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STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION OF THE ORGANIZATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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Abstract

The evolution of the modern organization is currently marked by the amplification of interdependencies with the environment in which it operates; the expression of this evolution is the accentuation of the open character of the organization conceived as a system, reflected both on the level of "inputs" - production factors and information - and on that of "outputs" - material goods, information, and services - through which it integrates into the environment national and international environment and which knows a much-increased variety and intensity compared to the previous period. Any change in the environment must be known and mastered, in order to ensure self-regulation through legal, conflictual, and operational sources. Strategic communication takes two basic forms: the development of communication relationships with the external environment and forecasting the evolution and changes that can occur outside the organization and which can affect their activity. The organization tries to survive in the external, necessarily competitive environment, by building profitable relationships with its key actors: local authorities, directors of other organizations, in general people who are considered to be influential. At the time of the initiation of these communication networks, they are not really indispensable. However, they are designed with the idea that they can prove useful in case of a crisis or other unexpected event.

Keywords: Communication, strategy, organization

1 INTRODUCTION

The organization is the main form through which people satisfy their needs and achieve their goals in society. It is the main structure through which society fulfils its economic function related to the production and distribution of goods. The elements that characterize the organization are:

- the objectives, expressed in a concrete and measurable form, the goals of the activity; they can be: general, corresponding to the role (mission) of the enterprise. They are fixed for long periods of time; -

derivatives, staggered so that their prior achievement gradually leads to the achievement of the general objectives; - specific, which condition the achievement of the derived objectives and are fixed for each individual activity or for each department of the enterprise.

- the resources necessary for carrying out the activity: material (equipment, raw materials, tools, furniture, etc.); financial (own capital, loans, attracted sources, etc.); human (the ensemble of employees, in number and structure, with all the needs, motivations, knowledge, experience, attitudes, skills, interests); informational, (proper information and related technology);

- the plan and activity program necessary to achieve the proposed objectives;

- the leadership (management), represented by employees capable of making decisions aimed at setting and achieving objectives.

These elements combine in a unique, particular way, from one organization to another. This allows the company to be treated not as a simple joining of elements, but as elements that are interconnected in space and time and depend to a large extent on the company's external environment. From this perspective, the enterprise can be considered as a complex, open and dynamic system.

No organization acts in a vacuum. Any organization acts in certain concrete conditions given by the environment in which it exists and operates, its activity being influenced by the forces and factors that make up that environment.

Organizations, as complex social systems, are made up of elements that must act in a concentrated way to achieve organizational efficiency. This requires that organizations be analysed both from the perspective of the capacities to integrate organizational variables with human factors, as well as from that of reacting adequately to the influence of the external environment [5].

Moreover, the survival and prosperity of companies are conditioned by the requirements of the environment in which they operate. Organizations operating in a dynamic environment marked by frequent and important changes in all its components must anticipate and cope with the changes that will affect their markets and the positions they hold in the respective markets.

Kotler [1] states that there are two types of organizations: those that change and those that disappear.

Due to the need to continuously adapt, modern organizations will have to respond to the growing need for freedom, respectively for the expression of imagination, fantasy and the pleasure of working. Against these requirements, the main characteristics of the organizations of the future will have to:

- to be temporary systems, capable of adaptation and permanent change, depending on the evolution of the environment and individual needs;
- to be created around the problems that need to be solved;
- for problems to be solved by groups of people who have different qualifications;
- that the managers have the role of connecting links, who have the ability to understand the scientific language, without claiming to know and direct the entire development of the activity;
- that people differentiate themselves not according to rank or roles, but according to capacity and professional training.

The transformations that are currently taking place at the international level, regarding the information society and the globalization recorded on the geopolitical and economic level, foreshadow a major impact on organizations [6].

2 METHODOLOGY

The organizational environment is represented by those factors that affect the activity of an organization in a certain way. Any organization carries out its activity in a certain environment external to it, which consists of elements that have a larger sphere of influence, affecting other organizations as well (these constitute the macro environment or the general organizational environment), as well as elements that are strictly related to that organization (these constitute the microenvironment or the specific or competitive environment) the elements inside the organization constitute an internal environment that obviously differs for each organization because each

organization has at its disposal certain resources that it combines in a unique and individualizing manner [2].

