

COMMUNICATION AS AN ELEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ON THE EXAMPLE OF A SELECTED FOREST DISTRICT: A PILOT STUDY

Kazimierz Michalski, Julita Popiołek, Katarzyna Szewczyk✉

Department of Forest Economics and Technics, Poznan University of Life Sciences
Wojska Polskiego 71c, 60-625 Poznań, Poland

ABSTRACT

Communication in an organisation encompasses the flow of information and knowledge between all parts and participants of the organisation and between its environment. The aim of the study was to assess the level of usefulness and use of communication in human resources management on the example of a selected forest district, to identify the needs there and to indicate the direction of further development in this area. The study was carried out with a group of 7 persons holding managerial positions (head forester, deputy forester, chief accountant, secretary, supervisory engineers, deputy commander of the Forest Guard Post), who are employees of the selected forest district. The subject of the study was the issue of communication in human resources management. A diagnostic survey method was applied using a face-to-face interview and a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed with 11 questions which included the understanding of the term 'communication' in the surveyed forest inspectorate, as well as the meaning, purpose and forms of communication, the skills possessed and the tools used in this area, as well as the gaps and needs that still exist in the area of communication. The survey was conducted in August 2024. The survey was a pilot study. The term 'communication' was understood much more broadly than just the flow of information by all participants in the study. Analysing the respondents' answers, an individual approach to the role of communication was observed in terms of its usefulness for management in individual departments or in the entire unit. When asked about internal communication, the respondents understood it as an element enabling the proper functioning of individual departments, making it possible to learn the strengths and weaknesses of specific employees, influencing more effective work and eliminating various types of mistakes and errors. External communication, on the other hand, according to those participating in the survey, enabled proper cooperation with customers, contractors and other external entities and was of key importance in building a positive external image. Those participating in the research felt that they had the right communication skills and tools. Public speaking and diplomacy were a challenge for many of them, as well as the need to be more familiar with electronic communication. Individuals struggled with giving and enforcing instructions and face-to-face communication. When it came to modes of communication, reflexively, participants in the study indicated a cooperative mode with the intention of agreement. In the unit studied, employees knew and appreciated the role of properly functioning communication in human resources management. They showed a willingness to collaborate and co-create. Managers perceived the need to further develop communication skills in order to increase the effectiveness of teams and the forest district through: harmonious collaboration, good relationships and relationship building, efficiency and effectiveness in working together, co-creating solutions relevant to the changing conditions and needs of the organisation's environment, and improving public speaking skills and other forms of external communication.

Keywords: organization, employees, information flow

✉katarzyna.szewczyk@up.poznan.pl

INTRODUCTION

Communication is fundamental to the functioning of an organisation (Rogozińska-Pawelczyk, 2014; Kowalczywska, 2016). Within an organisation, it can be understood differently, depending on the organisational culture. In the classic Taylorian organisation, it is understood as the flow of information for improving processes and achieving set goals. In a learning organisation, communication plays a significant role in team building, professional collaboration, but also in learning and development in order to achieve goals and contribute to human, team and organisational flourishing (Barrand and Deglaine, 2015).

The culture of an organisation is determined by social change, generational change, evolving levels of self-awareness and human needs. This is rooted in the trend away from consumerism and materialism towards coexistence, cooperation and co-creation. This phenomenon leads the organisation and teams to reflect on the level of satisfaction, security, sense of meaning and well-being at work. In a learning, living and adaptive organisation, work is based on trust and open communication, which replace control and ‘carrot and stick’ style external motivators (Laloux, 2015).

The intrinsic motivation of employees is what ‘brings the system to life’ and manifests itself in commitment and creativity. Through open, attentive communication focused on bonding and co-creation, teams can work synchronously, dynamically and creatively. If, in addition, the team jointly formulates the meaning and higher purpose of the organisation, people can take care of their autonomy and carry out tasks in a way that is fun and rewarding. In a learning organisation, social competences become important, in which communication starts where the intention towards colleagues is born (Barrand and Deglaine, 2015). The quality of communication depends on emotional intelligence, including emotion regulation and social attentiveness, self-awareness, autonomy and empathy (Michałek, 2022; Goleman, 2023). Emotional intelligence is an attitude and skill that is subject to development. In Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and many other European countries, pupils in public schools are taught empathy and attentive, co-operative communication according to the NVC (Nonviolent Communication) method (Rosenberg,

2016). If we want to meet today’s challenges and operate efficiently in a turbulent environment, we need teamwork based on trust and feedback. This not only enables us to act more effectively, but contributes to the development and flourishing of people, teams, organisations and permeates social life.

