

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN AN EMERGENCY

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Sandra Đukić¹, Nataša Novaković², Snežana Živković³

¹Municipal Administration of the Municipality of Ražanj, Serbia

²Business School of Applied Studies in Blace, Serbia

³Faculty of Occupational Safety in Niš, University of Niš, Serbia

Abstract. *Communication, regardless of type, is an important part of the life and work of each individual. In addition, it is important for further growth and development for both the individual and the entire organization.*

During communication, there are often errors in the transfer of information, so it is necessary to work continuously to improve the quality of information. Also, important differences in communication can be noted when there is a change from regular to emergency situations. Responsible and empowered persons must ensure that communication is at a satisfactory level in order to eliminate the consequences, reduce material damage, human casualties and prevent further development of disasters.

Key words: *communication, organization, emergency, communication plan, crisis management*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication originates from the Latin word *communicare* which means to transmit [4]. Communication is how some information is transmitted or shared and which requires that a sender who will be sending a message or information, the information or message itself, as well as the recipient who will receive that information or message.

From the moment we gain the possibility of conscious thinking, i.e. we become aware of ourselves and our environment, we embark on a process of communication in some form that we later upgrade. Communication is an essential element of every human being because we participate in it every day, whether we are aware of it or not [13]. The way communication is achieved depends on several factors such as the situation in which it occurs, the type of

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Corresponding author: Snežana Živković

University of Niš, Faculty of Occupational Safety, Čarojevića 10a, 18000 Niš, Serbia

E-mail: snezana.zivkovic@znrfak.ni.ac.rs

message or information being transmitted, and the number of people involved in the communication process itself.

Insufficiently researched and examined area related to the communication process represents communication in the organization during emergencies. When it comes to emergencies, none is of the same intensity or type. Also, they “don’t look like each other”, therefore, the communication during emergencies differs from case to case. Moreover, certain barriers may appear and interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver.

For this reason, it is necessary that all persons, both in the organization and those in the system of disaster risk reduction and emergency management, be “networked” which each other, which will help ensure communication without any interference or interruption.

2. TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

As communication is a relationship, sharing, or connection between a certain number of people, accordingly, it has a meaning and a purpose. If, when communicating with other people, a relationship, information sharing, or connection is not achieved, such communication is then said to be meaningless and pointless and in most cases interrupted. Regardless of whether the communication is successful or not it can be:

- mass,
- group,
- verbal,
- non-verbal,
- interpersonal
- intrapersonal [6].

Mass communication is used when we want to communicate a certain message or information to a large number of people at the same time.

Group communication is a type in which messages or information are transmitted on a smaller scale and intensity and are addressed to a smaller number of people. This type of communication is also said to be a “dynamic process with fewer people”.

Verbal communication can be achieved in writing or orally, more precisely through written or spoken words. This type of communication needs to choose the right way to convey information or messages.

Non-verbal communication is communication through the position and movement of the body, eye gaze, the intonation of the voice, a certain behavior, and even the way we dress [15]. It is an important type of communication because often one of the mentioned non-verbal symbols can tell the interlocutors not to say what they think.

Interpersonal communication is a conversation between two people and can be formal (between employees) and informal (between family members or couples).

Intrapersonal communications represent the most intense and uninterrupted type of communication that we have every day with ourselves, whether consciously or unconsciously.

3. COMMUNICATION AS A MEANS OF ORGANIZATION FUNCTIONING

Whether it is about the organization and business communication or about everyday life and the communication that accompanies it, communication is an essential element for the exchange of messages and information [14]. In order to be successful, communication needs to consist of 5 basic elements, which are:

1. Sender
2. Message/information
3. Channel
4. Recipient
5. Feedback

3.1. The notion of organization

The term organization is used to describe the characteristics of a particular group; based on that, we can say determine whether groups have an organization or not.

Common to all organizations are common goals for all members, as well as formal structure within the organization, i.e. functions and tasks are divided, norms of behavior that must be complied with are determined, and all members are aware of the fact that they are members of a certain organization.

There are many different organizations, but the most frequent is the division according to the power they have. For this reason, organizations are based on four different factors - the power of coercion, legitimate power, moral subtlety, or different types of power.

3.2. Communication in the organization

Communication in an organization is similar to the formula which says - good communication = successful organization - from which it follows that the organization will be as successful as its members achieve good and undisturbed communication.

Communication in an organization is like a network that has its hierarchical character. Also, its transmission is done through centers that send messages to superiors and subordinates. The fewer centers of this kind in the organization, the more successful communication will be, more precisely there will be fewer obstacles in communication.

