

## THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS IN THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT. ECONOMIC AND MORAL PRINCIPLES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

*The economic communication is more than a decade a point of interest due to the communication supports development and the diversity of information, on one hand, and due to the need for documentation and knowledge, both at the individual level and at the level of society, on the other hand. Thus the freedom into thinking and expression led to the development of communication activities and collecting them in a new vision. The process of communication has become, in a relatively short time, one of the engines of the economy, but also an integral part of what is meant to be today, the psycho-sociology of modern human societies. In this context, we propose an analysis of the communicative process that takes place in the economic environment, since the information and communication technology is, at present, a real factor in sustainable development. We start the analysis from the tight interdependence between the economic communication and the development of human culture as a basic factor for efficient management and for sustainable development overall.*

**Key words:** economic communication, moral values, economic principles, moral capital, economic actors

**JEL Clasification:** B1, D63, D83

### **1.Introduction**

The communication process now plays an increasing role in the contemporary society, being a living expression of economic and socio-political paradigms.

We support the idea that we are witnessing today the creation of a link between human communities' culture and organizations culture. The expressivity of culture is reflected, at a time, also on organizational culture. At the same time, organizational culture comes to meet the individual and collective aspirations, ideals, resulting from the influence of cultural system over masses. And a constituent part of the organizational culture is the communication process itself; we are born into a culture, we form and stabilize us in a cultural horizon, we are both creators and receivers of culture; everything that is animated becomes an opportunity for an image structure that explains and legitimizes something. Organizations, along with their cultural systems, reproduce and reflect images of the world, a certain spirit of the time and certain reporting strategies, practical to reality. (Oprea, 2005)

In a society based on globalization and communication, institutional identity is asked to be redefined. Thus, it requires a clear need to create the conditions to ensure a permanent link between the socio-cultural dynamics of modern human societies and institutional dynamics. All these lead us to the need to integrate human culture in the communication feed-back. This latter we need to ensure the implementation and the further development of the image and the identity of the organization at the level of individuals. In this context we assist to achieving a genuine interaction between the individual, the organization and human communities of which he is part of.

Regarded as a phenomenon of modernity, communication process generates a genuine mobilizing effect. It becomes the method to build a new image, a new vision of the institution, which supports its efforts in fulfilling the responsibilities assumed to the community. (Hristache, 2004)

Increasingly more, contemporary society creates a proper framework for the manifestation of institutional identity from the perspective of its attributes, carrier of value. They will also influence the social image of the institution and will provide an advantageous psychological status in the relation to the different individuals.

As a result, the social image (public) of the institution is identified in the information complexes generated mainly by the immediate perception of messages issued through the relevant events that take place inside and outside the institution and, as a result of the measures carried out deliberately by its specialized communication structures. (Halici și Chiciudean, 2004)

## 2. Moral capital and the communication process – economic perspective

Over time the society has evolved, has made several changes. Modern society, one in which we live today, is a society of communication, we might even say of "over-communication", characterized by an explosion of media forms and of increased volumes of communication. (Trout, 2006) In this society, the players are represented by organizations (institutions) and individuals that form the human community. To make a connection between these players, the economic communication plays a key role. It requires however a careful analysis of how this process unfolds, being necessary to draw several rules relating to moral and ethical conduct.

To maintain a legitimate and recognizable position in the market, many organizations choose a variety of complex communication activities.

On the other hand, the society presents a certain behavior towards organizations, which we can call "economic behavior" (Rogojanu) which manifests at the time of decision making. In principle, we can deduce two types of behavioral assumptions (Rogojanu):

a) The first type assumes that individuals are rational intentionally, but only to a limited extent (there is both a psychological limit of the economic behavior resulting from the satisfaction and levels of aspiration as well as its economic limit, resulted from the incomplete cycles)

b) The second type assumes that individuals are subjected to opportunism, that they diligently pursue their own interests, so they can get to disregard the law and fraud.

