Communication in Private and Public Companies

Onorel Petrișor Blidaru
onorelb@yahoo.com
Daniela Sfichi
atunad2002@yahoo.com
Valentin Florin Andrei
valentin.florin.andrei@gmail.com

Abstract

The companies' modernization is felt especially in the private sector, thus the employees, fundamental resources in the operating process of the company, are offered a favorable organizational climate. Emphasis is placed on a formal but familiar style of communication, as they are encouraged to participate with ideas and suggestions in the decision-making process. The private sector emphasizes the communication of the whole system; hence team buildings and events are regularly organized and the members of the families of the whole team are expected.

In public companies there is a less familiar climate, in which things are difficult, as many public companies are not yet adapted to today's systems.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the importance of communication in private and public companies, drawing a delimitation between how it is approached in both the private and public systems.

Key words: public communication, organizational communication, efficient communication, communication within companies, modernization of companies.
J.E.L. classification: L32

1. Introduction

The basis of this article is communication, an element without which a system cannot function and without which the connections between people would not exist. In order to follow a logical thread of the paper, we will focus our attention, in the first phase, on the term of communication, pointing later to the term of public communication, which we will analyze from the perspective of both public and private companies. The two types of companies will be analyzed separately, following the interpreted information, drawing a delimitation between the way each one works, then identifying the similarities and the differences between them. The term of public relations will be mentioned during the work; this concept is a result of communication and can play a substantial role in the communication process.

In making this article, as a research method, the qualitative analysis of information was the basis. I chose a qualitative approach because I considered it relevant in dealing with the topic of communication. Because qualitative research allows for a detailed study, the information we analyzed led to the creation of an article highlighting the importance of communication in the private and public sectors, and also drawing a boundary between the two sectors to understand how communication is is addressed.

The analysis of the theories drawn by the researchers helped us to identify the differences in the approach of communication between public and private companies.

2. Theoretical background. Communication and public relations

Communication is defined as a process that takes place between people, groups, which has as a means of interaction the word, gesture, sign, symbol, mimic, image. The purpose of the communication is to convey what is desired, the reason why something is desired and the means by which it can reach the proposed goal.

Communication is an inevitable process, so that each individual communicates, regardless of which means; any behavior, gesture, sign represents communicative value, even if speech is not involved.

In order for the communication process to run in complex parameters, it needs to answer a series of questions: why? (the purpose for which the communication is initiated), who? (to whom is the message addressed?), where and when? (the place where the caller will be when he receives the message and when the message arrives), what? (what is information communicating?), how? (what is the tone and style of the message being transmitted?).

Communication is a dynamic process, always in constant motion. Through the communication process there is an unlimited exchange of messages, so each entity involved in the communication process aims to send and receive the information of interest. Communication involves the existence of at least two parts, a transmitter and a receiver, which communicate through words, signs, symbols (Niculae *et al,* 2006, pp. 9-10).

The information transmitted to employees, shareholders, the board of directors, as well as the interactions between the members of the company are included in the internal communication. Internal communication supports the functioning of the entities, it being the one through which the activities within the companies are traced.

The information regarding the organization such as values, culture, principles, the positions that each employee occupies, the objectives set, all these are transmitted through internal communication. Decisions, problem solving, encouragement are all aspects that have in common communication; through internal communication the members of the company understand the company's steps and adapt to its norms. (Abric, 2002, p. 14).

Communication within organizations is carried out in stages, through various communication channels. The Top-Down type of communication, through which the messages are communicated from top to bottom, implies the transmission of decisions, instructions, values, operating policies, from a higher level to a lower level. This type of communication is considered to be insufficient, incomplete and ambiguous in certain situations, the information transmitted containing only the result to which it is intended to be reached, without instructions that should be put into practice to achieve the goals. Often, those who provide information from higher positions have a greater willingness to speak than to listen, thus creating unpleasant situations at the staff level because they cannot verbalize their ideas. The Top-Down communication is unidirectional in some situations, which means the lack of feedback from those receiving the message; in these cases, it is possible that the message transmitted is unclear and this problem cannot be detected in time, due to the lack of feedback, leading to consequences that can affect the entire communication system of the company. (Matei, 2006, p. 65).

