

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION, THE PROGRESS OF TECHNOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CRISTINA ANDREI

PH.D. STUDENT

e-mail: cristina.adagio@yahoo.com

Abstract

Sustainable development involves the broad public participation including the national, regional and local authorities, business and industry, civil society, all major groups – women, children and youth, all workers, trade unions and families. Not only organizations but also employees have a role to play in applying sustainable development in their jobs because their decisions taken every day have an environmental impact.

Communication within organization is used as a means to coordinate information exchange and to establish effective coordination of activities between the members of organization.

Internet, e-mail, mobile phones, satellite and wireless have had an effect on the way in which information is exchanged and on how people communicate not only in their day-to-day life but also within in the organizations they belong to. New communication technologies have increased the possibilities for a better access to information for employees and made possible to have their voices heard from their colleagues to superior levels, offering the possibility of a two-way communication and creating the potential for greater understanding and dialogue between them. Besides increasing profits, saving time and costs, the use of e-communication within organizations, offer the convenience of combating environmental damage through cutting back on paper and ink usage.

Keywords: *internal communication, sustainable development, progress of technology, e-communication*

Clasificare JEL : *M40, M41*

1. Introduction

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987). This well-known definition was written in Brundtland's report for the UN World Commission on Environment and Development, an independent committee of twenty-two members created by the U.N. General Assembly in 1983. The commission was designed to examine global environment and development to the year 2000 and beyond, to find out critical problems and best solutions for solving them.

Sustainable development requires the broad public participation including the national, regional and local authorities, business and industry, civil society, all major groups – women, children and youth, all workers, trade unions and families. All members of civil society should be actively engaged in the effort of finding ways to develop social, financial and environmental resources that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is important to develop a balance between economic growth, social well-being and the health of the environment.

All organizations must develop a sustainable future through strategies, policies, programs and operations which consider not only the economic benefits of development, but also the short-term and long-term environmental impacts. The organizations should focus on employing modern systems that support and maintain green economy in the context of sustainable development.

All employees have a role to play in applying sustainable development in their jobs. It is important that all personnel to be aware about the environmental impacts, actual or potential, of their work activities. Their decisions taken every day have an environmental impact. They decide on how to get to and from work, on whether switch on a light, and also they take decisions which have an impact on the amount of paper they use. Every employee can help his or her organization to reduce environmental impact by including in their day-to-day activities actions such as recycling, green procurement of supplies, organizing 'green' meetings.

2. Why is internal communication important?

Communicating with employees is one of the most important things that happen in an organization. According to the definition given by Welch and Jackson, *Internal communication is the strategic management of communication and relationships between stakeholders at all levels within an organization* (Welch and Jackson, 2007). It is used as a means to coordinate information exchange within the organisation and to establish effective coordination of activities between the members of organisation. Communication makes it possible building relationships, promoting mutual understanding and enables employees to have a clear vision of the organisation and to contribute to organizational success.

Every organization should realize that its employees are its most valuable resource and they are entitled to quality internal communications. Being an organisation's most important public (Therkelsen and Fiebich, 2003), employees need to know what's going on so they can stay up-to-date and feel that they're part of the organization. The departments and staff need to be informed in time and in the right manner about what they should know for doing their work efficiently.

Effective communication means informing employees about important news and about anything that concerns them, providing them with clear standards and expectations for their work and give them feedback on their own performance. More than that, effective communication means listening to people and providing them emotional support for difficult work, consulting them when necessary, taking into account their suggestions and allowing them to take the pulse of the organization. In this way, an organization can make its employees feel valued and helps them maintain a sense of ownership in the organization.

3. New technologies and the internal communication

The progress of technology, the development of data-communication and the Internet have had an effect on the way in which information is exchanged and on how people communicate not only in their day-to-day life but also within in the organizations they belong to. The Internet, e-mail, mobile phones, satellite and wireless have opened new ways of communication allowing all the members of the organization to be connected and to receive and respond to relevant information. *These technologies allow a radical increase in volume, speed and complexity for processing information* (Hilbert and López, 2011).

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become widely available both to general public and to organizations, affecting everyday lives at home or at work. In the (table 1) we can see the usage of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) in industry, trade and services in the 27 Member States and also in all the countries included in the European Economic Area in 2011. Internet access refers to the percentage of enterprises that have an internet access, so that anyone in the company could use the internet to get information or to send an e-mail.

