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COMMUNICATION IMPLIED BY THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: *Within a society, and especially within projects, the institution or the organization communicates with its own personnel and beneficiaries and the other way round, at various paces, with different intensities and in different manners. By means of communication, the members of an organization coordinate their actions and labor so as to reached established goals. Any activity, irrespective of its type, cannot achieve its objective if there is not communication by whose means a unitary coordination of the efficient organizational behavior is accomplished.*

Key words: *Communication, project, project's team*

To communicate means informing a large audience; transmitting messages; announcing; emitting; broadcasting[1]. Consequently, the verb 'to communicate' refers to the action of transmitting a message about something to somebody. A series of definitions on communication are worth mentioning:

a. Communication, generally, and dialogue, particularly, constitutes the means by which a double informational and affective load is transmitted.[2]

b. Establishing a univocal correspondence between a spatial-temporary universe, A, the sender and a spatial-temporary universe, B, receiver … that includes understanding and transfer and that spreads from the phenomenal field up to the field of symbols connected within a structure.[3]

c. Communication … is the fundamental manner for people's psychosocial interaction, achieved by means of symbols and socially organized significances of reality, in order to obtain stability or some individual or group behavioral changes.[4]

d. A process of emitting a message and transmitting it in a qualified manner, by means of a channel toward a receiver.[5]

e. By communication, one understands a process of transmitting data between a sender and a receiver who are either within the same system or within different systems of message perception[6].

[1] Vasile Breban, *Dicționar General al Limbii Române*, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Encilopedică, Bucreşti, 1987, p. 202

[2] Elena Zamfir, *Incursiune în universul uman*, Editura Albatros, Bucureşti, 1982, p. 25

[3] Serraf Guy, *Psychologie de la comunication*, în Cahier Adetem, nr.8, 1963, p.60

[4] *Dicţionar de psihologie socială*, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1981, p.54

[5] *Dicţionar de sociologie*, Editura Babel, Bucureşti, 1993, p.124

[6] Ovidiu Nicolescu, coordonator general, Dicţionar de management, Editura Pro Universitarea, Bucureşti, 2011, p.144

The content of definitions leads us to the following clarifications:

- communication is regarded either as a process of message transmission without their being received, or as a process of their reception in the absence of a conscious transmission;

- there are different degrees of intentionality in communication, both during the transmission and during reception of messages;

- communication is achieved either as an effect, or as a cause of a specific situation, of some social relationships or interactions of the organizational structures for the purpose of accomplishing certain objectives;

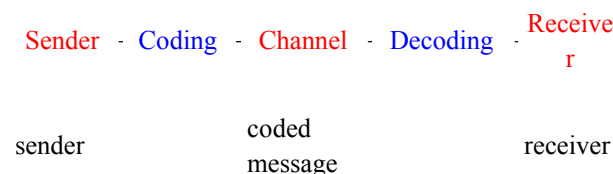- it appears as a linear, circular and interactive process;

- it may be characterized as a source for order, unity, cohesion or conflict;

- it may be achieved in a double way – of influencing others' behavior and of influencing own objectives by others.

The classical scheme of communication may be represented as shown in figure 4.3.1

S	→	I	→	R
sender		information(message)		receiver
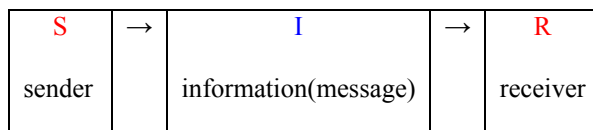
Shannon's scheme (1952) presents communication as shown in Figure 4.3.2.

Sender - Coding - Channel - Decoding - Receiver

sender   coded message   receiver

Communication represents, thus, a vital element, indispensable for the efficient functioning of the project's team, irrespective of its nature or size. This principle is found at the basis of project management, because it constitutes a main source for generating

unities of views and actions, behavior and interaction, while ensuring the correct understanding of objectives and individual or collective tasks and competing for the social and professional integration of individuals within that particular team.

