

## ACTIVATING COMMUNICATION AS A WAY TO IMPROVE INTERACTION OF MANAGER WITH STAFF

*The essence of the notion and process of communication has been disclosed and its most optimal types have been shown. The crucial role of horizontal communication in effective management aimed at close cooperation of manager with staff has been substantiated. On the basis of the results of a representative sociological survey among managers of the Western region of Ukraine conclusion has been made that almost 53% of them prefer language (verbal) communication.*

*The results of survey have been checked with application of statistical methods: factor as well as correlation and regression analyses. The constructed statistical model has shown the most effective influence of the following ways of communication on the effectiveness of manager's interaction with staff: business language (written) communication, oral communication, telephone talks.*

*There has been determined the most widespread way of business communication – face-to-face talk. There have been schematically depicted situations in which interlocutors cannot reach any understanding; there have been outlined possible reasons and barriers on the way to appearance of such situations. On the other hand, there have been suggested ways of achieving complete understanding between the communicants. As a supplement, there has been provided a standard communication model elaborated on the basis of the results of work of the author of information theory and coding theory C. Shannon. Attention has been paid to the peculiarities and advantages of unilateral and bilateral communication and there has been stressed crucial importance of conciseness and accuracy of information sending and obtaining.*

*Finally, conclusions have been made that communicative process at the company must be based on unified rules, and employees must be completely informed about the development strategy, problems and changes in the organization and obtaining of backward messages from them by the manager.*

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## **Introduction**

Global changes in the economy of Ukraine, permanent threat of crisis phenomena require from managers of companies to quickly react to external conditions. They can secure survival of the organization in such complicated conditions only by way of activating internal potential, maximum use of available human resources. Integration of labour staff for the sake of resisting external challenges, coordination of its activities aimed at achieving maximum results at minimum costs are possible only on condition that the manager of the company and his/her staff possess the necessary and timely information. Efficient information exchange is ensured by way of a rationally organized communication process.

The manager of the company is in charge of effective communication organization at all its levels. To ensure it he must know about all the events and problems in its activities, study the interests and needs of staff as well as ensure their unity with the company's objectives, shape its corporate culture. This can be achieved by way of permanent communication with employees, establishing active and open communication.

## **Main text**

Theoretical and practical problems of communication related to managerial activities started attracting attention of scholars quite recently. The role of communicative process in ensuring effective management is discussed in papers by such scholars as D. Goleman (Goleman, 2011), E. Dubrin (Dubrin, 2005), H. Krichevskyy (Krichevskyy, 2007), A. Leontjev (Leontjev, 1997), A. Menegetti (Menegetti, 2008). Russian scholars, G. Ogariov [9] study psychological peculiarities of business communication. Some aspects of verbal communication prevailing in manager's activity are considered by the national scholar M. Babynets (Babynets, 2009).

In spite of availability of some publications by Ukrainian scholars dedicated to the role of some ways of communication, it is necessary to point out that their prevailing part considers the issue of communication in the context of public administration and information policy. At the same time its importance in company management requires greater attention.

Therefore, the aim of the research is to trace the importance of communication in ensuring activity of company's managers and to substantiate most effective ways of their communication with staff aimed at achieving close interaction.

The essence of the notion of "communication" in scholarly literature is interpreted as the information exchange process, sharing its content between two individuals, between an individual and a group or inside a group. It requires accuracy of transfer of own views and feelings, and, at the same time, simultaneous acceptance and integration of messages sent by the other party. Therefore communication in the exhaustive sense of the word shall be understood as the situation in which there is one person (sender, transmitter) transforming his/her idea or image into a text using some means, and, on the other hand, an individual (addressee) transforming the text into the idea coinciding with the author's one.

Communication is of importance in different spheres of social activity since it enables to communicate openly about important problems, in the atmosphere of understanding and respect, in spite of the difference in points of view and stands. One may say that what the addressee realizes and not what the sender means constitutes the result of communication.

