Communication represents a solution to problem-solving at all levels and every manager should develop and promote a communication-based policy, so that his company could permanently adapt to changes. Analysing various management styles and functions from the interesting perspective of the communication techniques, we have reached the conclusion that only by a real, effective communication, and not a superficial one, can managers influence their subordinates and guide them into achieving their goals. In out attempt to reveal the factors that usually trigger conflicts within a company and to detect possible managerial strategies to settle them, we strongly believe that communication is the key to avoiding social outbursts, turning unsatisfied employees into discussion partners.

MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION STYLES. FUNCTIONS OF MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION

The concept of management has been for quite a long time researched and analysed, compared and criticized. Our country has limited to borrowing only its name, without its main characteristics. An analysis of this concept is outside the scope of our present paper, which instead seeks to find out how a so-called manager should lead using an important factor in conflict and problem-solving, namely communication. As uninitiated persons in this both highly interesting and challenging field, we will try to make use of the ideas of some great specialists in order to analyse the way managers really use or should use different means of communication in their relationships with employees.

In our hesitating and essentially theoretical approach we would like to remind managers that only by a real, effective communication, and not a superficial one can they influence their subordinates and guide them into achieving their goals. A successful manager is supposed to be a nice person, who needs to have communication skills, to be trustworthy, and of course, to know himself and his company very well.

Of the same importance is also the distinction between leader – leadership and manager. While leadership can be thought of as the ability to make people act, to guide them by personal example [10], a manager is the person to facilitate the achievement of the organisational objectives by planning, organizing and goal-oriented work. A growing interest has been showed lately for the manager`s leader qualities.

Communication or, we should better say, the lack of communication in society is considered „the cause of all evil" [3]. Thus, communication represents a solution to problem-solving at all levels and every manager should develop and promote a communication-based policy, so that his company could permanently adapt to changes.

By the position he holds, a manager exerts a real power on his conversation partner. For his employees, he should look like a wise, powerful person, a real embodiment of authority. He should be a „role-model", a „father" [2], image which appears many times distorted and far from reality. In his basic quality of transmitter in the communication process, the manager bears a double responsibility, both moral and for the good working of his company.

Managerial communication is related to the historical evolution of management. At the beginning of the 20th century, the incredible technical, economic and industrial development brought about the autocratic management [3], which involved a unilateral downward communication, from management to subordinates. Once with the evolution of relationships within a company and the growing importance of syndicates, the manager

acquired a humane side, becoming a human resources manager. While the role of this type of communication was increasing considerably, the manager became little by little the person who makes decisions, organizes, leads and evaluates.
Managerial communication is extremely important and involves a thorough analysis of the communication system used by a company. A company`s communication channels are organized into real communication networks which form a system.
In an ordinary company, one can detect a both formal and informal, vertical and horizontal communication within different groups or between chiefs and subordinates. Among the main purposes of a company`s communication system we can mention [8]: adaptation to environmental changes, group development and consolidation for company development, employee briefing and problem-solving by the manager.
Here are the objectives of managerial communication:

- Right message reception;
- Right message understanding;
- Message acknowledgement;
- Feed-back generation.

In order to enable goal achievement the manager should:

- Facilitate information access and even provide his subordinates with the necessary information to properly develop their activities;
- Communicate decisions at short notice and create a proper work environment for the implementation of these decisions;
- Ensure feed-back generation, stimulate communication among employees, stimulate and reward employee initiative and creativity;
- Stimulate employee performance improvement;
- Provide information needed to clearly outline the company image;
- Maintain a favourable work environment, stimulate self-confidence and increase personal accountability;
- Create slogans, norms and value systems to improve the staff literacy.

The planning, forcasting and goal-setting function cannot be fulfilled without communication. Unfortunately, in our country and in many other places, there is no real communication between management and subordinates when it comes to creating strategies and making forecasts and action plans.
The organizing function, in other words the general management, department organization, and position establishment, involves task setting and assignment and finally, feed-back generation.
The coordinating function deals with information transmission, and involves [3] a both bilateral coordination (between manager and subordinate) and multilateral coordination (communication network – meetings).
The involvement function is meant to have the personnel involved in achieving the goals set by managers. These goals cannot be achieved without motivation and effective cooperation. Motivation can be positive or negative, depending on the relation between employees` degree of satisfaction and their results. The motivation scale very clearly emphasizes many of the company`s and employees` interests.
The evaluation function requires managers to verify their employees` task achievement. At the end, the final result can be quantified and compared with the main pursued objective. Should communication be present, all difficulties can be overcome. This function also involves the control function, which is supposed to be permanent as it is only preventive. Its features are flexibility and adaptability in order to be really constructive.

