Communicational efforts for the construction of relationships in contemporary society: mediations and technology

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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the necessary alignment of communication efforts to build longlasting relationships between a organization and it public facing the ephemerality of the contemporary society. It begins with the historical and conceptual evolution of Public Relations activity, highlighting, afterwards, the social and technological context in which we live, which features lead to a discussion about the integration of professionals' skills from various fields of communication. Such integration enhances the construction of relational process, since it is an absolute necessity that translates changes and challenges over which we shed light with this article.

Introduction

Today the central functionality of communicational technologic resources is to promote interaction, symbolic exchanges and contents sharing, and through them generate ties which may promote the building of organizational and personal relationships. It's noticed in this scenery that the term relationship is applied to any communicative process which occurs on virtual social networks. Here, however, the concept of relationship is set around the mutuality of interests and impacts among the involved ones in the relational process.

Before that technological phenomenon, relationships in the field of communication were associated in an exclusive way to Public Relations, from which became object still in a primary mode since the conceptual change of the area, in the years of 1960. It fits to remember that initially such activity used to center in the goal of influencing "public opinion"[1] in order to favor some organization, idea or person.

With paradigmatic changes suffered by the area, the Public Relation function passes off the imposition, by persuasion, and seeks to transform "the subject himself and communicative process" through mediation. Public relations are a field of mediation which intends to promote interaction in inter, intra and transorganizational spaces, since

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[1] The use of quotation marks are justified to remember that the field of Public Relations has peculiarities in the concept of public opinion, that will be discussed subsequently.

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the organizations are seen and act in a web of negotiations, considering the contemporaneous technological and social panorama. Such purpose requires expansion and union of acts from the multiple fields of communication.

Thus, the objective in this article is to discuss the need of communicational efforts alignment to the process of organizational relationships construction in the contemporary context.

This text is structured in four sections. First one makes a historic rescue of Public Relations in Brazil. In second one is shown the passage of a paradigm founded in persuasion into another one guided by relationships management among a public, private or communitarian organization and their strategic audiences, based on dialogue. In third one is contextualized the society organization and the phenomenon of social networks in contemporaneity, in a historical moment understood as relationships era. It's still discussed the integration of communication areas on organizational relationships building. In forth one, final considerations about the developed thematic and proposed objective are traced.

Public Relations in Brazil, mediation and communication

In Brazil the birth of Public Relations was marked by the creation, in 1914, of a department inside Canadian multinational The São Paulo Tramway Light and Power Co., current Eletropaulo. That new sector had as objective to harmonize public and enterprise's many interests and clarify public opinion, in an attempt to reduce conflicts inside potable water and electric energy sectors.

The dictum "Audience must be informed", uttered by journalist Ivy Lee, considered as the creator of Public Relations in USA, express the concept that guided this area at that time. Profession until then and through some more decades was set as a promotional and people, organizations and ideas' advertising activity, by disseminating information which influenced public opinion and produced effects of acceptance and favorable behaviors.

Public Relations in Brazil were normalized in 1967, through law 5.377, which more used to represent an instrument of control of communication in the country. Considered as extemporaneous, and given to less legitimacy, such regulations disseminated conceptual distortions of the area legally contained, as the pattern implanted by militaries, specially through Public Relations Special Advice (PRSA), which consecrated the view that Public Relations is the art of creating concepts, true or false (Teixeira, 2002).

It may be said that in their first fifty years, Public Relations in Brazil were executioners of typically operational-instrumental tasks in order to obtain gratefulness of public opinion. The basic objective of the programs in that area was to change or to neutralize hostile opinions, crystallize latent opinions in favor of an organization or to conserve favorable opinions for purposes of social acceptance, in a process in which only organization had a voice, in the opposite hand of democratic and ethical values, guided by the truths that characterize Public Relations.

In the outlined context it's noticed that public opinion doesn't refer only to public interest question but private one, which leads us to the Habermas' (2003) conception of "non-public opinion". For that author, Public Relations lends to private interests an authority of public object and engender a consensus seeking for acceptance of ideas, people and products. Commercial intentions are coated in a false interest on the common good.

