

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Organization sets itself specific objectives in order to meet the better business success, and to gain comparative advantage over the competition. For these objectives to be achieved, of crucial importance is organizational communication per se which implies communication among employees, as well as communication between different hierarchic levels in the same organization. Communication as an element of organizational behaviour is seen through the group level as the independent variable. Throughout this paper we shall explain the importance of communication for organization, the communicational process and channels for information flow through the network of small formal groups and the network of informal groups. Hereby we also want to emphasize the greater need for appreciation of communication as the important factor of organizational behaviour due to the growing changes in organizations which face the leadership with new challenges and opportunities for testing the different organizational behaviour concept modes. We will also demonstrate the extent of satisfaction with communication within the observed economic operators in Osijek-Baranja County, and evaluate the impact of communication on the employee level on business performance of the same.

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1. THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION FOR ORGANIZATION

Organizational behaviour becomes more and more important for the growing role of the man in social processes, as well as in their management. According to S.P. Robbins „the discipline of organizational behaviour (OB) is a systematic study of actions and attitudes that people exhibit within the organisation. “ (Robbins; 1992, 1.) Thereby the elements of organisational behaviour become more and more important since the development of quality organisational behaviour can increase the competitive ability of the company and market value of the same.

The subject matter of the systematic study of the discipline of organisational behaviour is actions of which the most important ones are three determinants of employee productivity. They are reflected through productivity, absenteeism and workforce fluctuation, and great attention is paid to satisfaction at workplace since it reflects the attitudes of the employees which are also the subject of the systematic study of the discipline of organisational behaviour.

Analysis of the elements of organizational behaviour enables a better understanding, predicting and control of organizational behaviour. Communication as an element of organizational behaviour is observed through the level of group behaviour. Communication is one of the central components of every organization; therefore, it is clear why is the better understanding of communication efficacy the key to the overall organizational success. (<http://web.efzg.hr/RePEc/pdf/Clanak%2006-01.pdf>)

Business communication is usually divided to the one within the organization, and the one outside the organization. “Communication is the process of conveying the message from one person to the other (Weick and Browing, 1986), however it is very important that the recipient of the information understands the content and the meaning of the message.” (Rouse & Rouse; 2005, 40.)

Weihrich and Koontz state that the function of communication in the organisation is to connect the employees of that organisation in order to reach mutual goals.

Hence, the importance of communication in the organisation is important because of:

- the company’s goal setting and their carrying out,
- the development of plans towards their realisation,
- human and other resources management in the most successful and appropriate way,
- the choice, the progress and the performance evaluation of the organisation members,
- the management, guiding, motivating and creating a climate in which people want to contribute,
- the control over realisation. (Weihrich & Koontz; 1994, 538.)

“Communication in the organisation represents a complex system of the flow of information, orders, wishes and references made out of two partially complementary systems: formal communication network and informal communication network.” (Fox; 2001, 41.)

“Formal communication is a systematic and formal process of information transmission in spoken and written form planned in advance, and adjusted with the needs of the organisation.” (Fox; 2001, 42.) While informal communication does not follow the line determined in advance, but there is an undisturbed communication between particular groups within the organisation.

The process of communication involves several elements: the sender, the message, the medium, and the recipient. Communication flows from the sender which is the source of the communication (be it an individual or a group). He sends off the message to the recipient using a particular medium. When talking about the communication within the organisation, characteristic for the medium are different immediate conversations, memos, printouts and schemes depending on the content and the aim of the message which the sender wants to convey to the recipient. The recipient then attempts to understand which message the sender wants to convey, although the communication process may sometimes be interrupted by a noise in the communication channel, which can impede the communication. The problem which often appears within the organisation is getting information overload which leads to a burden, so therefore it is important to take account of selecting only the relevant information.

Communicational flow in the organisation can develop into many different directions: upward communication, downward communication and sideward communication.

Upward communication – the one which goes up the official hierarchy, from the lower to the higher level in the organisation. Information go from the subordinates to the superiors. It is mostly used for sending information associated with the proposals system, employees’ opinion, work insight, attitudes and problems of the employees. It is important to secure the freedom of communicating (undisturbed information flow) since the main drawback of the upward communication is message filtering.

