NATURE AND DEFINITIONS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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This article tries to explain the basic theoretical approaches to organizational communication, its leading functions and types, as well as the characteristics of communication skills. The author has also illustrated the relation between management power and the motivation of the staff, on one hand, and the business communication, on the other. In order to explain the organizational communication and the business communication, we have mapped out and explained the most common barriers to modern communication.

Key words: business communication, management**,** communication skills, barriers to communication, avoidance of communication.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Nowadays it is difficult to come across a job advertisement or a vacancy contest notice, which would not mention eligibility criteria such as "communicativeness" or "communicative skills." Concepts such as "organizational communication," "corporate communication" or "business communication" long ago became key terms for management, entrepreneurship

and human resources. They are even considered much more important in comparison to, for example, good education and qualification, leadership skills or the ability to take risks.

Why is it so?

Is communicativeness of such big importance to business, or the life of organizations? What is meant by "business communication"? What are its major functions and types? What is the characteristic of communicative skills? Is there a connection between management power and staff motivation on the one hand and business communication on the other, and what is this connection? What are the most common barriers and obstacles to contemporary business communication?

The answers to these and other questions will give us a better understanding of the phenomenon and process of business communication. Such clarification is certainly a good approach to some of the most important aspects of organizational communication: verbal and non-verbal communication, writing and reading in business and entrepreneurship.

1. HOW SHALL WE DEFINE BUSINESS COMMUNICATION?

1. 1. Theoretical Approach to Communication

Previously published works of mine presented a working idea for both the term "communication," as well as the similarities and differences between the terms

"interaction" and "communication" (Stoykov, 1995: 97-99). However, these are not sufficient for a better understanding of the semantics and terminological genesis of this phenomenon. It is for that reason that we also need to look at the interpretation of the concept "communication" found in a number of reliable sources: both foreign (Roland Burkart, John Fiske and Owen Hargie) and Bulgarian (Todor Petev).

Roland Burkart on Communication

In his fundamental book *The Science of Communication* Roland Burkart explains the concept of "communication" by analyzing seven major segments:

1. Communication as social behaviour;
2. Human communication as social activity;
3. Communication as social interaction;
4. Communication as a mediated process (including the concept "media");
5. Human communication as symbolically transmitted interaction;
6. Symbolically transmitted interaction as specifically human communicative modality;
7. Feedback as a form of control on the result achieved by the communicative activity (including mass communication).

Starting from the idea of Maletzke that communication is an exchange of meanings between live organisms, Burkart comes to the idea of human communication as a social activity:

> Human communication should be considered as an event localized in the sphere of social activities: "the agent of communication" is someone who does something with consideration for (at least) other person – therefore he/she acts "predominantly socially" on one hand, and on the other carries out a form of social interaction: "For communication to take place at all, what is needed is (at least) two living beings to get in touch – or in the language of social sciences – to be interacting. Communication as an event occurring between living beings might be considered as a specific form of social interaction (Burkart, 2000: 16-17, 21).

Burkart calls communicator everyone who acts communicatively and wants to announce something, thus trying to realize the common intention (aim, intention or striving) of their communicative activity – that is, to share meanings with other people or other partners in the communicative process, by "distributing" the contents, which they need to convey through the use of a certain media.

Thus, those meanings are conveyed and made accessible to somebody or several people. The recipient is that communicator, who wants to understand something and tries to realize the common intention of the communicative activity, or more specifically – to exchange meanings with someone, respectively with more communicative partners by accepting the message conveyed through the medium, and tries to comprehend its meaning. The recipient accepts and consumes the message sent by the communicator and can be also referred to as addressee, receiver or consumer (Burkart, 2000: 51-52).

John Fiske's Comparative Analysis of Process School and Semiotic School of Communication

John Fiske provides an interesting introduction to communication theory, by including also some questions of interest to contemporary researchers:

> Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily. Communication is talking to one another, it is television, it is spreading information, it is our hairstyle, it is literary criticism: the list is endless. This is one of the problems facing academics: can we properly apply the term "a subject of study" to something as diverse and multi-faceted as human communication actually is? Is there any hope of linking the study of, say, facial expression with literary criticism? Is it even an exercise worth attempting? (Fiske, 1990: 1).

John Fiske's ideas are based on comparative analysis of the two major schools of communication interpretation – the so-called "process school" and "semiotic school". His major approaches to explaining the concept and phenomenon of "communication" cover a number of hypotheses.

Firstly, he assumes that the whole communication involves signs and codes. Signs are artifacts or actions referring to something other than themselves, because they are signifying constructs. Codes are the systems in which signs are organized and which determine in what way signs are related to each other.

The second hypothesis is that these signs and codes are transmitted or are at the disposal of others and that communication, realized through the transmission or receiving of signs (codes), is actually the practice of social relationships.

And a third, very important assumption of this author is that communication has a central role to play in the life of our culture: without communication all culture

is unthinkable. Moreover, culture, deprived of communication is dead. Therefore, study of communication involves also research of its integrated culture (Fiske, 1990: 1-2).

Owen Hargie's Interpretation of Social Communication

Owen Hargie's ideas of interpretations of the term "social communication" will be of use, no doubt, to the clarification of the concept "communication," as well as to a better understanding of the term "business communication".

Hargie refers to some other colleagues of his, such as Phillips who draws the conclusion that social communication is the skill to communicate with other people by complying with major requirements, obligations and rights and without breaking their own.

This theory stresses the exchange of information and the right to such exchange and a specific type of information, rather than the skill for that (even though Phillips makes the point that the skill to communicate is part of social communication).

A similar idea is presented by Combs and Slaby who see the art of communication in the skill to communicate with others on the basis of some common models by gaining the maximum benefit from that and without breaking the interests and rights of any of the communicators.

Spitzberg and Cupach say that the skill to conduct good social communication also involves other various skills such as speaking without your voice trembling or good knowledge of the protocol for introductions to new people.

