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COMMUNICATION OF AN ENTERPRISE BY THE USE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Summary: Modern organisations wishing to operate efficiently in the market of goods and services should use effective communication tools. Among many available communication tools, particularly noteworthy is public relations as a way to communicate effectively with the environment. This article attempts to approximate the nature and importance of communication with the use of public relations. The initial part of the study shows the importance of communication in terms of the literature. The use of forms of communication in public relations activities is also presented. The further part of this article describes the selection of instruments in the process of communication. The final part of the paper includes a summary.

Keywords: communication, public relations, organisation, communication tools

Introduction

Public relations is a relatively young field of science, which is today under intense development, accompanying almost every organisation, and often a single person. Public relations activities in Poland were initiated by international companies entering the Polish market, accustomed to the practice of the presented issue, due to the use of similar methods by their competitors.

The client is one of the key actors belonging to the external environment of the organisation. Enterprises are more often showing initiative in an effort to gain acceptance and good reputation in the community or market sectors in which they do business. In order to establish a positive relationship with the environment, organisations use various forms of public relations, both in the external and internal character.

Public relations is the way businesses communicate with market participants. Communicating in an organisation is in both the internal and external sphere. It should be noted that the organisation of communication has become a necessity due to the increased interest in the activities of the company from the audience. At the same time, when communicating using the techniques of public relations, the organisation should take into account the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR-Corporate Social Responsibility), the strategy of taking actions and decisions of the organisation in accordance with the interests of society, in particular respecting the human rights of workers, environmental protection or the ethic rights.

The aim of this paper is to identify opportunities to communicate the company with market participants using forms of public relations and the identification and selection of instruments in the process of communication.

1. The meaning of communication in terms of literature

Activity of an organisation is based on continuous communication with both internal and external environment. The process of communication in the sphere of business or institution is carried out largely through public relations and is inextricably linked with the discussed area.¹ According to E.M. Cenker communication is the primary component of public relations, which can be regarded as a social activity in which there is an exchange of information between two or more members of the institutional system of relationships (social, interpersonal).² According to J. Baney "all interpersonal communication is based on a few basic skills, which include the ability to listen, to use of feedback, ask questions, and the use of appropriate communication style."³ In terms of promotion, communication is a "form of communicating in business with all kinds of buyers of their goods and services".⁴ B. Rozwadowska states that conceiving public relation in the context of communication is most widely accepted as its syntax, structured communication or strategic communication management. The author cites the following classification of public relations:⁵

- as a public communication system, that is, as one of the elements of the communication process,
- as an organisation communication strategy, aimed at mutual understanding,
- as a communication management, which means a planned and systematically carried out communication
- as a socially oriented business communication, manifested in actions striving to gain social acceptance, thus constituting a key role in organisation.

Obrębska also accepts the standpoint of B. Rozwadowska. She states that "the activity of public relations is the management of communication, and communication is a central aspect of public relations. Communication is the most basic tool of public relations, its material".⁶ Public relations practitioners should understand the communication process, which relies on mutual communication between the sender and the recipient of the message. This process was presented in 1948 by Shannon and Weaver, a circular loop, and then in 1953 modified by Schramm and commonly referred to as the so-called. communication loop.⁷

The basic elements of the cited model are: the sender, who is trying to convey the message and the recipient, having the task of understanding the transmitted information, its importance, and then react to it. Important for the sender is to determine to whom he wants to make a communication, and in what form. At this stage, the sender proceeds to encode the message in such a way that the recipient can decode it without effort. The author then selects the appropriate communication channel used to send the message, for example, it may be direct conversation, e-mail and telephone. When a message is sent by the sender, the receiver starts its decoding. Often the encoding and decoding processes are accompanied by

¹ P. Henslowe, *Public relations od podstaw*, Wydawnictwo Helion, Gliwice 2005, p. 15-17.

² E.M. Cenker, *Public relations*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej, Poznań 2000, p. 68.

³ J. Baney, *Komunikacja interpersonalna*, Wolters Kluwer Polska Sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2009, p. 13.

⁴ W. Smid, *Encyklopedia promocji i reklamy*, Wydawnictwo Profesjonalnej Szkoły Biznesu, Kraków 2001, p. 51.

⁵ B. Rozwadowska, *Public relations. Teoria. Praktyka. Perspektywy*, Studio EMKA, Warszawa 2011, p. 44-45.

⁶ A. Obrębska, *Istota i funkcje public relations. Projektowanie kampanii PR*, [w:] *Public relations małych firm*, red. A. Obrębska, Primum Verbum, Łódź 2010, 12.