Downward communication – flows from the higher to the lower levels in the organisation. It is characteristic for giving orders, broadening of ideas and communicational knowledge. It takes up a lot of time, but its most common problem is the loss or denying of information on the path through the chain of command; very often there is misunderstanding of the directions, therefore a backward connection has to be established in order to confirm the transmission of correct and full information.

Weihrich and Koontz term the horizontal and diagonal flow of information a *sideward communication*, because of their generic joint features. S. P. Robbins

terms them a lateral communication. Horizontal communication appears among people of the same status within a department or among different working units, whereas the diagonal communication appears among people of the different status who are not formally connected in the organisational communication system. (Fox; 2001, 41.)

Communication can develop into several different forms: oral, written and non-verbal form.

Oral communication – the spoken word is the main code of the communication. Formal discussions and informal rumours are some of the forms of oral communication. Usual channels of oral communication are phone, video, and face-to-face conversations. There are some advantages of oral communication over other forms of communication, namely the speed of conveying the information and feedback. The disadvantage, however, is the possibility of distorting the original message. In the business world oral communication plays a great role.

Written communication – compared to the oral communication it is tangible whereby it is much easier to verify the data. One of its disadvantages is that it takes up more time compared to the oral communication and there is not a direct feedback. The written form of the communication is attached to some sort of technology which enables us to convey the information (PC, paper, pen...).

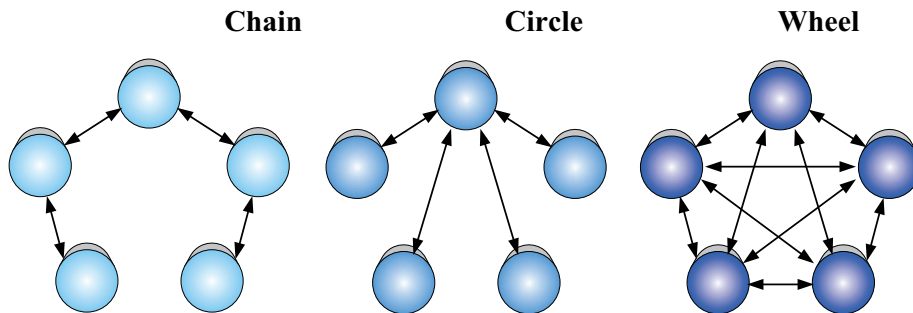
Nonverbal communication – facial expression, gesturing, tone of the voice, look and appearance are some of the elements of non-verbal communication. “Non-verbal communication implies all intentional and accidental meanings which have no form of a written or spoken word.” (Rouse & Rouse, 2005, 47.) Non-verbal form of the communication is often neglected compared to the other forms of communication. Important advantages of non-verbal communication are that it supports other forms of communication; whereas the disadvantage is that the recipient may misconceive the message and consequently misinterpret it.

2. COMMUNICATIONAL NETWORKS IN THE ORGANISATION

Besides already mentioned ways of communication, there are channels through which information flow, which is very important for analysing the communication as the element of organisational behaviour, and those are formal small group network and informal group network.

2.1. Formal small group networks

Picture 1. Three forms of network in small formal groups



Source: according to Robbins, S. P.: Organizational Behavior, 10-th ed., Prentice Hall, New Jersey, 2003., p. 290.

It is visible from picture 1. that there are three formal small groups networks : chain network, circle network, and wheel network. The differences between networks are in the basic features of each network. Chain network of formal small groups mainly follows the formal chain of command, whereas the circle network has the leader as the central person for conducting all communications within the group. As opposed to chain and circle network, wheel network is characterised by openness that enables the joint communication of all members of the group. If we compare the networks in small groups having in mind certain criteria as speed, accuracy, leader emergence and member satisfaction, we would conclude that in order to come to a conclusion, we have to wisely choose a particular form of the communication network depending on the aim we want to achieve. If we appreciate accuracy, then the chain network should be used. The small formal groups circle network is to be used if our aim involves some of its features: great speed, accuracy and high emergence of the leader. Wheel network is fast and enables high member satisfaction.

