

The Role of Communication Management in Strengthening Organisational Culture

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Abstract

This study explores the interdependence between communication management and organisational culture, highlighting the fact that a strong culture cannot exist without coherent information flows. Communication management is not merely the transfer of data, but rather the strategic process through which leaders' values, mission, and vision are internalised by employees. At the same time, communication management is the active tool through which an organisation's abstract values are transformed into everyday realities. It not only conveys information but also "shapes" how employees perceive the company's mission and interact with one another.

Keywords: culture, organisational culture, poor communication, management, communication management.

Introduction

Organisational culture has become an increasingly common topic in academic literature and managerial practice. It is one of the main drivers behind the changes taking place at an ever-faster pace in the economic, technical, and social spheres. Currently, organisations operate in a constantly changing environment, making it difficult to predict these changes. As A. Maslow argues, the world is changing much faster than before. The result of this acceleration is the accumulation of a multitude of facts, knowledge, ideas, and new technologies, which, in turn, necessitate a change in our attitude toward humanity. "*The world must be viewed as constantly in motion, not in a static state.*" If this view is correct, then we need a new kind of person, one capable of living in a constantly changing world. A person who would feel at ease, who would embrace change, who could improvise, and who could face uncertainty with courage and confidence (Zelenschi 2017, 61). Under such conditions, only those enterprises that adapt quickly to changes in the external environment of the economic entity experience stable development. Facilitating the creation of such an organisational climate is possible only by promoting a flexible organisational culture oriented toward change and innovation. Organisational culture reflects the direction and image of the individuals involved in the activities carried out, and shapes a certain mindset in individuals, allowing them to make sense of the world around them, identify patterns, and reduce the uncertainty they face. At the same time, culture shapes the individual's work in carrying out their assigned tasks. In this sense, organisational culture can be viewed as a code that enables members of the organisation to understand the world and act appropriately. According to O.

Niculescu and I. Verboncu, culture represents “*the collective programming of thought that distinguishes the members of one group, or category of people, from another*” (Niculescu et al. 1997, 21). There are no organisations as such, but rather individuals defined by their national, professional, economic, and social identities, existing at a specific moment in their lives.

Materials and Methods

Globally, interest in defining organisational culture is relatively recent, having emerged in the 1970s. Management borrows the concept of culture from anthropology, where culture is viewed as the product of a group of people who live together in the same place and share similar attitudes and behaviours. People belonging to the same culture share similar history, religion, values, norms, and symbols that distinguish them from others (Belias, Koustelios, 2014). We refer to the Petit Robert dictionary, which defines culture as “a set of behavioural patterns created in human societies.” On this basis, organisational culture can be defined, by extension, as “a set of behavioural patterns created within an institution.”

A broader definition of organisational culture is provided by Ed. Schein, as cited by C. Roşca and M. Varzaru, who defines it as “the set of basic assumptions that a group has invented, discovered, or developed while learning to cope with the problems of external adaptation and internal integration that have worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to newcomers as the correct way to think, perceive, and feel regarding these problems” (Roşca et al. 2005, 332). Author Ed. Schein formulated the definition of organisational culture based on the following *elements: the rules of behaviour* observed when people interact, such as the language used and the ways of expressing esteem and respect; *the norms* that develop within the work team; the dominant values adopted by institutions regarding products; *the philosophy* guiding an institution’s policy toward its own employees and applicants; *the rules* established in administration for efficient operation; the spirit and *atmosphere* present within the organisation, expressed through design, comfort, and the way in which members of the institution interact with outsiders (Burduş et al. 1999, 182).

In short, culture represents a way of thinking and acting within a human group; it is the result of the mental, spiritual, and organisational development of both the individual and society. We can expand this to include personal skills, ways of understanding everyday events or the performance of work tasks; metaphors and symbols, shaped into ideas, feelings, experiences, or images of oneself and of phenomena within the organisation, which manifest in daily life (Juc et al. 2013, 26). A definition of organisational culture that is as simple and clear as possible is the one proposed by Deal and Kennedy (1982), who view it as a “set of assumptions, meanings, and implicit rules that govern day-to-day behaviour in the workplace.” According to Fiol and Lyles (1985), culture is a set of shared beliefs, ideologies, and norms that influence an organisation’s actions, which are manifested through prevailing ideologies and pre-established behavioural patterns (as cited in Hundrea, 2014, 30). It should be noted that the concept of organisational culture was first used in the specialised literature by Andrew Pettigrew in 1979, in the article “On Studying Organisational Cultures,” published in the Administrative Science Quarterly (Mateescu, 2009) (cited in Covas, 2019, p. 13). Nor should we overlook the contribution of Elton Mayo in the 1920s and 1930s through his experiments at the Hawthorne factories. We also note the contribution of Edgar Schein, often referred to as the “father” of organisational culture.

