

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION FOR MANAGEMENT OF AN ORGANISATION

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Abstract: The article concerns the role of internal communication for efficient management of an organisation. The author divided the article into two parts. The first part – theoretical – was based on critical analysis of literature on the examined topic. It relates to the meaning of organisational communication, myths and misconceptions occurring in this area, key factors of communication, functions of internal communication and exemplary strategies for communication improvement. The second part of the article – empirical – concerns the research realised in the selected organisation, representing an international financial group. The research was carried out with the use of a questionnaire survey and implemented the following goal: analysis and assessment of internal communication, especially factors creating communication and the effectiveness of tools of its realisation. The main topics of the research concerned: general analysis of internal communication in the analysed organisation, factors creating the process of internal communication, assessment of the effectiveness of communicative tools, factors determining the effectiveness of communication and a final analysis of internal communication. The article is finalised with the summary, emphasising the most important results of the research.

Keywords: communication, management, organisation.

1. Introduction

Contemporary communication in an organisation coordinates the activities and interpretations of multiple people into an organised, recognisable form and sustains or alters this form for subsequent collective action. To study organisational communication, therefore, is to study the fundamental social processes that create and sustain the dominant structures of our society.

On the one hand, an effective internal communication process contributes to the proper functioning of a management system in any organisation. On the other, many problems occurring in the management system may result from poor communication. Efficient flow of information within the organisational structure, organisational work culture and work-related

documentation management builds internal communication. It is necessary to make a selection of appropriate communication channels and to develop a specific flow of information in the management system. Effective information systems should be stimulating to the development of areas where units of the organisation operate. Internal communication, to be efficient, needs to be realised between employees involved in the process of understanding and achieving organisational goals and strategies. Employees should be treated as equals to external customers in terms of their importance. This may result in establishing customer loyalty, which leads to stronger identification and association with the organisation. Many insufficiently informed employees do not identify themselves with an organisation, which, in practice, means they are not involved in achieving the organisational goals and strategies. Lack of information or delayed work-related messages result in worse quality of work and performance. Lack of information on important organisation events demotivates employees, as they like being a part of the organisation's life. The role of internal communication is therefore not only to pass information, but also to build a system of values, creating an ideology of changes which motivate and educate employees. Effective internal communication may become the key to an increase in employee motivation and involvement, an increase in work efficiency, the success of implemented changes and in building a positive internal and external image of the organisation (Purol, and Wosik, 2007; Armstrong, 2003).

The following article consists of two parts – theoretical and practical. In the first part of the article, the author uses the method of critical literature analysis, described the main elements analysing the examined topic of internal communication. These are: the meaning of organisational communication, myths and misconceptions occurring in this area, key factors of communication, functions of internal communication and exemplary strategies for communication improvement.

The second part of the article relates to empirical analysis of internal communication in the selected organisation, representing an international financial group. The main method used during examination was a questionnaire survey. Two goals – theoretical and empirical – concerning the research, were formulated. The theoretical goal concerned a description of the meaning and role of communication and internal communication in organisation as well as tools of its realisation. The practical goal consisted of analysis and assessment of internal communication, especially those features creating communication and the effectiveness of tools of its realisation.

The results of the research were prepared and grouped into five divisions:

1. General analysis of internal communication in the analysed organisation.
2. Factors creating the process of internal communication.
3. Assessment of the effectiveness of communicative tools.
4. Factors determining the effectiveness of communication.
5. Final analysis of internal communication.

The article was finalised with a summary emphasising most important results of the research.

2. The role of internal communication in an organisation

Regardless of the type of organisation, communication is an element that maintains and sustains the relationships within it. What one person says to another person not only can have an impact on those two people but, since organisations are systems, it can also have a meaningful impact on the total system. Communication between managers and employees and the employees themselves in the organisation is a major determinant of how satisfied people are. Organisational communication is central to an organisation's success (Richmond et al., 2005; FitzPatrick and Valskov, 2015).