2.2. Informal groups communication network

“Informal communication in the organisation, in Anglo-American business culture known as *grapevine*¹ is secondary and very complicated communication network that is based on personal contact, and opposed to the system of formal communication it does not follow a particular line settled in advance.” (Fox;

¹ Identification stems from the American Civil War. Hanging from the trees and bushes, the telegraph wires resembled the grapevine. The system was unreliable, and messages often wrongly interpreted. (Smith Vigor 1991:105)

2001, 46.) Since *grapevine* is not a less important source of information, the managers should acknowledge also the informal communication systems in the organisation, and use them for the welfare of their organisation.

“Informal communication reflects the employees’ perception concerning the organisation. It often carries or asks for information that the management, accidentally or deliberately, has not formally disclosed.” (Fox; 2001, 47.) *Grapevine* consists of three main features. “Firstly, it is not controlled by the management. Secondly, most of the employees consider it more feasible and more reliable than the official notifications provided by the top management. And thirdly, it is mostly used for the self-interest of the people within it.” (Robbins; 2003, 290.)

3. A STUDY OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION IN ORGANISATIONAL SETTINGS

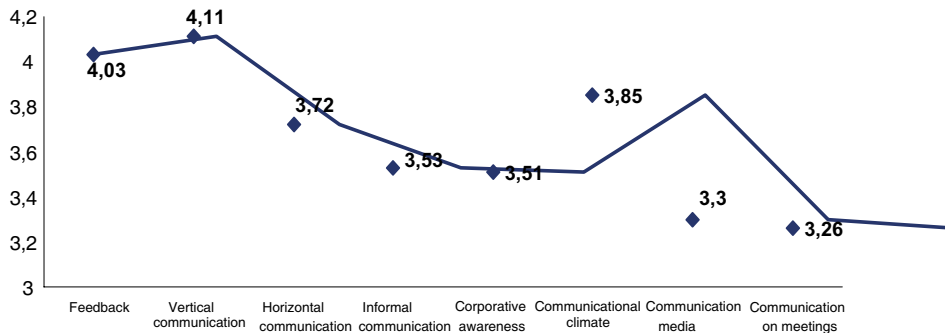
In order to reaffirm the above mentioned about the importance of communication for the organisation, and to see the employee communication satisfaction on a particular level, for making of this paper apart from secondary data, there have been used also primary data obtained by the own research.

The research involved employees of four organizations from Osijek-Baranja County, which were ready to cooperate.

We carried out a questionnaire for the needs of the research, and the questionnaires were handed in to the employees in person. There were 146 examinees (the employees from four organizations from Slavonija and Baranja area).

The questionnaire comprised 6 units which covered the elements of organizational behaviour, and one unit concerned the issues of communication satisfaction in organizations. The questions in the questionnaire were scaled by “closed” answers with given modality characteristics. Pursuant to the theme of the paper we will point out only the results of importance for the presentation of this work. We used a PC based program SPSS (*Statistical Package for Social Sciences*) for the statistic analysis of the collected data.

Diagram 1. Communication satisfaction



Source: authors' own research

From questioning the examinees about the communication satisfaction in the organisation from Diagram 1. evident are these obtained data. The examinees were asked individual questions about the communication satisfaction, and the same have been grouped in visible categories in the diagram 1.

The employees show the greatest satisfaction towards the vertical (mean = 4,11) and return communication (mean = 4,03). Individual questions which were given the examinees and to which they showed the biggest satisfaction (vertical communication) referred to the satisfaction with the formal communication with their immediate superiors, the satisfaction stemming from the informal company with the superior, and the questions about how the superior helps and pays attention to the things his employees are saying.

The examinees show the lowest satisfaction with the meeting communication (mean = 3,26) where the questions referred to the satisfaction with meeting organisation, usefulness of information obtained on meetings, and the duration of the meetings. The examinees also showed dissatisfaction with the media of communication (mean = 3,3) which is visible from the questions which referred to the satisfaction with e-mail usage as the medium of communication, and the possibility and quality of communicating via modern media.