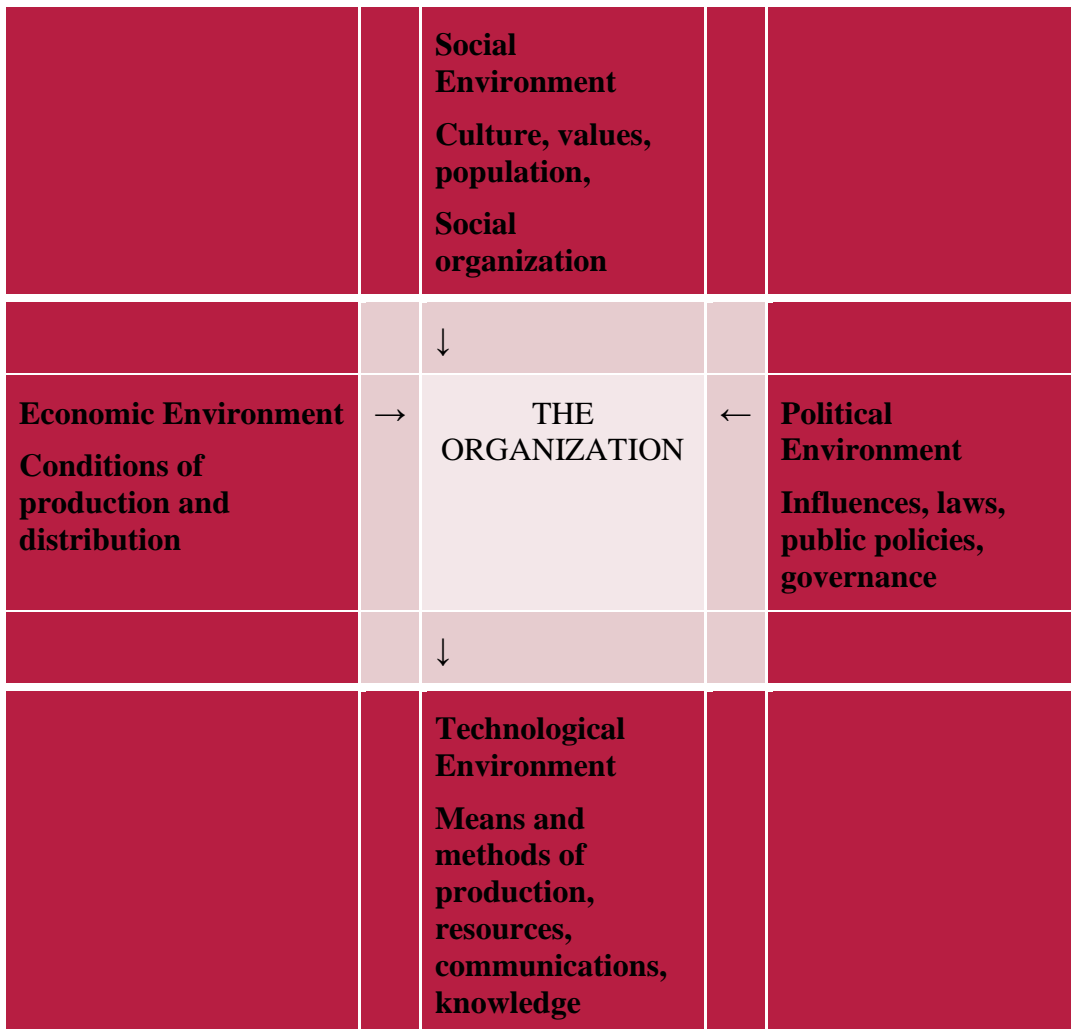


Table 1. Donna Wood, *Business and Society*, Harper Collins Publishers, USA, 1990

This explicit model suggests that certain constraints or opportunities of the firm can be sought in each of the four sectors, and not only in the economic or technological environment, as most managers are used to. Often the

interests of social groups, their attitudes or actions must be taken into account when a decision is made.

From this perspective, the organization is an open system, being influenced directly by other organizations and indirectly by economic, technical, social, political, etc. factors. of the environment in which they act.

The organization takes from the environment raw materials, materials, fuels, energy, machinery, labour, new technologies, financial resources, management methods and techniques, etc., which it introduces into internal management processes, resulting in products and services they transfer to the same environment.

Any change in the environment must be known and mastered, in order to ensure self-regulation through legal sources (limits, fixed by law), conflictual sources (provisions of the Labour Code) and operational sources (piloting - provided on different hierarchical levels).

It is stated in the specialized literature that the ability to control the markets on which the company currently operates derives, at least partially, from the most detailed knowledge of customers, suppliers, competitors, intermediaries and investors, environmental analysis thus proving extremely necessary, as Brownlie [3] remarked. The capacity for self-regulation is a factor that ensures the effectiveness of the organization, especially in a period of transition.

Publics are 'specific audiences' targeted by the organization. Many authors argued that a key role the organization should embark on in a crisis is to identify the publics and develop appropriate messages to reach out to them. It is often posited that because the publics have different perceptions of what caused the crisis, the organization's communication with them could ameliorate any unfounded anxieties. Moreover, it is suggested that the role of strategic communication in a crisis centres on the management of conflict between the organization and its important stakeholders. An organization thrives or survives by focusing and managing the stakeholders. In a crisis, the publics have been defined differently, according to their importance in resolving situation, their functional roles and their long-term influences. There are four key publics that the organization must communicate with, and that communication must begin as soon as possible. They are: those most directly affected, the victims; the organization's employees, who may bear the

brunt of the publics' wrath; those indirectly affected like families and relatives; the news media and other channels of external communication [5].