If for the first type of behavioral assumptions things are clear both in theory and in everyday practice, for the second type a series of complications and implications appear, that can affect the economic environment as a whole. Failure contracts according to the judgment after which the contract is considered as promise, naive, or the idea that to trade needs "protection", those are extremely serious problems that may endanger not only the functionality but also the credibility of an economy. Weaknesses of the legal system may encourage and maintain such behaviors whose consequences, sometimes dramatic, induce general doubt (mistrust) over compliance with the rules and norms of a society. (Rogojanu) It should therefore exist the necessity of a moral value system, able to provide the reliability and safety among communities but also at the economic level.

The terms morality and ethics are closely related to the economic efficiency. In an economic environment increasingly characterized by suspicion, it becomes essential to clarify the link between economy, efficiency and morale. The participants in the economic game, previously mentioned, present behaviors and moral values by which they are guided through their activity, that have great impact on the economy in general. We, therefore, argue that the efficiency of the economy is not independent of the moral conduct of participants in the economic game; the interest for ethics in business is greatly justified by the stated purpose of economic action - prosperity and wealth, not poverty. (Rogojanu, 2007) It should notify, however, the reluctance and apprehension of society towards the understanding of how this system of values is understood in the economy.

The individuals/economic actors and their moral capital in economics have been discussed, over time, with reference to three different relations: to themselves, to community and to nature - in the context of sustainable development. Over time, the specialized literature offered theories that were the basis for understanding the causes of the behavior of individuals. The most known is the Theory (Pyramid) of Maslow, that offers a hierarchy of needs behind the behavior and the actions of individuals. According to this pyramid, an individual has several categories of needs which he should satisfy. These are actually reasons which justify his behavior (see figure no.1)

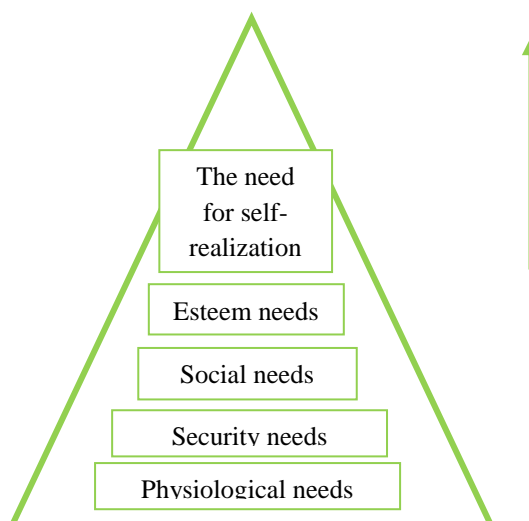


Figure no. 1 Pyramid of Maslow

Source: Tierney E. P., *Etica în afaceri*, Editura Rentrop & Rentrop, București, 1999

Another theory to which we can relate is represented by the classification of individual’s actions in the context of the Kohlberg’s three stages of moral development: “economic man”, “social man” and “ecological man”. (see figure no.2)

The “economic man” (Ingebrigtsen și Jakobsen, 2009) is present in the first stage of Kohlberg’s moral development and is described, as the classical economics say, as an egocentric individual seeking personal gain, a description which is close to the Adam Smith’s views, which conclude that every man is, no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care; however, the participants in the economic game are led by an invisible hand – meaning that people’s self intentions and interests can get to guide the course of events for the society. (Smith, 2011) Actually Adam Smith was perhaps one of the greatest moral theorists directly influenced by the moral tradition.

The “social man” (Ingebrigtsen și Jakobsen, 2009) is present at the second stage, and its purpose is to seek the best for a group of people within the perspective of neoclassical economics. People’s actions are studied in relation with the social life; therefore the individuals are trying to find solutions which lead to the highest possible utility for most people. In this context, we discuss about societal consequences.

The “ecological man” (Ingebrigtsen și Jakobsen, 2009) is present in the third stage. By this stage, the individuals are aware of the relation between economy and nature, therefore we can introduce here the concept of sustainable development from an economical and ecological point of view.