Communication in the organization means giving work roles, advice, instructions, information, seeking opinions, submitting reports, and other things independent of the hierarchy of the organization itself. Therefore, the categorization of communication in the organization is as follows:

1. The first category includes job-related communication.
2. The second category includes communication on general issues of organization and group work.
3. The third category includes communication that is a consequence of the socio-economic needs of members.

3.3. The importance of communication in the organization

Good communication in the organization can be an advantage over other organizations, which is most visible during emergencies.

Communication in organizations is actually the basis for all activities and without it, it would be impossible to complete any work. Each organization has its own internal

communication, between its members, but also an external one with other organizations and its members [12].

Business communication is the process of exchanging ideas, opinions, attitudes and information between employees. It is achieved in two ways: within an organization where all employees are included, and outside the organization where only certain employees are involved. In business communication, two ideas that constitute it are important - culture and strategy. Culture is the basis for communicating through national values while implementing the strategy creates an advantage over other organisations [11].

3.3. Forms of communication in the organization

In order for an organisation to be successful, there must be effective communication among its members. Although communication is an important part of any organization, communication is usually not given dedicated attention during emergencies.

Regardless of the organization type, communication inside an organization can be oral, written and non-verbal [1].

Oral communication is the most common form of communication in an organization and is a conversation between members of the organization. Members of the organization spend most of their working time in a work-related conversation, and on other topics that are not work-related. The advantage of this communication is that feedback necessary for further work is immediately obtained. The negative side of this communication is that it is not recorded and the details of the content must be remembered. Another drawback is that it is passed on to a large number of people- and as a consequence, everyone receives the information in a different manner.

Written communication is achieved by using words or symbols in writing. Written communication includes all documentation in the organization that is transmitted via letters, mail, reports. The advantage of written communication is the existence of more time available for the preparation and presentation of content, while its disadvantage is a longer waiting period for receiving feedback.

Non-verbal communication in the organization includes all those aspects that occur between the written word and the spoken word. This includes facial expression during communication, sight, the position of body, hand-holding, the distance between interlocutors.

3.4. Communication barriers in the organization

Barriers during communication can be the following: physical barriers, barriers due to a certain attitude, ambiguous words, physiological barriers, workplace requirements, fear of criticism, gender barriers, the ability of the individual to communicate [5].

- 1) Physical barriers-occur due to the nature of the work environment, when employees are deployed in different locations or several buildings;
- 2) Barriers due to a certain attitude-problems occur in the organization of employees, such as poor management, lack of consultation, or personal conflict among employees;
- 3) Ambiguous words-these are words that sound the same but don't have the same meaning and can cause communication problems;
- 4) Physiological barriers-the physiological state of the individual, such as poor health, hearing or vision problems, etc.;

- 5) Workplace requirements-means increased technological growth and development, lots of information, and frequent use of e-mail, leading to significant changes in communication;
- 6) Fear of criticism-how will be accepted what we have to say in front of a large number of people;
- 7) Gender barriers- women are considered much more critical in resolving conflicts, while men are thought to be more likely to withdraw from a verbal conflict;
- 8) The ability of the individual to communicate-use the jargon, confusing or inappropriate words by an individual.

Therefore, communication needs to be meaningful, to have a beginning and an end, to be optimal (neither too short nor too long) [2].

For successful communication and achieve its goal should be without interference. When an individual in communications with others loses the meaning of what they wanted to say, there is usually a listener misunderstanding.

For example, exaggeration during communication can be a serious problem because it does not speak well of us to interlocutors, we can lose their trust and they don't take us seriously. Therefore, we need to find the appropriate way of communication to gain trust with the interlocutor and to bring him into the conversation with us.

Communication without temper is the communication that we are forced to make. It occurs in large organizations when its members are deprived of sleep, nervous, depressed, tired, or feel overwhelmed at work. In order to preserve the quality of communication at work, the employees should avoid dealing with private issues during worktime.

4. COMMUNICATION IN AN ORGANIZATION DURING EMERGENCIES

A state of emergency is a situation declared by the competent authorities when the risks or consequences for the population, material or cultural goods and the environment cannot be prevented or eliminated, but additional forces and resources need to be engaged [7].

When such situations occur, all organizations with their members usually react differently, because there is a change from a regular (routine) situation to an emergency, new and unknown, and potentially very dangerous situation. Members are expected to contribute to such situations in order to get out of such situations with as little damage and casualties as possible. To achieve this, members of the organization need to communicate without barriers and obtain verified and adequate information on time [8].

