

DOI 10.51558/2490-3647.2021.6.1.441

UDK 316.776:005.32

Primljeno: 01. 12. 2020.

Izvorni naučni rad  
Original scientific paper

**Samir Ljajić, Danica PirsI**

## **THE ROLE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND WORKPLACE LANGUAGE IN POSITIONING OF ORGANIZATIONS**

Internal communications strategy influences and determines the way employees behave, observe, and maintain good vibes in their respective workplace. No company should allow the occurrence of inefficient communication between their workers and the management bodies, otherwise, it is doomed for failure. What happens inside organizations in terms of administering good communication channels, affects their business success equally so as to what happens outside them when public relations staff brings forth all the successful results to the society at large. Internal communication is very often neglected, which only shows the immaturity and lack of knowledge or incompetence of the leading figures in an organization about effective communication. This paper deals with the efficient execution of internal communication and its importance for the successful ranking and positioning of any business, whether it be small or big. First, it examines the main prerequisites for success such as trust and connecting with the employees and their establishment in big and small businesses as well, because small organizations find it easier to implement good internal communications than the big ones. Second, the paper explores higher education organizations and their ways to achieve excellent results through the positive impact of running good internal communication to the satisfaction of their employees, management bodies, and their wider community. The paper also argues that the essential preconditions of the organization's good positioning are mutual trust, stemming from the efficient internal communication strategy implementation, and the creation of a good business climate. Labour market as a catalyst and a sieve distinguishes good from bad, recognizes good social interrelating competences focusing on perceiving identities and

favourable working contexts. Third, the paper deals with the working place language knowledge which facilitates human resources management, enables efficient implementation of the internal communication strategy, and provides for the efficient running of the organization. Conclusions are that the successful implementation of the all above said will consequently result in a good positioning and high ranking of the organization on the volatile labour market.

**Keywords:** internal communication; organization; positioning; higher education; workplace language

## 1. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION, FUNCTION, SET-UP AND SIGNIFICANCE

In small businesses, all information is free-flowing, in large businesses with the dispersed and largely remote and separate business participant the information flow and its transmission are dispersed as well. Thus, if not carefully planned, dissemination of relevant information aimed at the full realization of the organization's potential and its successful competition in the labour market fails in the long run.

The first pillar of the paper will deal with business performance and the outcomes in case it is significantly impeded by the lack of the relevant employee's engagement and involvement in all cycles of running a business. This of course, greatly impacts the level of general morale which gradually decreases if the workers experience a low level of inclusion or even exclusion from relevant decision making. That is why internal communication satisfaction has a significant role in high employee engagement. Furthermore, as Verčič and Vokić claim, the level of worker's engagement has to do with the timely feedback, most often informal settings communication and communication during meetings. In their research study, they have found out that the "internal communication and employee engagement "feed" each other in a continuous "virtual circle" after thoroughly investigating correlations between the multidimensional ICS and employees engagement (Tkalac Verčič, Pološki Vokić 2017: 885). Thus, if the management bodies strive to connect their employees to their organization's vision, they would certainly need to draw up an effective and efficient communication strategy.

To add to a more comprehensive theoretical thread of the previous research on the topic of internal communication we bring forth the findings of Yue, Men, and Ferguson (2020) who have revealed that leaders' motivating and incentive language,

as well as corporate based symmetrical internal communication, contribute to the positive emotional culture within an organization. Their sample comprised almost 500 United States-based employees, half of them female, and all of the workers belonged to the most productive age category between 30 and 55, half of the respondents were holding at least a bachelor's degree, half of them were holding no high-level managing posts. Creating a positive climate within an organization was directly associated with the accentuated feeling of belonging to the particular organization and identifying one's own wellbeing with that of the organization itself.