The strategic position of an organisation is built not only through processes of dynamic capability formation, but also through access to specific resources, which include, among others, human resources and skills, related to employee acquisition and developing their commitment, as well as the organisation’s learning processes, which allow it to react dynamically to the changes taking place (Teece et al., 2009; Cyfert et al., 2020).

The intention to maximise achievement gives way to the need for sustainability of the system. This is the basis of the concept of regenerative economics and communication plays a key role in it (Barrand and Deglaine, 2015).

The aim of the study was to assess the level of usefulness and use of communication in human resources management on the example of a selected forest district, to identify the needs there and to indicate the direction of further development in this area.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study was carried out with a group of 7 persons holding managerial positions (head forester, deputy forester, chief accountant, secretary, supervisory engineers, deputy commander of the Forest Guard Post), who are employees of the selected forest district. The subject of the study was the issue of communication in human resources management. A diagnostic survey method was applied using a face-to-face interview and a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed with 11 questions.

1. What do you understand by the term ‘communication’ in the Forestry District?
2. What is the importance of communication for you? What does it give you?
3. For what purpose you communicate:
 - internal communication – within the department/unit
 - external communication – outside the department/unit?

4. What forms of communication do you prefer and why: e.g. face-to-face contact, contact virtual space, telephone call?
5. What do you do to understand your employees, your supervisor, managers of other departments well?
6. How do you deal with asking questions and listening to the interviewee?
7. What communication tools and skills do you already have?
8. What are your needs in relation to communication? What do you find challenging about communication?
9. People communicating can be in a fighting and competing mode or in a cooperative mode with the intention of agreement. In which mode do you communicate reflexively?
10. What actions do you take to communicate efficiently?
11. What strategies do you take when difficult situations arise?

The survey was conducted in August 2024. The survey was a pilot study.

RESULTS

For question one on the concept of communication, all survey participants understood the term much more broadly than just the flow of information. Communication is also about giving instructions, recommendations, exchanging ideas, building a team and ensuring that it functions properly. It is relationship building, understanding, cooperation. According to several respondents, communication ensured correlation between departments.

When asked about the importance of communication (question 2), interviewees consciously or intuitively saw it as a tool for efficient management. In their opinion, communication is a key element translating into the quality and effectiveness of work of entire teams, influencing the company's culture, interpersonal relations and the goals achieved. It is an instrument that allows for efficient problem solving, quick interpretation of thoughts passed between employees.

Analysing the respondents' answers regarding the purpose of communication (question 3), an individual

approach to the role of communication was observed in terms of its usefulness in managing individual departments or the entire unit. The role of communication in the management of the whole forestry unit was reduced to the management of the management of individual departments. In relation to specific departments, the nature of communication was more specific. For example, in the accounting department, communication was used as a tool to identify factors to increase the motivation of subordinate staff in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of both the whole team and individuals. In the case of the Forest Service, on the other hand, the greatest role was attributed to communication in terms of sharing key information with field staff. When asked about internal communication, respondents understood it as an element enabling the proper functioning of individual departments, enabling the strengths and weaknesses of specific employees to be known, influencing effective work and eliminating various types of mistakes. External communication, on the other hand, according to those participating in the survey, enabled proper cooperation with customers, contractors and other external entities and was of key importance in building a positive external image.

In the question on preferred forms of communication (question 4), almost all interlocutors preferred a form of communication in the form of direct contact, which, according to the respondents, made it possible to observe each other's interlocutors, establish relationships between them, examine their reactions to the communicated message, quickly reach an agreement and create an opportunity to get to know each other better. Analysing the responses of the survey participants, direct contact was identified as a form of communication conducive to building a field for constructive cooperation, easing tensions, shaping the climate for creative action, allowing to get to know different points of view on the same situation, providing an excellent opportunity for employees to learn to listen to each other. In second place was telephone conversation.