Within the project's team communication appears mainly with the relationships established between the manager and the members of the team, the primary organization, as well as between the former and the beneficiaries of activities to be performed.

Communication within the project's team is achieved;

- between different levels of the primary organization, in order to transmit orders and data either in written or orally;

- at the same level, in order to meet current tasks and responsibilities;

-- between the project's team and the primary organization;

- between the project's team and the audit team;

- with the beneficiary.

Communication channels used by the project management are formal and informal.

a. Formal (official) channels express communication relationships that result from the organigram, that is, between the team's members there is a systematic and intense exchange of descending, ascending and horizontal messages; without these messages, strictly regulated, the reception and transmission of tasks would not have been possible and feedback or cooperation between levels would have been impeded.

b. Informal channels are established, generally, between people and informal groups within the project but outside the official channel. These channels are made up of employees that share common interests and likes. Data transferred by means of these channels is unofficial and holds a private or general status and it is not verified. Data transmitted via this communication channel

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has an increased speed, is efficient and is based on (in most cases) real data, although there are situations when the informal channel also hosts data of the 'gossip' type.

In order to accomplish his or her established role, the project manager will use, more or less consciously, the following functions of communication: informative, command and training, influencing, persuasive, guidance and counseling, instruction, image generator, motivational, promoter of organizational culture, integration and preservation.

a. Informative function refers to the fact that the project manager is confronted with the reception of two types of data: external data- sent and received through specially created structures- and internal data – which circulates via formal and informal channels within that specific organization. The existence of these two types of informational fluxes is because any organization is the result of a cumulus of interactions with the external or internal environment, between sub-divisions of the organization and its members.

b. Command and training function is used by the project manager to ensure the action convergence of the other employees, so as to facilitate the accomplishment of the organizational policies. Decisions and instructions ensure uniformity in practices and procedures, correctitude and completeness of tasks achievement.

c. Influencing, persuading, guiding and counseling function allows project managers, no matter which their position may be, to perform control both over the data in process and over the behavior of other employees with whom managers are in various relationships (hierarchically ascending or descending or horizontal) within that particular structure.

d. Training function guarantees the forming and improvement of abilities and skills of the team's members, as well as those pertaining to managers of an inferior rank, to communicate by means of improvement training courses run by qualified personnel within the institution.

e. Image generator function is achieved through external and informal communication by promoting the institution's image on various occasions and by different methods (communication channels).

f. Motivational function focuses on the issue of engaging the entire personnel of the organization in the activities development, at a superior qualitative level, by promoting a motivating system of promotions, payment etc.

g. Organizational culture promotion function is assured by correlating communication actions with actions belonging to organizational culture, management and leadership.

h. Integration and preservation function gives an employee pertaining to superior hierarchical structures the possibility to assure the functional operability of the department/directorate/office/team he or she leads by a functional informational flow, an optimal use of informational channels so that data overlapping or useless data are avoided; sorting, checking and transmitting of data according to its specificity.

The stages of the communication process may be highlighted as follows:

a. Message coding; consists of a selection of symbols able to express the significance of a message. Communicative symbols are represented by words, images, facial or body expressions, signals or gestures. During speaking, words and gestures may be interpreted in a wrong manner. The reception meanings of words vary, according to contexts in which they are used. As far as gestures as symbols are concerned, frowning may be taken for uncertainty or discomfort or tension; the green traffic light symbolizes "free way". These symbols are yet ambiguous, as people unfamiliar with them or belonging to different cultures may interpret them differently. This explains why gestures, expressions with certain significance may be misunderstood by the receiver. Multiplication of meaning conferred to one and the same symbol leads to a confrontation of the message with difficulties of their selection and combination, so that the beginning of communication is often distorted. Within the project management, the most important codification form is, without doubt, the message codification.