Communication in organisation (internal communication) is difficult to define. For example, Pace and Faules suggest it is "the display and interpretation of messages among communication units who are part of a particular organisation. An organisation is comprised of communication units in hierarchical relations to each other and functioning in an environment". (Pace and Faules, 1994, p. 20). Another description proposed by Miller states: "most scholars would agree that an organisation involves a social collective (or a group of people) in which activities are coordinated in order to achieve both individual and collective goals. By coordinating activities, some degree of organisational structure is created to assist individuals in dealing with each other and with others in the larger organisational environment. With regard to communication, most scholars would agree that communication is a process that is transactional (i.e. it involves two or more people interacting within an environment) and symbolic (i.e. communication transactions stand for other things, at various levels of abstraction). To study organisational communication, then, involves understanding how the context of the organisation influences communication processes and how the symbolic nature of communication differentiates it from other forms of organisational behaviour" (Miller, 2015, p. 1).

Only a small amount of people in most organisations have ever engaged in a serious study of how the process of communication works. Communication is one of those things people deal with every day, so most of them assume they know a lot about it. Although that assumption is often correct, most people also know some things about communication, because they are just "common sense". Unfortunately, some things that are "common sense" are just plain wrong. The following points show the most common myths and misconceptions about communication in an organisation (Richmond et al., 2005):

1. Meanings are in words. What a particular word means to us may not be what it means to someone else. The word stimulates a meaning in our minds that is different from the meaning it stimulates in the mind of our colleague.
2. Communication is a verbal process. Nonverbal communication is important, too. In fact, when we talk to someone, our verbal communication is always accompanied by nonverbal messages.
3. Telling is communicating. People who believe that telling people something is equal to communicating with them fail to acknowledge the active role of receivers. To be effective communicators, we have to be sensitive to the other person's views and communication skills.
4. Communication will solve all our problems. Communication can either create or help overcome problems. There are a lot of ineffective communicators out there, and often they create more problems than they solve by people not knowing how to use communication.
5. Communication is a good thing. In reality, communication is neither a good nor a bad thing. Communication is a tool, and like any tool, communication can be used for good or bad purposes.
6. The more communication, the better. The quality of communication is important, not the pure quantity of it.
7. Communication can break down. Human communication does not break down; human communication can end.
8. Communication is a natural ability. Communication is a learned ability. Communication competence can be learned, and practice can help us improve.

Effectiveness of the communication process is determined by its key elements. They could be divided as follows (Hargie, 2016; Welch, 2012; White et al., 2010; Tourish, 2013; Thomas et al., 2009):

1. Communicators (attributes of the people involved). Communicators could be divided into two main categories: leaders and followers.
2. Goals (what communicators are trying to achieve). Goals come from a general description of an organisation, in which the behaviour of individuals is shaped and directed to achieve common goals.
3. Messages (verbal and nonverbal communication). In an organisation, messages are sent and received in five directions. We communicate with ourselves through self-talk and evaluation, communicate upwards to those above us in the hierarchy, downwards to those for whom we have line management responsibilities, outwards to suppliers, customers, etc., and across to colleagues in other departments. The key determinants of effective messages are that they should be timely, clear, understandable, accurate, consistent, have an appropriate load, be relevant to the recipients and credible (Zaremba, 2010) (Figure 1).

4. Channel (written, face-to-face, mediated). The terms “channel” and “medium” are often used interchangeably. It is often said about communication that the medium is the message, since the channel through which we communicate conveys information about our attitude to the interlocutor. The most popular are: face-to-face, video-conferencing, telephone, instant messaging, emails, texts, tweets and typed memos.
5. Feedback (how communications are transacted). Feedback is the means through which the sender is able to ascertain the extent to which messages have been successfully received and the impact that they have had on recipients. Convergence towards mutual understanding and shared meaning in organisations is directly related to the degree to which feedback is put to effective use.
6. Context (physical environment and culture). All communication is embedded within a context; thus, messages can only be fully understood by taking cognisance of the situation in which they occur. There are a range of contextual factors that impinge upon organisations. A key one is the globalisation effect, in that companies now look beyond their local markets.
7. Effects (the outcomes from the communication).