For us, it is important to note that the authors claim firmly the internal communication creates a positive emotional culture which in turn helps the workers recognize and build up their organizational belonging and identification. How do these findings improve our practice and business running? It is suggested that organizations instruct their leaders and management bodies to firstly, amply use the motivational language, and secondly, to insist on a two-way symmetrical internal communication system. Moreover, Mayfield and Mayfield claim that empathetic language can "ease and translate emotional labor into positive energy" (2018: 39). They listed some possible tools to measure and consequently boost the inward, in-house organizational communication comprising, for example, annual surveys, social media platforms and informal gatherings in order to collect employees' feedback, and to aspire to find varying approaches to create, and later on promote a positive workplace emotional culture.

Why is the organizational culture so important for the success and competitiveness of any organization, company, or business? It is because it represents a social glue or a connective tissue that brings organizational members together in such a way that they are fully aware of the organizational processes, and based on it they form judgments and attribute values to that particular organization. The organizational culture referring to the affective part is all about how the employees feel about being members of the particular organization. Thus, feelings of joy, love, pride, and gratitude create positive emotional culture. Knowing how to use leadership motivating language can help to identify and to pursue employees' personal goals in order to complement them with the organization's goals and objectives. This actually is the art of voicing up actions to be taken to realize organizational goals, and at the same time to give support, show empathy, and due respect to all the employees. Symmetrical internal communication denotes openness, reciprocity, and willingness to tolerate possible disagreements between organizations and their employees.

Julie O'Neil, Michele Ewing, Stacey Smith, and Sean Williams (2018) in their paper "A Delphi Study to Identify Standards for Internal Communication" concisely

described their research conducted in 2016, revealing the findings of the Delphi study. The study introduced and defined measurement standards that internal communication practitioners can use to create more effective communication plans and measure the value communication brings to their organizations. In the appendix of the paper, the authors conveniently summarise the findings of the Delphi study comprising and slotting standards into outtakes which they have labelled as awareness, knowledge, understanding, relevance, and retention of information. In the area of outcomes, they categorize attitude, advocacy, authenticity, empowerment, collaboration, teamwork, discretionary effort, trust, satisfaction, transparency and fairness. The standard of the organizational impact comprises productivity, innovation, continuous improvement, reputation and finally, employee retention and satisfaction (O'Neil, Ewing, Smith, Williams 2018: 16).

As a follow-up study in 2020 Julie O'Neil and Michele Ewing investigated how internal communication builds and maintains employee relationships and creates social capital for the organization, by conducting in-depth interviews with 27 practitioners totalling up to 15 years of internal communication experience and working for large, global companies representing different businesses. Explaining their findings, the authors claim that communicators also try to find ways to contribute to company culture, to build community, to create employee's confidence, to create collaboration and connection among employees and leaders, to encourage employees to share their voices, and to recognize employees.

Strategies practitioners used to create an engaged workplace were the following ones: effective storytelling, helping employees to understand the mission, vision and values of the company, fostering communities of purpose, treating employees as people, providing opportunities for employees to become involved, creating experiences around organizational values, helping employees enjoy their jobs and finally improving management bodies listening skills.

Important aspects were also the ways the internal communication practitioners measured employee engagement (Buhmann, Likely, & Geddes 2018). Practitioners discussed many functional measurement and evaluation tactics (for example, engagement surveys, readership numbers, channel studies, digital analytics), but equally important and insightful were the more intangible measures. Communicators described that they examined employees' confidence in the company's direction, strategy and leadership, employees' personal and professional growth, employee empowerment, employees' motivation to innovate.

What is the practical value of this research? It is valuable because it gives func-

tional views of measurement and evaluation by describing how communication can help to create value for their organizations by building and maintaining social capital. Practitioners provided us with numerous strategies and evaluation tools to inform their internal communication thus ultimately creating and maintaining social capital (Dodd 2016). Through measurement techniques they have built communities of purpose, engendering confidence among employees and leadership, enabling collaboration among employees and leaders, encouraging employees to share their voice, and the like.