In everyday situations, all tasks are performed under normal circumstances and normal conditions, organization members carry out their work tasks and are not under pressure. The moment an emergency occurs, the working conditions change, the fear and panic among members in a new and unknown situation arise, and then all tasks are performed in an emergency. In these situations, communication may be difficult, while sometimes it may be completely interrupted. In such a manner, people need to get familiarized with the emergency management system, in order to get out of emergencies with as few consequences as possible.

Communication in the organization immediately before, during and after emergencies should become a part of the organizational culture. This can be done by preparing and implementing a Communication Plan in regular situations and emergencies. With this Plan,

the head of the organization defines how the members within an organization should behave in both everyday situations and emergencies. Also, the Plan envisages that in everyday situations, any potential danger to the organization should be considered and included in the Plan, where it shall be further elaborated in detail and prepared for use in emergencies.

In addition, training of employees to act in emergencies should become a part of the organizational structure. During the training, employees should be made aware of all potential dangers, ways to prevent or reduce them, assist others and find a quick and adequate way out of such situations. Members should also be psychologically prepared for potentially new working conditions.

4.1. Organization department in charge of communication during emergencies - "Crisis Management"

The task of every organization is to be successful, regardless of its activity and number of members, which can be achieved through good communication. Good communication in regular everyday situations is taken for granted, and it is also expected to remain unchanged during emergencies as much as possible. For that reason, every organization should have the so-called "Crisis Management" [10].

The organization department in charge of emergency communication "Crisis Management" should be composed of members who have knowledge and experience in the field of disaster risk reduction and emergency management.

This department should be operational both on a regular basis and especially during and after emergencies. The task of the department is to monitor laws and bylaws in this area and apply the principles and provisions in its organization. In addition, the department should give instructions to employees on how to act and behave in conditions before, during and after emergencies. It should also help employees cope with fear, panic attacks, uncertainty and provide moral support to employees to more easily overcome such situations.

4.2. Networks during emergency

The most important element in an organization is an interaction between employees. Employees depend on each other and need each other.

Social networks have been often used as a means of communication in recent years. Also, they are used for the presentation of certain products and services, organizations and associations and the personal promotion of each individual. All social networks are made up of one actor who presents something and others who receive this information. That is how communication is achieved.

Social network theory and its representatives explored the importance and effect of communication both during everyday situations and during emergencies. Mark Granoveter, an American sociologist and professor at Stanford University with his theory called "The power of weak connections" is working on social networks, their importance and impact on the work of the individual, the impact on learning and communication in the organization [3].

In the process of training emergency employees, social networks have a big impact.

Their function is not only to mitigate the consequences of emergencies, but also to help and support the employees. Social networks are used for providing welfare and support, answering questions regarding the new situation, as well as for avoiding and controlling stress. Stress is the most frequent occurrence during emergencies which makes people get more connected to each other [9].

5. CONCLUSION

As already mentioned, effective communication is a necessary tool for the development of a successful organization. There should be good and undisturbed communication, both in everyday situations and during emergency development.

In order to maintain uninterrupted, effective and sound communication in the organization, the organization members need to be educated and their communication needs to be constantly improved, which could be achieved through continuous training.

In the organization, good communication comes from the highest management, which encourages its employees to achieve good and “healthy” communication.

In addition, it is necessary to establish a department that will be in charge of communication in emergencies, which will be a support to all organization members in such situations and which will help them cope with novel situations in the best possible way.

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ZNAČAJ KOMUNIKACIJE U VANREDNOJ SITUACIJI

Komunikacija, nezavisna od vrste, važan je deo života i rada svakog pojedinca. Pored toga, važno je za dalji rast i razvoj kako za pojedinca, tako i za celu organizaciju.

Tokom komunikacije često dolazi do grešaka u prenosu informacija, pa je neophodno kontinuirano raditi na poboljšanju kvaliteta informacija. Takođe, mogu se uočiti važne razlike u komunikaciji kada dođe do promene iz redovne u vanrednu situaciju. Odgovorna lica i lica sa ovlašćenjima moraju osigurati da komunikacija bude na zadovoljavajućem nivou kako bi se eliminisale posledice, smanjila materijalna šteta, ljudske žrtve i sprečio dalji razvoj katastrofa.

Ključne reči: komunikacija, organizacija, vanredna situacija, komunikacioni plan, krizni menadžment