Research on Responses
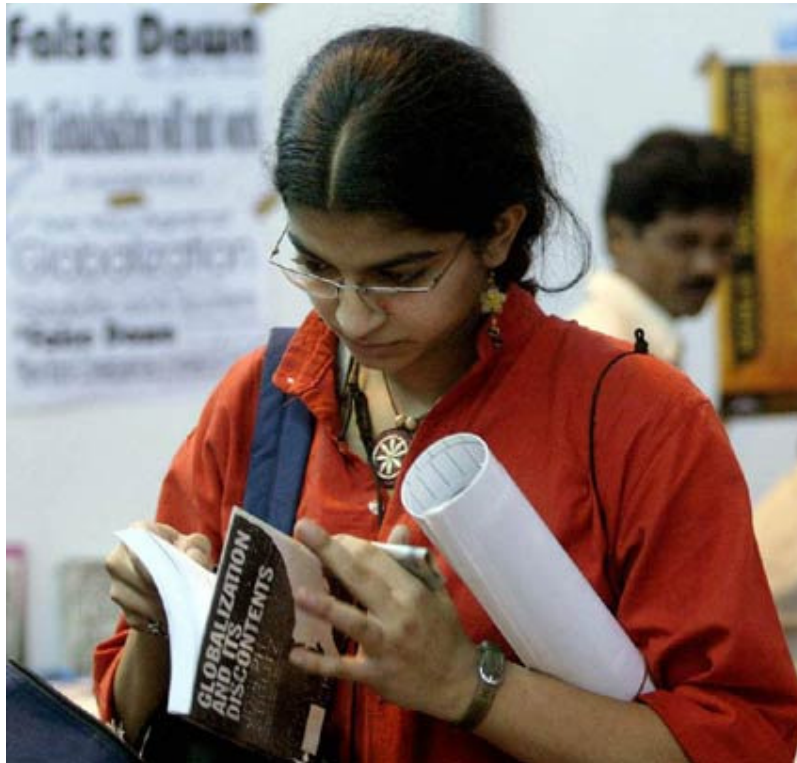
Another group of research is focused on the response – positive or negative - of the person with whom you communicate as part of the skill to communicate.

While raising this point, Libet and Lewinsohn define the art of communication as a complex ability to have a firm position while communicating and reduce the negative reaction of your interlocutors.

Hargie sees a drawback in this definition in the fact that it does not take into consideration the social dimensions of behaviour. Following such logic, we could say that an infuriated boxer who smashes his victim has great communicative skills because he obviously manages to reduce the resistance of his opponent.

Cartledge and Milburn look at more specific features of communication and consider communication as a behaviour reaction provoked by a certain situation

or person. Social communication requires such reaction to be positive (*The Handbook of Communication Skills*, 1997: 7-27).

In his highly useful monograph *Theories on Mass Communication*, the Bulgarian scholar and prominent sociologist, Todor Petev, writes:

> Communication as a type of social behaviour involves a conscious exchange of symbols and signs which are meaningful to the participants. The meanings are conveyed according to the topical social approaches and interactions in the situation mutually defined by the participants. Communication as social interaction presupposes an intentional exchange of symbols – a conscious aim, intention or social expectation (Petev, 2004: 29).

The same author while looking at mass communication, delineates several major types of communication: interpersonal communication, communication in small groups, communication in organizations and public communication.

Business Communication: Concept and Functions

After touching upon the terminological frames of communication, it will be good for us to look at the conceptual and functional aspects of the phenomenon, which is of real interest to us – namely, business communication.

We should agree that business communication has a major role in management, entrepreneurship and, as a whole, in the life of organizations. A question for us to consider: is there any activity in the business life, which does not involve writing and reading, listening and speaking? And another one: Is it possible to do business, or for an organization to function, without information, or a designed system for producing, transmitting, receiving, processing and storing information?

Statistics shows that working people spend from 70 to 85 percent of their time on communicating with their managers, colleagues, subordinates, clients, external partners and so on. They do that by speech or gestures and looks, e-mail and faxes or with the help of land lines or mobile phones – both at meetings and conferences, as a well as in more private settings – among the employees of an organization it is managers who perform their most important functions – planning, coordination, management and control. All this is possible due to organizational communication. Yet, what is business communication and can we come up with an acceptable definition for it?

Raymond Lesikar considers business communication as an activity or process allowing people to work together. Costley and Todd claim that the process of communication (respectively sending, accepting and interpreting messages) involves people's skill to understand and be understood), and Peter Drucker sees communicativeness as their ability to organize themselves and express their ideas in a verbal and written form.

It is a widely known that communication is a major function of business and is a channel, mechanism and means of exchanging information in the organization:

> "No matter whether it is written or verbal, it is the instrument through which business speaks to its consumers. It is the mechanism by which management influences its employees and guides their activities. It is also the means by which the employees provide information and feedback, which are necessary to the management to take smart decisions. Organizations which carry out clear, meaningful and effective communication with clients, employees, share-holders, creditors and the public have better chances of building reliable relationships and can count on good cooperation" (Business communications, 2004: IX).

Two Aspects of Business Communication

Tsvetan Kulevski, a researcher in the field of logics, lingua-statistics and public communications suggests that business communications should be interpreted in two aspects – the economic system for production and exchange of goods and services and the relations of people involved in that activity:

> In order for us to understand the business communications of the human society, we should look at two aspects: according to the first one, the economic system is a mechanism allowing the production, transfer, transportation and use of goods of any kind and any quantity. According to the second one, the economic system is a combination of business relations between groups and individuals maintaining this exchange or circulation of goods and services – and vice versa. From this point of view our study of the economic life of communities has an important role in the general study of the social structure (Kulevski, 2005: 51).

Exchange of Formal-Informal, Verbal-Nonverbal, Etc.

Some years ago we offered the following working or tentative definition of business communication as a total exchange of formal and informal, verbal and non-verbal information, feelings and sensations in the process of the organizational activity, in which the implementation of the basic functions of management is guaranteed, and along with this – a fulfilling performance of the individual members of the working community (Stoykov, 1995: 99-100).

The Bonding Element in Organizational Communication

Specialized literature on organizational communication claims that the ability to think and convey ideas in the process of communication is the very bonding element in the whole social interaction. Workers or employees of various organizations – bigger or smaller, focus their time mostly on communication (they discuss issues and different working situations, study or prepare reports and papers, give or receive instructions, read or dictate letters, speak on the phone or answer calls, make interviews, make speeches, interact and observe human behaviour).

Nowadays, everybody talks of communication and the problems arising from the ineffective communication in organizations (Koehler, Anatol, Applbaum, 1981: 3).

Communication is of great importance to entrepreneurship and business because it is an inseparable part of any entrepreneurship and business. It really gives a unique opportunity to managers, entrepreneurs and business people to implement their plans, avoid duplication of functions and carrying out of unnecessary activities, as well as to coordinate the involved efforts, share knowledge, report on the work done and the progress achieved, solve problems and so on. Communication helps employees and workers to build the necessary relationship with individuals or legal entities, people or whole companies outside the organization: these are representatives of other organizations (providers, companies offering different services, corporate clients), as well as individual consumers (other clients and the public as a whole). Business is unthinkable without commuinication – it cannot be made and cannot function

and respectively cannot be planned, organized, developed without it (Lesikar, 1988: 6).