## **2. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION ORGANIZATIONS**

Whatever happens within the organization is the subject of the internal communication encompassing dialogue facilitating, producing and delivering company messages, announcing company policies and explaining its vision, mission and finally, overall goals and objectives. The more company or any other organization grows, the more important a carefully planned internal communications strategy becomes. Drawing parallels with the higher education institutions, namely faculties as any other organization running tackles the second pillar of this paper. As mentioned, the starting point is usually emphasizing a Faculty's mission and vision which is actually a compulsory and binding duty as defined in the Faculty's Statute, Bylaws, and other legal documents.

Higher education organizations (HEO) have special "clients" to deal with, namely students – millennials. They are inquisitive, they want to talk, they are more than ready to listen and to collaborate on equal terms with the management and their peers as well. They want transparency and demand feedback, and they expect to know the reason and purpose of the activities prescribed. To deliver this, to accommodate the students' expectations, a higher education organization needs to convey the most effective, high-quality two-way communication.

To become and maintain the top-level ranking HEOs on the competitive higher education market they need agility, heightened ability to adapt and change their objectives so as to comply with the labor market. At this point, we draw on the application of the integrated marketing communication approach applying the 4C model: concept, costs, communication, convenience (Ognjanov 2005). HEOs "production concept" must be clearly conveyed from the very start, that is from the student's enrolment point. Frequently with limited funds and assets, HEOs need to "produce" highly competent and thus competitive students as their "final product". That is why

efficient internal communication with their employees must be established so much so that they all feel they are taking the same course, and striving for the same goals. Needless to say, a strong internal communications strategy is a must. Thus the fourth C “convenience” takes advantage of the digital age which has brought turbulent times for business and a need for greater transparency. This means that both the employees and students as the HEOs prospective “clients” must access the vital information in the most convenient way. Management thus must provide communication channels utilizing numerous online tools available to help business running.

HEOs with ambitious growth targets find vitally important aligning of all participants in the triad of management bodies, students and administrative staff at the faculty with the faculty’s vision and mission. If we take the example of any faculty or the University as the supreme management body, we could say that the internal communication tools at their disposal are: the introduction of the regular briefings, faculty and students newsletters, regular reports on the teaching and administrative staff efficiency on the weekly basis. These elements of internal communication help in opening vital communication channels for transparency and employee engagement. Talking to people in informal gatherings enhances meaningful insights from the teaching staff and their problems. Talking and reading reports from the administrative staff helps to identify their everyday problems with teachers and students as well.

The Dean’s hours and personal meetings with students and the representatives of the Students Parliament help a lot in resolving student population issues. Discussing management bodies propositions and draft decisions is a Statutory obligation strictly defining stages of decision envisaging and final enforcement. Students are approaching the Scientific Council body with their problems and proposals vital for their studies and studying conditions in terms of exams, scholarships, grants, awards, delegating free of charge compulsory teaching activities.

As for teachers their results are usually analyzed through reports on the exams’ success or failure rates and are further discussed at the Scientific Teaching Council meetings where suggestions for better results are conveyed both from the fellow colleagues and the students, who attend such meetings on a regular basis. Every successful research or teaching activity is promoted in the same manner, so everybody knows about the successful application for a project, or any award-winning. Elite students and top studies results from achievers are awarded either through financial incentives or travel abroad grant or usually some technical gadget awarding. Teachers are also awarded for exceptional research conducted and published in referred high impact factor publications or patents approved, which is all registered and publicly

posted on the Faculty's website.

In order to understand the competitive position of HEOs research literature cites perceptual mapping<sup>1</sup> as a valid tool to evaluate the quality and prestige of the institution and the beliefs of its service users. In this vein, Brkanlić (2014: 272) has researched the impact of marketing mix instruments on the higher education image and students' satisfaction. She claims that students' satisfaction will increase upon improving: the availability of information on the website, social networks and distance learning systems (DLS), having consultations and other relevant tasks on schedule, maintaining the quality of students who enroll the faculty, and nurturing/motivating teachers and associates.