The role of lines of communication in successful business is perfectly confirmed by the results of surveys held among heads of large companies and firms in different countries. 73% American, 63% English and 85% Japanese top-level managers consider the improper level of communication to be the most serious problem on the way towards effective management (Dubrin, 2005). Information exchange that is the basis of communication is of critical impact on successful activities of any organization. Realizing the importance of information exchange at the level of individuals and organization, managers must secure conditions for effective communication at different levels. Since if there is no information, employees do not know anything about the content of their colleagues' work, mid-level managers do not get input data and heads of units and team leaders are not capable of giving real orders. Thus, it becomes impossible to coordinate joint effort of the organization and staff cooperation since people do not send messages about their needs, responses, actions. One may conclude here that each communication act influences organizations to a certain extent, and communicative process on the whole ensures effective administration of basic management functions – planning, management organization and control.

Communication takes place vertically and horizontally, verbally and non-verbally, however electronic means of information tend to play a more and more serious role in its acceleration. Vertical communication takes place following the principle "from top to bottom", when information (instructions) come from higher bodies to lower units. Mainly these are manager's instructions relating to improvement of performance, improvement of industrial process, changes in tactical tasks, etc. At the same time transfer of information "from bottom to top", from first-line management to top-level management also takes place in the form of messages about the course of performance of the tasks set, procedural adjustments, work problems that arise, etc.

Horizontal communication is more open and more effective. It links team units of the organization and enables to coordinate interaction of its different units and departments. As a rule, that is communication between company's manager and members of his team, at the level of heads of units and their staff, inside task forces. That way of communication contributes to strengthening of the organizational structure of the company, improvement of interaction between units and coordination of their activity, improvement of the level of understanding of the content and nature of the work of colleagues by employees as well as elimination of barriers in their relations. There considerably increases the organization's performance rate and satisfaction of staff with conditions of work, the employees get the feeling of involvement in the company's activities. That is, horizontal communication, due to its open nature, has got many advantages over vertical one which is quite limited.

In the manager's practical work there dominate two types of communication – formal and informal ones. The first type is determined by the organizational structure and takes place via all available information channels and at the vertical, horizontal and, more rarely, diagonal (interpersonal communication of staff of different hierarchy levels) levels. Communicating at the vertical level, manager-leader performs the function of staff

integration, ensures its interaction at different levels and coordination of joint effort in compliance with the strategic goal of the organization. However, previously, launching the process of communication, he brings to the notice of staff the company's development strategy, sets specific tasks for heads of each unit and their staff, explains in detail the procedures and methods of fulfillment of the tasks set, determines the rate of responsibility of managers, intervals of reporting about the course of fulfillment and the results. Along with that, communication "from top to bottom" shall not be transformed into authoritarian management in the course of which subordinates will get tasks they are not capable of performing, there will be allowed distortion of information or its arbitrary interpretation.

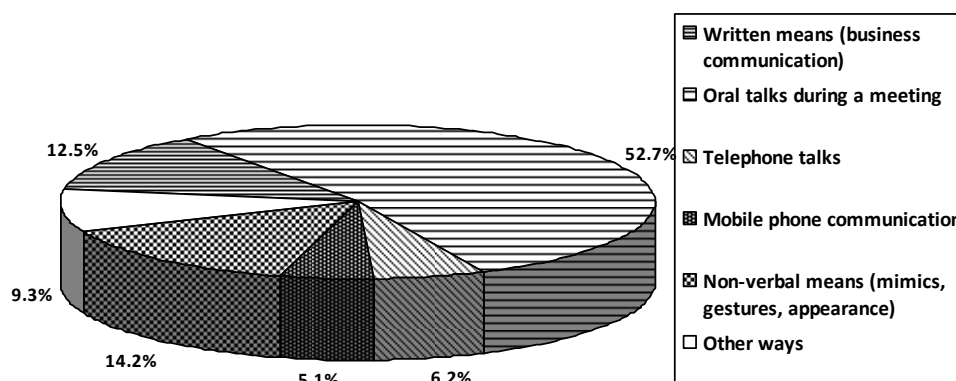
In its turn, information communication is not set by norms and is not envisaged in organizational rules, however, it is often supported by the traditions of corporate culture, but is not initiated vertically. Normally, that is exchange of ideas at corporate parties, during lunches and most frequently – the system of spreading rumours, forming legends, myths, informal data. Via informal channels a certain share of information constituting a serious supplement to formal one is spread, however, it shall not replace formal communication channels. Informal communication is spread in different directions: up, down, horizontally and diagonally, and, as a rule, demand for it is not lasting. It quickly appears quickly and disappears, and its bearers, objects and direction are constantly changing. Nevertheless, informal communication has got some positive consequences: supplementation of official information, speed of its transmission, obvious purposefulness and predictability, recent news handling.

