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## THEORETICAL AND APPLICATIVE DIMENSIONS REGARDING COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

### 1. Introductory notions regarding communication elements

Any analysis and intervention approach on communication management starts from the identification of the main aspects of communication, the scientific transformation of concepts and theoretical principles. The research aims, mainly, at identifying formal and informal aspects of the communication in the organization, in order to identify its most important elements of communication management.

In our case, the practical approach consists of two analysis and research plans:

- **the analysis of the company's organization documents:** rules of procedures, organization chart, quality management manual and procedures etc., in order to identify and define formal aspects of communication process.

- **the analysis of sympathetic and communication relations in the work groups,** in order to detect informal and psycho-social elements of communication.

There is an interplay between these two analysis levels, which build a complex system that incorporates all other communication types and approaches in the organization.

**1.1. Formal communication elements in the organization.** In any domain, formal communication, either verbal or written, includes all standardized/regulated types (by means of the rules of procedures, job description, etc.) including technical details, reports, plans, letters, guidelines, provisions, requests of the beneficiary to amend a project etc. For the messages to achieve their goal, the issuer must display formal communication skills. Messages must be clear, simple, easy to understand and contain relevant information, being highly recommended the use of tables and graphics. The effective formulation of a message relies on its appropriate elaboration by virtue of selection, analysis and previous organization of the ideas composing it.

Drawing up reports is one of the most important types of formal communication activities in a company. Management reports address to all stakeholders of the projects and have the following features:

- to ensure the understanding of the current state of play of the project to be delivered;
- to identify the issues and eventual risks and propose corrective solutions or alternative fulfillment scenarios;
- to be brief, as opposed to be time-consuming when being read (about ten minutes for the reading) and to enable the assessment of work performance and to adopt the necessary corrective actions.

**1.2 Informal communication elements in the organization.** Informal relations among the members of the organization rely on friendship, common interests, similar social position and come from certain psychological and social needs. The purpose of these relations is to attain certain personal and even organizational goals.

The organizational management has to know the details of the organization and informal communication inside the team it manages, and to identify the impact it can have on the effectiveness in terms of attaining the company's objectives. For this purpose, it is instrumental to detect the informal leaders, and to get their feedback as to the issues faced by the team, the discontents, and the potential impact of new technical and administrative approaches, of the reorganization and other actions whose success is conditioned by the individuals' acceptance.

Since the organizational climate reflects in the employees' attitudes and behaviors, the organization has to consider the informal elements occurring in the work groups, which contribute to attaining the objectives. The measurement of the informal communication dimension, in the researched company will be performed by means of a research based mainly on methods and techniques employed by social sciences.

## **2. Research objectives**

### **2.1. Theoretical objectives**

- a) to give an outline of communication in the work groups from a systemic perspective, by combining formal and informal aspects;
- b) to highlight relevant aspects of the organizational behavior patterns from communication management viewpoint, meaning both procedural elements, specific to the organizational and management processes, and interpersonal relations in the work groups;

c) to define communication determinants in the organizations and their role in the articulation of communication management.

### **2.2. Practical objectives:**

a) to identify formal aspects of communication and its role in communication management;

b) to analyze the sympathetic relations and their influence on communication in the work groups and in terms of configuring the informal plan of the organizational communication;

c) to identify the formal - informal ratio of the work group communication, as well as the weight of the two dominants in defining the dominant traits of communication management.

d) to identify several suggestions from the study of communication management analysis that has an impact on management performances in the organization.

### **2.3. Research hypotheses**

**Hypothesis I.** If certain organizational deficiencies and managerial operation of the organization influence the organizational communication alike, reshaping the communication management, mainly at a formal level (procedural-administrative), will become a pre-requisite for improving performance.

**Hypothesis II.** We assume that the elements of communication formal organization significantly determine similar configurations at the informal level of communication, as a consequence of systemic and integrated functioning of communication management.

## **3. Research methods and techniques**

In order to attain the established objectives and to check the research hypotheses, we employed the following research methods (techniques):

- direct observation method;
- analysis of the company's documents;
- interview;
- sociometric research;
- primary and complex data analysis.

**3.1. The observation.** The observation is one of the oldest and most widespread research techniques, which enables us to systematically and attentively follow the facts, the conducts and psychological state of mind of individuals, in order to draw conclusions regarding either individual conduct patterns in the work contexts, or ways of interaction between two individuals or group relations and highlights interpersonal acts, other than the ones specific to individual behavior.

In this research we performed a participative, structured observation, by employing an overt researcher. The approach was necessary in order to identify the elements that orient the research towards the areas of the maximum interest and that are compliant with the set objectives, as well as to collect additional information, to supplement the data collected by employing other methods.

**3.2 The analysis of the company's documents.** The use of the documents in the scientific research ensures a diversification of the information, and entails the elaboration of a systematic information analysis approach, bolstering on the skills acquired for this purpose, on the relevance or constraints of this information source.

The company's documents that were analyzed during this research were: the rules of procedures in the company, organizational documents: organizational chart, orders, administrative procedures, job description, quality management manual. As a result of the confidentiality principle agreed with the beneficiary, the data gathered from these documents and presented in this paper will be codified, to prevent the economic interests of the company from being prejudiced, or the honor of any employees participating in this study from being affected.