b. Sending the message via a channel; consists of transmission of the codified message, from the sender to the receiver, through the visual, audio, tactile or electronic communication channel. The manners in which messages are conveyed is of vital importance; thus, the channel becomes a component part of the message. Even if the same phrases (words) are used for expressing a message, a change in the channel by telegraphic transmission, adds a note of importance and emergency to the message, as compared with the message transmission by mail.

c. Decoding and interpretation (reception); refers to decoding symbols transmitted and, respectively, explaining their meanings, a formalized process in message reception. These two processes, composing the reception, are powerfully influenced by past experience from the latter part of the process, the feedback, and this is because the sender does not consider necessary to verify the answer.[7]

Communication may be unilaterally or bilaterally achieved, each of this variants having its own characteristics.

Within project management, regarded as an organization, a variety of categories and forms of communication is used, and they are classified according to distinct elements, such as direction, manner of transmission accomplishment, manner of processing or degree of formality.

a. In relation with its transmission direction, communication can be: ascending, descending, horizontal and diagonal.

- Ascending communication consists of message transmission by structures subordinated to managers of an inferior rank and, successively, to superior levels of management. By means of this type of communication there are sent reports, demands, opinions, claims. Ascending communication assures the efficiency of the process since, through it, reception of messages formerly transmitted by managers may be verified. Moreover, via ascending communication, the management of superior rank obtains information on the current situation of the project for each of the sectors or departments, drawbacks in communication, level and nature of recorded most frequent negative outcomes. The message, which circulates from executives to managers, is analyzed through cognitive and/or psychological filters. There are situations when, during ascending communication, and respectively, during specific data, reports, suggestions transmission regarding the content of work and modalities of improving it, managers of inferior rank may believe that

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[7] Tudorel Niculae, Ion Gherghiță, Diana Gherghiță. - *Comunicarea organizațională și managementul situațiilor de criză*, București, Editura Ministerului Administrației și Internelor, 2006, p.24-25

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their subordinates might be perceived by superiors as being more competent than they are. Whenever the send data constitutes a feedback to a previous message, the manager may interpret ascending communication as an attempt of having his or her professional competence or authority tested. Therefore, during this type of communication there might appear obstructions having direct effects on the capacity of controlling and maintaining communication.

- Descending communication is a manner of transmitting messages within relationships of hierarchical type, it being accomplished from top management to bottom levels. It is based on decisions, regulations, instructions, tasks assignment, data request. During message transmission, within this type of communication, there is the possibility for the message to be filtered as it is sent from one level to another, due to the fact that each of the levels may interpret messages in relation with its own necessities or objectives. Wherever the authoritarian style of management is applied, this type of communication is predominant throughout the unilateral communication.

- Horizontal communication is achieved between people or departments situated at the same hierarchical level. By its means, activities involving common objectives are more easily coordinated, excluding intervention from managers of superior rank.

- Diagonal communication is accomplished whenever the organization's members cannot communicate via other channels. This type of communication has the advantage of time and costs saving, of using informal relationships, of facilitating a climate based on reciprocal appreciation.

b. In relation with instruments used or manner of transmission, communication may be written, verbal and non-verbal.

- Written communication is the most used form within the project management, because through it internal announcements, reports, decisions, plans, letters to people inside or outside the institution are requested or transmitted. The major problems of written communication consist of clarity, concision, accuracy, yet, whenever all of these are used correctly, they may turn into advantages for this type of communication. The advantages of written communication are: it assures a clearer organization of informational data; it can be at all times checked; it may be used as evidence in case of trials. Some of the disadvantages may include: it does directly connect the addressees; it does not provide immediate feedback; it take time for typing, multiplication and reaching the destination.

- Verbal communication is frequently used. This type of communication is performed through language, nevertheless, it is influenced by personal opinions, values or reference points to which individual appeal when they transmit or receive message. Verbal communication may be achieved through conversations, conferences, meeting, gatherings etc.

