

THE MANAGEMENT OF GOOD COMMUNICATION IN THE P.A. BETWEEN ETHICS AND POST-MODERNITY

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ABSTRACT: *Ethics, understood as respect for others, is a cultural approach.*

But, to think ethically and act accordingly, in our current system, often involves conflicts with oneself and with others. In the post-modern era, where the role of the “media” is fundamental for the proper functioning of the Public Administration (P.A.), it's imperative to set up a regulatory and cultural environment, that the role and ethical responsibility of “media” and “communication” in the same bureaucracy. It is undisputed that “mass media” ensures greater visibility of the decision-making procedures and the public figures: all this increases their power and their responsibility towards the citizens.

IZSAM “G. Caporale”, an Italian veterinary public health institution, between the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009, equipped itself with a new Institutional Communication structure, focused on the specific task of conveying, through television communication too, its institutional activities (in the field of food, health and environmental safety), aimed at the protection and welfare of citizens... If, in the past, public sector workers could have been considered “even” civil servants, servant of the State, today, they must be above all identified as “servant citizens”. It, therefore, requires a public authority at the service of citizens, companies, communities, and not self-referential or, worse, tied to political power by a subjection relationship. Actually, the structure of institutional communication of IZSAM, was born to fill up the distance that still remains between its activities and public opinion. This gap needs to be shortened up to its final elimination. This gap can be solved via an “integrated” communication plan, consciously using each type of available communication tools (including journalistic deepening, Tv Spots, insights and press offices' activity).

All that said, in the belief that at the center of public ethics is the correct functioning of the public sphere, understood as a space for debate, however, free by restrictions and private interests, a place for exploring ideas to build the public opinion. But all this can happen, only if there are no restrictions and individual interests.

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1. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

It can be defined as “the set of processes of creation and exchange of messages and information within the organizational structure, to achieve coordinated behaviors of its elements aimed at achieving common goals¹.” It is a frontier discipline, indebted to multiple sciences: the sociology of organization, business communication, the psychology of organization, theories of communication, cultural anthropology and management.

Thus we can speak of a “multidisciplinary” discipline, which derives from the complexity to which, despite the continuous organizational changes, always sees, over time, the focus of attention and in any case “as protagonists” above all the people, with all their richness and complexity.

For those who study post-modern organizations, it is difficult to explain the corporate dynamics of communication, since the understanding of the processes of organizational communication is based on the knowledge of these phenomena. Though, these are ambiguous and always subject to continuous change: variable and non-deterministic ... “postmodern organizations increasingly resemble the improbable and perpetually excited hospital, rather than the perfect machine (Morgan, 1997)”

Karl E. Weick - one of the most important contemporary scholars of the organizations - was a penetrating part of the debate taking place in the seventies with very innovative and often provocative positions, which can be placed at the crossroads of the phenomenal-logical and the cognitivist one.

Interesting is the researcher’s statement that hypothesizing organizations as clocks, he argues that these “would certainly be different clocks. Not only can they be misread, but it is also possible that the frequency with which the watch is consulted may change the time it reports, depending on whether the observer likes the watch or not...”.

So, referring to the postmodern organization, if it becomes smarter over time and then, incomplete and changing, the spread of new technologies, in particular Web 2.0 tools, changes significantly the same way of communicating (not only) in organizations.

Comprehending and understanding the new communication, therefore, cannot prescind from a more in-depth knowledge of the new organizational contexts, of the characteristics of the new digital media and the effects produced by the new media in individual and corporate attitudes and behaviors.

To understand a post-modern organization, it is essential to be critical and to ask oneself some questions.

The emerging problems of communication in complex organizations require the ability to identify new organizational scenarios that include: corporate networks, spaces, organizational and communicative emotions, organizational cultures, the emotional climate.

Today, we no longer talk about external and internal communication. Yet, communication is turning to be for the company, and therefore for the organization, an indispensable component for its correct functioning.

¹<http://qualitapa.gov.it/sitoarcheologico/relazioni-con-i-cittadini/comunicare-e-informare/comunicazione-organizational/index.html>

Organizational communication is, therefore, “an integral part of the production and decision-making processes and relations with the outside world,” becomes the core of the organization, and this idea is radically new.

2. “INTEGRATED” COMMUNICATION, FUNDAMENTAL TO THE FUNCTIONING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

For decades, communication has been considered marginal in business contexts. Only after the economic boom of the seventies, the exponential growth of the market and the competition has highlighted the need to get known, focusing the attention of the user on the final product, its origin and its quality.

In concrete terms, only since the 1990s communication has become a central element in the organisation, thus providing reliable support for the achievement of various corporate aims and objectives. Since it is a matter of communication to support management and organizational development, the “internal” component is prevalent.