In Habermas' reasoning, the dynamic of Public Relations has contours of seduction and is drawn to conquer membership of sympathies to private interests, with public tone. On that context, Public Relations allies themselves to mass communication medias intending to generate the necessary influence over public ones , inserting proper material and producing news which reveal only what is interesting to organizations.

When talking about Public Relations on unilateral perspective, it may be associated the mediator dimension that they exercise to Martín Serrano's (2008) mediation concept, set up on adjusting molds and on control over information. According to that theoretician, mediator institutions, mediatic or socials, offer particular forms of representation of reality to promote adjusts and stability to social system.

Every social mediation, in an integration effort, purposes themselves to engender patterns which serve to preserve cohesion towards the disaggregating effects of the social change (Martín Serrano, 2004, 2008), via using information. Mediation constitutes, that way, a limiter and conditioning mechanism of the subject, once it frames information in such a determinate and convenient system of order, controlling it.

The intention of meaning the world to the subjects contained in that concept meets the objective of instrumental patterns of Public Relations, sustained by transmissive communication which seeks to influence the interpretation which publics make about an organization, in other words, control a situation by means of appropriated information to particular interests. On that perspective, Public Relations become an adjusting and controlling system of public ones, whose behaviors affect organizational existence and cohesion. In such patterns, Public Relations don't construct relationships on interests reciprocity dimension and interlocution defended here, inserting themselves exclusively in persuasive field of disclosure and promotion.

However, from 1960 on, a breaking of persuasion has begun as the main foundation of the area, and of the operational feature which characterized it, consolidating itself twenty years later, when Public Relations began to be comprehended as "[...]a directive function which establishes and maintain relationships mutually beneficial between an organization and its different publics on which depend their successes and failures"(Cutlip, Center e Broom, 2006: 3). In Brazil, also in decade of 80's, the concept of integrated communication was adopted and developed, based on the union of communicational efforts for reaching the organizational objectives, in a synergic and interdependent way.

Thus, the mediating function of Public Relations was no longer an operation of imposition of convenient messages, and passed to represent a process of construction of senses. Mediation is comprehended, according to Martín-Barbero (2009) and Orozco (2004a, 2004b) as an ensemble of structuring sociocultural factors, individuals and

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collectives of the subject – from ethnic and geographic origin to the social and cultural movements and to the communication technologies-, in a multiplicity of types.

Constituted from the symbolical subject material, mediations sign up in a revealing dynamic of its history and experiences, in which combinations and results are particular, although the mediating variables constitute in a collective process of social interaction. Mediations are, that way, permanently transformed and transformers – of the subject himself and of communicative process.

Given this, the institutional relationship is observed as a mediating process between an organization and its publics, present or virtual, interpellated (mediated) by sociocultural variables which mean interactions and are reframed by them. It is a process that envolves mutual interests, from which bonds among the involved ones are created and/or strengthened. It occurs in the setting of a web, considering the other relational process of the organization and publics, and the impacts that they generate among their interaction (Guedes, 2013).

The socio-technological contemporaneous context: communicational efforts for the construction of organizational relationships

The social organization which strongly marks the contemporaneous context was strengthened from the decade of 1970 on, when the main forms of expression of public space began to be the non-governmental organizations and the "[...]"volunteering associations" or, in general, social movements, as the institutional heart of civil society, and key of recomposition of public spaces at the same time"(Grau, 1998: 27). That recomposition refers to multiple representative instances of specific interests.

Thus, we live in a strengthened society; a society of articled and mobilized agents able to intervene politically. It's observed the formation of independent webs of communication around collective interests, in special through communication and information technologies and social medias. Forums of discussion and representation are able to elaborate specific agendas, develop their own communication channels and corroborate the discussion of social interest themes, like discrimination of any order – religious, ethnical, sexual; environment questions, abuse of power, moral harassment inside organizations and corruption.