**3.3 The interview.** This method represents a discussion between the researcher and the investigated individual, based on the observations that any person can make on its own behaviors [21], and entails, as K. Meili (1964) states, the following:

- direct relation, the face-to-face type, between the researcher and the researched individual;
- changing places and partner roles;
- total honesty of the researched individual, avoiding incomplete, superficial answers, as a result of voluntary distortion;
- the individual has a minimum capacity for introspection and self-analysis, evaluation and desire of self-revealing;

- the researcher's skill to determine the commitment and participation of the researched individuals in conversation;
- the researcher's empathy (placing him/herself on the position of the researched individual in order to anticipate and understand his/her reactions).

**3.4. The sociometric research.** One of the techniques that contribute to the identification of the informal leader in a work group, and also to the analysis of the sympathetic relations and interpersonal communication is the sociometric technique. By employing this technique, one can collect relevant data regarding preferential, sympathetic relations among the members of the work groups, as well as their structure at a certain time. This technique requires that the members of a group, who know each other and share collaboration relations, identify and name, in the order they prefer, three persons inside the group (apart from the manager) **with whom they communicate or collaborate to the best, as well as three persons with whom they have the worst communication or collaboration.** They are required afterwards to give the reasons why they chose those respective individuals, *i.e.* which were the criteria or traits that made them name those persons. Following the employment of the sociometric test, the obtained data are introduced in a sociometric matrix (a two-entry table containing, both horizontally and vertically, all the members of the group who completed the test), the received or expressed choices or rejections being written down for each participant.

*“The value of this proof is given by the fact that it provides information about the real, current situation of the relations amongst the members of a group, on which communication and collaboration processes rely, and enables the smooth identification of the informal leader or leaders in a group/a team in which the group/leader is not declared”[11].*

*This technique does not enable an “objective measurement” of the relations amongst the members of a team, but it offers **a description of the subjective relations, influenced by sympathy and antipathy, the informal aspect of interpersonal and communication relations [11].***

Being a radiography of the sympathetic relations existing in a work group at a certain time, the results obtained from the sociometric technique have practical applicability, meaning that on their basis one can delineate the informal influential area in the organization, or the acceptance or rejection areas of each employee or group within the company. All this information presents indirectly the **informal communication networks,**

their leaders, possible “barriers” or sources of information distortion, as well as a part of the elements generating or maintaining conflicts.

**3.5. The sociometric questionnaire.** Below we will present you a questionnaire, by means of which we will identify several elements of communication relations you have with your colleagues. **The questionnaire is anonymous and confidential** and therefore your colleagues or managers in line will not have access to its results. **We kindly ask you to be honest in expressing your opinions!** For each question, **please name three persons**, in the order you prefer, placing on the first position the name of whom you consider most adequate as an answer to the respective question, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> place the next in terms of importance and so on. Please specify for each name the reasons that determined your choice (Please justify your choice).

*In your professional activity, who are the peers you can communicate most easily with and who are the peers you can share with useful and beneficial professional information and why?*

Rank	Name and surname	Why? (reason of choice)
1.		
2.		

*In your professional activity, with whom of your peers you cannot communicate easily, you cannot share useful and beneficial professional information and why?*

Rank	Name and surname	Why? (reason of choice)
1.		
2.		

**3.6. Primary and complex data analysis.** There is an interplay between the general documentation and the scientific one and therefore they complement each other, therefore capitalizing on the exact perception of the ratio between what is essential and collateral. The stage is followed by the processing of the obtained data in order to devise and verify hypotheses, the following methods being called for:

- mathematical, statistical, economic or sociological methods;
- the operational feature that needs a swift processing in terms of decision-making and action.

**The primary analysis** means that only a quantitative data interpretation (a summary) is performed. It is used when there is no data enabling the expected impact measurement and when the data processing

cannot be made automatically, and therefore the impact measurement becomes difficult.

**The complex analysis** considers the interpretation of all data contained in the database, whilst the degree of complexity depends on the available information, as well as on the other dissemination criteria that define the analysis type, offering the opportunity to interpret the analyzed phenomenon as realistically as possible. The analysis of the phenomena entails their quantitative and qualitative measurement, the determination of their size from the static and dynamic viewpoint.

#### 4. The individuals subjected to the research

The research was conducted in the company S.C. ALUCO S.R.L that comprises **36 employees** and a general manager, the owner of the company. In order to analyze formal elements of communication, we referred to the entire personnel, in accordance with the analyzed organizational processes.

The socio-demographic structure of the company staff is divided as follows: women = 11, men = 25, average age = 37, management positions = 8, staff = 30.

As to the radiography of communication informal aspects, the group of subjects under research was reduced to the employees having responsibilities for each operational department.

Thus, out of the 36 staff, only 17 were included in the sociometric test, except for the workers. The 17 staff will be identified by the assigned numbers, as follows: *1 = financial manager, 2 = quality assurance manager, 3 = production manager, 4 = accountant, 5 = human resources officer, 6 = design engineer, 7 = construction engineer, 8 = secretary, 9 = legal advisor, 10 = Q.A. officer, 11 = quality control officer, 12 = supply officer, 13 = warehouse keeper, 14 = production officer, 15 = site engineer, 16 = mechanic/transport officer, 17 = workshop foreman.*

#### 5. Presentation of research outputs

**The analysis of the formal communication plan in the organization.** Following the observations we made, the analysis of the company's documents and the interviews with the employees, we outlined the defining elements of formal communication management in the organization. They will be presented in the next pages as **research and**

**analysis reports**, which contain approaches, rules and procedures applied in the company, as it results from the analyzed documents.

The main documents orienting the research of formal communication management are: **rules of procedures, organizational chart, job description, organizational processes map and quality management manual**. The observation guide that was utilized focused on all types of factors outlined when presenting the scientific observation method. The registered information was supplemented by the elements derived from the interviews with the staff of the company.