In response to question 5 on understanding colleagues the interviewees, in order to have a good understanding of their employees, supervisor, managers of other departments, first and foremost indicated openness, frank conversation, willingness to agree, dialogue and cooperation.

In response to question 6 on the ability to ask questions and listen to the interviewee, respondents indicated factors related to composure, a positive attitude towards the environment, mutual respect and emotional maturity. These elements fostered mutual understanding and allowed for ongoing analysis of the departments they manage.

Respondents answering question 7 were of the opinion that they had the right skills and tools for communication. They were able to listen carefully, take up problems and work as a team. Some took criticism about themselves and were not driven by prejudice. They felt that they were poised and had a positive attitude towards those around them.

In answering question 8, respondents were aware of their communication needs and gaps. Public speaking and diplomacy were a challenge for many of them, as well as the need to be more familiar with electronic communication. Individuals had problems with giving and enforcing instructions and communicating directly.

When it came to modes of communication (question 9), reflexively, participants in the study indicated a cooperative mode with the intention of agreement.

In order to communicate effectively (question 10), they were open to dialogue, discussion, seeking consensus, cooperation and addressing problems. Few of the respondents expressed the need for training in this area.

When difficult situations arose (question 11), respondents looked for a way out, took up problems, had frank conversations. Some looked outside for solutions.

DISCUSSION

Communication in an organisation involves the flow of information and knowledge between all parts and participants of the organisation and between its environment (Kowalczywska, 2015). In the unit studied, it was also regarded as an exchange of ideas, team-building and ensuring its proper functioning. As relationship building, understanding, collaboration.

Understood in this way, the definition brings the concept of communication closer to communication, i.e. a process of communication between individuals, groups or institutions, the purpose of which is to

exchange ideas, share knowledge, information and ideas. This process takes place at different levels, using different means, and has specific effects (Keyton, 2017; Siemieniak, 2017). A process approach is increasingly being used to manage all areas of the organisation. This approach contributes to the rational use of the resources at its disposal and to the activation of the organisation's activities and adaptation to the current state of the external environment. Within this approach, communication should also be considered as a process (Kowalczywska, 2015). The effectiveness of communication processes depends on the style of communication between superiors and subordinates, the openness of decision-makers to the opinions and suggestions of other system participants, and feedback (Siemieniak, 2017).

The openness of the respondents, the awareness of their skills as well as their shortcomings and the need for further development in the area in question testifies to a proper understanding of communication. Many participants in the study perceived that proper communication allowed, on the one hand, to act collectively activating the potential of the team and, on the other hand, to have a good understanding of the individual needs of employees. The research, in the form of an interview, was carried out with a group consisting of people in managerial roles. The questions posed in the interview directed the respondents' attention to key issues in terms of feeling safe and trusted in the team while at the same time caring for the achievement of goals and results. The words respect, agreement, cooperation, frequently repeated in the responses, indicate a high awareness of the impact of their approach and mindset on their colleagues and their results.

Active listening is very important in communication so that misunderstandings can be eliminated. Effective listening involves both active and open-mindedness (Szejniuk, 2016). Effective listening is determined by character traits such as objectivity, insight, patience, perseverance and sincerity (Sypniewska, 2013).

Self-awareness, understanding one's strengths and weaknesses. Being able to handle one's own emotions is essential in order to make them work in our favour and not against us. No doubt an optimistic attitude, positive thinking and self-motivation are helpful. In the correct management of communication in an organisation, emotional intelligence is extremely important

(Rajkumar et al., 2021; Michałek, 2022) and a focus on cooperation and dialogue (Glinkowska, 2016).

Communication takes place through a variety of communication sources and tools (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk, 2014). Analysing the results of the surveys conducted, almost all interviewees preferred a form of communication in the form of face-to-face contact, which was identified as a form of communication conducive to, among other things, building a field for constructive cooperation. In second place, a phone call was mentioned. Similar conclusions were reached in her study by Rogozińska-Pawełczyk (2014). Respondents to the survey appreciated the role of face-to-face communication and considered it to be the primary means of communication. They also attributed considerable importance to unrestricted access to telephone contacts, which determines a faster flow of information. Despite the large increase in electronic and telephonic forms of communication, information from a direct supervisor, conveyed through both individual and team meetings, remains in many cases the most preferred form of communication (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk, 2014).