⁷ A. Davis, *Public relations*, PWE, Warszawa 2007, p. 104.

disturbances associated with the perception of both parties. Barriers may for example result from social differences, age, occupational, receiving mixed signals or receiving excessive or insufficient information. Another factor that hinders a proper understanding of communication are so called hums that overlap interference between the sender and the recipient. This form of distortion may be in the form of noise and informational overload, which is the syntax of all remittances received by people throughout the day. Communication loop closes the feedback, which is the reaction of the recipient to a message, which is in the activity of public relations can serve as a tool for building a dialogue with the environment.⁸

2. Using of forms of communication in public relations activity

K. Wojcik distinguishes four forms of communication, each of which is used by public relations professionals.⁹ As the first the author cites a direct and personal communication, which is characterised by a lack of time and space distance between sender and receiver. This form can, for example, include: face-to-face conversation, seminars, group discussions. Another model presented by K. Wojcik is a non-personal direct communication, which is characterised by a spatial distance of both time and space between the participants. Examples are: talking on the phone or video conference. The opposite of the above mentioned forms of indirect communication, which takes place mostly between the organisation and the non-accidental receivers of information, often working in different organisational systems. Characteristic in this case is the distance of time and space between the sender and the addressee of the message. In public relations the role of the intermediary play own media of the organisation, by means of reports, brochures, letters, foreign media which means the mass media. The final form presented by the author is the double stage communication or chain of relationships, which appear in succession chronologically. Communication in this approach involves two stages. The first covers the provision of information by the sender to the indirect recipients through mass communication. Then the agents send a message to the target audience, mostly through personal communication, particularly direct. Links in this case are the opinion leaders, men of prestige, having a big influence on the views of society. These are mainly the professionals based on a constant and systematic contact with social groups. The use of this form of communication in public relations works when the organisation cannot reach the target audience directly, due to the numerous and fragmented media audience.

3. Communicating with the use of public relations

According to P. Henslowe communicating with the use of public relations applies to all sectors of the economy, it exists, inter alia, in sectors such as industry, agriculture, services, and government and public institutions. Thus, companies should maintain contact with all parts of the organisation's environment, with the public, shareholders, employees and the media through public relations. CSR refers to the policy across the entire enterprise - inter-

⁸ Ibidem, p. 104-107.

⁹ K. Wojcik, *Public relations od A do Z. Analiza sytuacji wyjściowej. Planowanie działalności*, Placet, Warszawa 2001, p. 58-62.

nal and external, becoming the basic strategy of most today's organisations.¹⁰ Communicating with public relations is also reflected in the charity. As the manifestation of the above we name informing and educating the public and the media about the profile of the organisation, its principles or ideas of its proceedings. In addition, the educational institutions entrust communication with the environment to public relations professionals.¹¹

Organisations use public relations also in the process of internal communication. K. Majchrzak emphasizes that the "well-informed and educated worker, takes conscious decisions, is satisfied with his work and motivated to operate efficiently. [...] This is because, by informing, motivating and educating the internal communication supports the implementation of the strategy of the company".¹²

M.E. Rybarczyk lists three key elements of internal communications strategy. First, the organisation should carry out an analysis of the initial situation in terms of communication by a communication audit, setting out the values and preferences of employees, level of motivation and integration of workers, informal and formal communication system, expectations of employees of the undertaking, culture and organisational structure, the factors motivating employees and others.¹³ The effectiveness of the audit is determined by using appropriate techniques, the choice of which depends, for example, on the number of employees, organisational culture, or the kind of work performed. The most popular tools for communication audit includes a survey among employees, senior management workshops and in-depth interviews. Workshops with the managers of organisation are designed to identify converging communications objectives and to determine the roles and expectations of what is expected to meet with the audit. In the case of research questionnaires, which are anonymous and voluntary, it is important to gain knowledge about the opinion and the ratio of the test audience for companies, executives and their work. In addition, research provides knowledge of how employees evaluate the course of action of information channels within the organisation. The in-depth interviews, which taking part in, as research questionnaires should be voluntary, represent qualitative complement to the previously described measurements. K. Majchrzak says that audit tests run from four to six months, and in the case of using the truncated version, up to ten weeks.¹⁴

Another element of the internal communication strategy within the organisation is setting goals, talking about what and by when the company wants to achieve, and also what factors will testify to their completion. The organisation may define targets in different ways, but it is suggested to use the SMART method (Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic, Time related) consisting in determining targets based on criteria such as: precision, measurement, commitment, feasibility and timeliness.¹⁵

The final stage of internal communication is the process of the selection of the target group. The organisation should take into account not only current employees, but both, former and potential employees. However, in this case it is essential to examine in-depth profile of existing employees, primarily determine the size of the group and its distribution by age, sex,

¹⁰ P. Henslowe, *Public relations...*, op. cit., p. 17-19.

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 19-20.

¹² K. Majchrzak, *Komunikacja wewnętrzna w PR*, [in:] *Public relations. Teoria, edukacja, praktyka*, eds. J. Mąkosza-Bogdan, Szkoła Główna Handlowa w Warszawie, Warszawa 2010, p. 42.

