

MANAGING THE IMAGE OF THE ORGANIZATION IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Irina PETRUCĂ¹

¹Assist. Prof. PhD, "Apollonia" University of Iași, Romania
Corresponding author: Irina Petrucă; e-mail: irinapetruca@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article presents the main aspects regarding the ways in which an organization can manage its image in the complex communication process. Given the fact that an organization is communicating through all its actions with both the internal and the external public, it has pay very much attention to the ways and methods it communicates through. The issues addressed represent both ideas from the literature review and the results of the efforts to understand and explain the importance of the image for all the actions undertaken by an organization. This paper deals with the different means of information the company uses, the measures taken in order to protect and promote the image and also the importance of the numbers and statistical data for the image of the organization.

Keywords: *communication, image, organization, public, message.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The image of an organisation appears in the communication process as both the internal and the external result of this process, and while it forms itself, it imposes the dominant character of a certain type of communication. The opinions, attitudes, beliefs and actions of the various categories of public are crystalized around the image of the organisation; therefore, image plays the role of a mediator, it intervenes between it and its public and it influences the public's attitudes, options and assessments. It therefore becomes compulsory for organisations to act in such a manner in which to avoid the formation of a negative or erroneous image about themselves, about the key people in the organisations or about their products or services.

In his article entitled *Is there still wisdom in communication?* the author Aurel Codoban says that if the most representative creation of the contemporary world is the Internet, the most

important activity of the contemporary world is communication (CODOBAN, 2015). Organisations carry out their activity in a social environment that they try to influence and which also influences them, communication being the most consistent component of this influencing process. From the perspective of the organisation, communication takes place, according to Philippe Cabin on four directions:

- The interpersonal relationships within the organisation (the daily interactions between the employee and his superior, the organisation of the workspace etc.)
- Placement and exchange of information (procedures, instructions etc.)
- Everything related to management and the communication between the management and the employees (human resource management, internal publications etc.)
- Communication with the external environment (advertising, press conferences etc.) (CABIN, 2010).

The relationship between the organisation and its public is neither simple nor very complex, since in this the public is not singular, but divided into different categories: employees, clients, suppliers, banks, competition etc. In this entire communication process between the organisation and its different categories of public, the image is the most influenced one and it represents one of the most significant concepts from the field of public relations. Moreover, according to the author Mary Anne Moffitt, "the concept of the image represents one of the most significant theoretical concepts from the public relations research," being able to define public relations as "the organisation's corporate image management"

(ROBERT, 2005). The same author draws attention to the fact that an organisation has multiple simultaneous images, according to the perception of its different types of public, and that the image of the organisation is emphasize in the relationship between the organisation's strategy, on the one hand, and the behaviour of the public (even though the image is created and implemented by the organisation, it cannot control the way in which it is perceived by the public), on the other hand (COMAN, 2009).

2. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Although it does not have a quantifiable reviewer, the significance of the organisation's image cannot be ignored, considering the way in which it influences the public. Timothy W. Combs therefore considers that "the problem is not whether the image matters or not; it matters. The problem is the way in which this concept is used by organisations." (ROBERT, 2005) The image of an organisation can be seen as "a patrimony object" and it is even more valuable than its fixed assets. The image of the organisation is based on the information that is presented to the public, as the public forms a certain image based on what it hears or sees. This image is formed following the messages resulted from the functioning of the organisation, on the one side, and from the messages issued by specialised structures, on the other side. Either a positive or a negative image significantly influences the success of the organisation, as many marketing studies show that the customers loyal to certain products do not make the difference between them and other existing products on the market and they purchase them only due to their image (DINU, n.d.).