The place of the sender and receiver of a message in the organisational hierarchy is determined by the structure of the organisation. It also influences the content of the information communicated. In organisations, information is communicated according to service relationships and beyond them in vertical (from superiors to subordinates and vice versa) and horizontal (between colleagues and organisational cells) (Sypniewska, 2013).

Communication effectiveness should be a priority in the organisation, hence it becomes necessary to continuously train the management in effective communication (Szejniuk, 2016).

An organisation's communication strategy should be about analysing what employees want to hear, but also what management has to say to them. Management should communicate clearly and comprehensibly about values, plans, intentions, achievements and results, and proposals, taking into account the views and opinions of their employees. It is important to discuss their messages with employees, as this reinforces their sense of involvement, acceptance and contribution to the success of the organisation (Sypniewska, 2013; 2015).

The study used a face-to-face interview technique to obtain information on communication in human resource management in the unit under study. The qualitative research conducted (action research) included an educational and inspirational element to realise the direct and indirect impact of communication on collaboration and its outcomes. The questions themselves directed respondents' attention to areas and issues that were key to wellbeing and effectiveness.

Qualitative research can be conducted by analysing experiences in the private or professional spheres of individuals and groups. It can be carried out by observing and obtaining first or second hand information, by analysing interactions and communication, it can be used to record or observe acts of communication and then analyse the material thus obtained (Flick, 2010). This type of research, treated as a partnership exchange between the researcher and the researched, sometimes changes them both (both parties) and the researcher is aware of this. What is important in this relationship is that the subject becomes the issue being explored and subject positions are taken by two parties – the researcher and the researched, but no longer in opposition to each other (Červinková and Gołębniak, 2010). With such a study, the possibility of communication between participants opens up. A space is created to explore easier and more authentic ways of acting. Thus, collaborative action appeals to the power of better argument rather than the power of authority and power. A space opens up for communication in the field of action (Denzin and Lincoln, 2014).

The crucial importance of human resources in an organisation such as the State Forest Holding, including the need to develop them, increase their competences and motivate them, is highlighted in their research by, among others, Cyfert et al. (2020), Cyfert et al. (2022) and Nowacka (2009).

CONCLUSIONS

1. In the surveyed unit, employees knew and appreciated the role of properly functioning communication in human resources management. They showed willingness to cooperate and co-creation.
2. Executives identified the main factors influencing the improvement of communication skills in the forest district. Particularly important to them

were harmonious cooperation, good relations and relationship building, efficiency and effectiveness in acting together, co-creating solutions adequate to the changing conditions and needs of the organisation's environment. It was also important to improve public speaking skills and other forms of external communication.

3. Executives recognised the need for further development of communication skills to improve the effectiveness of teams in the forestry division.

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KOMUNIKACJA JAKO ELEMENT WSPARCIA ZARZĄDZANIA ZASOBAMI LUDZKIMI NA PRZYKŁADZIE WYBRANEGO NADLEŚNICTWA – BADANIE PILOTAŻOWE

ABSTRAKT

Komunikacja w organizacji obejmuje przepływ informacji i wiedzy między wszystkimi częściami i uczestnikami organizacji oraz jej otoczeniem. Efektywność procesów komunikowania zależy od stylu porozumiewania się przełożonych z podwładnymi, otwartości osób podejmujących decyzje na opinie i sugestie innych uczestników systemu oraz sprzężeń zwrotnych. Zasadniczym celem pracy była próba oceny poziomu