Upward communication, as opposed to descendent communication, involves the transmission of messages from the lower to the higher hierarchical level. In this case, the most common means of communication is the direct one, the message being transmitted by subordinates to the superiors. There are situations in which in the process of upward communication intervenes an intermediary who takes the message and sends it further, if he considers that it is a problem which can only be solved by superiors. Like descendent communication, in the upward communication there are also limits, the most frequent being the limit of inequality. In the case of the ascending communication, there are situations in which the subordinates compromise their rights, offering the superiors the messages they wish to hear, both for the purpose of being liked, but also for the purpose of hiding the mistakes they have committed. (Bogathy *et al*, 2007, pp. 9-10).

One form of efficient communication between departments is the horizontal one. In this case, communication is made from peer to peer, between the different departments of the company, the superiors not being involved, messages have a low level of distortion. There are also limitations of horizontal communication in this case; certain types of managers want to have control over all

departments, so they try to control the flow of information between departments; their intervention can block the communication and the natural course of the process. Another limitation may be the culture that each department develops. Although these subdivisions are part of a whole, the people who build them have different values, thus forming different opinions and different points of view regarding the functioning of the system. An eloquent example would be in the case of the sales department, which, focused on quantity, aims to distribute the services/products to as many customers as possible, while in the case of the quality department the staff focuses on quality; they prefer, to the detriment of the large number of sales of products created at a lower quality level, to deliver fewer products/services, but created to the imposed standards, which can do nothing but maintain or increase the company's image. (Bogathy *et al*, 2007, pp. 9-10).

A final model of communication is the informal one, which takes place between subordinates. In this case, the language is familiar and the climate is relaxed. Through this means of communication, the subordinates transmit information of general interest about the company's approach, thus being aware of its situation. Through this means of communication, the messages are clear and concise, with no distortion of information. Of course, there may be situations where the information transmitted is incorrect, which could adversely affect the situation of the company. An example would be stock companies, where decisions are made quickly, and there are situations when there is no time to verify the authenticity of the rumors (Bogathy *et al*, 2007, pp. 9-10).

Public communication, which is part of each company, is the means of communication through which information of general interest is provided to the public/client, the communication process being a complex one, in several stages, transmitted through various distribution channels. The messages transmitted are intended to inform, to share opinions, ideas and programs, but also to influence the public/clients. The public communication has the role to bring to the target public's attention information about the existence and the functioning of the companies, the decisions taken, the new regulations; there are, of course, information that cannot be divulged and which are related to the secrets of the operation of the company/institution and its security. Through public communication, the needs and interests of the public/client are also monitored, following that through the resources the companies have, they intervene in solving problems. Public communication used by public institutions can be classified into three categories:

— Institutional communication: within this type of communication, legal regulations are brought to the public's notice; in the foreground is the organization itself, its image being fundamental; it tries to influence the public perception on the image of the organization, the objectives being those to attract, convince, sell.

— Political communication: it is the form of communication that deals with the transmission of messages with political content; its purpose is to form a positive opinion for the public; the time and space of action are defining, these being substantial characteristics in this type of communication (Rus, 2002, p. 30).

— Social communication: it is defined by human interaction; the focus is on interpersonal relationships, here usually being a transmitter and a receiver whose roles change by rotation; if in the other two types of communication there is often a transmitter and several receivers, which are represented by the public, in this case the situation is restricted, the communication being made between two persons or between groups of only a few persons (Marin, 1998, p. 36)

The communication barriers have a significant importance in the communication process, as they intervene on the transmitted message, distorting it. They are cataloged as follows: physiological and mental; the physiological ones refer to the obstacles encountered in the external environment, such as noise, excessive heat or cold, smell, these kinds of barriers having an impact on the participants in the communication process, the message being wrongly transmitted or misunderstood. Psychological barriers appear in a more subtle form, being present at the level of senses and experiences. The information transmitted and received is filtered, being subsequently transmitted and understood differently by the participants in the communication process. This type of barriers is difficult to detect, precisely because the subjective filter intervenes, the information being thus perceived according to the experiences lived, the level of knowledge accumulated, the perspectives of life. The category of psychological barriers includes cultural, social and individual barriers (Silvaș et al, pp. 250-251).