Such forums are instances no more linked to common local sharing and set up other kinds of social relations, of action modes and interaction and exercise of civil rights. Those representative arenas constitute new forms of power, whose position on public space relates itself with other technical resources, knowledge and prestige applied into relation with others, to influence people and groups. They represent collective willing, seeking for group consensus, and form themselves consonant to demands of interlocution, discoursivity and negociation of interests and matters of the subjects of each temporality, considering that, according Wolton (2006: 104), "[...]individuals each time more informed, educated and opened to the world, are each time less mistakable".

Flares in that scenery, the influence of informal spheres – recognized and institutionalized however – in the formation of public opinion and changes in the route of political power. Thematizing questions linked to social well being by specific organizations

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provokes demarcation of diverse participative instances and, consequently, rises the dispute among interests and opinions and the possibility of occurrence of conflict.

Admission of new interlocutors, establishment and enlargement of dialogue and opening communication channels modify the forms of interacting, reclaiming, administrating conflicts and legitimating voices. At last, reset the recognized space for political participation. Increases the opportunity of positions and counter-positions collocation "[...]in several arenas, through several instruments and around variable objects of specific interests[...]" (Gomes, 1998: 155).

However, in the other hand, that same organized society, ingrained in a perspective each time more "web" and potentially more interactive is marked by individualism, unstoppable consume and ephemerality of relations. Towards that paradox, it's believed that tolerance, negotiation and collaboration – like the everydayness of subjects – are basilar for the balance of relationships, either among individuals or inside organization-publics binomial.

In that context, the social networks act, with their multiple forms of sociability, with large potential on relational sense and proximity with others, enlarging desterritorialization of communicative interactions and relationships of people and organizations. Such phenomenon transformed world into a plurality of ideas, opinions, concepts, setting up an opposite spectrum to that in which only organizations had a voice, seducing and manipulating publics via techniques and instruments of Public Relations.

Social networks are virtual spaces that either opportunize enlargement of web relationships, or modify the mode of people and organizations relating. They transform the spaces and temporalities where those relationships occur. In that space of interaction, subjects constitute themselves in a different way, since there is a detachment among them, in other words, actors are mediated by computer or by another support (Recuero, 2009).

That way, actors of/in the networks are representations symbolized by sites, blogs and profiles on social networks. The representation of actors on networks express elements of their personality and individuality, appoints Recuero (2009). It may be said then that every profile in the digital environment is the presence of "ego" in the cyberspace. However, though being private, networks are public spaces at the same time. That way, the concept of social networks is circumscribed in the border of public and private, which means that technologies redefine the boundaries between personal and collective, intimate and shared, me and the other, according to Silverstone (2010).

Social networks constitute sharing spaces, which may generate action and intervention places. Therefore, they implicate on the formation of new social actors and collective and individual identities, new forms of content production, which goes beyond the huge press. Nassar (2010) discusses about the moveholders, which are the interested parts that gather themselves in social networks, blogs, flash mobs, among several forms of digital and hybrid communication. Then, it treats about new interlocutors, whose on-line behavior reverberates in off-line world.

The sociability in social media field is related to the visibility of social actors, in other words, actors from that networks need to be seen, and so social interaction, relations

and social ties may exist (Recuero, 2009). As said by Martín-Barbero, an emergency of a techno- communicative surroundings, powerful in languages, actions and social, political and cultural dynamics. "It is a world where we are seen, and see. And we see actively. We produce visibility. We build visibility to us and to others[...]" (Martín-Barbero, 2009: 15).

In the organizational dimension, visibility may either be an allied of organization for social acceptance and consecution of its objectives, as, at same time, represents public transparence and opportunizes vigilance and pressure to the publics over that one as social subject. Such process requires opening communicational channels between organizations and its publics, seeking for mutual confidence and credibility, internal and externally. It treats about a process that involves promotion of attributes and organizational acts and which is crossed by multiple flows of multidirectional communication of digital era.

Visibility on the social networks field becomes a mediator of sociability from individual and organizational social actors inside digital universe. The process of producing it and control it involves several communicational efforts.

In that context, it is emphasized that in the center of all those processes is the people. They are the ones who create social networks and uses mediation technologies, like internet, to recreate the necessity of closeness to others to reach common objectives, as detached by Cardoso (2011). It is the introduction of mediation of technology in social relationship, with all its possibilities of promoting appropriation and transmission of contents/behaviors.