All the above-mentioned elements will mold internal communications strategy because without teachers, administration clerks and the students the Faculty cannot grow and prosper as an organization. Informative activities both vertical and horizontal implemented, provide the glue we need to keep the business on track. Students get informed about new study programs, about incentives for their efficient studying, teachers are informed about other colleagues' success, or if needed, they provide suggestions for less successful teachers, or young researchers as to the way to improve their results. The Faculty will, thanks to such transparent communication channeling and all employees' constant stimulation, rank very high in the main World Ranking List such as the Shanghai Ranking Award Lists. Thus we can conclude that favourable internal communications increase the employees' engagement, build stronger teams, improve Faculty's operational efficiency and boost the overall organizational climate and performance.

Based on SWAT analyses faculties are mandated to run, essential practical skills to develop and maintain successful internal communications in the higher education organization settings are:

- *The ability to claim your rights, voice your opinion and go against the grain, speak up and communicate through the platform created for staff*
- *The ability to collaborate with people similar to your temperament, beliefs and competence*
- *The consistency in supplying information up to the point, keeping it short and coherent*
- *Keeping the type of audience you have to deal in focus*

---

<sup>1</sup> "Perceptual mapping – a Tool for Understanding Competitive Position", *Marketing Decisions. Research Insight Strategy*, [www. marketdecisions.com](http://www.marketdecisions.com)



- *Information sharing is a two-way manner encouraging dialogues rather than monologues, meeting people informally and then chatting about plans, projects*
- *Making objectives and goals public and clear helps all the staff keep in mind the broader vision and mission*
- *Developing listening skills both for the individual or the whole team of your colleagues so that they are sure their voice is heard and respected*
- *The teaching and administrative staff activity reports were found useful to pinpoint possible problems in the communication*
- *Training and external events are excellent opportunities for all the staff to communicate informally without any tension or restriction*
- *One should use as many channels of communication as to accommodate for all types of workers.*

Mahmutovic (2011) claims the inevitable significance of social media in the organizational lives of business and academic settings as well. This is in agreement with our observation that millennials as the main recruited employees in modern organizations use social media and other available digital tools to improve internal communication. Mahmutovic et al (2011: 165) insists on the need of the Balkan region to adopt, fully exploit and constantly promote the use of social media in order to enhance organizations' functioning in higher education and equally so in all other lines of businesses in general.

We could summarise that the adequate and efficient internal communications strategy aided by modern digital tools such as social media, can resolve problems, can enhance employee's potential and can keep them engaged in the long run. Regardless of the approach taken (Ognjanov 2005; Brkanlić 2014), it is necessary to always bear in mind the three Cs: consistency, collaboration and confidence, no matter what type of organization we have in mind if one strives for the best positioning and high ranking, and hopes for success and ultimate competitiveness of one's organization in the volatile labour market.

### **3. WORKPLACE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY ROLE IN ORGANIZATIONS**

Labour market as a catalyst and a sieve harshly distinguishes good from bad, recognizes good social interrelating competences, perceiving identities, focusing on working contexts and specific language use for specific working place needs. Thus, we



come to our third focus topic – working language knowledge and use. Proper working place language helps manage human resources, provides smooth working flow, enables profit-making, and assures good company ranking and positioning on the labour market.

Workplace discourse or professional language use research turns out to be very helpful to study, practice and acknowledging the employees' success enabling good practice in communication with the group and the people we communicate in any given company or organization, as well as understanding the difference in the manner of speaking to another person (Pirsl, Petković 2017). In the new work order, hierarchy is dead and 'partners' in communication engage in meaningful work amidst a collaborative environment of mutual commitment and trust. Educationally relevant cognitive sciences heavily stress collaboration, active problem-solving, learning in context, alternative assessment, communities of practice, and the integration of technology in communication establishment (Gee, Lankshear 1997).