Results and discussion

Of particular importance to the present study is the evolution of the concept of organisational culture. In her work *Organisational Culture and Competitiveness*, author Cristina Gănescu outlines several **stages** in the development of the concept of organisational culture: 1) the approach to the firm as a social organism—mid-20th century; 2) the approach to the firm as a cultural identity – the 1970s; 3). the school of cultural management – the 1980s. We will briefly outline the basic elements of these stages.

Regarding **the first stage—viewing the firm as a social entity**—it is important to note that the author refers to a shift in perspective from a mechanistic view (where the employee was merely a “cog” in a machine) to a humanistic one. During this stage, the importance of the human factor is discovered, and researchers and managers begin to realise that a company’s efficiency depends not only on technology or the scientific organisation of work (Taylorism), but also on interpersonal relationships. Thus, the company ceases to be seen merely as a place of production and becomes a social entity. It is also during this stage that we identify culture as an element of cohesion. It is observed that organisations develop a “life of their own” in which employees adhere not only to internal regulations but also to unwritten rules that arise from social interaction. At this stage, the sense of belonging also takes on an entirely different role. The company is perceived as a community that provides its members with identity. It is worth noting that the focus of communication shifts at this stage, namely toward informal communication and social satisfaction. Thus, the importance of “rumour networks” and coffee-break conversations in shaping internal public opinion (informal communication) is recognised. As well as the fact that communication involves not only conveying orders but also motivating employees and creating a pleasant work environment (social satisfaction).

Stage 2 – viewing the company as a cultural identity. While the first stage (mid-20th century) viewed the company as a social community concerned with interpersonal relationships, the second stage focuses on the organisation’s self-image and how it distinguishes itself from others. Thus, the company is perceived as a system of representations and symbols, with an emphasis on myths, rituals, heroes, and taboos. At the same time, the company becomes a place where not only goods but also meanings are produced. Also at this stage, the concept of “corporate personality” emerges, implying a distinct history, a specific language (professional jargon and internal slang), and internal branding—that is, employees’ identification with the image the company projects outwardly.

Stage 3—the school of cultural management, or the managerial approach—began in the 1980s and continues to this day. In this stage, culture is not viewed merely as a symbol or a social entity, but as a strategic resource for success. This stage was largely driven by the success of Japanese companies. We note William Ouchi’s Theory Z, which demonstrated that productivity is closely linked to how communication and culture are managed. According to this theory, a key role is played by lifetime employment, which fosters a sense of loyalty and collective responsibility, with decisions made not solely from the top down but by consensus. Also important for this stage, in our view, is the Kaizen philosophy, which emphasises continuous improvement. Japanese success has demonstrated that communication management must encourage every employee to propose ideas. Consequently, communication transforms from a tool of control into one of active participation that contributes to the company’s success (Gănescu 2011, 15).

We believe it is important to note that the benefits of this philosophy include a more collaborative and innovative organisational culture and increased productivity and

efficiency. And employees are motivated through responsibility and engagement. Analysing all three stages in the process of developing the concept of organisational culture, we note that communication management has evolved from a purely informational function in Stage 1 to one of internal branding in Stage 2, and today serves as the backbone of business strategy in Stage 3. We consider it appropriate to note that the formation of organisational culture is a complex and lengthy process that requires specifying the objectives to be achieved, the methods and techniques to be used, and creating an organisational climate conducive to this process. Informally, culture can be understood as the style, atmosphere, or personality of an organisation (Juc 2013, 25) that shapes collective standards of thinking, values, concepts, rituals, and ceremonies. In every organisation, certain behaviours and ideas—which stem from the values shared within the company—are either encouraged or discouraged. The higher the level of organisational culture within an organisation, the less need there is for instructions, detailed procedures, and guidelines. In this regard, Jesper Sorensen (2011, p. 76) defines organisational culture as a “social control mechanism.” Through this definition, the author refers to how organisational culture regulates employee behaviour without the need for written rules, strict supervision, or formal punishments. In the context of communication management, this mechanism involves control through the “internalisation of values”; that is, whereas in bureaucratic control, you are monitored by a supervisor or monitoring software, the social mechanism originates from within the employee. This is achieved through constant and repetitive communication until the company’s values become the employee’s personal “compass.” Ultimately, the employee does not do something “because that’s what the job description says,” but because “that’s how we do things here,” and consequently, control becomes invisible. As Ovidiu-Iliuță (2014, 1156) notes, the concept of organisational culture is not merely about being a good employer but rather focuses on having employees who share the organisation’s vision and mission (apud Covas, 2019, 31).