Cultural barriers intervene when the transmitter and the receiver belong to different cultures, in which perspectives, language, time, gesture, mimicry are understood differently, thus distorting information. Such situations are encountered especially in the international private companies, in which they carry out numerous nationalities, with different cultures.

Social barriers refer to the positions from which we discuss, at the hierarchical level, living, values, norms, knowledge. The attitude and language used change, consciously or unconsciously, depending on the perception that the participants in the discussion have about each other.

Individual barriers are about the intrinsic values of each individual. Although the work environment is the same in a company, even if it is about the same hierarchical position, individuals perceive the organizational culture differently. Within this type of barriers are included the values of members, motivation, perceptions, level of influence.

Once the information regarding the communication process is set, we will treat the concept of public relations, which are a consequence of the way the company communicates with the outside. Public relations have the role of positively or negatively influencing the perception of the public, depending on the means of communication approached. The term of public relations lasts in the dictionary before the outline of the term we are referring to, being defined in the form of information, persuasion and integration. Subsequently, these three terms merged into what we now call *public relations*. Certainly, the basic meanings of the three terms remained the same, adapting to the new changes that occurred during the development of the society (Department of Communication, University of South Africa, 2000, p. 15). The half of the XIX-th century welcomes the business field with a new concept, namely, public relations. The phrase is used for the first time in order to maintain a connection between businesses and consumers. Debated by theorists in the field of philosophy, psychology, sociology, etc. the definitions of public relations are numerous. There is no clear, unique definition of this concept; there are only a multitude of ideas expressed from different points of view (Rus, 2002, p. 71).

The explanation given to the numerous definitions formulated for the term of public relations is that the activities of public relations are carried out in different types of organizations, each having its own purpose of using this field; public relations are applied in governmental/non-governmental organizations, civic associations and educational institutions - the purpose being the formulation and implementation of public policies, public/private companies - whose interest is to make profit. Public relations are used for a purpose other than the permanent connection between the company and the public, namely, to persuade and manipulate the public in favor of the organization. (Coman, 2006, p. 27).

There must be a two-way link between at least two entities for public relations to be present; such a relationship would not exist without the presence of an organization and a public. It is the organization that initiates a first contact with the public, consolidating in time a relationship based on trust. We consider the value of trust as the most important factor in establishing a relationship with the public. The managerial function is the one that intervenes for the physical creation of the relationship, the PR specialists being the ones that mediate the connection between the two parties. The activities of this function include the following: analysis, interpretation and anticipation of public opinion; involvement in management decisions; studying, managing and evaluating the actions taken and the communication processes; planning and implementing a plan that will lead to changes in public policies; management of financial resources to carry out the aforementioned actions. This relationship that wishes to exist from both directions cannot be possible without communication, a form of interaction considered vital. If the communicator is considered to need both the ability to be a good speaker and a good listener, then the organization is seen as such. (Rus, 2002, pp. 70-71).

It is worth mentioning that public relations consists of the links that the organization has, not only with the public, but also with the employees, the authorities and, not least, with the press. The relationship with the media can be defining for the life of a company. As for the relationship with the media, the purpose of the company is to create a favorable climate, to have an effective relationship with it. The relationship with the press must be permanent, there must be communication, there should be initiative from the company when events or product launches take place to provide exclusivity to a certain media source; these initiatives crystallize in the confidence of the media in the organization (Rus, 2002, p. 41).

If the companies use the public relations tool for issuing information and the public relations have a set of tools that they use to spread messages; depending on what is wanted to transmit, the information reaches the public through press releases, press conferences, public talks, community programs for the big mass.

There are studies that show that the public of a company is formed due to the prestige that the respective company has, the type of services and products falling in second place; therefore, public relations can have a huge impact on the sales and revenue of a company (Hillstrom *et al*, 1998, p. 925).

In the following we will treat separately the private companies and the public companies, and then we will integrate the communication process into the functioning process of each of them.