### **5.1. The analysis and research of the company as to its objectives, activities and way of organization**

**Presentation of the company.** S.C. ALUCO S.R.L. is a company with private national capital, founded in 1998, which conducts the following activities: execution of highway construction works, roads, airfields and sport fields, manufacture of concrete elements destined for constructions and merchandise road transport.

In the framework of the company's general policy, at the beginning of 2003, a management and quality assurance system applicable to the activity of the companies in the field of construction and repairing was adopted and implemented. This system evolved into a quality management system, as per ISO 9001:2001. The organization of the company and the way of its operation are outlined in the job description and in the organizational process map.

#### **The main managerial objectives of the company are:**

- to ensure the capacity to provide services/products to meet the demands of the customers, by observing the laws and regulations;
- to increase customer satisfaction by providing services/products that meet and go beyond the customers' expectations;
- to communicate to the staff and customers the policy and current objectives of the company as established by the management;
- to train the staff and raise its awareness regarding the processes, organizational structure, authority and responsibilities of all company departments;
- to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the company.

One can notice that the main concern of the company's management resides in the communication processes both inside of the company and in relation with the customers. For this purpose, we have attempted to identify whether there is a communication management strategy and what steps are taken.



We have found out that the company did not elaborate a communication plan or strategy and that this responsibility was left to the heads of the department, depending on circumstances. Moreover, the general manager considers that communication problems could be solved to a great extent on the basis of the unofficial agreements with the staff, of the skills and authority of the heads of departments.

**Communication.** In the Rules of procedures, it is defined as an important instrument in assessing the company's performance, leading directly to process improvement by involving the staff in attaining the company's objectives. Formal management has the responsibility to create and maintain a work environment by which the staff is involved in establishing the most adequate way of accomplishing internal communication, changing responsibilities, introducing new work techniques, equipment and materials.

**The official ways of internal communication** of the policy, objectives and demands of the company to its staff and the ways in which the management receives the feedback, as shown by the official documents:

- by planned training and organizing training when necessary;
- by advertising on the notice boards in the production departments of the policies, objectives and performance indicators of the company;
- by means of daily briefings (morning briefings) between the department supervisors and the staff;
- by means of surveys among the staff, whenever necessary, regarding the quality of the works/products and personal satisfaction;
- by means of daily progress reports to the line manager as to the development of processes, stages and deadlines;
- by means of monthly reports of the heads of departments regarding the achievement of performance and production indicators;
- by means of the 6-month report on the implementation of preventive and corrective actions and the efficiency of communication management system, also containing recommendations to improve the departments under management analysis;
- by means of any recommendation is brought to the attention of the line manager, who, following its analysis and depending on its suitability, will include it in the above mentioned reports;
- by means of open discussions, when it is necessary, on topics regarding the quality of the products.

**The content of the information presented to the staff of the company refers to:** policy of the company, authority and responsibilities,

demands of customers and market, requirements of standards and regulations, processes/product demands, including any change occurred during the work execution process, accepted service/product suppliers, competition and competitive products.

In order to ensure a proper organizational communication, the management allocated enough resources in order to make sure that it gets the necessary information to meet the customer demands, it provides all the information about the product, as requested by the customer, it processes all the calls for offer or received orders, the concluded contracts, it obtains satisfaction feedback from the customers, including their complaints.

## **5.2. Management process analysis and research**

*5.2.1. Goal of the approach:* to establish responsibilities and ways of organizing regular management analyses.

*5.2.2. Actors (participants) and their responsibilities:*

### **a) General Manager**

- signs the invitations to the analysis meetings and decides on their attendance;
- chairs the regular analysis meetings within the company;
- approves the measures to be taken;
- decides as to the responsible persons and to the deadlines for implementing corrective and preventive measures adopted in the meetings;
- signs the minutes of the analysis meetings.

### **b) Financial Manager**

- attends the board meetings conducted in the company.

### **c) Production Manager**

- participates in the board meetings and presents information about the quality of products/works;
- signs the minutes of the analysis meeting.

### **d) Quality Assurance Manager**

- participates in the analysis meeting as a management representative, presents reports on the operation of the quality management, its efficiency and effectiveness, and brings to attention the program containing corrective and preventive actions;

- signs the minutes of the analysis meeting and monitors the implementation of corrective and preventive measures.

### **e) Quality Assurance Officer (QA)**

- draws up every 6 months the QA report regarding the operation of the quality management system and submits it to the QA Manager;
- participates in all management analysis meetings, as an invitee;
- monitors the fulfillment of previous decisions and reports about it to the General Manager.

**f) Quality Control Officer**

- draws up every 6 months the QC report and presents it, as an invitee, on the occasion of the management analysis meeting, the QC report regarding the inspection results and the products /services quality.

**g) Heads of departments**

- draw up, subject to the obtained data and information, the reports on the outputs of the processes they carry out/monitor and measure and submit the report to be analyzed in the management meetings;
- are responsible for the implementation of management decisions, when their staff are involved.

*5.2.3. Management analysis procedure*

The meetings secretariat is ensured by the company's secretary – in his/her role of invitee.

These analyses are regular, either on a monthly basis or when necessary. Three days before the board meetings, the secretary draws up the invitee list for the management meeting, and after the General Manager signs it, she/he disseminates the list to all participants and other invitees decided by the General Manager. The invitation to the meeting contains, apart from the date, the names of the participants invited to the meeting and the agenda.