We continue our exploration with the view expressed by Romanian authors Ovidiu Nicolescu and Ion Verboncu in their work *Fundamentals of Organisational Management* (2008), who define organisational culture as “an invisible yet omnipresent force that determines the success or failure of any management strategy.” They also identified five main **functions** of organisational culture:

1. *The function of integrating employees into the organisation* is considered the most important function from the perspective of communication management. Through internal communication, values are conveyed to new members, facilitating their acceptance into the group. In this case, culture acts as a “glue,” creating a sense of belonging for new employees. This function allows newcomers to familiarise themselves with the work environment, organisational culture, colleagues, and responsibilities, quickly transforming them into productive members, motivating them to stay in the long term, and contributing to the organisation’s overall success by reducing the risk of early turnover.

2. *Guiding organisational roles and behaviours*—in an organisation with a strong culture, employees know what to expect. And norms and values act as a shield against uncertainty and external stress. Thus, transparent communication from management regarding the company’s future reinforces this protective function.

3. *Protecting employees from external threats*—this function highlights the role of culture as a psychological and operational “shield.” It is particularly evident during sudden technological changes, global crises, or economic uncertainties. Under these conditions, communication management becomes the tool through which this protection is activated. At the same time, a strong culture provides employees with a set of stable rules and values that remain unchanged, regardless of what is happening outside.

4. *Preserving and transmitting organisational values*—this refers to the continuity of organisational culture, which is essential for the long-term survival of the company’s identity. Examples of this function include award ceremonies or company anniversaries, where values are “showcased” to new generations of employees. Thus, values become known and translate into behaviours when linked to the system of rewards and recognition. It is worth noting that values endure beyond leaders' departure; they are perpetuated.

5. *Strategic competitive cultural resource*—culture is no longer viewed merely as a “work environment,” but as an intangible asset capable of generating a sustainable competitive advantage that is difficult for competitors to imitate. For this function, the VRIO Model created by Jay Barney in 1991 and adopted in Romanian academic literature by Gh. Căprărescu—Value-Rarity-Imitability-Organisation—applies, to which we refer below:

- ✓ ☐ *Value applied to culture*—culture must help the company capitalize on opportunities or mitigate threats.
- ✓ *Rarity*—if all companies in the industry have the same culture, it does not provide an advantage.
- ✓ *Uniqueness*—a strong culture is impossible to copy exactly because it is the result of a unique history and complex human interactions.
- ✓ *Organisation*—communication management must be organised in such a way as to extract the maximum potential from these values (Căprărescu et al. 2014, 58).

In light of the findings of this study, we observe that organisational culture influences how decisions are made within an organisation and its development. Thus, we note that organisational culture underlies the entire decision-making process, even though it appears in the organisation’s visible sphere only indirectly.

At the same time, it has been demonstrated that organisational culture has a significant impact on the management of conflicts and stress within organisations. Thus, according to researcher Edgar Schein, organisational culture acts as a filter for conflicts. The author identifies the following: collaborative cultures: where “constructive conflict” is encouraged. The focus is on ideas, not on people, and problems are discussed openly, reducing the risk that minor grievances will escalate into major crises; authoritarian cultures: conflicts are often suppressed or ignored. This leads to “latent conflict,” where tension builds beneath the surface, manifesting as passive-aggressive sabotage or disengagement; cultures based on internal competition: which can generate destructive conflicts, as employees withhold information from one another to gain individual advantages (Schein, 2010, p. 216).