<b>The “ecological man”</b>	Stage III Post-conventional	Morality of individual principles of conscience
		Morality of contract, of individual rights and democratically accepted law
<b>The “social man”</b>	Stage II Conventional	Authority maintaining morality
		Good individual morality of maintaining good relations, approval of others
<b>The “economic man”</b>	Stage I Pre-conventional	Naïve instrumental hedonism
		Punishment and obedience orientation

Figure no. 2 The integration of individuals into Kohlberg’s three stages of moral development

Source: Adaptation after Kohlberg L., apud. Ingebrigtsen S., Jakobsen O., *Moral development of the economic actor*, Ecological Economics, Elsevier, nr. 68 (2009)

For an extended period of time, the economy and economic concerns were considered to be incompatible with the moral values that guide individuals and economic actors in their behavior, but it is not the real issue. Some moral values have guaranteed material values and material values, in turn, generated some moral values. The engine of any economic activity is the principle of effectiveness; according to this principle the main goal is to achieve maximum results with minimum effort. Modern society is characterized by the personal interest of each player, resulting from the diversity of occupations, from individual’s natural inclination to exchange, from the need for communication of society, sharing benefits and satisfaction of their interests. (Rogojanu, 2006) In this context there are, or there should be, some rules and moral principles to serve as guidelines for a good and proper course of economic activities which is found as a code of ethics. (see figure no.3)

<b>What is a moral value?</b>	<b>What is ethics?</b>	<b>What are the deontological principles?</b>
It’s the idea that guides the moral judgment of individuals and societies.	The study of moral principles, of how we live, of what is good or bad, right or wrong.	Moral integrity. Compliance duties.
Forms doctrines that shape the duties imposed in consciousness as an ideal.	Overall ideas about morality.	Honesty and fairness. Professional independence.

Is created and transmitted by ideologies, religions and human communities.	The study of morality. Sometimes ethics is called moral philosophy.	Transparency. Responsibility. Professionalism.
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Figure no. 3 Morality - Ethics - Deontology

Source: Adaptation after Rogojanu A., *Deontologia Comunicării*, Editura ASE, București, 2005

During this framework, the economic communication is an important factor for both the development of the individual and implicitly the development of the society and for the development of economic actors and economic environment. The means of communication play an important role in the knowledge of everything that is happening in society and at the organizational level and across the economy, in general. In this context we discuss about the effectiveness of communication, given the opportunity and the quality of communication, which should be considered from the perspective of ethical criteria and norms, but also from the perspective of deontological requirements of the effective practicing communication process. (Rogojanu, 2005) (see figure no.4)

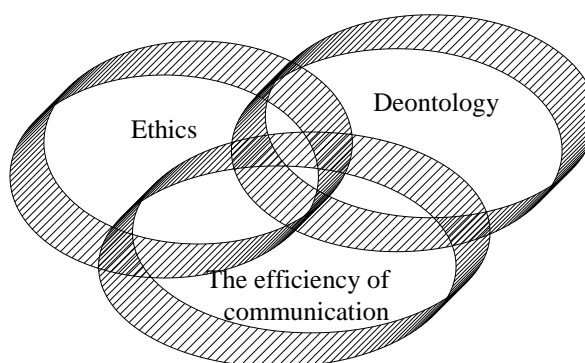


Figure no. 4 The efficiency of the communication process

Source: Rogojanu A., *Deontologia Comunicării*, Editura ASE, București, 2005

A major problem faced by the process of communication in general, is the lack of trust that individuals and society, as a whole, have in the means of communication. In the past, they enjoyed greater confidence because of the way they were used to transmit information. Radio and press have contributed mostly in the two World Wars and then, television started to dominate the means of communication. Nowadays we talk about means of communication increasingly better, more developed, and yet, paradoxically, they are accused of all evils (Bertrand, 2000) and still are under the sign of distrust. Moreover, are accused of excessive subjectivity and even some aggression, thereby gaining an offensive role. This is becoming more visible and, thus, we can speak of an unprecedented development of all means and forms of communication, development which do not always mean quality. Under these conditions there is an increasingly need for a manual of using these means of communication, in order to have some guidance, meaning a code of deontology, ethical and moral aspects, to guide and, at the same time, to assure a correct function. This need is supported by several powerful arguments, including: technological progress, the increasingly larger trade of the means of communication, the mixture of information, advertising and entertainment, low credibility, the abusive role and subjectivity of the communication process, etc. (Bertrand, 2000)

Since ancient times, philosophers were interested in the issue of ethics in everyday life and beyond. Even nowadays we help on the lessons of the greatest philosophers and cultural personalities. Thus for Socrate, virtue is a science, is choosing and following of good and truth. Thus the code of ethics is based on certain values. For Socrate, the superior virtue is justice, obedience to the law, followed by other virtues such as knowledge and philosophy (love of wisdom).