The **entry data** for these analyses are represented by the technical reports or the records of the participants to these meetings. They contain information about: the outputs of internal and external analyses on various fields of activity, the evaluation of the state of play in terms of the set objectives and performance indicators achievement, the records and resolution stage for the previously adopted actions, customer service information, suppliers or control authorities, factors influencing the market (technology, research, development and competition performance), information about complaints or customers satisfaction, proposed actions for overcoming difficult situations.

**Outgoing data** of the management analyses refer to: updating the approved procedures, task re-distribution, establishing new performance

indicators, establishing achievable specific objectives (for each department), amendments in the policy and organizational structure.

**Documents and records:** invitee list, management analysis report and the minutes of the management analysis meeting.

We studied and presented the managerial analysis mechanism, because this is the decision-making “axis” of the company and, implicitly, of the organization communication. We found that that work procedures observe to a great extent the logics of the management functions outlined in the relevant literature.

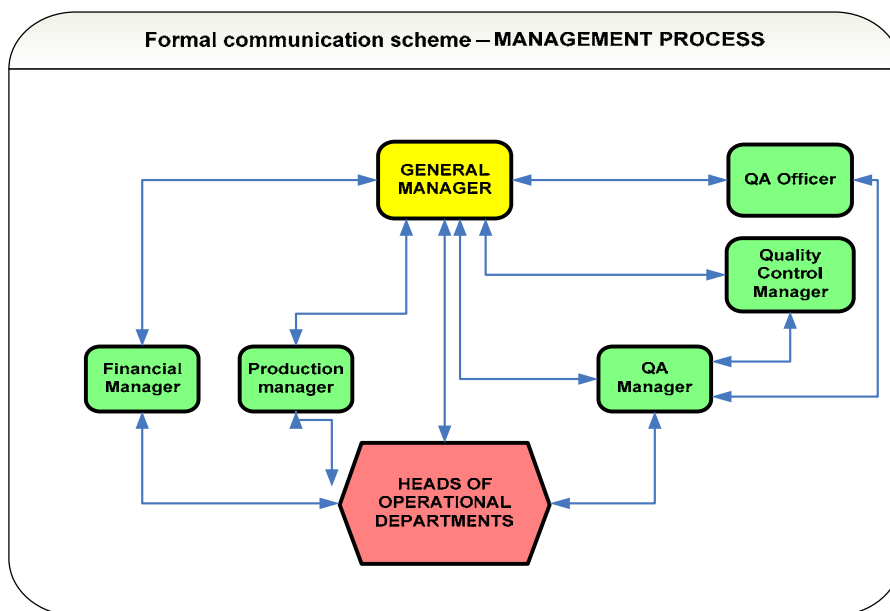


Figure 1. Formal communication scheme regarding the management process (resulting from the research)

**Observation:**

- the General Manager is placed in the center of difficult situations, having bilateral collaboration relations with all other department managers and heads of operational departments;
- we detected a centralized management case, focused on the “omniscient manager” type;
- communication bonds are stronger between the manager and each head of departments, and less regulated horizontally, where the manager has no interest in settling the way of communication;

- this management type, slightly authoritarian, can prove to be effective in limit situations or in situations under pressure, when an authoritative management is needed;

- it is recommended that this management type should not be perpetuated in the long run, as it can lead to tensions and unfair or even destructive competitions among managers.

### 5.3. Communication management scheme in marketing, tendering and contracting process

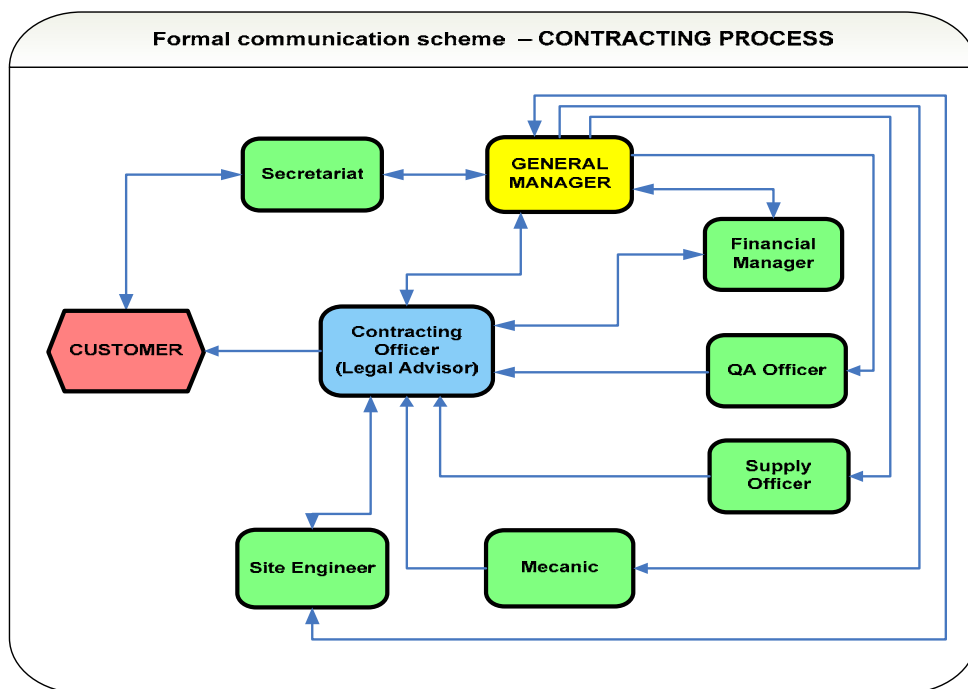


Figure 2. Formal communication scheme in the contracting process.  
(resulting from the research)