We consider it important for the present study to also refer to the types of organisational culture identified by the Irish researcher Charles Handy. The author focused on the exercise of power within organisations, personality-based value orientations, managerial attitudes, organisational structure, and the specific nature of the organisation's activities at various stages of organisational development. Based on his examination of these factors, Ch. Handy identifies four **types** of organisational culture:

- Power-based—characterized by the existence of a center of power from which sources of influence and power originate and radiate. In organisations with such a culture, communication occurs primarily through interpersonal relationships, and effectiveness is achieved through the demonstration of trust and empathy;
- Role-based type—based on a rigorous definition of the roles or activities to be performed. The strength and efficiency of such a culture lie in the existence of a predefined system of rules and procedures, considered to generate stability and certainty;
- Task-oriented type—characterized by the existence of flexible, organic, matrix-style structures, whose efficiency is determined by the focus on achieving a specific goal. In such a culture, power is viewed through the lens of a chain of problems that involves identifying solutions, which can be found by competent employees who are experts in a field and work within the project team;
- Existentialist type—where professionals and their individual goals represent the essence of the organisation. Power is based on resources, professionalism, administrative duties, and negotiation skills, which are necessary for coordinating the organisation's activities. Handy argues that these types of organisational cultures can be characteristic of an organisation as they go through different stages in the development of its activities. Organisational cultures, especially strong ones, reflect the vision of top-level managers. Through the socialization process, employees learn the values and norms of behaviour. The assessment of the influence of organisational culture on organisational performance can be carried out by analyzing processes such as communication, decision-making, control, and others.

The Romanian author G. Militaru, in his work *Organisational Behaviour*, notes that, structurally, organisational culture comprises the following components: “the dominant values of the organisation”; “the norms accepted by its members”; “the philosophy that underlies the organisation's policies”; and “the prevailing climate within the organisation.” The same author describes the following levels of organisational culture: 1. cultural symbols; 2. cultural heroes; 3. organisational rituals and ceremonies; 4. cultural values (Militaru, 2005, p. 164).

In light of the above, a question arises: “*Can an organisational culture survive if the communication management system is flawed?*” To answer this question, we must first clarify what constitutes flawed communication. In fact, a flawed communication management system does not merely mean that “people do not talk to one another,” but rather refers to a systemic failure in how information is processed, transmitted, and received

within an organisation. In this context, Peter Drucker noted that “60% of management problems stem from faulty communication.” In the author’s view, communication within an organisation “is not merely a transfer of information, but a process of perception. The researcher notes that in communication, the responsibility for being understood lies with the sender, who has not adapted the message to the receiver’s context” (Drucker, 1974). Also in this work, Drucker develops the concept that “management is communication.” The author highlights the essential *elements*, namely:

- ✧ *Communication is perception*: it doesn’t matter what the manager says, but what the recipient understands. If the recipient cannot perceive the message, communication has not taken place (it is merely noise);
- ✧ *communication is expectation*: people often hear what they expect to hear, ignoring information that contradicts their beliefs;
- ✧ *communication and motivation*: he argues that management by objectives is, in essence, a communication system that fails without a two-way flow.

We believe it is important to note that in any organisation, managerial communication is not merely an exchange of information, but rather the “nervous system” that sets everything in motion. It is through communication that high-level decisions are transformed into concrete actions. The distinctive features of managerial communication, compared to other forms of communication, stem from its purpose, objectives, and roles, as well as the organisational framework, structure, and context of organisational culture. In management, communication is of paramount importance. If we were to focus solely on managerial decision-making, it would suffice to emphasise that its proper adaptation and successful implementation are inconceivable without flawless communication between managers and staff (Câmpeanu-Sonea et al., 2011). According to R. Cîndea, the mission of internal communication consists of:

- ✓ ☐ Ensuring that employees understand and support the changes taking place within the organisation;
- ✓ Shaping and influencing organisational culture as the organisation adapts to these changes;
- ✓ Influencing employees’ attitudes and behaviours regarding quality and the customer (Cîndea, et al., 1996).