When trying to comprehend the technological revolution where is lived, new challenges to social life are given to rise, mainly what is referred to the relevance of the Other for construction of individuals and corporations identity and, considering that identity always will require one – or several – alterity(ies), because, "[...]even multi connected, each one seeks the other and, over all, needs human intermediations" (Volton, 2006: 92). In other words, seeks to build relationships.

However, it is necessary to have in mind the need of using every potentialities of technology for virtual meetings, without despising real and physical interaction, stimulating and preserving what characterizes man as a social being. In a scenery where online relations overcome off-line ones, an imbalance streams in which technology protagonizes and "human" typified on face-to-face interactions is just a co-adjuvant.

In an era of social networks, there are the ones who say that we live in the relationship era. But what kind of relationship is being talked about? It must be considered that the essence of concept of relationship is in exchange, in reciprocity, in respect, in tolerance and dialogue. By own nature, relationships implies being in relation with others, an exchanging of ideas and concepts and introduction and renewing of senses, in a given context. As lived in an immaterial and symbolic society goods, relationships acquire the status of intangible goods, either in personal or organizational field.

Relationships presuppose coexistence among different ones, dispute of interests and, then, the necessity of dialogue and mutual understanding. The opening to dialogue requires to considerate the perspective of other, that relational process is crossed by

intentionalities and needings that bring in themselves the principle of interdependence, in other words, no one actor involved on them has a total control of the situation. The autonomy of social actors is limited, therefore. So it is told, then, that relationships appoint to attempts of equate necessities and dependences and contains the ability of create links.

It is observed, that way, the mediating character of relational process. Beyond mediating, relationships are mediated, in other words, socio-cultural variables of the involved ones intervene on them. Those ones may be observed through the knowledge of public behaviors and profiles, and from the origin of the relationships, a step of Public Relations process, that involves the lecture of contexts – spaces of interaction and symbolic sharing - , in which subjects of publics are constituted and act. It is evidenced that the public profile and behaviors reverberates on the organization interests.

In such process it is able to identify the variables which overcome on relationships, molding them and influencing them in their nature, becoming them, for example, friendly, conflictual, submissive or dependent. The mediating variables also affect the continuity or discontinuity of relationships. The contextualization of relationships reveal the conditions in which the relational process is edified, being determinant to consecution of organizational objectives of mutual understanding, of negotiation and balance of interests.

It is noticed that the process of constructions of relationships holds in itself the concepts of mediation, which becomes it closer to several areas of communication, each one with its singular view, fundamental to the organizational objectives.

In the relational process, another constituting element is identified – the possibility of conflict. That, for its time, generates the necessity of negotiation – of senses and power – and crisis may surge from it. The point of balance in that process is the dialogue, instrument to which Public Relations turns "[...]to manage conflict and cultivate relationships with internal and external strategic publics[...]" (Grunig, 2009: 2).

Considering the concepts discussed until here – sociability/visibility, conflict/negotiation, sharing/reciprocity, interlocution/action/common objectives, it is understood that the construction of organization x public relationships involves conjoint communicational efforts for dialogue between organizations and publics, though the organization relational processes are proper objects of Public Relations. Relationships permeate – sometimes more, sometimes less – all of the communication areas, in special with the advent of social networks.

Dialogue integrated on communication

The construction of public, private or third sector organization relationships is one of the moments in which communication areas must dialogue among themselves. In this process they also dialogue with other sciences. Then the concept of integrated communication, comprehended as the unity of action and decision, in order to take care of the reputation and organizational objectives. It treats about the alignment of ethical

communicational efforts, straight to the accomplishment of the organization mission and to the attendance of its interests and the groups of people involved on it.

The base of integrated communication is the constructive dialogue among professionals with formation and different experiences, seeking for common results, more democratic. Such dialogue is the foundation to another dialogue – from the organization with their groups of interest, from which depends its survival and perenity.