#### **Observation:**

- we found the existence of the same management type, centralized and oriented to the general manager, who wants to be informed first about everything and asks for feedback only from the middle management;

- the general manager has no direct contact with the staff;

- the general manager communicates with customers mainly through the agency of the secretary and not directly;

- the contracting officer (the legal advisor) has only a one-way contact with the customers, namely in the customer call center, for marketing surveys and contract preparation;
- customers can contact neither the contracting officer nor the other departments (for instance the QC officer or QA officer), aspect which shows the closed character of the organization;
- the manager is an authoritarian individual, who is not inclined to direct exposure (he liaises through the agency of the secretary), and who does not want to expose the members of the company either (he is the only one in contact with customers). This is likely to occur as a consequence of the lack of confidence in his staff;
- the general manager retains enough power and authority to cope with crisis situations, with conflicts and with cases that go beyond normal situations and in cases of design errors he can directly intervene and motivate the staff;
- in the long run, this management type can lead to conflicts based on sub-group segregation and tendencies of unfair competition.

#### 5.4. Communication management scheme regarding the supply

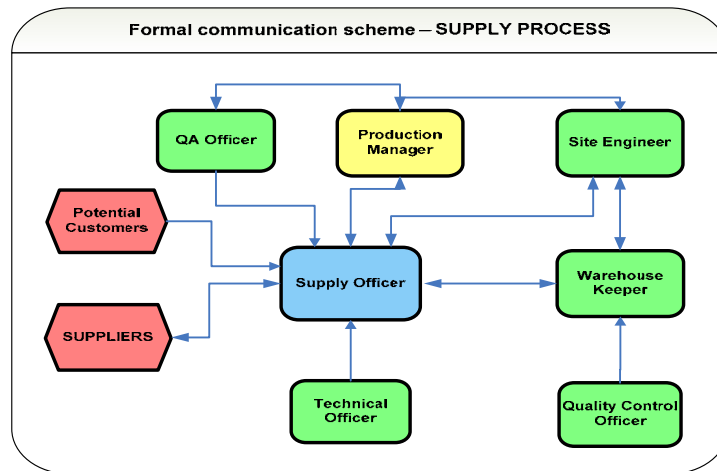


Figure 3. Formal communication scheme regarding the supply (resulting from the research)

#### Observations:

- it is the best formal communication scheme for the production process;
- economic departments (accounting, financial) and the general manager are not involved;

- the flow of document and the communication with the financial/accounting department is cumbersome, aspect which may block certain supply contracts, due to the lack of financial data;
- the general manager does not consider important the direct contact with the supply department;
- the general manager, as well as the supply officer, seem little interested in the capital flow and cash, giving the impression that they are not ruled by the economic principles;
- any external economic control (financial guard) can take the company by surprise (high degree of vulnerability), due to the lack of collaboration with economic departments (financial and accounting).

### 5.5. Communication management scheme regarding the production or work execution

#### *Observation:*

- we noticed the same management hierarchy, where the general manager, production manager and contracting officer (legal advisor) are placed at the first level;
- the general manager conceived work procedures: they are layered, inclined to centralism;

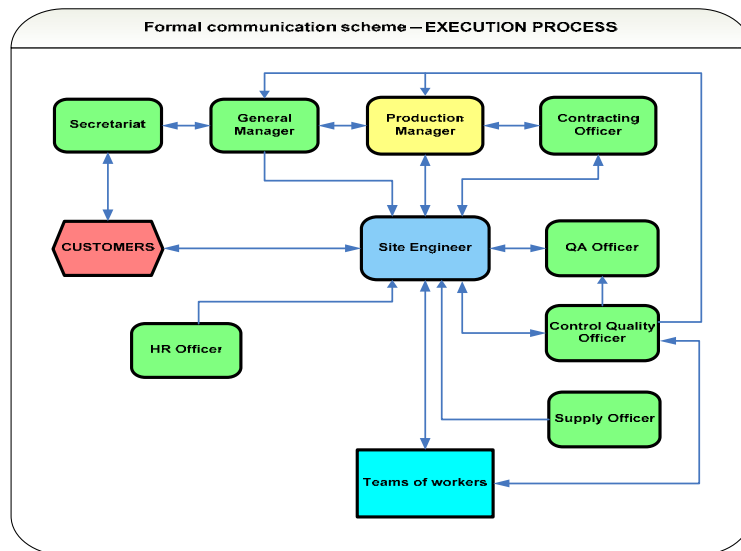


Figure 4. Formal communication scheme of the execution process (resulting from the research).

- the team supervisor holds direct responsibility in relation to the execution process, and the production manager gathers the information about the completion stage of products/works execution only from the team supervisor and quality control officer, who is an evaluator, rather than a member of the staff;
- the production manager breaks the communication contact with the execution and supply department, with the team of workers, HR and labour protection officer;
- the general manager, as well as the production manager, gathers information only from the team supervisor and quality control officer and does not have direct contact with the execution department;
- the economic area is totally missing from this communication scheme (financial/accounting);
- this situation occurs as a consequence of the strong placement of the general manager at the top level of the organization.