There also exists division of communication by classes into internal and external one, however, the former is the object of research, therefore let us focus on its details, peculiarities and ways of optimization. Internal communication takes place within a specific company and is in this or that way connected to managerial activity. In all the firms and companies verbal (oral, written, via computer networks) and non-verbal (via mimic, gestures, facial expression and milieu) ways of communication are used. Management theoreticians apply different approaches to assessing the effectiveness of verbal or non-verbal ways of communication (Babynets, 2009; Dubrin, 2005; Shannon, 1963). Since there is no common and final estimation and it is complicated to determine that empirically, it would be expedient to mention the results of surveys among company managers, in which assessment of the priority ranking of a specific way will be provided.

The research held by us in 2008-2010 on the basis of a number of companies and organizations of the Western region of Ukraine has shown that their managers treat priority ranking of this or that way of communication differently, but generally they prefer oral talk during a business meeting. Assessment of actual application of ways of communication by respondents has given the following result: more than a half of heads and managers use language way of communication (52.7%), while Internet network is acknowledged by only 5.1% (fig. 1).

Analysis of the results of sociological survey is made using statistical methods, in particular, factor as well as correlation and regression analyses that correspond to STATISTICA system modules. The task of the analysis was to construct a statistical model and on the basis of its results determine the degree of influence of factors [1,2,3,4,5,6] on the effectiveness of manager's interaction with staff.

Figure 1  
Use of ways of business communication by heads of companies and organizations | (in % to the number of managers surveyed) [copyright]



Analytical dependence of the level of communications effectiveness ( $E_fK$ ) on the application of different ways (there have been pointed out six of them in the course of the sociological survey – written means or business language communications (DMK), oral communication ( $US_p$ ), telephone talks (TR), mobile phone communication ( $T_{mob}R$ ), non-verbal means of communication (NZS), other methods ( $I_nM$ )) have been researched using a complex of correlation and regression models preceded by factor analysis, in particular, the method of principal components. Analytical dependence has been built on the basis of the data of sociological surveys held on the basis of 30 companies of the Western region of Ukraine. The aim was to find parameters of analytical dependence which is generally represented in the following way–

$$E_fK = f(DMK, US_p, TR, T_{mob}R, NZS, I_nM) \quad (1)$$

In order to reduce the size of the task factor analysis (method of principal components) has been applied, that is there has been made reduction of data and there has been determined the structure of mutual relations between the six variables, that being equal to the notion of their classification.

The results of factor analysis with predetermination of the number of factors as equal to the UJ number of variables are represented in table 1.

In the table principal components are distributed according to knock-out of eigenvalues (1<sup>st</sup> column). The third and the fifth columns contain relative and accumulative contributions of each component into the aggregate variance. To determine the most important factors there has been used the Kaiser criterion according to which it is recommended to use only those factors for which their minimum eigenvalues of principal component (minimum

eigenvalue) are no less than 1. For further analysis there were used the first basic components, aggregate contribution of which into variance exceeds 70%. In our case these are three first components, aggregate contribution of which makes up 72.1925%.

Table 1

Assessment of influence factors using the method of principal components  
(number of variables: 6, number of factors: 6, method: of principal components)

Principal components	Eigenvalues	% total variance	Cumulative values	
			eigenvalues	% total variance
1	2	3	4	5
1	2.069229	34.48715	2.069229	34.4871
2	1.202088	20.03480	3.271317	54.5219
3	1.060236	17.67060	4.331553	72.1925
4	0.883883	14.73138	5.215435	86.9239
5	0.757537	12.62562	5.972973	99.5495
6	0.027027	0.45045	6.000000	100.0000

The next step in the analysis is calculation of factor loadings (table 2). It results in a matrix, the elements of which characterize the tightness of connection between the variables and principal components.