Managing the image of an organisation therefore represents a highly significant aspect of communication which the organisation achieves with its external public, since everything that it does and broadcasts influences the way in which it is perceived. Aurel Codoban notices that this new communication model is not a rhetorical or informatic one, as we might think it would be natural, but a therapeutic one; usually the process of communication is nowadays guided by a

subfield of communication, namely "the therapeutic communication," which is now predominant in any kind of communication process. The paradigmatic generalisation of this new type of communication model leads, especially in the practices of political or sales communication, to generally treating people as if they were mentally ill, and communicating with them is like communicating with patients ("Of course, the mentally ill can be treated, he cannot be persuaded, but rather he has to be manipulated or seduced, because, in the psychiatric therapy, hypnosis represents the climax of communication." (CODOBAN, 2015) How did it get to such a situation? One answer could be "the modern individualism" (CODOBAN, 2015) which changed the individual, making him so smug that he cannot convinced with the help of persuasion, who perceives accepting other people's ideas as a weakness, even though he knows or feels that these ideas are true. Therefore, communication can no longer be limited to the boundaries of persuasion, appealing to manipulation and seduction.

The new communication model stresses the relationship that appears through communication, unlike the traditional model, which perceived communication as a means of broadcasting information. "Relationship becomes more important than the content, because the new communication paradigm and practice appear in a therapeutic environment. In such an environment the therapist meets people for whom the broadcasting of information does not change the situation, who are not permeable to persuasion. In this case, the aspects that has to be changed are the interpersonal relationships. Only after a good relationship with the patient is established, can the therapist broadcast the information necessary for change and the patient is ready to accept them." (CODOBAN, 2015) Of course, communication does not only mean the broadcasting of information, but also the existence of a relationship, and this aspect is present in the second of Paul Watzlawick's communication axioms: every communication assumes the content and the relationship, in such a manner that the latter includes the former, therefore representing a metacommunication (ANDRONIC & PĂRȚACHI, 2013).

3. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

It has been noticed that the internal public, meaning the employees of the organisation, are very important in the formation and broadcasting of its image and therefore companies are more and more aware of the fact that a good communication with them is beneficial for the creation of a positive image. Regarding the internal communication, in an organisation all its activities refer to a chain of interaction and communication processes. If Taylor's labour organisation refers to limiting workplace interactions to a minimum, a clear set of work tasks and therefore a limited communication among employees, the new organisation forms have significantly changed communication within an organisation through transversal organisation, autonomy, teamwork, etc. In the sociology dictionary coordinated by Raymond Boudon, organisations are seen as "ordered and hierarchical human assemblies meant to cooperate and coordinate their members for certain purposes." (BOUDON et al., 2009)

If we are to speak about communication inside an organisation, it is usually seen as the root of all evil and also the probable solution to all of them. It has even become a habit to blame the faulty communication for all the dysfunctions that exist in an organisation. Therefore, communication within an organisation reached a certain kind of idealisation, this being the object of some illusions, among which Philippe Cabin in his article entitled "Communication and the organisation" (CABIN, 2010) presents the following three: the first one says that it is easy to communicate, the message being enough; the second one says that once a message is sent it will be understood by the receptor in the same manner as it is understood by the sender; and the third one says that there is a communication manner referring to the one in which the message was sent.

One should also take into account the multitude of communication types from an organisation. If we want to briefly present them, these are: formal communication (written dispositions, internal publications etc.) and informal communication between the employees, which sometimes has an even greater role than formal communication. Also, vertical communication (ascendant,

respectively boss-employee descendant) presents some limits which differ from those of horizontal communication (among employees on the same hierarchical level). In each case the aspects that refer to identity, culture, hierarchy manifest in a different manner. The important aspects in facilitating communication within an organisation represent the environment in which communication takes place, the bases and the channels used, the establishment of the communicational strategy and of the information circulation systems, the use of a certain technology, individual identities etc. One can notice the preoccupation of the major organisations for the communication with their own employees and for their level of workplace satisfaction; this preoccupation is generated not only by the purpose of increasing productivity but also for the formation and strengthening of a positive external image of the organisation, towards the other categories of its public (FRUNZĂ, 2011).

4. THE IMPORTANCE OF STATISTICAL FIGURES AND DATA IN THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE ORGANISATION AND ITS VARIOUS TYPES OF PUBLIC

Communication with the public refers to activities that require a consistent factological support: research, counselling, event management, preparing and conducting interviews, establishing and maintaining the relationship with the media. In this regard, having statistical data is highly significant and their interpretation determines, to a large extent the success in communication.