przydatności i wykorzystania komunikacji w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi na przykładzie wybranego nadleśnictwa, określenie występujących tam potrzeb oraz wskazanie kierunku dalszego rozwoju w tym obszarze. W badaniu wzięło udział siedem osób pełniących funkcje kierownicze (nadleśniczy, zastępca nadleśniczego, główna księgowa, sekretarz, inżynierowie nadzoru, osoba zastępująca komendanta posterunku Straży Leśnej), pracownicy wybranego nadleśnictwa. Przedmiotem badania było zagadnienie komunikacji w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi. W pracy badawczej zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego z wykorzystaniem techniki wywiadu bezpośredniego i narzędzia w postaci kwestionariusza wywiadu. Opracowano kwestionariusz zawierający 11 pytań dotyczących m.in. rozumienia pojęcia „komunikacja” w badanym nadleśnictwie, a także znaczenia, celu i form komunikacji, posiadanych umiejętności oraz stosowanych w tym obszarze narzędzi, jak również występujących jeszcze braków i potrzeb w obrębie komunikacji. Badania prowadzono w sierpniu 2024 roku. Miały one charakter pilotażowy. Pojęcie „komunikacja” przez wszystkich uczestników badania było rozumiane znacznie szerzej niż tylko przepływ informacji. Rozmówcy pytani o znaczenie komunikacji świadomie lub intuicyjnie upatrywali w niej narzędzia do sprawnego zarządzania. Analizując odpowiedzi respondentów, zaobserwowano indywidualne podejście do roli komunikacji pod kątem przydatności do zarządzania w poszczególnych działach oraz w całej jednostce. Respondenci pytani o komunikację wewnętrzną rozumieli ją jako element pozwalający na prawidłowe funkcjonowanie poszczególnych działów, umożliwiającą poznanie mocnych i słabych stron konkretnych pracowników, wpływającą na efektywniejszą pracę oraz eliminację różnego rodzaju pomyłek i błędów. Z kolei komunikacja zewnętrzna zdaniem uczestniczących w badaniu umożliwiała prawidłową współpracę z klientami, kontrahentami i innymi podmiotami zewnętrznymi oraz miała kluczowe znaczenie w budowaniu pozytywnego wizerunku na zewnątrz. Prawie wszyscy rozmówcy preferowali komunikację w postaci kontaktu bezpośredniego. Respondenci wskazywali na to, że aby dobrze zrozumieć swoich pracowników, przełożonego, kierowników innych działów, potrzebna jest otwartość, szczerza rozmowa, chęć porozumienia, dialog i współpraca. Umiejętność słuchania, a także zadawania pytań pozwalały na bieżące analizowanie pracy działów, którymi zarządzają. Opanowanie, pozytywne nastawienie do otoczenia, wzajemny szacunek i dojrzałość emocjonalna sprzyjały zrozumieniu. Uczestnicy badań byli zdania, że mają odpowiednie umiejętności i narzędzia komunikacji. Potrafili uważnie słuchać, rozwiązywać problemy oraz pracować zespołowo. Niektórzy przyjmowali krytykę na swój temat i nie kierowali się uprzedzeniami. Uważali, że są opanowani i mają pozytywne nastawienie do otoczenia. Respondenci mieli świadomość swoich potrzeb i braków w komunikacji. Wyzwaniem dla wielu z nich były wystąpienia publiczne oraz dyplomacja, a także potrzeba lepszej znajomości komunikacji w formie elektronicznej. Pojedyncze osoby miały problem z wydawaniem i egzekwowaniem poleceń oraz komunikacją bezpośrednią. W przypadku trybów komunikowania się odruchowo uczestniczący w badaniu wskazywali tryb współpracy z intencją porozumienia. W celu sprawnego komunikowania byli otwarci na dialog, dyskusję, szukanie porozumienia, współpracę, rozmowę o problemach. Nieliczni z respondentów wyrażali potrzebę szkoleń w przedmiotowym obszarze. W razie wystąpienia trudnych sytuacji respondenci szukali wyjścia, dyskutowali o problemach, szczerze rozmawiali. Niektórzy szukali rozwiązań na zewnątrz. W badanej jednostce pracownicy znali i doceniali rolę prawidłowo funkcjonującej komunikacji w zarządzaniu zasobami ludzkimi. Wykazywali chęć współpracy i współtworzenia. Kadra kierownicza dostrzegła potrzebę dalszego rozwoju umiejętności komunikacyjnych w celu podniesienia efektywności zespołów i nadleśnictwa poprzez: harmonijną współpracę, dobre relacje i budowanie więzi, sprawność i skuteczność w działaniu razem, współtworzenie rozwiązań adekwatnych do zmieniających się warunków i potrzeb otoczenia organizacji oraz doskonalenie umiejętności wystąpień publicznych oraz innych form komunikacji zewnętrznej.

Słowa kluczowe: organizacja, pracownicy, przepływ informacji