Inter-personal and Inter-group Nature of Business Communication

Business communication, along with everything else, is interpersonal or inter-group communication, which is subordinate to the targets of management and entrepreneurship. Its tasks are related to transmitting and conveying professional information in relation to the normal functioning of the organization, as well as to the effective making and applying of management decisions, including the control on their implementation. Which are the main functions of business communication from the point of view of the scientific research?

According to some of them (Bovee, Thill, 1989: 5) business communication is an exchange of messages aiming at the understanding of their meanings and is realized through its two major functions: the first one is to help members of the organization achieve their goals, and the second one is to work towards bonding the group. We should agree with the way the four functions of business communication are differentiated by one of the most valuable analyses of organizational communication (see Koehler, Anatol, Applbaum, 1981): **informative, regulative, persuasive and integrative**.

Let us look at them separately.

Informative Function of Organizational Communication

The employees of an organization, as well as their managers, require a serious exchange of information so that they can work effectively, take decisions and handle arising conflicts, Organizations should be considered as information-processing systems, whose individual members are impatient to receive more better and timely information, so that they can carry out their tasks and achieve their business goals professionally and within the deadlines. It is good to know that the majority of staff – employees and workers, look for information, which has almost nothing to do with the performance of their direct duties. Workers are concerned with the general welfare of their organization, the working standards of other employees, and security benefits, such as retirement plans and so on.

The staff members are also looking for information which is not directly related either to their work or the success of the organization, and has more to do with the informal communication, subculture and the personal life of their colleagues.

What Do They Look For?

A survey of 219 banking personnel executives lists the types of information, which is most often transmitted in their organizations. Firstly, this is company news and future plans (targets and achievements of the company, economic progress, new facilities, organizational changes, future business and employee outlook). Second in the list come the competition among employees, benefits and services. This category includes changes in the target programmes, wages and salaries, reports of profit-sharing results, holiday and vacation schedules, tax information and information on medical services.

All types of information mentioned in the survey concern the company rules, policy and programmes, conditions and safety regulations, equal programmes for employees' development, clarification of policy, promotions and opportunities for training and advancement including changes, position openings, education programmes and other social activities (Koehler, Anatol, Applbaum, 1981: 8-9).
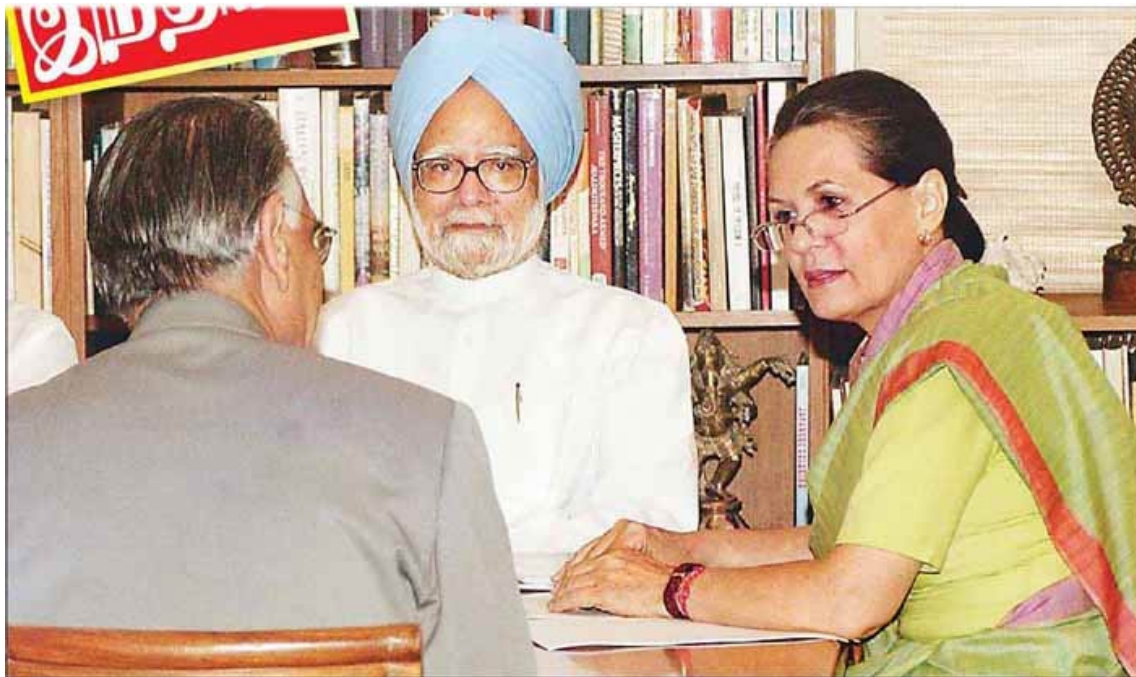
Regulatory Function of Organizational Communication

In order to understand this function, we need to know that above all, management controls the transmitted information. The manager gives orders to his/her employees. Orders put the communicator in a position of authority presupposing compliance from the other side. However, employees' acceptance of a given order will be dependant on 1) legitimization of the source of the order 2) power of the source to enforce sanctions 3) assumed competence of the source on the discussed topic 4) trustworthiness of the source as a leader and

person, 5) perceived credibility of the received message and 6) acceptance of the tasks and aims, which communication is trying to achieve. Secondly, regulatory messages are mainly targeted at employees and focus on the tasks, which need to be fulfilled in a given job. Employees need to know what is expected of them and what sanctions their behavior is liable to (see Koehler, Anatol, Applbaum, 1981: 9).

Persuasive Function of Organizational Communication

While running organizations, managers quickly find out that power and authority not always bring the required control. They often have to use persuasion, which is exercised at every level of the organization – a request of an employee gets to the boss or the manager makes employees perform tasks outside their professional duties. Lots of managers prefer to persuade their employees rather than give orders. Successful managers realize that voluntary compliance by employees means a stronger commitment rather than the one resulting from requests and orders of the management (see Koehler, Anatol, Applbaum, 1981: 9).

Integrative Function of Organizational Communication

It gives the organization unity and cohesion, by setting definite goals and tasks aiming at attracting and smoothly integrating the appropriate participants;

coordinating activities and schedules of various personalities and departments; eliminating redundancy and wasted efforts.