3. Private companies

With the fall of communism, major changes took place on the Romanian economy. The Romanian state has alienated its property rights over the entire economy, thus giving freedom in terms of setting up companies by citizens. 1989, the year marked by the privatization of companies, was the year when the country's economy started on a path of continuous change. An article published in February this year confirms that almost 80% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) is allocated to the private sector and only 20% to the public sector. The same source, confirms a share of 70% allocated to the private sector in terms of Romania's GDP in 2016, the growth being marked. If during the communist period the state was the sole owner of the companies, the situation took a completely different turn with the years passing, the private companies being the ones in majority on the Romanian economic market. A significant desire for modernization and development came with the entry of foreign companies into the Romanian market. The level of development of companies with an international profile, significantly higher than the Romanian one, raised the bar in terms of the business operating model. Romanian private companies have taken over procedures from the operating system of foreign companies, and will implement them in the management process. An impact on the modernization of the Romanian companies was also by those who were employed by the foreign companies, either in Romania or abroad, thus taking over ideas which they subsequently introduced in the business they created. (Economica, 2017).

In private companies, internal communication and employee involvement are fundamental requirements for the good approach of the organization. Communication in a private company takes place on the four levels mentioned above: descending, ascending, horizontal and informal. As mentioned above, the modernist trend that entered the Romanian economic market had an impact on companies; the communication means has become more accessible between subordinates and superiors, the horizontal communication having a significant weight in the current companies. Top-down and upward communication is still present, these being fundamental in any company, but the climate has become more relaxed. The subordinates are encouraged to participate in the good approach of the company with ideas, suggestions, which leads to the desire to involve them, their interest being significantly increased in the activities they undertake. Private companies often use the reward system for active employees, who are continually involved in the good initiative of the company and whose results are above that initially established by the management.

Internal communication in organizations circulates through communication networks, which are classified in formal networks and informal networks. Messages that are transmitted through official channels, such as emails, written statements, brochures, reports, memos, newsletters, are part of the formal network. Informal paths involve the transmission of information through opinions, rumors, expressions, usually being subjective; In this case, situations such as the ones mentioned above may occur, in which certain unverified information may adversely impact the organization. This type of communication is included in the interpersonal one and it is carried out horizontally, between the employees from the same hierarchical position (Berger, 2009).

Private companies emphasize the conditions they offer to employees; thus, human resources departments are becoming more involved and larger in size in the composition of organizations. In the private companies, at the beginning of each year, the budgets for the whole year are established, according to the objectives set; there are budgets allocated to events organized for the entire team

of the company, events that encourage communication and within which the predominant type of communication is the horizontal one. During *corporate* events, a term adopted from English, the atmosphere becomes relaxing and relaxed; those in the higher hierarchical positions lower their barrier and become more accessible. Corporate events have the role of creating and establishing relationships between team members, the topics of discussion not being necessarily about the company. Often such events are organized for the families of the members of the company, thus, the atmosphere becoming even more familiar.

Another type of events that private companies organize is team building. This type of activity, which usually takes place outside the cities precisely to avoid the turmoil and to increase the level of relaxation, is considered necessary in any company. Various team games are set up that aim to increase the level of trust between the members of the organization; such activity also involves games of self-awareness, encouragement of team spirit, decision-making and problem-solving; it stimulates creativity and improves the performance of the team members. Ideas are conveyed that state that employees are motivated only by the financial side, but studies say that following events like this, organized by companies for employees, their desire for performance is visibly increased. Activities are needed to disconnect the team from work and daily routine, and a salary bonus could not contribute to the employee's mental health. Of course, we do not dispute the importance of a financial surplus, but mental health is also taken into account; a balance between the two is the ideal recipe (Kaisser, 2018).

Regarding the leadership position in front of the internal communication, they have the role to increase the communication within the organization. An open communication style from the leader is recommended, precisely so that the employees feel free to express themselves, offering opinions and suggestions, but also complaints. A defining characteristic that may have a negative impact on internal communication is the inconsistency of the facts of the leaders with that of the words; in a case where the leader's actions would be contradictory to what he expresses verbally, his integrity and credibility would lose value.

4. Public companies

The term of public company means the company in which the state or other public unit is either a sole shareholder or a majority shareholder, in each of the two situations the state having the control (Nicolescu, 2017). The remarkable expansion of the private sector took place between World War II and the late 1970s, an event that marked the twentieth century. The public sector can be found in various fields of activity, such as education, security, food, trade, health, etc.