Verbal communication may include:[8]

- narratives regarding situations, actions, existential events;

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[8] Idem, p. 31-33

- feelings and reactions, at the central level, to certain situations;

- opinions, attitudes that express an individual's position in a specific situation, subjective viewpoints.

Within verbal communication, distortions may appear when messages referring to a departmental issue are transmitted, and reception is achieved by another structure of the system, by mistake. During verbal communication, such confusions are frequent, those who communicate must be aware of the fact that messages do not only include narration of facts and events, but also feelings, opinions, significances given to and perceived by participants at the communicative act. Verbal communication request of the manager not only his or her capacity of emitting signals, but also his or her capacity of listening.

- Non-verbal communication represents an efficient instrument which, when it is skillfully applied, it facilitates emission and reception of messages. By gestures, dress code, body posture and distance a great load of inter-human communication is performed than in any other manner.[9] This type of communication consists of its competition with the verbal communication, which allows for some messages to be sent right away during a conversation between interlocutors. Gestures, mimics, body posture represent stimuli that may be successfully used to increase the efficiency of interpersonal communication. It completes the means used by verbal communication through: highlighting of certain aspects, providing expressivity to the message sent, contradicting or even canceling the verbal message, substituting the verbal message, completing some verbal messages and adjusting feedback.

c. In relation with its course of action or its message transmission technique,

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[9] Allan Pease*, Limbajul trupului*, traducere de Alexandru Szabo, Editura Polimark, București, 1995, p.7

communication may be direct, face to face, indirect or mediated.

- Direct communication or face-to-face communication is the most efficient way of building a working relationship. Communication being bi-dimensional (since it involves hearing and sight), it allows the sender to evaluate on the spot the manner in which his or her message was received by the receiver. Sometimes, according to the receiver's reactions, the message may be repeated, rephrased and behavior may be adjusted. Direct communication is especially appealed to in sensitive issues that may involve sensitivities or suspicions from the personnel. The manager delivering bad news to his or her subordinated personnel via short written messages, takes the risk of being judged as incorrect or lacking courage. Under such circumstances, his or her credibility will be at a loss. The advantage of the rapid feedback is completed by that of the non-verbal communication. Facial expressions and gestures are deciphered, analyzed and clarified immediately. Direct, face-to-face communication remains a precise, rapid and efficient manner of communication on which healthy and durable relationships can be built.

- Indirect or mediated communication is accomplished by means of letters, films, discourses, telephone, radio, video-phone etc. and by means of interactive television (teleconferences). Of all the above mentioned instruments, the telephone is currently the most used. Telephonic communication lacks many of the non-verbal messages and therefore, some messages may be only deduced from the pitch and intonation of voice or from speech delivery pace.

d. In relation with its formality degree, communication may be formal and informal.

- Formal communication includes both ascending and descending messages that circulate through the channel of organizational relationships. It may appear under various forms: spoken, written, direct and indirect,

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multilateral and bilateral. Irrespective of its manifestation, formal communication remains a necessity for adjusting the well functioning of the project team.

- Informal communication includes rumors and gossips. Caused by a lack of data or by truncated data that may appear within inter-human processes, informal communication tries to eliminate uncertainty, curiosity or anxiety of some people from the project team.

Several action principles would be necessary for an efficient participation and communication within the project management: professionalism; ensuring participation in decision making by consulting all decisional factors; a greater involvement of the personnel in institutional management and ensuring an adequate degree of permissiveness; the internal communication will hold priority; yet, a balance between internal communication and external communication must be taken into account; communication will not restrict to a mere data transmission but also to listening; thus an exchange of information, ideas and opinions will be considered; investment in the long-term communication, knowledge technique and human capital.

Communication within the project management is one of the major manners by which an institution makes its presence visible, both internally and externally. Under these circumstances, the entire process is connected in an efficient system, resulting in the relationship organizational culture, managerial culture, leadership and communication. Transparency, responsibility

and accuracy of messages are major factors for the institutional communication.

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