### 5.6. Communication management scheme regarding the testing and inspection process

#### *Observations:*

- the general manager is directly involved (receives direct reports from the site engineer and quality control manager) and has bilateral links with the production manager;
- although this is the control and testing scheme, we noticed the absence of the quality control officer, who is link between the general manager and the persons performing the tests and controls;
- the economic department representatives are totally absent, aspect which indicates that the general manager did not take into account the cost of an eventual reconstruction of certain works;

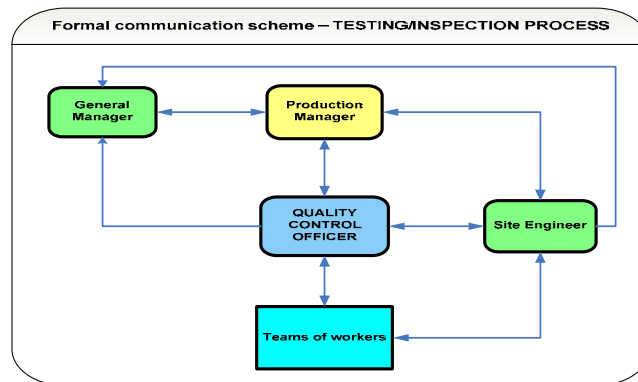


Figure 5. Informal communication scheme of testing/inspection process (resulting from the research)



- the general manager introduces an intermediate link (the production manager) between himself and the heads of departments, although he has direct contact with them.

### 5.7. Communication management scheme regarding product/work delivery process

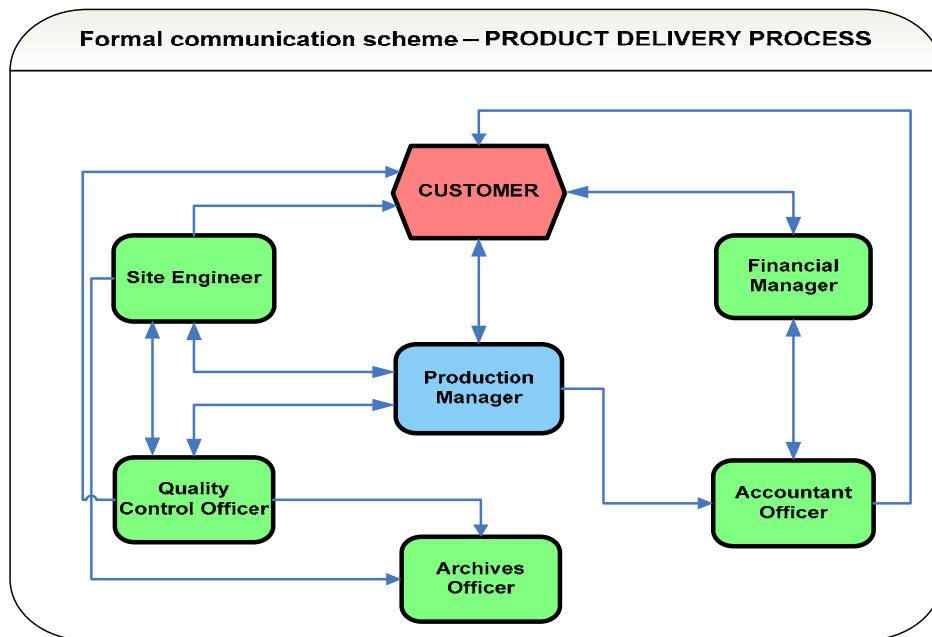


Figure 6. Informal communication scheme of the product/work delivery process (resulting from the research)

#### Observations:

- the interest of the management team to meet the needs of the customers was confirmed;
- the responsibility related to the work reception by the customers lies with the production manager;
- if up to now, in the intermediate stages, the general manager tended to be in the center of the decision-making, this time - for the delivery stage - his responsibility is void, and this fact confirms the assumption originating from the management analysis processes and board meetings leading us to the idea that he is not willing to have exposure in front of the customers and staff;

- although the general manager was present in all the stages of the production cycle (from the design stage to testing one), in the last stage, namely the reception one, he is not present anymore, even if he was in direct contact with the customers.

## 6. Informal communication plan analysis

As it was presented above, the informal communication element analysis will be performed on the basis of the sociometric technique results. In the examined group entered the 17 individuals, responsible for different departments.

The exceptions were the worker teams, whose answers would not have been relevant for this study's objective. Following the sociometric questionnaire and matrix, the following results arose: the highest rank was the no. 8 individual – the secretary (0.69), followed by 3 – production manager (0.63). In the top classification for this indicator were also 15 – site engineer (0.56) and 5 – HR officer (0.44).

In other words, we can state that these four individuals are the top preferences in the company in terms of communication, and they can be called central or nucleus characters in the informal communication structure.

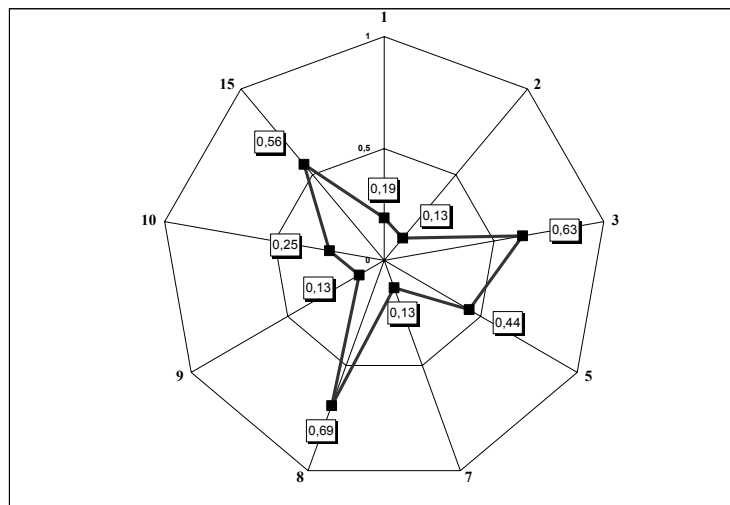


Figure 7. Sociometric statute coefficient resulted from the research

The motivation analysis of the votes received from each individual builds up also a featured profile for these positions in the sociometric hierarchy statute:

– **The secretary:** open-minded person, careful and friendly, very close to the general manager, aware of everything that happens in the company, solves the employees problems fast; trustworthy, discrete, caring, sociable/voluble, reliable.