Communication is not an end in itself. Its existence cannot be conceived of apart from its role in supporting an overall policy aimed at achieving the organisation’s stated goals. In this context, the organisation and communication must be viewed as complementary tools rather than independent techniques. This is why the organisation must be communicative, and communication must be organised. An organisation that aims to be communicative must exhibit certain *characteristics*:

- be *open*, so as to be able to communicate with the outside world, with the sending and receiving of messages constituting an interactive process;
- be *adaptable*, meaning it should prioritise innovation over routine;

- be *flexible*, allowing for an appropriate balance between formal and informal communication;
- be *explicitly* goal-oriented, to create the most suitable framework for formal communication;
- promote *accountability*, to avoid the artificial accumulation of power through the hoarding of information;
- be *dynamic*, to create, through information, specialisation, and communication, the means to turn these goals into reality.

On another note, poor management manifests itself through several clear signs:

- ✧ ☐ *Lack of clarity*: messages are ambiguous, leaving room for interpretation. Employees don't know exactly what they're supposed to do or what the priorities are.
- ✧ *Wrong choice of channels*: sending constructive criticism via a curt email instead of a private conversation or announcing major changes via WhatsApp messages.
- ✧ *One-way communication*: management issues orders, but there are no feedback mechanisms for employees' voices to be heard.
- ✧ *Fragmented information*: departments do not communicate with one another, leading to duplication of work or contradictory decisions.

To avoid such problems, it is important to note that in a healthy organisation, communication must flow in all **directions**:

- ✓ *top-down* (from top to bottom): conveying the vision, objectives, and tasks;
- ✓ *upward* (bottom-up): feedback from employees, reporting of issues, and suggestions for improvement;
- ✓ *horizontal* (between departments): essential for avoiding information "silos" and for collaboration between teams (specific to Handy's Athena-type culture).

If we consider the key elements of the communication process (based on the Shannon-Weaver model), then for the process to be effective, the manager must monitor: *encoding*—the message must be clear and tailored to the recipient; *the channel*—choosing the appropriate medium (an email for technical data, a face-to-face meeting for sensitive feedback); *noise*: identifying and eliminating barriers (emotional, physical, or semantic); *feedback*—confirming that the message was understood correctly.

In this context, we can also refer to **the 7 Cs** (e.g., Cutlip & Center), which outline the seven qualities of a well-structured managerial message, namely: 1) clarity: avoiding unnecessary jargon; 2) conciseness: conveying the essentials without redundant details; 3). concreteness: using facts and figures, not assumptions; 4) correctness: accuracy of information and proper grammar; 5) coherence: the internal logic of the arguments; 6). completeness: providing all the data necessary to decide; 7). Politeness: maintaining a professional and respectful tone.

We believe it is important to note that culture is like a living organism; if it is not nourished through official and transparent channels, it will "adapt" to survive by feeding on gossip, assumptions, and mistrust. Consequently, there is a likelihood that a "parallel culture" will

emerge. When leaders fail to clearly communicate the direction, employees create their own narratives. Official information is replaced by “the grapevine.” This parallel culture is typically fear-based and defensive, undermining any strategic objective.

At the same time, without a two-way communication system (where employees feel they can provide feedback), the phenomenon of “information silos” arises. People will hide their mistakes for fear of punishment, and innovation is the first thing to go, because no one wants to take risks in an opaque environment.

Another important aspect in our view is that values sometimes become disconnected from reality. You can have the most beautiful values written on the office walls, but if management does not communicate them through actions and constant dialogue, they become sources of cynicism. Employees will perceive the discrepancy between “what is said” and “what is done,” leading to a culture of apathy. As for the long-term consequences if the communication system is not fixed, the organisation will face:

1. High staff turnover: Talented employees leave for places where they feel heard.
2. Low productivity: The time wasted trying to decipher ambiguous messages is enormous.
3. Resistance to change: Any new initiative will be viewed with suspicion.

Conclusion

Organisational culture is not merely a symbolic backdrop to economic activity; rather, it constitutes the “operating system” that determines an institution’s resilience in the face of internal tensions. A healthy culture acts as a constructive filter, transforming conflict from a destructive force into a driver of innovation and learning by maintaining an optimal level of psychological safety. In contrast, a rigid culture, based on excessive control and a lack of transparency, not only stifles dialogue but exponentially amplifies employees’ stress levels, turning professional demands into sources of burnout. Communication management is not merely a simple flow of information; it is the spearhead through which organisational culture is created, maintained, and, when necessary, changed. An organisation that succeeds in breaking down “information silos” and promoting collaboration over internal competition will not only reduce absenteeism and burnout but will also secure a sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly volatile economic environment. We grow by communicating, and by communicating we grow.

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