The aim of the integrative processes is to set the frames of the organization, involve those personalities and activities, who contribute to her goals and exclude the ones who do not. The hierarchy of the organizational structure – provisions for channeling information and authority, distribution of power and responsibilities - is at the basis of the integrative function. The role of the team is to fulfill the integrative functions, at least in its aspects of recruitment and training staff.

The incentive of integrative communication is towards identity and uniformity. Integration necessities provide an explanation why, for example, organizations are trying to acquire means, which will be used by workers to identify with the workings of the organization. Official channels include newspapers, videos, visits by the top management and annual progress reports, all aimed at informing the employees. Integration is a consequence of the type of information, which everybody receives for their work.

The best-integrated employees are those who are acquainted with the organizational aims and tasks, including also the way their work fits within the whole picture and the progress they are making on the job (see Koehler, Anatol, Applbaum, 1981: 9-10).

Sub-functions of Corporate Communication

One of the greatest authorities in the field of corporate communication, Professor Paul Argenti, prefers to talk not of its functions, but of its sub-functions. On the basis of the fact that corporate communication is the main function of organizations, he differentiates ten sub-functions, as follows:

- Image and identity

This one refers to marketing research concerning the needs and approaches towards the organization with the aim of creating a most positive image. For corporate identity the sub-function of corporate communication presupposes research and activities related to the visual manifestation of the reality of the company and the values with which it identifies itself (logo, buildings, offices, working uniforms, etc.)

- Corporate advertising and advocacy programmes

Communications related with this type of advertising are not striving to sell certain products or services but to promote the company itself and to influence the natural leaders and potential share-holders in the creation of their ideas on the life of the company and its whole strategy.

- Media relations

Here we are actually talking about public relations and those activities of corporate communication, which update the public on the state and development, prosperity and business news in a certain organization. Thanks to new technologies (Satellite up-links, Internet and all sorts of electronic means for transmitting information), companies can now use lots of media services valid all over the world.

- Product publicity and customer relations

This sub-function covers coordination and management of publicity of new and already existing products (for example, sponsorship of events such as car races, golf tournaments, marathons and various other contests). Relations with clients are carried out both in the traditional way of receiving feedback on the satisfaction of consumers, and by new mechanisms and instruments, such as the so-called "pressure groups". Along with this, what is also important is the communication system for processing and analysis of phone calls, product recalls, customers' letters, etc.

- Financial communications

Relations with investors and share- holders as a rule are handled by financial departments, but there is a tendency focus to be shifted from calculations and numbers to the ways organizations treat their partners. This function is performed jointly by experts on risk assessment and specialists in public relations and media for buyers, as well as sales people. An important role for this sub-function is played by annual reports and financial reports, which are prepared by specialists in financial communications.

- Employee relations

Activities related with internal communications serve the needs of top management to receive information on the satisfaction of their staff; to explain to their employees different changes in legislation and labour law, to clarify the complex social and health benefit packages, training programmes and all more important and topical aspects concerning the realization of human resources.

- Community relations and corporate philanthropy

This is one of the most important social sub-functions of corporate communication. Creation of charity funds and activities related to the social commitments of organizations are the basic prerequisite for building companies' positive image. Professor Paul Argenti claims that these sub-functions are organically related to each other because companies are taking bigger and bigger responsibilities for the communities in which they realize their activities. It is a normal practice for donations and charities to be oriented towards organizations and institutions working towards the benefit of employees, clients or share holders (for example institutes and universities doing research in spheres related to the activities of the company-donor.)

- Government relations

It is obvious that each organization could benefit from strategic and purposeful contacts with the executive power. It is a common practice for big companies to build offices especially designed for that purpose, including also lobbying in front of the respective institutions, departments and areas in the country. This is especially true for spheres involving the activities of companies, which are strictly regulated by the state – energetics, railway transport, etc.

- Crisis management

This sub-function presupposes that corporate communication should bear a specific and well regulated responsibility for planning and coordination of potential crises, of course with the help of managers and specialists from other structures of the organization (Argenti, 1994: 59-65).

2. TYPES OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

If we refer to the definition of types of communication of economic organizations, suggested by Kolyo Ramchev, then we can talk of two major types – internal and external communications (Ramchev, 2000: 238-251).

The prominent Bulgarian scholar and researcher of psychology and labour sociology includes in the internal-organizational communications the relations, contacts and interactions between the members of the organization – all or some of them. Directions, instructions, orders, inquiries, reports, phone calls on different specialized issues, conferences, weekly meetings, and assemblies are the most frequently functioning internal business communications.

Internal Communication

Internal communication has four directions – descending, ascending, horizontal and diagonal. Descending vertical communication processes, for example, use three chief methods:

1) Written messages (instructions, orders, etc.)
2) Meetings and conversations, carried out between managers and recipients;
3) Phone calls, communication via fax, Internet, telex and via other electronic means of technology.

Another part of internal-organizational communications are ascending, because as Ramchev claims, in them information moves from the bottom to the top. In this way is transmitted information on:

- The work of the staff from the point of view of their progress, achievements, plans, failures, gaffs, etc.;
- Unsolved issues arising in the working process;
- Statements, positions, opinions and attitude of the employees towards the work, management and organization;
- Different suggestions, ideas and recommendations.

The author also mentions that when communication processes are carried out between groups and individuals standing at equal hierarchical levels within the organization, then we can talk of horizontal communicative processes aiming at coordinating and harmonizing the activities and serving certain informational needs.

The importance of the horizontal internal-organizational communication is constantly increasing in parallel with the role of the liberal models of management. The most frequent means of this type of communication are written messages, meetings, phone calls and direct contact face in face.

Another important function is that of the diagonal communications (when information is transmitted not through traditional but other diagonal or parallel channels) and that of informal communications (when information is transmitted spontaneously and through unofficial channels). Informal business communication deserves separate and special research but here we should stress its importance on the basis of the fact that 80 % of the rumours in a company turn out to be true (Argenti, 1994: 168).

> In companies internal communications perform economical, as
> well as social functions. When the latter are of good quality they
> provide psychological comfort to the members of the individual

teams. Together, all the normal communicative processes in the companies are a solid guarantee for establishing and maintaining the social equilibrium, with the purpose of preventing and solving conflicts between the administration and the staff (Ramchev, 2000: 244).