Table 1. Communication satisfaction in the organisation

	I am satisfied with how much the communication in the company helps the individual feel as an important part of it.							
	n	%	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	sig.hk.
Sex	148	100	6	16,2	36,4	33,1	8,1	0,62
Male	52	35,1	9,6	19,2	34,6	28,8	7,6	
Female	96	64,8	4,1	14,5	37,5	35,4	8,3	
Age group	148	100	6	16,2	36,4	33,1	8,1	0
to 30 years of age	37	25	0	2,7	51,3	40,3	5,4	
aged between 31 and 40	31	20,9	16,1	22,5	38,7	16,1	6,4	
aged between 41 and 50	53	35,8	24,5	30,1	32	5,6		
aged between 51 and 60	27	18,2	0	11,1	25,9	44,4	18,5	
The level of education	148	100	6	16,2	36,4	33,1	8,1	0,16
Without high education	66	44,5	9	9	34,8	37,8	9	
With high education and more	82	55,4	3,6	21,9	37,8	29,2	7,3	
Employment	148	100	6	16,2	36,4	33,1	8,1	0,11
First employment	69	46,6	7,2	18,8	34,7	28,9	10,1	
Second employment	44	29,7	4,5	2,2	45,4	38,6	9	
Third employment and upwards	35	23,6	5,7	28,5	28,5	34,2	2,8	
Years of service	146	100	6,1	16,4	36,9	33,5	6,8	0,02
to 5 years of service	43	29,4	0	4,6	44,1	41,8	9,3	
5 and more years of service	103	70,5	8,7	21,3	33,9	30	5,8	
Income	144	100	6,2	16,6	36,1	34	6,9	0,28
to the average salary in RH	58	40,2	5,1	13,7	29,3	41,3	10,3	
more than the average salary in RH	86	59,7	6,9	18,6	40,6	29	4,6	
Type of ownership	148	100	6	16,2	36,4	33,1	8,1	0,01
Private sector	79	53,3	11,3	18,9	37,9	26,5	5	
Government sector	69	46,6	0	13	34,7	40,5	11,5	
Communication	148	100	6	16,2	36,4	33,1	8,1	0
Dissatisfied by the communication	24	16,2	33,3	58,3	0	8,3	0	
Satisfied by the communication	124	83,7	0,8	8	43,5	37,9	9,6	
Influence on decision-making	146	100	6,1	16,4	36,9	33,5	33,5	0
Having influence	44	30,1	0	20,4	36,3	43,1	0	
Without influence	68	46,5	11,7	20,5	29,4	32,3	5,8	
Cannot estimate the influence	34	23,2	2,9	2,9	52,9	23,5	17,6	

Source: authors' own research

Table 1. shows the obtained data based on the total sample to the assertion made: I am satisfied with how much the communication in the company helps the individual feel as an important part of it. Visible data are arranged into several segments: demography (sex, age group, level of education, place of employment, years of service, income, and a type of ownership of the organisation), and we showed the data according to the level of communication satisfaction within the organisation, as well as the assessment of what kind of influence the employees have in decision making within the organisation.

Namely, there is a notable statistical link (at the level of significance) between individual segments like: age structure (at the 0,00 level of significance), according to years of service (at the 0,01 level of significance), then according to the type of organisation ownership (at the 0,01 level of significance), and according to the communication and as well as by the influence of employees in decision making within the organisation.

4. CONCLUSION

Greater attention should be paid to the communication as the element of organisational behaviour because of the growing changes within organisations which face the leadership with new challenges and opportunities for testing the different organizational behaviour concept modes. By identifying the level of communication satisfaction within the organisation we get an insight into organisational forces, but simultaneously also get an insight into weak points in the area of communication within the organisation. We can also use them as the basis for making important business decisions within the organisation. Examining the results of the research done within observed economic operators in Osijek-Baranja County it is visible that the employees are dissatisfied by the vertical and return communication, while they have showed the greatest dissatisfaction with the chosen communication media and the overall meeting communication. Causes for this kind of expressed satisfaction we can search partly in the possible different understanding of the communication importance of the leadership, and equally in the usage of old-fashioned media used in communication between different levels.

We find it essential that there be a great investment from the side of the organisation towards satisfaction growth on those levels where there has been shown the least satisfaction. It is important to develop awareness about the importance of communication which is shown through individual growth, job satisfaction and motivation of the employees which again leads to employees' loyalty towards their parent organisations.

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