The workers today must possess competence within their specialization, but they also need numerous other skills to help them in mastering internal communication challenges. Therefore, multiple skills enable multitasking which is a must in the workplace. Nowadays, any workplace demands a worker to possess multiple skills, to show digital literacy and to have a good command of the organization's specific domain area language, if he or she wants to obtain and retain his or her job. To return to the case of the higher education organization, according to the Employers Association survey on any town level, the prospective employers expect from their employees to be communicative, to speak and write confidentially, to respect the working situations and show basic humanism, to respect ethical norms, to build and maintain team spirit and friendly and positive atmosphere, to show leadership qualities and surprisingly, last but very serious suggestion usually addressed to the Faculty management is – to nurture emotional intelligence at the workplace. In fact, high-powered business executives often hire consultants to coach job seekers how to sharpen their communication skills as part of their social competence and multiple skills, and the knowledge and good command of professional languages at one's workplace is just a part of these skills.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The digital age is the real scene companies and organizations are running in. Therefore, everyone is more responsible for greater transparency in internal communication

execution. The society of knowledge asks for the best and the most competent workers able to master and use lots of online tools available to help businesses develop the most effective internal communication. We can learn a lot from the feedback given by the respective Employers' Associations since they have practical suggestions and are luckily willing to contribute to the organization, especially to the formative education organizations such as higher education institutions, or faculties. Their management generally cares about technical expertise and the fund of "technical knowledge" acquired, but it turns out that social and emotional intelligence comprising also all the mentioned multiple skills and the workplace professional language proficiency, are equally important assets of their "clients", that is their students.

This paper concludes after consulting relevant literature on internal communication and drawing on the significant working experience in the higher education organizations, that: internal communication increases employee engagement, enhances the creation of stronger teams, improves operational efficiency and strongly boosts performance both of the employees and the management bodies within HEO organizations. Having and implementing an adequate internal communication strategy helps to build up the essential pillars of the organization: mutual trust, greater output, increased production, and finally, the establishment of firm morale in general. Equally important is proficient workplace language knowledge as it can help a lot in creating a sense of complete competence in oral and written forms of language used in the specific domain organizational horizontal and vertical internal communication patterns.

## REFERENCES

1. Balas, Andrew, Enver Halilovic, Mirza Mahmutovic, Mirza Mehmedovic, Sejn Husejnefendic, Vedada Barakovic, Eموke Mihály, Vahid Fazlovic, Zumreta Jamakosmanovic, Mimo Draskovic, Vlatko Rosic (2011), "Social Media and Future of Leadership: Call for Action in the Balkans", *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae. Social Analysis*, 1(2), 154-166.
2. Brkanlić, Sandra (2014), *The influence of marketing mix instrument on the higher education image and students' satisfaction*, University of Novi Sad
3. Buhmann, Alexander, Fraser Likely, David Geddes (2018), "Communication evaluation and measurement: Connecting research to practice", *Journal of Communication Management*, 22(1), 113-119.

4. Dodd, Melissa Dawn (2016), "Intangible resource management. Social capital theory development for public relations", *Journal of Communication Management*, 20(4), 289-311.
5. Gee, James, Glynda Hull, Colin Lankshear (1996), *The new work order: Behind the language of the new capitalism*, Sydney and Boulder CO.: Allen & Unwin and Westview Press
6. Mayfield, Jacqueline, Milton Mayfield (2018), *Motivating language theory: Effective leader talk in the workplace*, Palgrave Macmillan
7. Ognjanov, Galjina (2005), *Integrated marketing communications*, Publishing Centre of the Faculty of Economics, Belgrade
8. O'Neil, Julie, Michele Ewing, Stacey Smith, Sean Williams (2018), "A Delphi Study to Identify Standards for Internal Communication", *Public Relations Journal*, 11 (3), 1-16.
9. Pirsl, Danica, Emilija Petkovic (2017), "Workplace Discourse as an Asset in Labor Market", *Proceedings ICTIC (Proceedings in Conference of Informatics and Management Sciences)*, 6(1), 28-32.
10. Perceptual mapping – a Tool for Understanding Competitive Position, *Marketing Decisions. Research Insight Strategy*, [www.marketdecisions.com](http://www.marketdecisions.com) ; accessed in September, 2020
11. Tkalac Verčić, Ana, Nina Pološki Vokić (2017), "Engaging employees through internal communication", *Public Relations Review*, 43(5), 885-893.
12. Yue, Cen April, Linjuan Rita Men, Mary Ann Ferguson (2020), "Examining the Effects of Internal Communication and Emotional Culture on Employees' Organizational Identification", *International Journal of Business Communication*, Special Issue: Organizational Culture and Identification, 1-27.