In Platon's view (Rogojanu, 2005) there are four virtues, which aim to give an ethical code: wisdom, truth / justice, temperance / tolerance and bravery. If we jump in time, we see that all these virtues were essential in order to live in peace and harmony with the rest of society.

For Aristotel (Rogojanu, 2005) there are two types of virtues: intellectual and moral. They include: justice, humility, confidence, courage, honesty, friendship, temperance, generosity, self-restraint and generosity. Aristotel is the one that emphasizes the distinction between the concept of "voluntary" and "involuntary". The

principle of moral act is given by deliberate choice, which leads to the idea that the influence of any kind, as long as there is no consent of the victim, is an immoral act.

Some of the values surprised by the three philosophers are maintained, to a large extent, today. On this basis, the code of ethics should promote itself certain values in society, in general, and in the economic environment, in particular.

### 3. Conclusions

Based on the previously performed analysis, we conclude that the communication process must comply several conditions in order for it to enjoy the confidence and support in society:

1. There must be respect for the laws; deontological laws come to explain these rules in order to be known and respected. The process of communication must not violate these legislative and deontological laws;
2. The communication process should not be just to comply with these rules of law; he must take into account the ethical aspects;
3. It should be realized what is good and what is bad, so that it may avoid any exaggeration, distortion. Ethics is the one that establishes what is good and what is bad, right or wrong, just or unjust. Economic communication helps in transmitting messages that should be guided by this principle;
4. Communication must therefore restore and respect the truth, in order to exist thereby that respect between participants in the communication process;
5. The emphasis is on credibility; as the information is clear and promptly distributed, the greater credibility in the communication process is;
6. The submitted information should not create tension or encourage discrimination; it shall encourage cooperation and mutual trust, regardless of age, sex, religion or social affiliation;
7. The information gained is not used for its own interest and benefit and also there should not be a conflict of interest; the participants in the communication process should assume responsibility for the sustained but undertakes to appoint the sources from which information was taken.

As an addition to the ones mentioned above, we support the idea that a modern society must have some rules, conduct and virtues by which to operate. To be able to determine them, it is necessary that each economic actor to start from an analysis of his own person, but intergraded in a community, so that their principles should be in accordance with the basic principles of management but also consistent with the human relationships established between the members of society. Among these rules, the most important are: the duty to the community, confidence, moral obligation, reciprocity, rationality and contract. (Rogojanu, 2005)

**Duty to the community.** The economic actors must remember that any activity is reflected on the community. Moreover, in this case an increased attention to the process of sustainable development is required. At the same time, organizational culture meets the individual and collective aspirations and ideals of society.

**Trust (confidence).** If the members of society trust each other, they can collaborate, can be open, can conduct a fair and efficient communication process, in order to achieve common aims.

**Moral obligation.** Regardless of time or action, we should not forget about the economic actors' own values and the values of the society in which the economic actors are incorporated.

**Reciprocity.** Based on a relatively simple principle, namely that you do not make to another individual what you do not like, it is recommended to give time to the economic actor for reflection on their own actions, so as to analyze the effects of their own actions on the other economic actors or to the overall society.

**Rationality.** It is recommended a long-term thinking, in order to have a general overview.

**Contract.** Once established certain rules and principles, they must be respected. Otherwise, the consequence is given by the loss of confidence.

Finally, we must emphasize that each individual / economic actor is regarded as a model, either by definition, either by action or by values (Tierney, 1999), so it becomes more important that he takes responsibility for inspiration and communication of a certain kind of ethical and moral comportment.

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