

Organizational Communication-the Importance of Communication Strategy in Times of Crisis for the Organization

Gazmend Abrashi, PhD Cand.

Abstract

Crisis is a circumstance in which the organization can not function normally, hindering the achievement of its objectives and threatening survival. When a crisis occurs, there is uncertainty, stress, panic and confusion among management, employees, and the public. This makes it difficult to make the right decisions, while the organization is involved in a crisis. Organization management requires skills to predict the possible crises and weaknesses of the organization, planning strategies to respond to potential crises scenarios, skills to identify early crises, and provide rapid response capacity. When a crisis emerges, strategic communication becomes a key crisis management function. The way an organization communicates or does not communicate with the target audience during the crisis will have a decisive effect on the outcome of efforts to overcome the crisis. Every crisis is different, so it is difficult to predict anything that can happen in an organization. Crisis-based communication strategies are essential for any organization in order to be prepared for taking measures in the event of a crisis and thus preventing the formation of negative publicity and other negative consequences for the organization.

Keywords: *communication, crisis, communication in crisis, media, public relations, strategy.*

Introduction

Theoretical framework

Organizations characteristics

Undoubtedly, each organization has its own characteristics that differ from other organizations not only in its field of action, but there are many elements that are characteristic of organizations. From this fact, we can conclude that organizations have their own specifics even when in difficulty or internal crisis. What causes such a situation, what should be the measures to be taken, and how to manage such a situation to overcome these difficulties, and return to normal functioning of the organization.

The organizational structure is characteristic of the organizations because it organizes, delegates and performs the work within the organization. An efficient and interoperable structure would be a greater opportunity to succeed, but not only so, because the efficient structure would enable employees to be more satisfied and motivated and not have misunderstandings about the work they do. Meanwhile, organizational culture is characteristic for each organization because each organization has its own culture, and this is unique, although there may be organizations that have the same activity but still have a different culture. This can be illustrated with different examples, one of which could be, if we make a comparison between members of a family, despite having grown together and living, still each has its own culture, and it is shown in its own way, and this manifests itself in relation to others, the same applies when the organization goes through the crisis, where each member manifests it in a special form and manner.

The impact of organizational culture on the organization life

Generally, each organization has its own culture, which it is distinguished from others, but the issue is deeper and more complicated, because we are dealing with human resources i.e. its employees who have their own culture and intellect and the issue becomes more sensitive and should be given special importance. Initially it is thought that an organization has a single culture that is distributed throughout the organization. In reality, there may be multiple cultures within any given organization. For example, people working in the sales department may have a different culture from what people in the

store can have.¹ A culture that appears within the different departments, branches, or geographic locations is called a subculture. While there are a number of sub-cultures within an organization, this makes it even more difficult for a crisis situation for the organization, because people with different cultures and formations react and act in different ways and may create problems in the process of responding to the created state.

Research has shown that employees' perceptions about subculture were related to employee engagement towards the organization (Lok, Westwood, & Crawford, 2005).² Therefore, in addition to understanding the values of the wider organization, managers will have to make an effort to understand the values of subculture to see its impact on the behavior and attitudes of the workforce.

Organizational conflicts or organizational crises

There are dozens of definitions written about the concept of conflict. The most widespread are: Kenet Bollding: "Confronting situations in which the parties see the disagreement of the potential future positions and in which each party wants to remain unmanageable with the desire of the other." Morton Dojc's brief definition: "When there are two contradictory opinions about one issue, this is a conflict."³ In each conflict, we distinguish three basic phases:

- The emerge of conflict;
- The reaction (what is do after its emerge) - act as if everything is under control, make concessions, silence, cry, go to superiors, hit or speak nervously, complain, laugh as if nothing had happened, talk, agree to talk and so on;
- Consequences - stress, relief, escalation, reduction of tension, solution (good or bad), touched feelings, etc.⁴

The term "conflict" does not make sense. Much of the confusion is created by researchers of various disciplines who are interested in studying the conflict. Fink (1968), in his classical revision, has illustrated an extraordinary thing, changes in the definitions of conflict. He discovered a number of specific definitions, interests, and a variety of general definitions that strive to be inclusive. In the organizational field, Mars and Simon (1958, p. 112) consider the conflict as a breakthrough in standard decision-making mechanisms, so that an individual or group experience difficulties in choosing an alternative.⁵