We should also pay some attention to a survey made on the aims of internal company communications, some years ago in the USA among two hundred top managers of leading industrial companies (Argenti, 1994: 160). These aims are given below in the order of their importance:

- Encourage the spirit and moral and foster goodwill between management and staff.
- Inform employees about internal changes like re-organization or staff promotions.
- Explain all the plans for compensation and social benefits such as the introduction of a new programme for health care or a programme for the support of employees.
- Strengthen awareness and understanding of the employees of the company and its products, organization, ethics, culture and external environment.
- Change the behavior of the employees regarding their better performance, productivity and initiative.
- Raise the employees' awareness of the major health/social issues or trends concerning them, such as child care or AIDS.
- Encourage participation of the employees in community activities.

And What Are External Communications?

External communications actually involve the establishment and maintenance of organizational relations with representatives of other institutions, of legal entities or individuals. According to their range, they can be differentiated as national and international.

National include maintaining of business relations and carrying out of business meetings and negotiations with Bulgarian economic representatives, and international are related to business contacts and negotiations of Bulgarian entrepreneurs and managers with foreign economic representatives.

Who are usually the objects of external communications of economic organizations? These are, above all, their related economic organizations, other economic organizations from unrelated fields, investors and creditors, debtors,

mass and individual clients, consultants, designers and experts, mass media, competition.

External communications help fully realize all those important activities related to marketing, advertising and public relations, in or outside the context of developing joint business projects. It is also very important to consider the peculiarities of the potential and real business partners. They need to be known and considered in the development and implementation of the strategy and tactics for communication with them. An individual approach is needed for every partner. This is a subjective prerequisite for success in business negotiations with external communicators (Ramchev, 2000: 246).

It becomes clear that external communications concern the work with companies, individuals and groups of people outside the specific working community. Contacts with intermediaries and providers, with clients and, as a whole, with the public, take up a big part of external company relations and external organizational communications. Job applications, filling in of documents and interviewing applicants; organizing of an advertising campaign trying to promote sales of a particular product or development and endorsement of the image of a given brand; establishment and maintenance of efficient public communications; participation in different external meetings, conferences, symposia, discussions, fairs, exhibitions and forums – in all these cases we can talk of the so-called external business communications. This form of communication once again shows how important to business are the role of individuals and groups of people placed outside it (Stoykov, 1995: 104).

3. COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS
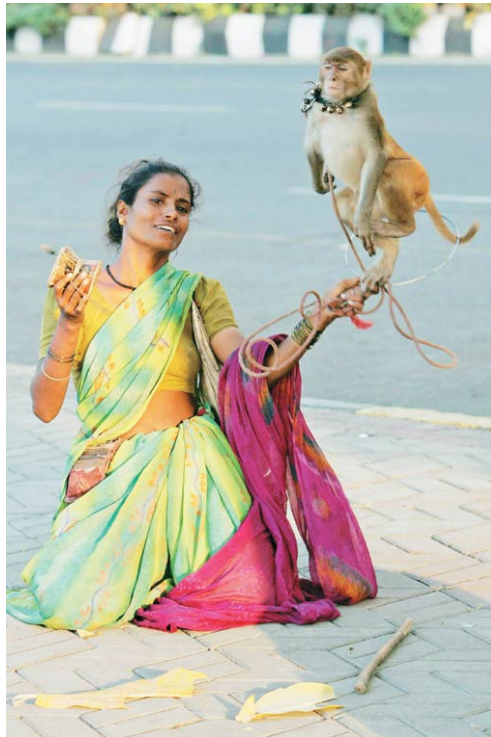
People like sociable personalities not only in business, but also in their private life. The reason for this is the extraordinary behaviour amalgam offered by the communicative person. Communication with such people brings you a good mood and positive thinking; also energy and positive emotions; gives you a most quick orientation in their approaches, thoughts and feelings.

The skill to be a good communicator, however, does not have to do only with the hedonistic feeling and spiritual comfort, which result from this communication. Communicative skills involve perfect individual understanding of the mechanisms for transmitting and receiving information, building trust, guaranteeing admission and acceptance.

People born with the gift to communicate, or taught by parents and pedagogues how to cultivate in themselves communicative skills (the building of the latter is a permanent process and does not in the least end with college or university graduation), on one hand predispose others to sociability and sincerity, and on the other, they themselves manage to transmit information in such a way so that it could be understood and comprehended. Furthermore, they do so in a natural and unobtrusive way, with tact, ethics and good intention.

But the gift for communication is based not only on qualities like tactfulness, compliance, good nature. Without trying to discredit those qualities in any way, we should say that, after all, they are not everything and not enough to guarantee meaningful communication.

The Ability for Active Orientation Towards the Others

The ability for active orientation towards the others is particularly valuable. This ability is recently frequently mentioned by psychology scholars. Orientation in the process of communication with people calls for purposefulness and brilliant intuition in finding that person or those people with whom you might be able to get along with, enrich yourself spiritually, wake and develop in yourself the interest for the matter and the spirit, life and art (Stoykov, 1990: 10-27).

Other Cognitive Abilities

Owen Hargie in his too concise and lapidary style looks at the dominant views on communicative skills. By providing an overview of all these opinions, he writes that Rinn and Markle define the art of communication as a range or, shall we say, a repertoire of verbal and nonverbal manners, which is similar to the claims of Wilkinson and Canter that verbal and nonverbal behavior reactions are at the basis of acquiring the skill to communicate.

Curran supports the idea that communication can be compared to the nature of motive culture. His claim is based on the principles of behaviourism. This theory is not accepted by most researchers, who assign bigger importance to factors such as cognitive ability and emotionality. The last characteristic feature was defined by Becker in 1987. He believes that the secret for successful communication is in the skill to sense the emotional mood of your interlocutor and choose the right approach and behaviour. Here we should also mention the necessity to get to know the people, with whom we communicate, foresee their answers and react accordingly.

To conclude this overview

This overview of the theories on communicative skills reveals the unconditional similarities between the nature of motive and communicative skills, but it also shows the multifarious theories on the art of communication. Phillips makes a short summary – all acquired skills are unique in themselves and of their own kind, very often they are strictly personal and concern only a specific situation or influence, all social contacts are formed on their basis and it is them which define the social norms and order and in their absence we often need to resort to the word "psychopathology".

One of the dimensions of a process, which directs specific attention to interpersonal communication, is the concept "competence". Actually, Spitzberg and Cupach claim that "competence is both of long standing and key to the

study of communication". Several theoreticians claim that skills are closely related to competence. For example, Ridge (1993) defines competence as the ability to choose strategies and skills appropriate to the specific context so that those could be used with the idea in mind that "strategy is a plan derived from a context determining which skills need to be applied". In this way, competence is considered to be the ability to choose an appropriate strategy and to apply it to qualified performance.