Before discussing the approach of communication in the public sector, we will make a comparison between the two sectors at the development level. In 2017, the studies attest that the public sector is becoming more and more limited to the private sector, so that the profit margin of the public companies decreases from year to year, with the private companies having a considerable advance. When filing the balance sheets at the end of 2015, the state-owned companies held only 0.18% of the total number of companies in Romania, with a profit of 4.1% of the revenues of all companies.

An important aspect that we consider to be relevant in this context is that the private sector is a shareholder in certain private companies. Studies confirm that in companies where the state owns shares, the dividends paid as a result of filing financial results are significantly higher; thus, the money collected from the dividends goes into the state budget (Economica, 2017).

Private sector interest should be focused on meeting the needs of the general interest. In today's Romania, perceptions about public companies are divided, the public sector being described as chaotic and disorganized. A strong influence that has a significant impact on the perception of the population is the media. Negative messages that reach the public are more than half the percentage of positive information. The media delivers the information that the public wants to receive, and those that are of interest are those that have a negative temptation. The news with violent tone, the news that present negative situations within the public institutions and the news in which there are communication mistakes made by the representatives of the public institutions, are the ones to which the public reacts and resonates. There are public institutions where the shortcomings are obvious and the interest in the activities they have to perform is too low; because of these

institutions the public's opinion about the public sector has become a general negative one, in which all public institutions are framed.

Regarding the type of communication directed to the public, the institutional one is predominant. As mentioned above, the role of institutional communication is to inform the public about issues of general interest, but also to create a favorable image for the outside, in order to justify their actions with the risk of a diminished level of revolt on the part. population. The image of the company is reflected in the people who work in it; the presentation of the company's image by the PR department must be in the same parameters for both employees and the public and it is necessary to have a continuous communication with them through talks, monthly publication of magazines, existence of newsletters, video production. Before this information is disclosed by various means, it is advisable to survey the opinion of the employees to find out what kind of information they would be interested in.

Communication in the public sector is carried out according to the models detailed in the first part of the article. As with private companies, all four types of communication are present: vertical communication, which includes top-down and upward communication, horizontal communication and informal communication. The environment in this sector is considered to be more formal than in the case of private companies, as the communication. Upward communication is more difficult to access, so it is quite difficult for subordinates to transmit information directly to superiors without intermediaries. Horizontal communication is considered to be cold and not very friendly. The psychological barrier is felt in this case, because, the perception of the environment as being a formal, serious one, is also transposed on the communication style (Mardare, 2016, p. 128).

The existence of communication barriers is present in a higher percentage in the case of the public sector than in the case of the private one. If, in the case of private companies, cultural barriers are predominant, in the private sector, psychological and social barriers are encountered. Due to the less warm organizational culture in the public sector, the hierarchical positions are better defined and the communication is more rigid. Although there are situations in which employees are not satisfied with the conditions offered, their choice is not to convey what displeases them. Carrying out the activity in an environment where communication is on a secondary level, leads to employee frustrations, the interest in the workplace being at an increasingly low level.

If in the case of private companies, various events are organized whose main purpose is communication, the conclusion of relationships, the consolidation of the members' trust, in the case of public companies, things are different. There are very few public institutions where such activities are organized, the public sector relying on results, internal communication and networking not representing important aspects of daily activities.

In the system of government there are still imprints of communism, imprints of a rigid and cumbersome leadership style, which influence and affect the functioning of public companies. Because a private company is set up through a public company, there are countless complaints from business owners regarding the conditions for setting up companies. Due to the lack of internal communication, civil servants do not know the necessary information, information that enters into the duties of the position they occupy, which is why the chaos in institutions is installed.

The fundamental shortcoming of public institutions is communication, which also leads to a lack of feedback, thus, no information regarding the changes that can be brought about an efficient functioning.

