

Internal Communication

How effective management of communication contributes to:

- Improved strategic decision making
- Organisational functioning and
- Better policy delivery

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by Kurumae - World Wide Web

Even if the management was always a part of soldier's profession, nowadays, officers of the army have to face a new necessity: the management of communication. Indeed, the choice of the tools of communication and their management has a fundamental importance on the efficiency of the internal communication. In the first place, this essay show how actual management of communication contributes to improved strategic decision making, here I have focused on the various actors of the internal communication and their role. Secondly, I explain how the management of communication permits to improve the functioning of the organization and to affect the objectives fixed by the organization. To finish, I look at why a good management of communication optimizes policy delivery.

As for any initiative of communication, the implementation of a policy of internal communication has to be an integral part of the strategy global of the organization.

The employees are the soul of the organization; they are legs while the board of directors is the brain. That is why it is necessary to optimize the internal communication and to use it as the nerve centre of all the organization. To demonstrate the efficiency of a good management of communication on the internal communication, «6eme Regiment du Genie» opens us the doors of its department of communication.

THE 6EME REGIMENT DU GENIE (ARMY)

The mission of "6eme Regiment du Genie" (army) is to help other regiments, that it is out of France during external interventions, at the time of stays in the departments and overseas territories or during the exercises and operations.

The major missions of the regiment are supports regiments to facilitate displacements of the brigade and to block enemy displacements, help for deployment of regiments while arranging or by rehabilitating the necessary infrastructures, even the participation in missions in human matter and help for operations of amphibious unloading with unique competences and materials.

The 6eme Regiment du Genie is:

- 1 company of command and logistics,
- 3 mechanized companies of combat,
- 1 company of supports,
- 1 company of administration,
- 1 company of reserve of professional regiment,
- 1 brass band

The slogan of 6eme Regiment du Genie is "I will continue" (<http://www.sapeur-de-marine.com>).

"6eme Regiment du Genie" is the native regiment of Angers for 30 years (Anjou, France). This regiment helped people who live in Angers during dark period (e.g. inundations).

The communication department is not a part of large communication army. It has its own existence and own objectives. The communication department missions includes the production of different internal magazines, creation of communications tools for the population

and the regiment, creation of 6eme Regiment du Genie website and organisation of different events (open days, exhibition).

HOW ACTUAL MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATION CONTRIBUTES TO IMPROVED STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING

The management of the communication allows gathering means, manner of process and considering the individual interest of every partner to achieve the common interest. As for the general policy of the company, it is essential to respect the requirements of coherence and obligatorily which requires the internal communication. Indeed, in the slightest doubt, a wave of rumour and suspicion gangrenes the organization and affects the heart of this one and preventing it from realizing its objective. During problem, the partner focuses on his individual interest. An oversight creates the doubt, the insecurity, the fold on one, and the renunciation. To avoid these problems, the responsible have to explain the strategy of the public organisation and protect the transparency of communication.

“Understanding the forces driving the move to greater workplace participation aids the establishment of clear goals for these news forms of governance and advances the development of assessment processes that identify the relation between specific practices and goals accomplishment.”

(Dennis Tourish and Owen Hargie, 2004, pp. 173)

Every superior is responsible for his own department that is at the level of the transmission of the information or the understanding of this one. The hierarchy of “6eme Regiment du Genie” is a succession of people in charge: assistant of the officer of communication, the officer of communication, the board of the superior officers and the Chief of Regiment. That is why it is imperative that the communication always passes by the responsible + 1. Marc Pierre, CPE Consulting, said: “When we are a department responsible, everything has to pass by us! It is necessary to respect the domain of responsibility of each”. Indeed, every people of this chain have a role: responsible for a project, a collection of the skills, to support the consequences (positives or negatives). A good responsible allows avoiding the doubt and assures the realization of the objectives.

“Practitioner roles are at the nexus of a network of concepts affecting professional achievements of practitioners, structures and processes of the function in organizations, and organizational capacities to dominate or cooperate with their environment.”

(James E. Grunig, 1992, pp. 327)

Various actors play a role in the internal communication. First of all, the person in charge of internal communication has to possess many qualities: know how to listen to someone, know the structure, enjoy communicating, rigour, team spirit, control of the techniques of communication... Within «6eme Regiment du Genie », the nature of the information is extremely precise and complex. It is thus indispensable that the responsible of the internal communication and its function are recognized by all. The holder has to occupy a function in the hierarchy which confers him authority and credibility. In the case of the department of communication, the person in charge is either a graded officer, at least a lieutenant, having

double profile soldier and communicator, or a graduated officer of prestigious one school of army, like Saint Cyr in France.

The second actor who relieves the information is the hierarchical executives. They are the key elements of the good functioning of the internal communication. Indeed, placed between the employees of base and the management, they are the relay, so much ascending communication as the downward communication. It comes true in «6eme Regiment du Genie» where executives have a real power of control and assume the responsibility of the actions of their department in front of their superiors.