Modern organizations need diversified communication supports (functional, informative, formative, and creative communication) and at the same time, integrated. The need arises both from the increase in the number of players in the organizational contexts and from the greater complexity of the organizational structure itself. Therefore, by changing the models of organization, the communication models also vary intending to create similar linguistic codes to increase the competitiveness of the company. This is how “external” communication is outlined.

One of the most recent acquisitions in the field of organizational studies is the enterprise-network theory, which is based precisely on a high degree of consistency between internal and external communication.

Therefore, the same contemporary company presents a markedly favorable attitude to the integration of marketing communication, market-oriented, and internal communication, aimed mainly at employees and stakeholders.

The forced relationship between internal and external communication and corporate identity has now led to the affirmation of a new paradigm of “Organizational Communication” which is defined as “[...] the set of strategic and operational processes of creation, exchange and sharing of information and value messages within the various networks of relationships that constitute the essence of the organization and its place in the environment” (Invernizzi, 2000).

In “Organizational Communication” communication takes on a strategic role in the management of organizations, especially when recourse to early use of communication, concerning organizational needs, appears to be a strategic factor and a stimulus for the action of organizational changes.

Therefore, it is mandatory to bring together all the communicational activity (internal, external, and about the product) in a single concept. Due to the rising organizational complexity and to properly work better, companies must necessarily benefit from broad and integrated communication support, essential to growing.

Furthermore, through organizational communication, the company can promote its transparency both on the internal front and in the reference markets.

The essence of organizational communication is defined by five identified and validated operational propositions, through the analysis of some case studies on national and international companies (Invernizzi, 2000):

1. "All communication initiatives must refer to the company guiding values" The specific, ethically founded guideline values can be derived from the history of the company or defined by the top management and must be explained so that everyone can understand them.

2. "It is necessary to achieve a high level of coherence, and possible synergies, between all the communicational acts directed towards the outside and those directed towards the inside or management." The coincidence of contents between external communication and internal communication, as well as avoiding inconsistencies, it will strengthen the company-employee relationships, making sure that they do not feel bypassed or neglected by their company.

3. "It is essential to support all the processes of organizational innovation and all the relevant changes, with communication plans adequate to make them known and shared by the majority of those concerned." In particular, the decisive importance of organizational communication must be underlined to successfully manage extraordinary business processes, such as mergers and acquisitions.

4. "It is vital to spread the skills of interpersonal communication between everyone, from top managers to operators, and to maintain a constant update on communication issues." The managers and collaborators of an enterprise find themselves in a chain of relationships that sees each, in turn, assume or ask for the respect of "commitments": the fundamental competence that the organizational actors must-have is interpersonal communication.

5. "It is increasingly important for top management to implement a strategic communication tool, while an operational body should be maintained by the structures responsible for managing the communication system."

The strategic management of communication is understood to mean the direct involvement of top management in the communication governance methods and the placement of the body in charge of a high hierarchical position.

For this reason, to date, a company that aims for success must activate the participation and involvement of all employees regardless of the role and level held. It must use direct communication initiatives to constitute a fundamental component of the government and in the development of modern organizations, also to increase the effectiveness of relations with the reference environment.

Companies draw up a strategic communication plan to define times and ways of communication. A plan to control the forms of business communication, their organization and coordination: "the separation between communication for the commercial purposes of the brand and product and communications for institutional (corporate) purposes has fallen while the lines of conduct are becoming established inspired by the concept of integrated communication."²

²Pecchenino M., Arnese E.D., 2009, Digital Corporate Communication. Le cinque leve della Comunicazione
d'Impresa nell'era del WEB, Franco Angeli.

3. IZSAM AND INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION. LET'S MAKE THE POINT

The Experimental Zooprophyllactic Institute of Abruzzo and Molise “G. Caporale” (IZSAM) is a public health authority with organizational, administrative, patrimonial, accounting, management and technical autonomy, which operates as a technical-scientific instrument of the State and the Abruzzo and Molise regions, guaranteeing the public veterinary services the analytical services and technical-scientific collaboration necessary for the performance of the functions in the field of Veterinary Public Health.

The IZSAM plays a consulting and collaboration role towards the Ministry of Health, the Regions of competence, the ASLs, and the other nine Italian Zooprophyllactic Institutes.

In its more than 75 years of history, the communication activities of the Zooprophyllactic Institute “G. Caporale” were mainly addressed to the scientific community and to national and international institutions, with which there has always been a fruitful and close confrontation in terms of planning, research and experimentation.

With the passing of the years and also with the evolution of the legislation on communication, mainly addressing the scientific world and the experts were no longer enough. The communication had to be entrusted with a much broader task, extending its range of action to the citizens through a calibrated, robust, transparent and innovative communication process.