We are very aware of the fact that figures have a higher impact than any other type of information, since people believe in figures. Of course, the simple presence of figures in a public communication is not enough, the talent of the communicator being also required in order to offer the appropriate context." (ANDRONIC & PĂRȚACHI, 2013). Allegorically speaking, a communicator has, in the case of figures, the role of a jeweller – it will mount the gemstone (meaning the figure) in the most appropriate bead (meaning the context) and it will make it glitter (meaning to

have an impact).” (ANDRONIC & PÂRȚACHI, 2013) At the same time, in the case of debates, contradictory discussions, or even conflicts, figures represent the most solid argument.

Given the current emphasis on transparency, both in the case of public institutions and of private companies or even NGOs, the presence of figures in the communication process is highly significant, proving openness and professionalism. Of course, the skills of the communicator appear in the selection of data and in the facilitation of their understanding. The presence of figures and statistical data in the communication process allows a complex and complete vision on the environment, facts and results and this allows the development of forecasts on the organization's progress. Moreover, organisations, regardless of the nature of their activity, are obliged to regularly present statistics regarding their activity (information about their turnover, sales, number of employees, salaries etc.). Companies will use in their internal communication the figures related to turnover with the purpose of promoting their achievement or to show that things are not going well, if this is the case. The dynamic of investments and other data related to the activity of the company will bring transparency to the external communication, offering an extra image to the organisation and stating the seriousness of the activity and intentions of the company.

On the other hand, in developing or modifying advertising messages and in the development of the advertising campaigns, an organisation will use statistics because it is very important to know the socio-economic and demographic background in order to take into account the particularities of the target market. Therefore, we notice that an organisation will use statistics both to communicate about its activity and to generate the communication itself (CHICIUDEAN, 2000).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The organisation, either public, private or NGO, is continually developing its own image, both in relationship to its internal public (employees), and to its external public (clients, suppliers, banks, competition). The most consistent process by which this is accomplished is that of communication, a

process which influences the perception of different types of public, the image of the organisation gaining meaning through the relationship between the strategy of the organisation, on the one hand, and the behaviour of the public, on the other hand.

In the process of public communication, one must not forget that the main purpose is to correctly disseminate the information and, at the same time, to inform the management of the organisation about the public opinion, contributing to solving the demands that come from it and thus anticipating the environmental trends (ANDRONIC & PÂRȚACHI, 2013). Therefore, one of the basic principles to communication with the public is that each communication act is based on the truth and is used to the benefit of the public, which implies correct information. Upholding this principle without any deviation will greatly contribute to increasing public confidence in the organization and to the strengthening of its image.

References

- ANDRONIC, L. & PÂRȚACHI, I. (2013) *Statistics in communication* [in Romanian]. CEP USM Publishing House, Chişinău.
- BOUDON, R., ȚUȚUIANU, M., CHERKAOUI, M. & BESNARD, P. (2009) *Dictionary of sociology* [in Romanian]. Encyclopedic universe Publishing House, Bucureşti.
- CABIN, P. (2010) *Communication and organization*. In: CABIN, P., DORTIER, J.F., editors. *Communication* [in Romanian]. Polirom Publishing House, Iaşi, pp. 147-155
- CHICIUDEAN, I. (2000) *Image management in the communication process* [in Romanian]. Licorna Publishing House, Bucureşti.
- CODOBAN, A. (2015) *Is there still wisdom in communication?* In: DUNCA, D. & DUNCA, P., editors. *Constants and reconfigurations in the ethical issues of communication* [in Romanian]. Pro Universitaria Publishing House, Bucureşti.
- COMAN, C. (2009) *Crisis communication. Techniques and strategies* [in Romanian]. Polirom Publishing House, Iaşi.
- DINU, D. (n.d.) *The role of public relations in managing the image of organizations* [in Romanian]. Available from: <https://ghdinu.wordpress.com/rolul-relatiilor-publice-in-gestionarea-imaginii-organizatiilor> [12 November 2019].
- FRUNZĂ, S. (2011) *Ethical communication and social responsibility* [in Romanian]. Tritonic Publishing House, Bucureşti.
- ROBERT, L. (2005) *Image*. Encyclopedia of Public Relations, Sage, Thousand Oaks.