## ULOGA INTERNE KOMUNIKACIJE I POZNAVANJA JEZIKA STRUKE U POZICIONIRANJU ORGANIZACIJA

### Sažetak:

Strategija interne komunikacije utiče i određuje način na koji se zaposleni ponašaju i održavaju dobre poslovne odnose na svom radnom mestu. Nijedna organizacija ne bi smela da dozvoli razvoj neefikasnih interne komunikacije između svojih radnika i organa upravljanja, inače biva osuđena na neuspeh. Ono što se dešava u organizacijama u smislu administriranja dobrih komunikacionih kanala utiče na njihov

poslovni uspeh podjednako kao i ono što se dešava izvan njih, kada odgovorni za odnose s javnošću prezentuju sve uspešne rezultate široj društvenoj zajednici. Interna komunikacija se vrlo često zanemaruje, što samo pokazuje nezrelost i nedostatak znanja ili nesposobnost vodećih ličnosti u organizacijama u pogledu ostvarivanja efikasne komunikacije. Ovaj rad se bavi problemom uspostavljanja efikasne interne komunikacije i njenim značajem za uspešno rangiranje i pozicioniranje bilo koje organizacije, male ili velike. Rad se prvo bavi ispitivanjem glavnih preduslova za uspeh, poput uspostavljanja poverenja i povezivanja sa zaposlenima, kao i njihovom implementacijom u velikim i malim organizacijama, jer se smatra da je malim organizacijama lakše da primene dobre interne komunikacije negoli velikim. Drugo, rad istražuje organizacije visokog obrazovanja i njihove načine za postizanje odličnih rezultata kroz pozitivan uticaj uspostavljanja dobre interne komunikacije na zadovoljstvo svih zaposlenih, upravljačkih tela i šire zajednice. Rad se takođe fokusira na osnovne preduslove dobrog pozicioniranja organizacije kao štoje uzajamno poverenje, koje proizilazi iz efikasne primene strategije interne komunikacije i stvaranja dobre poslovne atmosfere. Tržište rada kao katalizator i sito razlikuje dobro od lošeg, prepoznaje dobre socijalne međusobno povezane kompetencije usredsređene na sagledavanje identiteta i kreiranje povoljnog radnog konteksta. Treće, rad se bavi značajem poznavanja jezika struke na radnom mestu koje olakšava upravljanje ljudskim resursima, omogućava efikasnu primenu strategije internog komuniciranja, pa samim tim obezbeđuje uspešnije poslovanje organizacije. U radu se zaključuje da će uspešna primena svih navedenih elemenata rezultirati dobrim pozicioniranjem i visokim rangiranjem organizacije u uslovima nestabilnog tržišta rada.

**Ključne reči:** interna komunikacija; organizacija; pozicioniranje; visoko obrazovanje; jezik struke

Adresa autora  
Authors' address

Samir Ljajić  
University of Nis  
Faculty of Philosophy  
ljajics@gmail.com

Danica PirsI  
University of Nis  
Faculty of Sport  
danica@fsfv.ni.ac.rs