The last party concerned by the internal communication is all the employees of base. It is necessary to look after the different types of behaviour of people, particularly under the social angle. To meet the expectations of employees, messages must be adapted. «6eme Regiment du Genie» has to work on this heart of target. This one wants more consideration and does not wish to answer any more the orders without that they are explained to his. The communication must as well be rising that downward and transverse. So the information can be to spread in all the levels of the regiment.

How the management of communication permits to improve the functioning of the organization and to affect the objectives fixed by the organization

To avoid the doubt, which would prevent the achievement of the objectives of “6eme Regiment du Genie”, it is necessary to respect the domain of responsibility of each and to create the conditions where each has an interest to be well made. It is necessary to have a purpose to act and consequently well work.

“Communication is increasingly gaining the status of a valuable, if not indispensable management tool, together with the obligations that such status carries.”

(Cees B.M. van Riel, 1995, pp. 1)

The internal communication permits to transmit the information and to answer quite the questions. The best intermediary is always the responsible +1. But so that the network of information is effective, you should not hesitate to speak with people, not appropriate their ideas and to not hesitate to announce bad news.

Within “6eme Regiment du Genie”, every project respects a very precise communication. Members of the department in charge of the project are consulted before the decision to definite the delegation of missions and the implementation.

The internal communication has several missions which aim at involving more and more the employee in the strategy of the organization and the success of objectives. An effective internal communication intervenes to animate the information, accompany the evolution and support the supervision. The directors board of “6eme Regiment du Genie” set up means of internal communication to involve the soldiers in the objectives of the regiment. Indeed, it is necessary that every soldier feel his membership in his regiment and made only one with the rest of his brigade. So, “6eme Regiment du Genie” takes advantage of the assets and personal specificities of every soldier, and insures a fusion between all to achieve objectives of the regiment.

In fact, an individual has to pass by several stages to integrate perfectly the objectives of the internal communication. Any good internal communication begins naturally to inform the internal target about objectives of the organization. The soldier has to appropriate it and understand all the involvements and the means to be spread to achieve the objectives. The

outcomes of following both phases depend completely on the relational quality and the skills of the officer of internal communication. Indeed, after the understanding of the information, it is necessary to mobilize soldiers around the strategy of the regiment and to activate their participation in the success of objectives, what implies that soldiers approve the decision of the people in charge. It is imperative to make sure of the level reached by the receptor before passing at the following level.

To support the strategy of the organization, tools of communications have to be use throughout the phases of internal communication. The management of communication has for objective to translate the policy of the organization thanks to a set of coherent actions and coordinated between them.

"Ideally, strategic planning does not subvert normal political or bureaucratic approaches but takes place within them."

(Owen E. Hughes, 1998, pp. 154)

An officer of internal communication can manage different tools to transmit information. The most popular of tools of internal communication is the meeting of department, used by 86 % of the public organizations. Others effectives tools are the internal newspaper and the internal posting, used mutually by 85% and 75% of public organizations. In the case of "6eme Regiment du Genie", the structure of internal communication is somewhat limited in its choice of tools. Furthermore, the regiment is subjected to a strict policy as regards its strategic choices. It is necessary to know that soldiers have not the habit to be passive and really have not a schedule to read documentations or to consult their e-mail box. The main part of their time is distributed between the training, the maintenance of their vehicles or the learning of fighting techniques. Even if the communication is vital in a team such as a regiment, it is difficult to quantify the effects from a good internal communication especially on the short term and explain it to soldiers, as far as it does not save your life as well as a tank. That is why the department of communication has developed some tools of communication more participative and adapted to the soldiers.

"Communication channel also can alter the organizations' social structure. Certain channels restrict access to key individuals, while others encourage interactions."

(Phillip G. Clampitt, 1991, pp. 112)

Indeed, the subjects evoked usually during traditional meetings of department are treated during two significant events. First of all, during the almost religious presentation in front of the French's flag on Friday morning, Chief of Regiment approaches the positive and negative points of the last week and announces the projects for the next week for the regiment. This tool of internal communication has a big impact because it is a tradition for 30 years and soldiers can participate thanks to them songs or by receiving rewards. Secondly, these elements are resumed at the beginning of the week by the responsible of department.

As regards for these elements, tools of communication produced by the department of communication are adapted in experiences of soldiers and treat with concrete subjects about the missions of the regiment. There are two magazines produced by the department of communication. The first one, «6 express» is produced for the military and civil staff of the regiment. It deals with objectives of the regiment, the evolution of this one and the current events or intendeds. It is very popular thanks to the numerous reports on the missions of the regiment in

France. Indeed, it is very attractive by its photos representing the soldiers themselves during their missions, but also by the involvement of the soldiers who are often put in contribution for the taking of photos during abroad missions.