On the other hand, Pondy (1967) has argued that organizational conflict can best be understood as a dynamic process based on organizational behavior. This is a very broad definition that excludes very few things that arise in a group or individual. Tedeschi et al. (1973) take a middle position, defining the conflict as "an interactive state in which an actor's behaviors or intentions are to some extent incompatible with the behaviors or intentions of any other actor". It is understood by their exposure that "actor" refers to any social entity, from the individual to the corporative organization. Smith (1966) also takes a similar approach and defines the conflict as "a situation in which conditions, practices or goals for different participants are essentially incompatible." Another definition of conflict is "a kind of behavior that occurs when two or more parties are in opposition as a result of a relative deprivation perceived by activities or interaction with another person or group" (Litterer, 1966, p. 180).⁶

The distinction between the two last authors in determining the conflict is that while Smith considers the conflict as a situation, Litterer considers it a kind of behavior. However, both authors and Tedeschi et al. consider conflict as a result of incompatibility or opposition to goals, activities or interaction between social subjects. Baron (1990, see also Mack & Snyder, 1957), after reviewing a number of recent definitions of the conflict, concluded that although they are not identical, they overlap in relation to the following elements:

1. Conflict involves the opposite interests between individuals or groups in a zero situation;
2. Such conflicting interests should be recognized for the existence of the conflict;

¹ <http://open.lib.umn.edu/organizationalbehavior/chapter/15-3-characteristics-of-organizational-culture/>

² Lok, P., Westwood, R., & Crawford, J. (2005). Perceptions of organisational subculture and their significance for organisational commitment. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 54, 490–514.

³ Todorov, Antonij, Kanev, Dobrin, Angelova, Ilija, "Menaxhmenti politik", Shkup, 2009, pg.97.

⁴ *Ibid*, pg.97.

⁵ Rahim, Afzalur, M., "Managing conflict in Organizations", Londér, 2001, pg. 17.

⁶ *Ibid*, pg.18.

3. Conflict involves beliefs on either side that the other will hinder (or already hinder) its interests;
4. Conflict is a process; it develops from existing relationships between individuals or groups and reflects their past interactions and contexts in which they occurred; and
5. Actions by one or both parties, in fact, produce obstruction to others' purposes.¹

Conflicts within the organization

The most common chances of having conflicts within the organization are when the organization has changes that affect employees' interests. There will be no conflict when no new decisions are made when there are no changes, and that is a state of organization. Conflict is not a tangible phenomenon. It exists in the minds of the people who are their participants. People emotionally enter conflict. It stems from their role in the company's functioning process.² Which means that the fear of change, eventually the loss of position and benefits that it uses, can lead to a conflicting situation with the manager or the owner of the organization.

Conflict represents a situation in which intentions, attitudes, emotions and incompatible behavior lead to disagreement or controversy between two or more parties. It occurs when goals, values or events are perceived as contradictory by two or more parties.³ Conflicts are the result of a certain behavior. The manager's duty is to create an organizational climate that will create healthy relationships between employees without the existence of conflicting opportunities. Today, conflict is seen as an inevitable phenomenon that can have positive and negative effects on the company's functioning. Therefore, the role of managers is not to prevent or eliminate conflicts, but to resolve them.⁴ Many organizations have compiled a Code of Conduct and Ethics, with a view to providing employees with a clear indication of how they behave and collaborate within the organization. Depending on the organization's functioning log, these codes are more rigorous and are fully implemented.

Given the fact that organizational conflicts exist and have different effects on the functioning of the company, but also for the employees, it imposes the need to review the content of the conflict, in its definition, the selection of the types and causes of the organizational conflict, and the processing strategies for solving them.⁵ According to some definitions, the conflict is a state of disagreement between the manager, the workers and the organizational units in the performance of the work.

The other definition of conflict says that it is a phenomenon due to the simultaneous existence of opposite interests of different behavior between two or more parties. The third definition shows that conflict is a dispute between two or more groups that derive from the discrepancy between goals, interests, and values. This is a normal phenomenon given the fact that organization is made up of differences, i.e. individuals who are distinguished among themselves.⁶ This can even be understood in this way where there are differences, there is also incompatibility of thoughts, ideas and as a result there may be disagreements and conflicts.

Types of conflict within the organization

Insufficient organization of work and inadequate management system leads to the appearance of the attack of the interests of certain groups and individuals, does not cooperate, loses the work discipline, has no work responsibility that is the basis for the conflict.⁷ Also, coverage or blocking the flow of information or giving incomplete or untrue information can also lead to conflict in the organization. When there is a lack of adequate information in an organization, there are phenomena of informal unions and objections.⁸

¹ Ibid, pg.18.

² Postolov, Kiril, Drakulevski, Lubomir, "Organizimi", Shkup, 2010, pg.100.