Dialogue with citizens also means letting them enter their world, telling them where they come from and where they are going. It means above all to convey technical arguments with a popular language, but at the same time rigorously scientifically. Only in this way is it possible to ensure correct communication and the right level of understanding for all (citizens and professionals).

In 2008, the Institute bearing this in mind began to lay the foundations for gradually achieving a complete reporting of the public resources invested on behalf of the general interest and for the achievement of the institutional objectives, with a view to total transparency and awareness that communication had to assume an even more proactive role in the institution's activities.

It is no coincidence that all the most critical institutional activities are today supported by a much more energetic and strategic communication action than in the past. It focuses on informing citizens-users and leveraging on topics of daily interest such as food security, and animal welfare. But, we will discuss this more in detail in the next chapter.

If in the past, then, public sector workers could be considered civil servants, that is, “servants of the State,” today they must also and above all be “servants of the citizen.”

Therefore, a Public Administration is necessary to serve the citizen, the companies, the community and not self-referential, or in any case, linked to political power by a relationship of subjection.

There, in recent years, the winning idea is that the user is a customer in all respects with a focus on Citizen Satisfaction. Thus, translating the public administration's ability to proactively design, implement, and participate in the various interventions that aim to

ensure over time the quality of services and the satisfaction of users, citizens and stakeholders.

For this reason, and in any case accordingly with the legislation on public communication of the 2000, the “G. Caporale” Institute only in 2009, creates, within the new organizational structure, an ad hoc communication structure, called “Institutional Communication (SICI)”, aimed at bridging that distance that remains between the purely scientific activities of the Entity and public opinion. This distance will need to be slowly shortened up to its definitive elimination employing an integrated Communication Plan. That manages to optimize the available resources, addresses in a complete way, that is “integrated” the different reference targets, using both the tools and the types of communication accessible consciously and jointly.

Since 2009, IZSAM has begun to pay particular attention to Institutional Communication in an organic way, with the establishment of a well-defined delegated structure aimed at both external and internal communication, economic-financial communication, and institutional communication, integrating hardware, software and computer networks.

From here, therefore, an organic process of communication will begin, which will be carried out through a plurality of actions.

And even today, at the Institute, a large part of institutional communication passes through the web, which represents one of the tools capable of combining the dissemination of clear and simple messages with the dimension of the relationship, accessibility and usability.

Even the new Internet Portal with its proprietary CMS (Content Manager System) helps to manage the news, activities and contents that are securely communicated to citizens under an IT point of view.

To give an order of magnitude of the activities produced by the personnel belonging to the Department Communication on the institutional website from 2010 to 2018 (news, press releases, videos, and so on), they have been published about 1,500 communication contents.

Besides, the IZSAM, from the year 2012, has equipped itself with its own YouTube channel, which, at the moment, collects about 125 films, including television specials and interviews with researchers on the activities of the Entity. Still, on the subject of the video, the Institute has also recently activated a channel on Vimeo, which allows uploading videos in high definition (HD), within which historical and/or longer videos are exhibited.

Furthermore, since 2014, the Institute has been featured on the Flickr photographic social network where today, more than 2,000 photos of conferences, events and meetings are uploaded. From the beginning of 2017, instead, the institutional LinkedIn page was also activated, today structured in a way very similar to the most popular social network, Facebook (FB).

Recently activated, around the end of 2017, the institutional Facebook Page is currently very dynamic. Think that in the last year, the number of followers has almost tripled. The page is not limited to supplying or relaunching information on the activities of the Organization. Still, it also proposes scientific news coming from international Organizations, curiosities, and events of interest, which, by the rapid and immediate

sharing of news on the web, allows the creation of relations and contacts with other institutions and researchers from around the world.

Over the last ten years, the Institute has never neglected television communication, always with the conviction that giving a face and a voice to its researchers could bring the citizen closer to the scientific activities of the Institute, using a fluid and straightforward language.

To date, just over 100 journalistic insights have been transmitted on the major television networks in the area in question (Abruzzo and Molise), visible both in streaming on the Institute's website and shared on institutional social channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn.

But if it is true that multimedia communication via the web has represented the true and perhaps the only revolution at the turn of the two centuries, it is equally valid that liquid communication cannot wholly replace traditional communication. Relationships and personal relationships are still the basis of effective communication, especially when there are specific territorial boundaries and we relate to a community where we know and recognize each other.

In this, it is fundamental to the activity of the press office that since 2013 is carried out in IZSAM entirely by internal staff. In addition to the organization of periodic press conferences, in collaboration with the Directorate General, in the last six years (2013-2017), 140 press releases have been prepared and disseminated to the media.

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