The second, "la letter du 6", is intended for a more external public having links with the regiment. Its target is going to be the friendly of the regiment, the reservists, executives of the regiment and all of supporters of «6eme Regiment du Genie». The contents are shorter and the terms are adapted so that novices can understand texts without difficulties. Even if this magazine is less popular than the precedent, it has a faithful readership.

The department of communication prepare the uploading of the site of "6eme Regiment of the Genie". Indeed this one must be able to re-lay in the waits of the various targets evoked previously for magazines, while facilitating the recruitment of young soldiers. For the moment, this site must be updated and the navigation has to be more fluid, but the project was already used for the promotion of open day.

WHY A GOOD MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATION OPTIMIZES POLICY DELIVERY

The internal communication is a set of principles of actions and practices to give soul, to facilitate the cohesion and to incite each to communicate better and to work in group.

"A team represents something greater than the sum of its parts, and by playing to each member's strengths more can be achieved, more ideas can be inspired and more fun can be had than by individuals in working alone."

(Bill Quirke, 1996, pp. 215)

In the case of "6eme Regiment du Genie", it is essential to develop the appropriation by every soldier of the objectives of his unity. In fact, the absence of sense immobilizes, and the news generation of soldiers do not want just a number in a mass people. It is important to promote "6eme Regiment du Genie". The recruitment is more and more difficult since it is not a duty to serve France.

Each Regiment have got its own history and way of think. Soldiers have to face precarious situations and are often far from their family. The links between the soldiers must be strong to assure the survival of the group.

That is why, in this situation, the internal communication is not that a game but a real necessity. It gives a soul to the regiment. The absence of cohesion leads to the subdivision and to the indifference. So it is vital to develop the consideration, the exchange, the responsibility and the sharing with a good internal communication.

"The better the managers' communication, the most satisfied employees are with all aspects of their work life and that most managers, when shown these results, are willing to allow that a more satisfied employee is a more productive employee."

(Jon White and Laura Mazur, 1995, pp. 164)

For that purpose, it is important that the information circulates in all the organization. There are three types of internal communication. The first one, the downward communication, is the one which leaves down from the pyramid of the hierarchy to reach the employees by way of the relay of executives or of the written tools diffused globally, like the newspaper

interns for example. The downward communication also permits to know better the environment of the organization and the organization itself. It is an instrument of completely positive management if it is managed with objectivity, but can be badly felt if it is used by the direction like propaganda tool. It is essential that the downward communication remains permanently an instrument of information to serve employees, to give them the real feeling that they are considered, and to permit them to be situated in the organization and the functioning of the organization.

Contrary to the previous one, the ascending communication leaves the base of the employees to go back up towards the hierarchy. It can be provoked or spontaneous. The development of the ascending communication answers three objectives: investigate, detect and stimulate. It can inform the hierarchy about preoccupations or expectations. It can show itself in the form of demands or of contesting. The ascending communication allows appreciating the state of mind of the employees and the quality of the internal climate.

The third type of internal communication ensues in a logical way from two others and completes them. It is often during fortuitous meetings, festive occasions or during the informal meetings that the richest exchanges occur. When employees have the possibility of having a dialogue, either with creators of the tool of communication, or with the members of the other services of the organization, the exchange is facilitated. Besides, areas like cafeteria, restaurant are places of mutual and informal communication. It is necessary to try to manage them or to manage information which are exchanged there, because from there can arise from rumours. This rumour translates a sentiment of frustration when a tension shows itself. It can be facilitated by a bad internal climate due to a manager and to his style of management. A company which communicates few is more fragile in front of the rumour.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the internal communication can exist only if all the actors of the organization involve in the transmission of the information. Every person in the organization has its role to play in the chain of the information from its creation until its understanding. The responsible of internal communication is the keystone of the group and act as an engine to create and propel the information through all the organization.

However, a good internal communication has to be a part of the global strategy of the organization and planned in the long term. The tools of communications form a set to reach the same goal: integrate employees into the decisions of the organization and take the best of each for the survival of all. That is why the management of communication has to assure the cohesion between the tools of communication and the control of the information. Furthermore, the internal communication has not only an objective of efficiency or profit, it has a social purpose. Indeed, the internal communication is going to give an image of the organization internally and is going to give it a soul. This intimacy which the employees are going to find in their organisation is going to create indispensable links to feel well in its work and limit the turn over. Indeed, the employees spend more time in the work than in their own family, it is thus necessary that the social climate is warm.

The internal communication is as important within the regiment as within the family. Indeed, soldiers risk their life with their company. It is this brotherhood which characterizes «6eme Regiment du Genie» and which promote this regiment as the leader of his speciality. After 30 years of existence, the soldiers of this regiment naturally understood the necessity of communicating between them. During the problems, indestructible links are created between the soldiers. In the past and today still, the soldiers are present to help the civilians in France and abroad. That is why, after having developed the communication inside the regiment, it seems necessary to communicate towards the civilians so that «6eme Regiment du Genie» can fill its missions of assistant to the population.

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