³ Kasamati, Mimoza, Manxhari, Mimoza, "Sjellje organizative", 2002, pg.295.

⁴ Postolov, Kiril, Drakulevski, Lubomir, "Organizimi", Shkup, 2010, pg.100.

⁵ Ibid, pg.100.

⁶ Postolov, Kiril, Drakulevski, Lubomir, "Organizimi", Shkup, 2010, pg.101.

⁷ Stamenkovski, Aleksa, Jaqovski, Boshko, "Komunikimi Afarist", Shkup, 2011, pg. 138.

⁸ Ibid, pg. 138.

Starting from the types of conflicts, we begin with conflicts or confrontations with oneself or as interpersonal conflicts are known, then we pass into conflicts or employee relationships between ourselves, and then with the relationship with the manager and the management. Under the conditions of the parties involved in the conflict, we can distinguish the following types of conflicts:

- intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup, and intra-organizational, inter-organizational conflicts.¹

Intra-personal conflicts are conflicts that the person has with itself. These conflicts arise from individual characteristics and manifestation. Interpersonal conflicts are those conflicts that arise in relationships with others. Usually these are conflicts that occur as a result of goals of disagreement of goals and activities that a person has and do not respond to the goals and activities of others.²

Intragroup conflicts arise within the group. They manifest themselves as a conflict of roles, conflict of outcome, and conflict with iteration - interaction. According to the conflict of roles, it means when a person in the group performs the work of another person from that group. There is a conflict of outcome when some of the group should make a decision that is in opposition to the other members of the group. And, in the end, the conflict of interaction is when the success of the work is attributed to itself, while the failure is presented as a result of others not working.³

Intergroup conflicts are the result of group identification, clear group differences and - frustrations. The identification group means that employees identify the group they belong to. The visible differences of the group can be manifested in different forms - grouping of different floors of enterprises - pursuit of different schools and more. Frustration – it is usually a result of a situation when a group reaches their goals, while the other group is unable to reach such goals. Intergroup conflicts are created in relationships with other groups and can be horizontal and vertical. Horizontal conflicts occur at the same level of conflict between the technical sector and the marketing sectors are a form of this type of conflict. Vertical conflicts occur between different hierarchical levels and usually relate to issues related to control, power, goals, and wages and benefits.⁴

Intra-organizational conflicts arise within the general company. And, finally, inter-organizational conflicts arise between different companies in the market. This is the result of creating interest groups and groups in the market, competition for resources, customers and suppliers.

Conclusion

In the process of conflict management, it is possible to apply different strategies. Selecting the relevant strategy is determined by the type of conflict, and the outcome is to be achieved in conflict resolution. Then, they must try, except to choose the conflict but also to eliminate the reasons used as sources for the emerge of the conflict. In this process of conflict resolution there will be problems that need to be solved. If it is a constructive conflict, it should be helped to this point until it is proven that one side is determined to be a destructive conflict or even adversely affect the work environment and employee health.⁵ Avoiding problems that lead to conflict is possible with the use of indirect and direct strategies. Indirect strategies include the following:

- creating of a standardized reward system;
- better organization of work;
- involvement of low management structures, decision-making in top management
- creating a sense of mutual respect and trust.

The measures mentioned are called indirect methods of conflict resolution because they do not go directly with conflict participants but pull back reasons that lead to conflict. In direct methods that apply to resolve conflicts - we can mention methods of avoidance, mitigation, compromise, confrontation, negotiation, mediation and arbitration. By avoiding the

¹ Postolov, Kiril, Drakulevski, Lubomir, "Organizimi", Shkup, 2010, pg.101.

² Ibid, pg.101.

³ Ibid, pg.101.

⁴ Ibid, pg.101.

⁵ Postolov, Kiril, Drakulevski, Lubomir, "Organizimi", Shkup, 2010, pg.104.

problem is ignored in the hope that it will disappear. Mitigation involves minimizing the conflict, making things go well. Compromise means the case when both parties make deals and there are no winners and losers - defeated. Confronting is reaching agreement or solving the problem. Co-operation negotiations mean the resolution of direct conflicts with the participation of the contradictory parties. Negotiation is done through mediation through a third party whose job is to help the confronting parties to reach an acceptable solution. Arbitration involves the third party in conflict, which confronts the parties with a certain outcome and tries to resolve it correctly.¹

It is now clear that based on our disposition in relation to the conflict, it is very important during our reaction to the ability to communicate in conflict situations. But here we will mention:

- a) Specificity of effective communication from assessment;
- b) Effective communication elements.

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¹ Ibid, pg.105.