Some contemporaneous situations rouse us to the importance that the organizational relationships have acquired and lead us to understand that they pervade all of the management and the communication actions of enterprises:

1. Entrepreneurship and communication professionals in general have already noticed the necessity of establishing and managing relationships of the organization with their employees, clients, community, in a dynamic that includes, however not limiting to produce messages to the media and/ or placement of sophisticated merchandise campaigns, in an isolated form, out of a strategic plan of communication.

2. The rising, in the organizational scope, of areas with actions and objectives turning around closeness and loyalty of the publics and sectors which bring in their name the term "relationship", like relationship centers or relationship departments with clients or community, or other terminologies which contain the same sense, like the service of client attendance, or post-selling.

3. Relationships have been taken as an object of study in other areas, like marketing. In several times it is observed only the use of a new term to name what Public Relations do since a long time ago. It is said about relationship marketing, but it can't be forgotten that the main focus of that marketing modality is the client, while Public Relations concerns about an ensemble of publics.

4. It still has the growing of socio-environmental responsibility area, whose concepts brings in themselves the relational process, added to the theoric presupposes of Public Relations. Socio-environmental responsibility implies on participation of employees on results and decisions of the enterprises, respect to the citizen rights, partnership between clients and suppliers, production with quality, satisfaction of users, contributions to the development of community, commitment with environment. Once again, surges the dialogue to listen to the interests of different parts, seeking for attending the demands of everyone and not only from actionists and owners. It treats on the construction of relationships.

5. Enterprises tend to invest more in processes of management to gain differentials towards the significative rising of competitivity. The concepts of management and sustainability hold relationship one as a constituting element of those processes.

That is the scenery of actuation of communication professionals, whose variables are predominantly social and technological, having in sight that inside it are the interaction provided by social networks and other possibilities of digital communication. Meanwhile, on that context, there is still the political bias, considering itself as the intrinsic power to social relations and the capacity of individuals and groups to promote transformations inside society and organizations.

Final considerations

The complex "social and cultural broth" demonstrated till here cut out some features that permeate the constructed relations in different mediations and releases light over one of the main problems that constitute the theory and practice of integrated organizational communication: how to construct longlasting relationships in an individualist

and marked by ephemerality and infidelity in relations society? How to deal with multiplicity of publics, most of the times reified by market researches and verification of costumer profile, for example? Would the Public Relations be the panacea to sociabilities engendered by society in a web and for the repositioning of corporations in the virtual world?

Social scenery defined here is marked by personal and organizational reset relationships, revealing opportunities of use of technologic resources available to transform the interaction that they promote into true relationships, via stimulation of dialogue. The practice of relation is from the own human necessity of balancing the expectations and interests among the people and among those ones the organizations. That necessity leads into symbolic exchanges generated by reciprocity in the relational process. Thus, the practices of relationships contain the principles of mutuality of interests and of interdependence.

In the organizational field, having in sight that the communication professionals are able to use and potentialize the using of technologies, it is also up to them humanize the processes made possible and facilitated by technologies, beginning with dialogue among themselves seeking for common objectives. Is not it through communication that every order conflict is to be avoided? Would not humanization be a path to reach that objective? It hurries to recognize that, according to Wolton (2006: 225), "[...]communicate is to accept the experience of alterity[...]", is to comprehend that the subjects and corporations identity will make sense when it is taken into account the dialogical and dialectical dimensions proper from the actual society as permeating and fundamental aspects.

In that universe, visibility is the mediator of relationships – mediation understood as the production and sharing of senses and not as social control through information. What can be done with visibility, being it deliberately or involuntarily constructed? To become it favorable to communication and to relation organization-publics, through the different forms which characterize each area of communication.

The construction of organizational relationships in the socio-technological contemporaneous context has acquired, that way, a multi-disciplinal profile, which implies a synergic interlocution of communication areas among themselves and with social sciences. Multi-disciplinarity constitutes an adequate phenomenon to the era where we live: fertile and facilitator of relationship construction that promote the consolidation of democracy in its kaleidoscope of meanings. It is the ideal moment to overthrow barriers, professional maturation and reaching nobler objectives of communication, whose absolute necessity translates the mutations, challenges and the deep presentments treated in this article.

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