3 RESULTS

Due to the need to continuously adapt, modern organizations will have to respond to the increasing need for freedom, respectively for the expression of imagination, desire and pleasure to work. Against these requirements, the main characteristics of the organizations of the future will have to:

- to be temporary systems, capable of adaptation and permanent change, depending on the evolution of the environment and individual needs;
- to be created around the problems that need to be solved;
- for problems to be solved by groups of people who have different qualifications;
- that the managers have the role of connecting links, who have the ability to understand the scientific language, without claiming to know and direct the entire development of the activity;
- that people differentiate themselves not according to rank or roles, but according to capacity and professional training.

The transformations currently taking place at the international level, regarding the informational society and globalization, the changes recorded on the geopolitical and economic level, foreshadow a major impact on organizations.

The multiple challenges that organizational executives perceive this year (2022) reflect the continued volatility of current societal issues and those looming on the horizon. While caution in the face of growing threats may be a natural reaction, it should not prevent business leaders from taking bold transformational action. Cyber security, the health crisis and macroeconomic volatility are the top threats to business growth [4].

Strategic communication is still needed today to influence perceptions, to be able to change attitudes and behaviors, so organizations must carry out an analysis of the audience they are addressing in order to subsequently formulate appropriate messages in order to achieve the desired effects.

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There is a common and growing concern among CEOs about challenges that seem more complex than in previous years as organizations struggle to adapt to the new normal.

If in the last two years, humanity has focused with predilection on managing the pandemic, this year the crises overlap - sanitary, economic, and military.

In this rather turbulent context, we should not forget the other global problems of the last decades – for example, the lack of living resources, the lack of access to education in underdeveloped countries, or the irreparable damage to the environment. The balance between optimism and anxiety remains precarious this year as well.

At the top of the concerns of business leaders globally, cyber security surpasses the pandemic in 2022 – the main challenge last year.

The significant increase in IT security incidents in recent years and the accelerated digitization in all sectors of activity propel cyber risks to the top of the list of perceived threats to business development prospects by company executives globally.

In Romania, 51% of CEOs declare themselves extremely or very concerned about macroeconomic volatility (fluctuation in GDP growth, inflation, unemployment).

At a short distance, in second place on the agenda of business leaders in our country, are pandemic risks (mentioned by 49% of respondents), followed by cyber security (43%).

The percentages are lower for climate change (31%) and geopolitical conflicts (19%) – including resource and trade disputes, terrorism, interstate violence [4].

The watchwords are caution and agility. Business strategies, including communication strategies, must be prudent enough to help companies navigate troubled waters, but at the same time must provide business leaders with a high degree of decision-making mobility in conditions where reality can change dramatically from one hour to the next, the external environment being extremely volatile.

This involves improving the flexibility of organizations when it comes to including commitments in the long-term business strategy and putting it into practice by launching initiatives and regularly measuring their impact.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The organizations of the future must be an optimal combination between bureaucratic rationality, flexibility and adaptability of organizational formulas of the adhocracy type (in which "organizers", bureaucrats collaborate with experts, with specialized groups). The future consequences of these extra- and intra-organizational changes are not entirely predictable.

The rapidity with which the means of communication (internet, social media, messaging platforms, etc.) have developed requires careful monitoring of the effects at the macroeconomic and social level and, subsidiarily, at the organizational level.

In addition to major economic and social developments, other high-impact factors have driven significant changes in recent years: technology, workforce, cyber risks, environmental and sustainability policies, regulatory pressure. Therefore, the perception of company leaders that they are navigating a highly volatile environment that prompts rapid repositioning is not at all surprising. Thus, it can be seen how CEOs have adjusted their views and, implicitly, their agendas, not only in the last year, but also in the last two months of the year, as the studies show. As expected, the war in Ukraine has reset the list of concerns and influenced the perception of CEOs.

Even after the start of the war in Ukraine, macroeconomic volatility remains the most acute threat in the opinion of business leaders in Romania. 54% of the general directors in our country declare themselves extremely or very concerned about this risk (increasing slightly, from 51%). Geopolitical conflicts come in second place: the share of respondents who say they are extremely or very worried about this danger has doubled, reaching 43%. Cyber security remains in third place, mentioned by 31% of company executives (down from 43%). On the other hand, the pandemic threat is decreasing in intensity, with only 17% of the leaders of organizations in our country saying that they are extremely or very concerned (down from 49%), while another 40% show some concern about this danger.

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As the global economy faces successive shocks and risks mount, it is expected that financial results will take a hit and companies' attention will focus almost exclusively on customers and employees, while other societal concerns will be left on the back burner. the second plan.

While it seems self-evident that business leaders are aware of the societal impact of operations or supply chain decisions, the reality is coming to test them. How many CEOs would have thought two months ago that they would have an immediate decision to make in response to the war in Ukraine? Many companies reacted quickly, but others needed more time for analysis.

The public pressure was immense, explicitly asking them to take a stand, demonstrating once again that businesses can only thrive when they understand the societal interest and the broad political dimension of their operations and act accordingly.

But the war in Ukraine is only the most recent and arguably the most dramatic context in which society influences the business decision, and strategic communication follows the decision, makes it known and promotes it.

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