The informing function refers to information received by the top management from both well-established external structures, and internal sources, which can be formal and informal (*e.g.* rumours).
The directing, instructing and influencing function involves the orders and directions given by chiefs and managers, along with the possibility to exercise control.
The integration and maintenance function aims at the different Heads of departments, who ensure the data selection, checking and analysis for the good working of their department.
The most important of these functions remains the informing one. Thus, from the entire range of information received by the top management, subordinates should be reported, after selection and interpretation, only the most relevant pieces. A communication method should also be chosen, along with an adequate place and time to send the message. There should also be formulated short and concise messages and non-verbal communication should be attentively used (*e.g.* using an adequate intonation in accordance with the information value). The natural result of this process is the control of task achievement, and eventually, new action taken to make potential adjustments, namely feed-back.
In managerial communication, of the utmost importance is also the respect paid to subordinates, their treatment as „rational, free human beings, having control of their own life, liable for the tasks they have assumed" [2]. Any preconceived idea, stereotype or tension must be eliminated and employees` qualities must be sought instead.
The way a manager communicates and assigns tasks depends on the situation and of course, on the person involved and his character, and on how well ke knows his duties and subordinates. There are several classifications of these management styles, but in all these styles, the „authority" element should be reduced as much as possible, giving way to responsibility and accountability.
Unfortunately, in our country, management had long been characterized by excessive bureaucracy, along with planning and supervision exercised by a central authority. Yet, little by little, the populist managers claimed their place and importance.
Here is a possible classification of the management styles [7]:

- Authoritarian-oppressive style – typical of rigid, unsocial managers, who focus on company restructuring and not on social issues; there is no communication between managers and subordinates; their management style is authoritarian, aggressive, and communication takes place downwardly; the work environment is hostile and the key-words are obedience and hard punishments; there is no sign of delegated authority or working-hours flexibility;
- Authoritarian-objective style – the leader is not willing to develop interpersonal relationships; no authority is delegated and employees are regarded as mere instruments in achieving different goals; communication also takes place downwardly but without hostility; important decisions are made at the top management while leaving the less important ones in subordinates` hands;
- Democratic-consulting style – characterized by frequent meetings with the staff; the leader is rational but not interested in group unity; employees are allowed to partially participate in decision-making; the leader intervenes in case of conflict to settle any dispute;
- Democratic-participating style – the leader shows much regard for his subordinates` needs; decisions are made at all company levels; information is transmitted freely in and from all directions, the motivation is positive, interpersonal relationships are important, no punishments are used and employees who have made mistakes are helped to become more efficient; his communication style is characterized by flexibility, enthusiasm and motivation;

- Permissive or populist style – propensity to communicate horizontally; discussions take place in an informal environment and tasks remain most often unfulfilled.

A reduced productivity is reported [4] in case of a permissive management style. Employee satisfaction is higher if a democratic style is adopted, while the authoritarian style generates higher employee aggression due to frustrations. In this case, communication takes place downwardly, as the manager does not listen to his subordinates, he just gives directions, attitude resulting in the lack of any feed-back. This can be avoided if the leader-manager`s attitude changes after work and he tries to create a different relationship with his subordinates. Effectiveness of authoritarian style can be maintained only if followed by a powerful control.

We should also mention the conciliating style of a manager who tries to keep a balance between the desire to develop and restructure his company, and the need to take into consideration his employees` demands so that he could be maintained in his managerial position as long as possible. Communication is achieved by negotiation, by potential conflict mediation within the company. Last but not least, the style of the incompetent manager refers to a passive and most often corrupted person, who takes no interest in his subordinates` real problems.

In reality these styles cannot exist separately and one can notice a combination of all them.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION. SETTLEMENT OF CONFLICTS

Conflicts („conflictus" – violent argument, disagreement, tension within a group) have been defined based on various aspects (*e.g.* psychologically, socially, etc.), but when it comes to companies, we can say that these occur in case of divergent opinions on meeting personal needs, which, obviously interfere with the company`s goal achievement.

Conflicts can be categorized depending on their place of occurrence, visibility, level [11].

Within a company, these conflicts can be found mainly with employees or groups of employees, but many times, one can detect interpersonal conflicts that generate others types. These conflicts can exist in latent state for long periods of time or manifest permanently, both situations severely affecting the company. They can occur as accidental events, arguments over wrong message communication, smouldering tensions within the group that eventually burst out, aggressive verbal or physical behaviour, all suggesting a real crisis.