Konsky and Murdock (1980: 86) present a similar position by claiming that "Competence involves knowledge in two aspects and skills. Knowledge is our awareness and understanding of the various variables concerning human relations. Skills imply the ability to apply those pragmatically, consciously, and even unconsciously."

Some people might argue whether skills involve competence. Here is a definition on skills provided by the English dictionary: "talented and competent people are to be given better jobs". In this respect, a qualified football player or skillful negotiator will be considered as highly competent from the perspective of the process through which they have been employed (The Handbook of Communication Skills, 1997: 7-27).

If we look at the meaning of the concept of communicative competence provided by the socio-linguists, we will find out that it includes:

- Language knowledge – verbal and nonverbal codes and their possible variants;
- The skills for social-communicative interaction – socio-linguistic rules for socially acceptable verbal activity, organization of discourse, strategies for successful realization of communicative goals, etc;
- Socio-cultural knowledge – knowledge of social structure, values, beliefs, etc. (Pachev, 1993: 157).

It is difficult to think of the success of any entrepreneur, manager or businessman, without considering their clearly shown communicative skills. The art to get to terms with the others – to behave in such a way so that the others will let you in and have trust in you; will accept and approve of you; will be persuaded in your opinions and statements, ideas and suggestions – all this is part of the communicative gift of the business people.

A survey on the life and qualities of the most successful American millionaires shows that one of the five main factors for their financial success is claimed by them to be their ability to communicate. The other four are honesty, which involves honest and sincere attitude towards everybody, discipline understood as

self-control; husband/wife supporting them; hard work – harder than the work of the others (Stanley, 2000: 17). The skill to communicate, or furthermore, to get along with other people is a factor for success, which 56 % of the polled millionaires believe to be of great importance. They put it in the third place, right after honesty to other people and discipline, and before many others, also important factors to prosperity, such as love for the profession or business, competitive spirit, organizational skills, ability to sell ideas and products, discovery of opportunities missed by others, the chance to have good managers, striving after respect, investments in own business, finding of appropriates niches, etc. (See table No 6).

4. MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AND STAFF MOTIVATION

Some of the most frequent reproaches to weak managers concern their inability to motivate sufficiently their staff. The relationship between management authority and staff motivation is further complicated by the fact that it is not simple behaviorist communication based on the method stimulus-reaction, and is much more delicate and multilayered. What is meant by staff motivation? What is its role for the quality performance of their work duties? What should every manager know in order to be able to well motivate their staff and not to allow lack of motivation?

> The role of the motive is in that it turns one or another physical behaviour into psychological behaviour. This is possible because it includes the behavior in the system of basic needs of the personality and provokes in the subject an approach for its implementation. What happens is that a certain approach becomes a basis for willful behaviour (quotation from: Psychology personalities, 1982: 81).

In academic literature, motivation is usually characterized as a process resulting in active behaviour, so that it can be pointed towards a set aim. For example, how can a manager motivate his or her employees so that they can achieve a certain organizational goal?

Firstly, she/he should clarify for herself/himself the goal or goals set for achievement. Secondly, it is very important that she/he should be clear enough about the goals and intentions of their staff. Thirdly, she/he should use successful business communication in order to be able to integrate the goals of the organization with the individual goals of the employees and to activate them for a conscientious, effective and high quality activity in a planned definite direction.

The act of organizational communication is accompanied by the so-called "negotiation of communicators" – or to put in another way: the carrying-out of a special process, in which communicators discuss their intentions and thus achieve their common goals (see The Handbook of Communication Skills, 1997: 29-59).

The Bulgarian theoretician of psychology of management, Ivan Ivanov, describes two groups of factors for building motivational working behaviour. Considering motivation as a personal characteristic, which influences significantly the behaviour and activeness of people, he summarizes the methods for motivating employees in the following way.

According to him, the first group of factors for forming or changing the motivation behaviour are based on the psychological meaning that the carried out work contents has to the employees. The second group of factors has to do with the psychological meaning to people of the goals set before them or their organization. Ivan Ivanov mentions:

> The greatest extent of motivation behaviour can be achieved by setting difficult, but realistic goals and through participation of the agents in defining the goals and through establishing a constant feedback in the form of exchange of information on the results realized by the individuals in the working activity (Ivanov, 2004: 198).

Another Bulgarian scholar – the researcher of mass media innovations, Petko Todorov, considers motivation as a main mechanism and process in the relations manager-staff. By considering it in the context of the relationship interpersonal relations-motivation-moral, he says:

> The real manager should be always thinking how to motivate the employees when they are required to achieve the goals of the organization. The efficient manager should know the individual needs of his/her workers and should be able to persuade them that the latter can be fulfilled in the frames of the organization. However, this is not everything; the manager should be observing and sensitive to the moral of his/her employees (Todorov, 2003: 72).

Effective, two-way organizational communication is needed for all this to be achieved. Without it, it is simply not possible for the manager to find out about the personal needs and approaches of their employees and respectively to manage to successfully motivate them, i.e., to behave in such a way that people

will willingly and consciously strive after bigger and bigger results in their work, better quality and establishment and fostering of a better image of the organization in which they work. Business motivation is usually achieved by convincing presentation of arguments and evidence on the sense of one or another initiative in the context of individual preferences, expectations and aspirations.

Selection and organization of human resources is directly connected with the relation between power and motivation in any business structure. It is appropriate to refer here to the guru of the world management, Peter Drucker, who believes that people and staff organization are the basis for the vitality of any company. He stresses that the right selection and training of employees is of biggest importance to their work motivation. All this is inextricably linked to the staff policy of the companies, which need to think not only about the qualification of the employees but also about the training of the managers.

A very important moment in the approach to the selection of the human resources is also the right choice of the key staff. Along with this, any serious manager of a given organization should take into consideration the fact that his employees who have good motivation for success are striving after perfection not because of money, power and prestige, but for perfection itself. Their success really gives them a sense of self-satisfaction and realization. They not only like their job, but also are ready to work in a team and to get along with their colleagues while respecting their competence. People with good work motivation have forward thinking and creative imagination. They can plan ahead their activities and do everything to achieve their goals no matter whether the conditions are easy or difficult. This type of people likes responsibility. Well-motivated staff take the initiative and like to take risks, try new and new opportunities, activities and experiments (see Parkinson, 1993: 100-125).

The staff of a given organization can be, in many ways, demotivated by incorrect communication of the management. One of them is inadequate and unfair attitude. It can take the form of haughty or unserious communication between managers and employees, resulting in lower trust, and thus less effective teams as a whole, or individual members of the organization.