Table 2

Factor loadings matrix

Variables	Factors					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
DMK	-0.353667	-0.373323	-0.781150	-0.042345	-0.348190	-0.048216
US <sub>p</sub>	0.851768	0.226477	0.206627	-0.328705	0.250378	-0.098838
TR	-0.370028	0.421712	-0.149378	0.809720	0.083073	-0.019418
T <sub>mob</sub> R	-0.382014	-0.343431	0.609164	0.207123	-0.567387	-0.014573
NZS	0.987780	-0.827855	0.094800	0.268239	0.472069	-0.033329
I <sub>η</sub> M	0.096230	0.174059	0.070458	0.059535	-0.148102	-0.115036

Values of factor loadings above 0.7 in absolute value points to a considerable dependence between the variable and the principal component.

To complete factor analysis we calculate the factor score coefficients, of which coefficients of transfer from the system of reference coordinates to the coordinate system of factors are elements (table 3).

Calculating the values of principal components via the values of coordinate system of factors (table 3), we get the input data on the basis of which parameters of multiple regression have been received.

Thus, our multiple regression equation via the system of principal components ( $Z_1, Z_2, Z_3$ ) looks as follows:

$$Y=0.416 \cdot Z_1 + 0.106 \cdot Z_2 + 0.052 \cdot Z_3 + 65.125.$$

Table 3

Factor score coefficients

Variables	Factors ( $Z_i$ )					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
DMK	-0,170917	-0,310562	-0,736770	-0,047908	-0,459634	-1,78397
US <sub>p</sub>	0,411635	0,188403	0,194888	-0,371887	0,330516	-3,65698
TR	-0,178824	0,350816	-0,140891	0,916094	0,109662	-0,71846
T <sub>mob</sub> R	-0,184616	-0,285696	0,574555	0,234334	-0,748988	-0,53918
NZS	0,047737	-0,688681	0,089414	0,303478	0,623163	-1,23316
I <sub>n</sub> M	0,465054	0,144797	0,066455	0,067357	-0,195505	-4,25629

And determination coefficient has the following value:  $R\text{-square}=0.74096286$ . That points to the share of general variance accounted for by the constructed regression. The closer that figure is to 1, the more accurate the model is.

F (value of F-criterion) equal to 18.56 and level of significance (p-level) = 0.00451 enables to deny the hypothesis claiming that there is no linear dependence between the dependent variable and independent variables. Standardized coefficients of all independent variables are statistically significant ( $p_1=0.00000$ ,  $p_2=0.00014$ ,  $p_3=0.00023$ ) p-level – level of their significance close to zero points to the linear connection between the dependent variable and independent variables. Analysis of model adequacy was made via the analysis of residuals. The main tools of that analysis point to the adequacy of the constructed model. Correspondingly, using statistical methods of analysis of the results of sociological survey we obtained a confirmation of the critical importance of the first five factors in improving effectiveness of manager's interaction with staff.

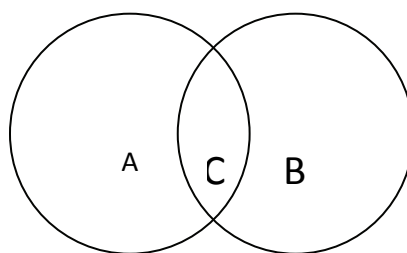
In our opinion, current state of development of home economy, mental peculiarities of Ukrainians, level of organization of managerial activity as well as the results of survey confirm that language means play the most important role in communication. That becomes even more evident taking into account the fact that regardless of the way of communication its main function is to coordinate ideas, stands of communicants. The most serious advantage of oral communication lies in its external representation by language means. The individual conveying information by language means presents internal individual mental process. And he tries not to allow subjective opinions and distortion of information, strives for mutual adjustment of individual ideas, thoughts and ways of thinking that may differ. Collective thinking of communicants (at least two of them) in case there is mutual wish to achieve the result is much more likely to lead to discussion development, search of alternative approaches, develops mental skills of communicants, becomes a mechanism for the construction of objective information about the condition of the object of discussion. Group thinking formed by way of collective problem discussion gives effective results due to clear organization of communicative process. Therefore, the role of manager in organizing the process of oral communication is of greatest importance. Since unprepared, chaotic, unguided discussion does not give desirable results and can often be worse than