The persons involved in a conflict can be isolated by the others, slandered, their ideas permanently fought against, they are no longer assigned important tasks, and sometimes they can even be ill-treated.

It is a well-known fact that emotions severely affect our life but their strong impact on employees' behavior at the workplace, and implicitly, on the entire organization and its goal achievement was admitted quite late [7]. Emotions influence employees` motivation and therefore, a manager with good communication skills needs to have knowledge of and interpret the non-verbal aspects of communication in order to influence his employees.

STIMULI → EMPLOYEES → EMOTIONAL FEED-BACK → ACTIVITY → COMPANY PERFORMANCE [1]

The way emotions interfere with the company activity

There are persons who can control their emotions, others who are able to suppress them, and a third category of people who get carried away by them. In a crisis situation, emotions take over and this gets really dangerous when the manager acts solely driven by his emotions.

People behave differently when it comes to workplace conflicts. Thus, some give up fighting and implicitly, upholding their own ideas, which may be good and efficient for the company, others have the ability to adapt and accept other opinions or at least reach an agreement, while a third category keeps fighting until they get what they want. The fight can take place directly, using means of communication like: aggressive tone, slander, physical violence, or indirectly, by creating secret alliances or determining other persons to act for them.

Conflicts occur within a company as determined by various factors [9], among which the competition, as a person`s success means other person`s failure. This happens when there is no group unity, tolerance and mutual affinity. The reasons may range from unsatisfied pride, older vengeance, smouldering tensions that burst out as violent arguments or secret alliances [3].

Another factor is the way the manager tries to influence subordinates, using methods like threat, punishment, harassment. Although these methods may sometimes be really effective in company goal achievement, the generated tension can later on turn into real conflicts. The manager can limit the ways employees express themselves, he can scold them, or make oral or verbal threats. Conflicts between managers and subordinates have proved to be the most delicate, especially that no objectivity can be attributed to any of the two parties.

Personality differences are also great conflict generators within a group, along with the lack of logistic resources or materials.

Yet, the most powerful conflict generators remain the communication problems. Messages may be wrongly interpreted due to both the way they are transmitted and received, or to external disturbing factors.

Here are some barriers to effective communication [10]:

- inadequate use of intonation, gestures, postures or facial expression;
- transmitter`s incapacity to suppress his emotions;
- use of the same words but with different meanings depending on the person they are addressed to;
- tendency to hear only what the person has got used to hear;
- ignoring information that disagrees with what we already know;
- receptor`s subjective evaluation of the message objective transmission source;
- completely different reception of the same message by various persons within a company;
- different message perception depending on the disturbing factors acting on the receptor (*e.g.* noise);
- incapacity to distinguish the relevant sent or received messages from those having reduced or no importance;

These barriers can determine lots of difficulties in organizational communication, such as communication channel filtering and overcharging. In order to prevent them from generating conflicts within the group, they can be eliminated if the manager is willing to take action as follows:

- strongly motivating his employees;
- offering clear and concise information;
- undergoing permanent performance improvement;
- using the involving management style;
- using electronic communication devices in the managerial process.

Due to the huge amount of responsability and decision-making a manager usually deals with, it is quite difficult for him to get involved in the settlement of each conflict occurring within a company. However, it is absolutely necessary that he should take action when the

conflict is getting worse and different alliances are created, as these might endanger the entire company.
The manager can adopt several conflict-resolution strategies [6]. For instance, even if competition is good for the company, he needs to get involved when it turns into a fight, and encourage instead cooperation with a view to achieving the company goals (e.g. initiating joined projects, team-work, etc.). Also, he must implement a fair promoting and rewarding system, in order to prevent some employees from becoming extremely influential, which could negatively affect the entire company and its staff.
Employees must be informed permanently and rumours discouraged. Team-building and informal communication must be considered more, once with a growing work amount. Solutions have to be real and not chosen for compromise.
Conflicts have to be solved sincerely and without pursuing some obscure advantage. Although they say „silence is golden", keeping endlessly silent in a conflict may trigger emotional instability. If wrongly managed, conflicts may have a negative impact on the entire company: aversion for colleagues, team-work rejection, negative attitude, tendency to accuse other people. In case they are not solved rapidly, these conflicts severely affect the focusing power of the other employees, reduce productivity and thus, determine a loss of money (a survey made by the American Management Association showed that top and middle-level managers used to spend as much as 2 hours to settle different conflicts).

CONCLUSIONS

Managers should be aware that an action can be considered moral should the following saying be respected: „treat others the way you want to be treated".
Communication as a management tool ensures harmony among people, avoids the outburst of social conflicts, turning people into discussion partners [4].

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