Table 1: **Enterprise use of information technology, January 2011**
(% of enterprises)

Nr. Cr.	Country	Internet access	Fixed broadband connection	Mobile broadband connection				Website or home-page
				All size classes	Small	Medium-sized	Large	
1	EU-27	95	87	47	43	66	85	69
2	Euro area	96	89	51	47	73	88	69
3	Belgium	96	86	29	25	45	71	77
4	Bulgaria	87	68	34	30	47	67	45
5	Czech Republic	96	87	25	20	41	61	77
6	Denmark	98	91	47	42	68	81	89
7	Germany	97	88	57	52	79	93	81
8	Estonia	96	90	48	45	58	71	73
9	Ireland	93	90	46	41	65	85	70
10	Greece	93	76	38	35	54	62	64
11	Spain	97	96	47	43	71	85	64
12	France	96	92	60	56	80	92	60
13	Italy	94	84	47	43	75	89	63
14	Cyprus	91	88	32	27	49	81	56
15	Latvia	92	82	23	21	32	53	53
16	Lithuania	98	87	49	45	64	84	68
17	Luxembourg	97	93	27	23	37	66	75
18	Hungary	89	84	38	33	57	77	60
19	Malta	95	94	41	37	52	74	73
20	Netherlands	100	91	41	36	55	75	82
21	Austria	98	82	65	60	87	97	83
22	Poland	94	73	24	19	38	73	65
23	Portugal	95	83	39	35	60	85	54
24	Romania	79	54	15	13	22	54	34
25	Slovenia	97	92	50	45	63	88	74
26	Slovakia	97	76	38	35	51	71	76
27	Finland	100	96	77	74	90	95	93
28	Sweden	96	94	67	64	85	95	89
29	United Kingdom	95	92	52	47	75	91	79
30	Iceland (1)	98	95	43	36	74	78	77
31	Norway	97	87	53	49	73	84	78
32	Croatia	96	80	41	34	48	74	66
33	FYR of Macedonia	82	74	24	23	28	38	52
34	Turkey (1)	91	89	16	13	25	41	53
	(1) 2010.							

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: isoc_ci_in_en2, isoc_ci_it_en2 and isoc_ci_cd_en2)

In 2011, the enterprises with internet access exceeded 90% in EU-27 except the enterprises in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The majority of enterprises (87%) in EU-27 had internet access using a fixed broadband connection. The mobile broadband technologies are also used, 47% of enterprises in the EU-27 equipped their staff with USB sticks, smart phones and other mobile devices.

4. Channels of internal communication

When selecting the best way to deliver their message and understand their audience, internal *communicators have so many more options to choose from to deliver messages to employees.* (Crescenzo, 2011). Organizations and managers can choose from various communication channels from traditional print publications, phone calls and face-to-face communication to intranet and blogs. The new technologies for communications changed not only the way organisations communicate but also the way they think to the support of green economy in the context of sustainable development when choosing the right communication channel for them. Not only them, but all of us should realize that a healthy environment is imperative for our long-term quality of life, economic and social well-being.

4.1. E-mail

Being the easiest way to deliver consistent and timely information to staff, e-mail should be used more often. The same information can be sent to a lot of people in a fast and inexpensive way. It is cheaper to send information electronically to avoid printing costs. Where staff have access to a computer and to e-mail, this can be a cheap, easy and quick way to send information, keeping the staff informed and allowing them to respond to the message. Creating an internal list of the employees, everyone can send e-mails to any other person in the organization. Being simple to use and reaching mass audiences fast, e-mail is an effective method of internal communication.

4.2. Intranet

Intranet is a private web site accessible only to the employees of an organisation. An intranet uses network technologies as a tool to facilitate communication between people or work groups providing consistent, up-to-date information in an appealing visual format. It includes an internal email system, a message board service, web sites and databases containing company news and personnel information. It is an effective communication tool which utilizes standard network hardware and very user-friendly software technologies. Intranets use the same technology to communicate with staff that everybody use on the Internet to communicate all around the world.

Organisations can use intranets in a variety of ways: to publish news and alerts, to store policies and work-in-progress, to provide online training programs, to host discussions or to carry blogs by staff. It is an inexpensive information resource, where common notices, policies are kept, improving the data sharing capability and reducing the need for online storage because one copy serves many people. *The intranet can improve access, increase speed and facilitate global communication* (Holtz, S. 2003).

Besides reducing the consumption of energy and water, reducing the consumption of paper is very important within any organization. Using the internet and email to communicate and to disseminate information, paper use is minimized. Paperless office can become a reality today. Other ways of reducing consumption of paper are: print or photocopy double sided, encourage the re-use of paper which has been printed on one side, editing documents on-screen, rather than printing unnecessary drafts and producing documents only when necessary, monitoring paper use and reducing the amount of paper bought.