¹³ M.E. Rybarczyk, *Public Profits, Poznań, Komunikacja wewnętrzna w firmie*, Konferencja IIR, Warszawa 2002.

¹⁴ K. Majchrzak, *Komunikacja wewnętrzna...*, op. cit., p. 43-44.

¹⁵ Ibidem, p. 44.

level of education, place of residence and the number of years of service in the enterprise. It is also essential to know the specific place of work of the study group, the characteristics of the position occupied by it in the organisational structure and identification of its information needs. According to K. Majchrzak the environment of an employee in an organisation is characterized by considerable diversity and different specificities, thus it is important to know the internal pressure groups such as trade unions, community groups and opinion leaders.

4. Choice of instruments in the communication processes

Once an organisation has defined objectives and clarified the target groups which will lead to the intended action, it should also choose the instruments to be used for communication. There are several indicators of sharing communication tools, they are, for example, communication direction, or the used type of message transfer. According to the direction of flow of information, the vertical and horizontal communication tools are distinguished. The vertical communication is characterised by the top-down relationship, from management to employees and the bottom-up, that is, from employees to management. Used tools in this case are billboards, newspapers, corporate intranet, telephone helpline, face to face meetings or e-mails. In the case of horizontal communication, characterised with a flow of information between employees at the same level, we can distinguish a casual conversation, correspondence by e-mail, phone calls, meetings, parties, etc. K. Majchrzak emphasizes that horizontal communication can harmonize activities as well as popularise and supplement the information transferred in the organisation. It often helps in resolving problems.

Internal communication tools are classified according to the forms of communication, they are divided into: written, oral and visual. The written forms include, among others: personal communication, corporate newsletters, bulletin boards, newsletters. Oral tools include direct meetings, radio broadcasting, speeches. The audio visual instruments take the form of multimedia presentations or corporate videos.¹⁶ A characteristic instrument of public relations, by which almost every organisation communicates with the environment is negotiation. B. Barańska discusses the presented issue as "a form of persuasive communication, which might lead to the improvement, maintenance of the existing state or its deterioration."¹⁷ Negotiation is a communication process based on bilateral agreement, running in the range specified by the highest and the lowest minimum boundary of expectations on both sides. Communication via this form consists in conducting discussions, exchange of information, or a decision by the negotiating parties. In the negotiation process, as in the communication process, both parties are both broadcasters and consumers. The course of information transmission is gradual, and the applied forms of transmission of messages, verbal and nonverbal codes, make up the process of creating the image. It should be noted that an important feature of a public relations specialist is the ability to persuade and influence others, and the ability to connect a variety of positions, which gives a reflection in the negotiation process.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 44-48.

¹⁷ B. Barańska, *Negocjacje jako narzędzie public relations w kreowaniu wizerunku przedsiębiorstwa. Public relations: sztuka skutecznej komunikacji w teorii i praktyce*, AE w Katowicach, 2004, p. 192.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 193-194.

Conclusion

Today, public relations is a field of science, and its proper use in practice gives the company the opportunity to appear on the market and effectively reach target audiences. Public relations has become a liaison of the organisation with the environment, with the use of which society acquires knowledge not only through the prism of marketing promotion mix, set on the visibility of products that meet the expectations of customers, or the very compelling need to purchase, but proposes a much greater value. The area refers to the total activity of the entity, paying attention to its contribution to the economic and social life, including relationships and appropriate communication. The basis of public relations has become a focus of company operations on people. Importantly, the activities of public relations of companies do not focus only on customers but also directs its resources on the staff. Building positive relationships begins inside the organisation where the foreground are placed on the needs and aspirations of subordinates and the development of optimal contact and harmony in the team. Only the company which is "healthy" from the ground up, has a chance to succeed in the external environment. Thus, public relations activities include inter alia, appropriate information policy, ensuring both, timely and accurate completion of projects as well as motivation of employees to action.

Due to the strategic nature, science is for the business a key position in the hierarchy. Often, in situations of crisis, public relations is used as a problem-solving process.

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KOMUNIKACJA ORGANIZACJI ZA POŚREDNICTWEM PUBLIC RELATIONS

Streszczenie: Współczesne organizacje, chcąc sprawnie funkcjonować na rynku dóbr i usług, powinny wykorzystywać efektywne narzędzia komunikacji. Spośród wielu dostępnych instrumentów komunikacji na szczególną uwagę zasługuje public relations jako sposób efektywnego komunikowania się z otoczeniem. W artykule podjęto próbę przybliżenia istoty i znaczenia komunikacji z wykorzystaniem public relations. W początkowej części opracowania przedstawiono znaczenie komunikacji w ujęciu literaturowym. Wskazano także na stosowanie form komunikacji w działalności public relations. W dalszej części artykułu opisano dobór instrumentów w procesach komunikacji.

Słowa kluczowe: komunikacja, public relations, organizacja, narzędzia komunikacji

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