– **Production manager:** close to reality assessment ability, higher access to information than others, objective, responsible with his employees, able to keep a secret and talk in the name of the employees, protective with employees' interests.

– **Site engineer:** has access to information, trustworthy, professional and direct attitude, sociable/voluble, well balanced and responsible.

– **HR officer:** cheerful person, sociable, very calm/cool and does not hold grudge, realistic, team oriented.

If we deep the data analysis and take into consideration /consider the number of acceptance votes and as well rejection votes (which contributes to differentiating the position of group members in the communication chart), we will have to analyze also the *preferential statute coefficient*.

From this graphic and the sociometric matrix we notice that the preferential statute coefficient values are differentiated: for some individuals they are positive, for some negative, and others equal 0.

These coefficients provide data regarding place, position of each employee in the group, based on communication criteria. Therefore, the negative coefficient individuals are rejected, they are difficult characters, the 0 coefficient individuals are neutral in the group communication system, and the positive coefficient ones, according to their dimension, are the accepted individuals, popular or very popular from the communication point of view:

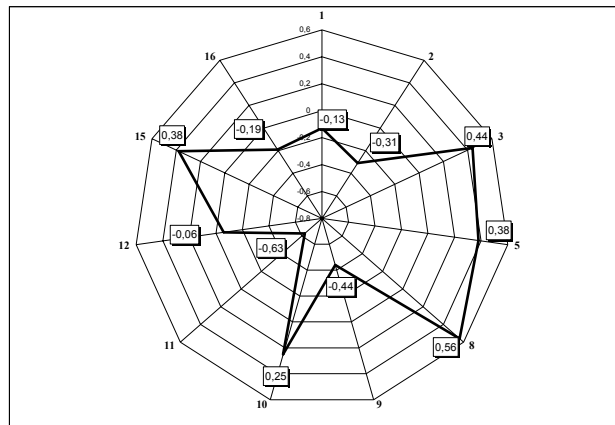


Figure 8. Preferential coefficient statute issued from the research

The persons who obtained a high positive coefficient, meaning the most important on the informal communication plan, are the same who

achieved the highest sociometric coefficient: 8 - *the secretary* (0.56), 3 - *production manager* (0.44), 15 - *site engineer* (0.38) and 5 - *HR officer* (0.38). Besides these leaders, *QA officer* distinguishes himself as well a high coefficient result (0.25). He seems to be among the preferences of those who chose him: a serious person, who tries to give the best, rational, thorough, patient, knows how to talk to people, comprehensive.

The rejection reasons refer to:

- **Quality control officer:** quarrelsome/naggy person, alcohol problem individual, careless with work assignments, very rough in appreciating the other's work, untrustworthy, fair-faced (double-dealer, pretender).

- **Legal advisor:** proud, arrogant, omniscient, uncomfortable behavior in the group, short-temper.

- **Quality assurance manager:** constantly nervous, arrogant, underestimate his colleagues, great in theory but low in practical approach.

- **Financial manager:** cold person, isolated, tense, perfectionist, rigid, absurd, boring.

In order to deepen the communication relation nature and employees' position in the group we have to build up the flow *socio-chart* (*sociogram*). Starting from the positions they have there we can distinguish a spectrum of aspects related to preferential structure of the group in the direction of the informal communication efficiency. The data could be explained as well individually, as well as globally (in the group). The central person, the nucleus of informal communication relations, is the secretary (8), with whom all the other informal leaders bilaterally communicate, forming a strong sub-group: financial manager (3), site engineer (15) and HR officer (5). On the other hand, the other two persons: financial manager (1) and quality control manager (2) develop bilateral communication relations with the legal advisor (9), building a second more isolated sub-group.

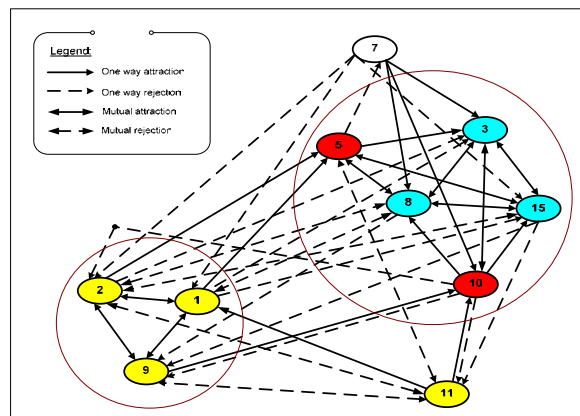


Figure 9. Company's sociogram issued from the research

The isolated individual of the group is the *quality control officer (11)*, who tries to fit somewhere in the communication structure. Besides the behavior gaps, confirmed by most of the employees, he is as well an immature person, from the interpersonal communication point of view, in the sense that he prefers individuals or sub-groups that reject him.

The only reciprocal rejection situation it is with the quality assurance manager (2), probably due to the difficulties they experience in the professional field, the quality control officer (11) being appreciated as a person that does not exactly perform the job tasks. The other individuals were not represented in the sociogram, they are neutral from the point of view of the communication, and do not significantly influence the company's informal communication structure.

We can notice that 2 sub-groups develop: a very strong one, formed by the hardcore (8- secretary, 3 - production manager, 15 – site engineer), which we will call “**sub-group A**”, and the other one formed by the isolated ones (1 – financial manager, 2 – quality assurance manager, 9 – legal advisor), called “**sub-group B**”.