individual product in terms of quality. It is common knowledge that maximum synergetic effect of group action, in particular, mental one, is achieved only when all its participants obey common rules of interaction, common goal. Along with that, communicative process is much more successful when it is based on corporate spirit of the organization, in accordance with which readiness of the participants of discussion (meeting) to reach a compromise, ability to give up their interests for the sake of joint aim achievement is considered to be a norm. Thus, compliance of communicants with the agreed norms of interaction, objective requirements and joint aim ensures a considerable result in assessment of the mental product of collective thinking as well as demonstrates high level of communicative process organization.

The most widespread form of communication of the company's manager is a face-to-face talk with a subordinate. However, communication becomes efficient when the addressee understands the information the way the sender interprets it (its content). In business communication the sender's information must in detail convey what he wants to say, and the addressee's understanding fully coincides with that. In case the sender conveys the information in an understandable way, and the addressee is correspondingly set to get it, he will perceive it adequately. Such understanding may be represented as the overlapping of two circles (fig.2).

Figure 2

Understanding of information between two communicants [copyright]



- circle A – way and content of problem understanding characteristic of interlocutor A;
- circle B – way and content of problem understanding characteristic of interlocutor B;
- circle C – plain of commonness in the ways of problem understanding.

The variant of interpersonal communication drawn in the figure is ideal, however, there may happen situations when communication fails due to complete opposition of the participants' stands, absence of commonness in their ways of understanding. Graphically that can be represented in the following way (fig. 3).

The situation of mutual misunderstanding, non-perception of information frequently results from other reasons, when communication is made by phone, via computer networks, etc. In such situation emotional perception (influence) between the interlocutors is restricted due to impossibility of including gestures, mimic into the process. Besides that, of importance is processing of signals, that is the procedures of encoding and decoding messages (information). The founder of information and coding theory C. Shannon [C. Shannon



(1963)] has elaborated the standard model of communication (talk) that helps to better realize the essence of the process and identify possible barriers that may arise (fig. 4).

Figure 3

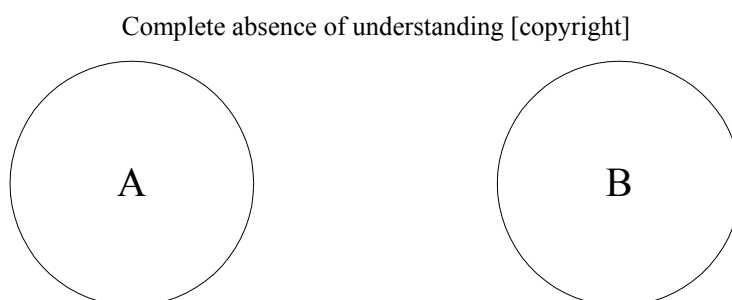
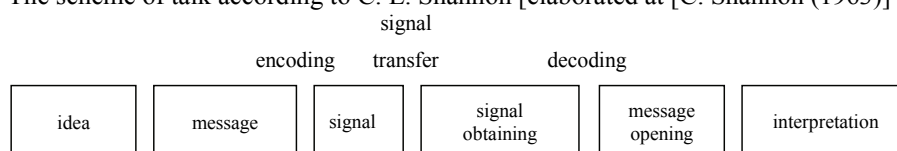


Figure 4

The scheme of talk according to C. E. Shannon [elaborated at [C. Shannon (1963)]]



In the above scheme:

- idea stands for the aim of launching the talk;
- message is what the sender is trying to say;
- encoding is translation of the message content into words;
- signals are conveyed words;
- signal obtaining is careful listening to the talk (message) of the other individual;
- message opening – signals heard enable to disclose the content of the message sent;
- interpretation stands for the attempt to realize the intention (desires) of the individual with whom we talk.