We can talk of demotivation also when the management do not formulate clearly their goals and tasks for their teams and cannot stimulate their staff to work together and with enthusiasm towards the achieving of the latter.

Moreover, we are not talking here only of financial, material stimuli. It has been proven that the members of a group made by a corporate principle can be often better motivated with spiritual stimuli, faith and certainty of the management in

the purpose of the initiative, rather than with promises for good remuneration and bonuses.

The best way to achieve adequate motivation is by combination of stimuli – both spiritual and material, with the triggering of an efficient communication mechanism, which will guarantee the quick, accurate, clear and convincing transmission and acceptance of business information. Inappropriate or incorrect condescending criticism by the management of their employees can have a negative effect on the staff behaviour (respectively lower work motivation).

Finding the best tone, time and place for making a negative remark can be clearly seen in the well differentiated two most common forms of management discontent with the bad performance of the staff. Dennis Murphy shows in his book "Better Business Communication" (Murphy, 1957: 96) that the difference between reprimand and reproof can be seen in the following:

Reprimand	Reproof
Done in public and the tone is angry	Done in private and the tone is calm
Rarely deserved and cannot be supported by facts	Deserved and can be supported by facts
Combines sarcasm, threats and curses	Done directly and straight to the point
Aims to humiliate and demonstrate authority	Aims to help the employee in fault correct his/her mistake
Is harmful to diligence, trust and good atmosphere	Encourages initiative and diligence
Employees feel defeated and despondent	Employees are stimulated to seek perfection

If we look at this comparison, we will eventually make the conclusion, that most of the employees would not mind being reproved for the mistakes they make (smart people know that nobody is perfect and there are no perfect people and that it is objective and constructive criticism which will help people develop themselves and show the best in themselves), but they are also aware that what is important is the way they are reproved – that is, what is important is the good intention and ethical tone and contents, place, moment, etc…

Common occurrence in the business practice is an employee leaving the organization, which is not only unexpected, but also unwelcome by the top manager. What could be the reason for that? What is that disappoints people and makes them leave? And how can we motivate and keep the staff longer in our company? It is logical to assume that the most common reason for employees' leaving is dissatisfaction – with the employer's attitude, working conditions, lack of opportunities for development, low salaries, etc. According to the experts in management of human resources the most common reasons for employees' quitting their jobs are:

- Lack of recognition
- The fact that they did not feel appreciated
- That fact that they have not been told what to expect from the job
- The fact that they have not received adequate remuneration
- The fact that the employers have not kept their promises
- Various personality conflicts

In order for the staff to be retained longer and better motivated, the experts are suggesting the following:

- Recognize your employees and mean it
- Do as you say
- Organize for your employees trainings, vocational seminars
- Provide competitive payment
- Provide a good working environment
- Help your employees develop their skills (see Beers, 2001).

One of the most important motives for people's professional realization is to give them opportunities for receiving satisfaction from their jobs. If these are creative opportunities, then the chance for motivation becomes greater. It is interesting that the richest person in the world and computer genius, Bill Gates, points out entertainment and games as his major professional motive. He is a real embodiment of human and professional happiness because he makes money out of what gives him greatest pleasure and joy:

> He is not working, he is not taking over markets, he is just having fun and days are too short for such a person who is always on the go. The minute you lose sight of him, he is far, far away…It is true that Bill is having fun, while changing the world. As he says himself: "What is the point of creating a company and working towards its success, if not enjoying yourself? (Ichbiah, 1999: 20).

From the point of view of personal satisfaction, probably creative people are the happiest – writers, artists, musicians, actors, etc. There is really no analog for the pleasure they get from creative spiritual work. Yet, the pleasure or thrill of achieving big management and business goals is also significant. Professional satisfaction is even bigger when these targets are related with social interest and are subject to the welfare of a great number of people.

5. BARRIERS TO BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Specialized literature points out and classifies the cases of hurdles and barriers to business communication. Parvenu language or the desire to use convoluted and complex words (whose meaning is usually not known or not rightly understood) is a boring obstacle to business communication. Other negative moments, which could hinder transmission and acceptance of organizational information, are the differences in perception, hasty conclusions, stereotypes, lack of knowledge, interest, difficulties with self-expression, feelings and individuality (see Stoykov, 1995: 119; Stanton, 1990).

Not everything, however, has been described and analyzed in academic literature, because, as a rule, theory is always lagging behind real life and the latter is offering new and new surprises, which unfortunately, are not always pleasant ones. That is why we will be looking here at some of the most frequent mistakes and shortcomings of business communication and also a very dangerous, shall we say, even harmful, manner of communication with subordinates, contractors and partners, that is – evasion of communication.

5. 1. Most common mistakes

Business communication is often spoilt and hindered either by wrongly coded information by the communicator (manager, controller, investor, etc.), or a wrongly chosen channel of information, or any omissions in the perception of the information flow by the recipient (staff, subordinates, clients, etc.). It has been proven that business communication is hindered when the receiver has not understood the meaning and importance of the message:

- Sender breakdown – too much information has been sent and the receiver has not got the key moments. Moreover, the language in which the message has been sent was of a too high stylistic level.

- Method breakdown – when information is too detailed and complicated, written directions are the better option.

- Recipient breakdown – when the recipient is trying deliberately to interpret the message in the wrong way.

Other communication problems could be:

- Chain of command
- Language – complex and difficult to understand
- Vague goals – not detailed enough, more explanation is needed
- Inappropriate medium (written, electronic medium).
- Message passing on too many people before it finally reaches the recipient. This makes the process too long and results in changes in the message. Also, actions can be delayed as a result of the late delivery of the message
- Location – distance of recipient or where the message needs to get to.
- Distraction – when there is a break-up in communication channels, etc (see Barriers to Communication and Causes of Communication Failure in Businesses, 2001).

5. 2. Avoidance of communication

If you happen to ask any businessperson whether somebody in business tried to hide from them, you will see what will happen. You will hear loads of stories about insincerity in business communication, shameful and improper scenes of communication evasion and avoidance of direct contact or phone calls. And these are all stories accompanied with justified disappointment, insult and even anger of all those affected business people and entrepreneurs, and all those who have been refused communication.

What does this avoidance involve?