5. Communication in the private and public sectors

The role of communication is primordial, which is why the presence in any of the two sectors is mandatory. In both private and public companies, all four models of communication are present, namely: top-down communication, upward communication, horizontal communication and informal communication. In private companies, relaxed communication is encouraged even in the case of the upward communication approach, while in the public sector, communication is not as present and as friendly. The private sector encourages employees to freely express ideas, suggestions, even dissatisfaction, which is absent in the public sector. Regarding the relationship of the members of the private companies, these are naturally carried out, the informal communication being fundamental. The formal environment that characterizes the public sector imposes on

employees a cold climate, in which the relationship and communication are not as important as in the case of private companies. Although the private sector is focused on generating profit, the importance given to employees is not neglected. Within the private companies, activities such as team building and corporate events are organized, which aim to communicate between employees. At the same time, in private companies there is the term brainstorming, which involves meetings in groups, which encourage communication, the ultimate goal being to find the right solutions for existing problems or for development. The operating system within public companies is quite different, so that the activity of the employees is carried out in a climate in which communication is at the level of the strictly necessary. The lack of constant communication in public companies negatively affects the activity of the company, causing chaos both inside and outside, in the relations with the public (Kaisser, 2018).

A relatively new concept that has emerged in the private companies in Romania is the specialization of the employees. Specialization programs are carried out in different cities, even countries, if it is a multinational company, which has branches in several countries. Within these programs the employees receive information regarding the activity of the company, the objectives set, the new implementations and changes. Often, teams of several people are sent to specializations, thus, the relationships between team members are strengthened.

Regarding the motivation of the employees, in the private companies they practice encouragements and the recognition of the merits both by the superiors and by colleagues. Financial rewards are not always enough. The corporate events come in support of the employees, giving them the possibility to relax with the work colleagues, activities that also contribute to the motivation of the employees.

There are certainly advantages and disadvantages in each of the two sectors, but based on the information obtained, communication in private companies seems to be placed on a primordial level and on a higher level than in the case of public companies. The public's opinion changes and is shaped according to what is transmitted from inside the company to the outside, to the public. Each company establishes its own way of communicating with the external environment, and the results are drawn according to what it wants and manages to issue.

The tone of the communication is given, first and foremost, by the company leader. A relaxed management style, open to communication, gives employees the confidence to express their ideas and opinions. The organization works properly if there is an efficient management, which gives importance to the professional training, motivation and reward of the employees.

In making this article, as a research method, the qualitative analysis of information was the basis. I chose a qualitative approach because I considered it relevant in dealing with communication. Because qualitative research allows for a detailed study, the information we analyzed led to the creation of an article highlighting the importance of communication in the private and public sectors, and also drawing a boundary between the two sectors to understand how communication is addressed.

6. Conclusions

Communication is closely linked to coexistence. Relationships between people are based, above all, on communication. Companies, whether private or public, are created by people, and they are the ones who support them. Communication is a continuous process, which must be sustained, as two-way communication is required for efficiency. The feedback provided by both subordinates to the superiors and vice versa, is fundamental for a normal functioning of the company; feedback has the role of providing information on what could be improved.

Effective communication requires a balance between all four types of communication. Upward communication is necessary to know the hierarchical positions of the members of the company, through the top-down communication the information reaches from the subordinates to those from the higher positions, the horizontal communication connects the team members and the departments from the same positions, and the informal communication is necessary to relax things and to make friendships within the organization.

Public communication is also an important aspect within companies. The public's perception of public or private institutions is the result of the way they communicate with their public. In this

context, public relations also intervene as a result of public communication. A good communicator needs to have the ability to be both a good speaker and a good listener, a principle that also applies to institutions (Rus, 2002, pp. 70-71).

The media, an important factor in the public's perception of organizations, can significantly influence the public's opinions. Within the public sector the media has a greater influence; Once the companies are public, they become accessible to the public, which already have an opinion about the institution, and a news provided through the media can strengthen their opinion or change it. Media pressure is higher in the public sector; there are situations in which the media either anticipates the movements of the company or provides false information, which then creates problems to be solved by managers/spokespersons.

There is an interdependence relationship between the public and private sectors, so that the regulations and principles according to which each of them works are the same or at least similar. The functions that are found both in the public and in the private sector are those of organization, forecasting, coordination, control, value, administration, motivation and profit. Each of the two categories of companies has a purpose and several goals set: although they differ, the process they implement to achieve them is similar.

Following the information obtained and the qualitative analysis, we conclude with a quote on communication, which is described as "the most important engine of business performance". Communication is the boost that starts the whole process of operating companies.

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