As it is known, the main function of communication lies in reducing the degree of uncertainty of the situation for the entity getting the information. C. Shannon's scheme most obviously points to appearance of difficulties in achieving problem understanding by the interlocutors at the stages of information shaping and transmission, its decoding and interpretation. In other words, in the course of communication the way of information provision is primarily crucial. In practice most widespread are four ways of verbal information transmission:

- provision of facts, objective descriptions, outlining and voicing of intentions;
- usage of metaphors, transferred meanings, similes and samples;
- clarifications about to which deals and intentions there is proneness due to a certain fact, manifestation of positive or negative emotions in relation to it;

- assignment of labels, imposition of pieces of advice, expression of claims, exercising pressure.

Intelligibility of information and quality of communication are the best when the first way is applied, they are a bit lower with the second and the third ones, they falls drastically with the fourth one. The difference between the first and the fourth ways when communication is made by means of oral language is quite obvious. The use of the first way ensures conveyance of ideas in a literal and meaningful way, it tunes the interlocutor for openness and constructivism.

On the other hand, the fourth way of verbal communication evokes fair feeling of offences, anger with the interlocutor and causes resistance and aggression. In such situation one cannot talk about any positive result: communication will fail and contacts will stop.

The way of information transmission can be unilateral or bilateral. In the course of communication a unilateral sender conveys information without the backward communication with the addressee:

SENDER      —————>      INFORMATION      —————>      ADDRESSEE

In the course of bilateral communication there exists backward communication of the sender with the addressee:

SENDER —> INFORMATION —> ADDRESSEE —> INFORMATION —> SENDER

Each of those ways of communication has got both its positive sides, and its drawbacks. Unilateral communication is much more efficient, it can be applied in cases that are simple and accessible for a detailed conveyance of messages, it is easy to organize. The sender is more confident of himself, knowing that there will be no questions on behalf of the addressee. It can be applied in cases short tasks are set, messages are sent to a large audience. Bilateral communication is much more complicated. Backward communication enables the sender to improve and additionally work at the information. The addressee, asking specifying questions, better realizes the essence of the information, and that makes both communicants feel more confident of themselves, improves their motivation. At the same time, in case of bilateral communication, quite often there arise problems due to incorrect or absolutely different information interpretation by the addressee. It is not always that the sender presents what he means, and it happens that he does not clearly formulate his idea of the essence of the problem. Misunderstandings arising as the result of divergence between what the sender meant and what the addressee thinks of that are not often caused only by careless selection of words, grammar forms or verbal non-correspondence.

They more often result from emotional and social sources of “noises” (external influences obstructing clear understanding of information) or conclusions in signal uptake. Sometimes interlocutors are just inattentive or focus so much on their vision of the situation that they perceive only what is desirable or await the moment to express their point of view. Information addressee is meant. However, sender also often makes a number of standard

mistakes in the course of the communication process: even before the beginning of communication he gets tuned for uncompromised results only; if that is the head of the company he tries to impose his opinion by compulsion; he does not listen to counterarguments provided by his interlocutor; he prematurely stops or interrupts his interlocutor.

## **Conclusions**

Communication in the work of the company's manager plays quite an important role, and the process of establishing it takes from 60 to 80% of work time. Communication achieves its result when the manager transfers his idea (or image) into a text using language means, and another person – interlocutor of the company's manager transfers that text into the idea similar to the author's one. Though by his functional duties top-level manager shall communicate vertically, complete understanding, establishing of close cooperation with staff is achieved in the course of horizontal communication. Only by means of live speaking confirmed by mimic, gestures, facial expressions of interlocutors the aim of communication is achieved – elaboration of a collective mental product.

It is understandable that in the communicative process a greater role now comes to be played by electronic means: Internet network, mobile phones. However, traditions of entrepreneurship organization in Ukraine, the state of managerial relations testify to the highest effectiveness of verbal bilateral communication of the company's manager with staff. That ensures corporate spirit at the company, subordination of communicants to common rules of interaction. The leadership position of the manager among the staff that he must play is primarily ensured by bilateral communication, staff notification about tactical changes and receipt of backward messages from staff on the basis of that. Thus, the staff leader provides permanent support to them, cares about their needs. That creates the grounds for emotional unity, relations of creativity and cooperation.

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