We can state that sub-group A has a central role in the communication, being very important in the informal communication management, and sub-group B, secondary and less important, because although its members have very close relations, they remain isolated and are rejected by the majority of the employees, including the ones in the sub-group A.

The one with most difficulties in communication is the sub-group B, because its members attempt to establish informal relations with the other sub-group, through the HR officer as a mediator (5) and QA officer (10).

The integration effort in the central communication nucleus of sub-group B seems to have low chances of accomplishment, because none of the sub-group A members, nor the mediators welcome this invitation. On the contrary, between the sub-groups A leaders and B ones there are mutual rejection relations.

Shifting the preferential relation analysis at the communication management level, we can infer the following relevant aspects:

– **Sub-group A configuration** contributes to the hierarchical communication of the company's decision-making, the principal “actor” being the secretary, and the main decisional authority is the production manager; the site engineer represents the information transmission link to the staff, and messages reinforcing factor is the HR officer.

– **The sub-group B**, made of company's key persons, becomes a sort of “island” where it is isolated; in this way we have a permanent gap

between 3 fundamental organizational processes: contracting, execution and financial, with all their subsequent actions.

– **The quality assurance manager**, without any responsibility at the formal communication level, seems to represent a distortion source in the organizational communication.

– **The quality assurance manager's role** is undertaken, at least formally, by the QA officer, who succeeds to fit in the A sub-group; in this way, the managerial quality assurance position are likely to be accomplished, even if it entails a reshape in the authority and responsibility with respect to certain positions in the organizational chart.

– We can identify the **HR officer** as a potential factor of improving drawbacks in communication. On the one hand he is the link between acceptance and rejection attitudes between the two sub-groups, and on the other hand he is an informal leader himself, having the skills to influence the employees' opinions.

## 7. Conclusions

**7.1. Checking the first research hypothesis.** The analysis of the way how formal communication is achieved in the company highlights a series of drawbacks, such as:

– the deployment of the supply department in the production area makes the document flow cumbersome and isolates the supply manager from the financial and accounting managers;

– the absence of the quality control manager from the control and inspection stage;

– the absence of financial/accounting managers from certain stages such as supply process, production/execution, tests and trials reveals that the general manager has little economic knowledge;

– the lack of information flow between accounting and supply departments may lead to negative phenomena;

– the absence of the general manager in the reception stage shows inconsistent ownership of responsibilities;

– the management type is slightly authoritative, by its excessive involvement in less important processes than the product delivery and reception;

– the quality control manager does not appear formally in any organizational process analysis, aspect which shows a mismanagement of the quality process, performed by the quality assurance officer.

*We can therefore conclude that the managerial processes map must be reshaped in order to improve the performances of the company by designing a new communication management scheme, taking into account all the afore-mentioned findings.*

*Under such circumstances, we can draw the conclusion that the first research hypothesis is partially substantiated*, the assertion being bolstered on the following elements:

– no complaint has been filed by a customer in relation to the product quality;

– there is a customer satisfaction rate of 80%, measured by the satisfaction questionnaire, suggesting that there is a certain level of dissatisfaction and also indicating that quality is not the strongest point (the brand) of the company;

– the turnover rate raised in the past 2 years with approximately 500,000\$; one can therefore say that the exerted management obtained positive results in a short time, however it is not certain that the growth rhythm will be maintained in the long run, whilst the management board took the risk of investing a lot in the technique, even if no firm contracts have been secured for the year to come.

**7.2. Checking the second research hypothesis.** By summarizing the elements of the communication informal plan research, one can say that **the second research hypothesis was not substantiated, meaning that elements of formal communication level do not engender significantly similar configurations at the informal level**, as consequence of the systemic and integrated communication management functioning. This fact is sustained by the following elements, found during the research:

– the formal communication system, presented in previous pages, is very complex and defined by a series of assumed administrative elements, meant to ensure a systemic and process-oriented operation of the company's management, whilst the informal level is very much streamlined and divided into two sub-groups. The communication hard-cores are redefined against a different pattern than the one required by the organizational chart and organizational process map;

– the emphasis of the informal reconfiguration of communication is made on the work execution, therefore leaving aside the contracting and financial management;

– the interpersonal relations chart can materialize in an informal communication process scheme that differs substantially from the ones drawn up following the research of formal organization sequences;

– the personality traits of the company's staff are critical when configuring the informal structure of communication management, going beyond other variables, such as: the training level, the authority originating from filling a certain position in the company, communication proximity, the responsibilities arising from the job description etc;

– the communication management within the organization displays a systemic integration deficiency, at least as a consequence of the differences of representation of the two communication layers; this aspect may generate conflicts in the organization and even difficulties in accomplishing certain job tasks, impacting on work quality or execution agreed in contracts;

– the individuals identified as informal leaders having communication and inter-personal skills can be involved to reduce communication deficiencies and contribute to a performant communication management, and this aspect can be achieved more efficiently than adopting formal, administrative measures.

Determining communication effectiveness represents a complex phenomenon, where the psycho-social factor remains critical and therefore, preferential relations and informal group structure, in the communication area alike, rank high in terms of the influence of other factors such as: professional experience, opportunity, professional activity type, interests or values of the employees.

The ideal situation, where the formal leader is identified with the informal one occurs only in the production sub-group, where the production manager is also perceived as an informal communication leader. This proves the coagulation of this particular work sub-group around individuals with a strong sociometric statute, aspect that leads also to management communication efficiency.

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