4.3. Electronic document management system

Beside encouraging staff to reduce the amount of paper used, an organisation can move away from paper documents by having electronic records and documents using a document management system. According to Colesca, *the most document management software solutions approach the problem from the point of transition from the old organization systems to the new electronic classification and recording tools based on databases.* Using a computer system and software, an electronic document management system (EDMS) replace paper-based processes with electronic procedures, eliminating the printing, posting and manual filing of paper documents. The system enables organizations and individuals to scan, capture, retrieve, manage, control and distribute documents safely and securely.

A document management software is easy to use and provides a better way to organize and store a large volume of digital documents and digital scanned versions of original paper documents. The system provides easy access to documents, helping those who are searching archives to find what they need, whether by chronology, topic, keywords or other associative strategies. Colesca points out that *the supervising and control of the documents, their workflow, the speed of taking decisions at managerial level are the main reasons to for implementing document management systems.* More than that, the software is so valuable for an organisation because it brings significant cost and time savings and also because it brings paper use saving which is extremely important for sustainable development.

4.4. News Bulletin and company newsletter

News bulletins are occasional publications that provide urgent information to all employees. It is used for timely announcements, as a precursor or supplement to other communication, allowing the employees learn about important events before or as they happen, before they hear it through the media.

An organizational newsletter is a way to deliver large amounts of information to employees being published every couple of weeks or once a month. Both news bulletins and company newsletters, whenever they are published, can be distributed electronically by e-mail or post them on a website instead of making paper copies.

4.5. Blogs

The blog is a quick and informal way to get news and to share consistent information for the subscribers. Blogs can also be useful for internal communication programs by supporting other communication efforts made by the organization to keep its members informed. It is a kind of online journal (on intranet or Internet) used not only for sharing information but also for building a company culture.

5. Conclusions

Every organisation needs to improve its operations not only for social and economic performance but also for a better environmental performance. Where necessary, the vision and the core values of the organisation should be changed in order to reflect its commitment to sustainability. A sustainability strategy should be developed at any level of the organization from corporate headquarter to plants and offices.

This sustainability must be communicated to all employees using the newsletters or other communication channels, encouraging them to reduce the amount of paper purchased, using the internet and email as the main means of communicating and disseminating statistics and other information. The employees should understand that the use and loss of resources are influenced by how they do their work and that environmental protection and resource conservation depends on how they perform their everyday activities.

The implementation of information and communication technologies helps organisations to improve their internal connections by removing barriers to communication and offering other forms of social media (blogs, discussion forums) which can be very effective for communicating within an employee group. With the spread of new means of communication, it is easy for everyone in the organization to have access to the phone, voice mail, fax, e-mail, news bulletins and company newsletters. Organisations should explore also the possibility of having electronic records and files by using a document management system in order to move away from paper files.

Besides increasing profits, saving time and costs, the use of all forms of e-communications within organizations, offer the convenience of combating environmental damage through cutting back on paper and ink usage.

6. Bibliography

- [1] **Feleagă N., Malciu L.**, Reformă după reformă: Contabilitatea din România în fața unei noi provocări, vol. I Eseuri și analiza standardelor IAS – IFRS, Editura Economică, București, 2005;
- [1] **Brundtland, G.H.**, Our Common Future. United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987;
- [2] **Welsh M. and Jackson P, R.**, Rethinking Internal Communication: a stakeholder approach. Corporate Communications: An International Journal, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 177-198, Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2007;
- [3] **Therkelsen, D. J. and Fiebich, C. J.**, The supervisor: The linchpin of employee relations. Journal of Communication Management, vol.8, 2, pp. 120-129, 2003;
- [4] **Hilbert M. and P. López.**, The World's Technological Capacity to Store, Communicate, and Compute Information. Science, vol. 332, no. 6025 pp. 60-65, DOI: 10.1126/science.1200970, 2011;
- [5] http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Information_society_statistics
- [6] **Crescenzo, S.**, Internal employee communications media. In Gillis, T. (Ed.) The IABC Handbook of Organizational Communication (2nd ed). Jossey-Bass, Inc. pp. 219-230, 2011;
- [7] **Holtz, S.**, Corporate Conversations: A Guide to Crafting Effective and Appropriate Internal Communications. Saranac Lake, NY, USA: AMACOM, 2003;
- [8] **Colesca, S.E.**, Managementul documentelor. Revista Economica. Seria Management, Anul X, Nr. 1, 2007, pp 25-31, Editura ASE, București, 2007.