Above all, it involves hiding or delaying of an answer on the requested information, or a decision concerning an extended offer for one or another opportunity for partnership. In this cases what we have is a constant, to use the colloquial phrase "messing around", "passing on the ball" from one employee to another, banal or meaningless explanations from the personal assistant or the office manager, such as "They are not in yet" or "They have just left", "They are on the phone", "They are in a meeting", "They are busy and can't talk right now", as well as treacherous formulas for avoiding communication such as: "Please leave us your phone number and we will call you at the earliest opportunity." The latter is widely accepted as the most frequent formula of an indirect rejection or a roundabout way of giving bad news.

All these, as well as many other organizational tricks for avoiding communication have been created in the working process and seem to help managers and employees to get rid of intruders, annoying agents, sacked employees or unwanted partners.

Profitable Communication?

Do they really profit from such acts? What do businessmen win and lose when they refuse communication and avoid interaction? In order to be able to give a more reliable answer to all these questions, we should look into the two major reasons for such behaviour: corporate and personal.

Corporate Reasons for Rejection of Communication

We are inclined to interpret the cases of avoidance of business communication (hiding and avoidance of meetings and phone conversations, excuses made and given by the personal assistants such as: sick leave, business trip in the country or abroad, meeting with the big boss, conversation with clients, board meetings, etc.) as a general trademark of the communication style in the given organization.

"Tricks" used by the big boss are quickly learned and used by the employees. In this way everything, which was an exception in the company becomes a rule. Our observations show that such negative business attitude is more common in the organizations dominated by conservative and authoritarian personalities, rather than in liberal organizations, where communications (internal and external) are verbal, two-way and mostly relieved.

Among the major corporate reasons for avoidance of organizational communication the leading role is played by the inability of management and staff to deliver bad news in an adequate way (clearly and with consideration), along with taking on and accepting own responsibility, and respectively, the guilt for a failed deal or unfulfilled project. With the delay of communication comes the hope for a better result in probable future joint initiatives.

Personal Reasons for Rejection of Communication

We should not always blame the organization and its set communicative style. Avoidance of communication with partners and contractors can also be the result of human, individual needs. Many of the people are indecisive and hesitant and need time to get oriented in the proposal, situation or problem. Unfortunately, they think that when they refuse or reschedule a meeting or the

conversation by tricks, which are known to everyone, they will gain time in order to take the wisest decision.

Often personal reasons for denial of communication are fear or uneasy feeling arising from delivery of bad business news, declining of offers or admitting an organizational error concerning, for example, an incorrect price, delayed delivery, low-quality service or delayed payment. A good excuse for rejection of business communication is for example ill health or weariness from hard work. Everybody has experienced the moment when they have reached the limit of their working capacity and can no longer take on new tasks, suggestions and organizational ideas in a given day or week. In such cases it is better if we explain the situation to our partner and ask for extension (which we will need to keep) of the deadline for reply and announcing the final decision.

If some of the described individual reasons for avoiding business communication are excusable and explainable, there are others, which need to be severely criticized and reproached. Usually such cases of communication evasion are due to bad manners and personal culture or let's say it straight – due to vulgarity and insolence.

In some of the cases of evasion of organizational communication, there is a strictly personal reason, which is usually related to narcissism, haughtiness, arrogance or "too high opinion of oneself". The mania for their own grandness and infallibility makes the poor businessmen and managers think that somebody should be always grateful to them and that they have the right to communicate when they wish to and "are up to it".

These misguided managers can be given a good example by one of the most prominent businessmen of our times, Donald Trump, who gives an example of normal and natural behaviour towards unknown and not so prominent contractors with the following story he tells:

> Sometimes, when I have time, I myself reply to the media requests. Once I phoned a guy called Phil Grande in Florida. He was representing a small local radio doing a broadcast on the Stock Exchange and money, and had requested a fax interview with me. I picked up the phone and called him. When he asked who was calling I naturally replied:
>
> "It is Donald Trump".
> His answer to that was: "Yeah right! And I am the King of Saudi Arabia."

It was not easy to convince him who I was but I managed in the end and we had a chat. After that he called my assistants to make sure I was not fooling him and since then every single Christmas he has been sending me flowers. People like Phil make our job great fun" (Trump, McIver, 2005: 198).

What is the consequence of the above described corporate and personal reasons for evasion of business communication? There are several negative results:

- Missed business chances because of underestimation and lack of reaction to an offer, idea or specific project;
- Loss of valuable time for exchange of information and finding a mutually beneficial decision;
- Triggering of negative emotional states of the partner who has been declined communication: nervousness, disappointment, worry, anger, peevishness, irascibility;
- Misleading of the partners and their positive approach to fulfilling business communication, necessary to both sides;
- Elimination of the possibility for future collaboration, partnership, cooperation or joint prosperity in joint business efforts;
- Undermining of the image of the organizational subject who evaded the communication (the affected and disappointed partner quickly and willingly spreads the news among his colleagues and acquaintances of this negative occurrence, which contributes to spoiling the image of the "uncommunicating communicator").

It is not easy to find a panacea for the organizational mistakes in communication. However, communicators can be really successful in dealing with drawbacks in business communication if they "like their mistakes", or to put it differently, "achieve success by accelerating their mistakes" (see Gelb, 2005: 70-92).

Positive thinking, correct motivation of staff and serious preliminary and preparatory work, involving designing strategies and planning business communications are among the good instruments for avoiding or minimizing the management mistakes. In this respect, it is particularly useful for the managers to fight their own personal flaws – avarice and selfishness, haughtiness and coldness in communication, presumption and sense of infallibility.

Business communication as an important form of general communication has not been yet studied and researched that thoroughly. But the findings of the academic thought are enough to convince us in its great sense and importance in

the working process. In order for people to be able to work successfully and efficiently, they need to understand each other while speaking and listening, writing and reading.

For managers to be able to manage well their staff, they need to be aware of some of the leading functions of business communication such as: informative, regulative, persuasive and integrative functions. Good and effective business communication is dependant on its successful functioning in relation to outside partners, clients and various contractors, as well as its running within the organization itself – in ascending, descending and diagonal order.

Very important is also the need for business people to sense the emotional states of colleagues, managers or subordinates and to find the right approach and adequate model for successful behaviour towards them. And this will not be possible without the serious and in-depth knowledge of the people around us and a right sense of their reactions and behaviour.

Modern and meaningful business communication is also unthinkable without the skill of leaders and managers to well motivate their staff, which in its turn will mean achieving integration between organizational goals and individual, personal goals of the employees.

All errors and flaws of business communication are mostly committed because of the inability to encode and decode messages, choose adequate channels for their sending and receiving, as well as the wicked and negative practice of rejection or evasion of business communication.

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