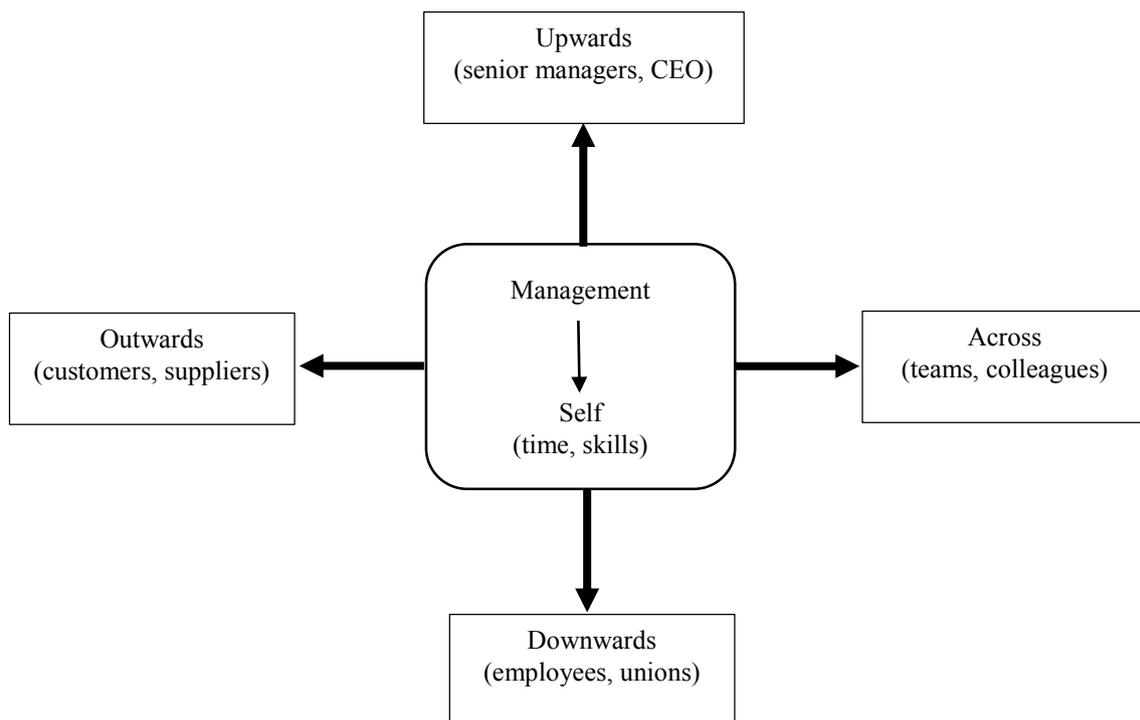


Figure 1. Directions of management communication. Note: Hargie, 2016.

Internal communication serves many functions in organisations. There are six functions that seem to dominate communication in the organisational context. These functions are: inform, regulate, integrate, manage, persuade and socialise. The informative function of communication is fairly self-explanatory. It is the function of providing needed information to personnel so they can do their jobs in an effective and efficient manner. People need to be informed about any changes of procedure or policy that are related to their work. The regulative

function of communication is involved with communication that is directed toward regulatory policies within the organisation or messages about maintenance of the organisation. The integrative function of communication is focused on coordination of tasks, work assignments, group coordination or the fusing of work units toward a common goal. The management function of communication is directed toward the three goals mentioned earlier. It is communication focused on getting personnel to do what is needed, learning information about personnel to know them better and establishing relationships with personnel. The persuasive function of communication is an outgrowth of the management function. Here, the supervisor is attempting to influence the employee to do something in particular. The last function of communication – socialisation – is the one that can determine whether an individual survives well, or not at all, in an organisation. Socialisation does not mean being “buddies” with everyone. It means being integrated into the communication networks in the organisation (Richmond et al., 2005; Clampitt, 2013).

Internal communication in an organisation could be improved in many ways. The following examples are 12 strategies for improving communication across an organisation.

1. Optimise huddles. Huddles are brief touchpoints among all members of a work group or team that occur according to a predetermined schedule, often daily.
2. Prepare middle managers as messengers. Those who work most closely with teams will naturally be the most trusted sources of information. It is essential, therefore, to equip managers with the knowledge they need and the tools and structures to communicate effectively with their team.
3. Think beyond the written word. In all your communications, the use of simple graphics, charts, photos and even videos can help to draw employees’ attention and make the information easier to digest.
4. Meet employees where they are at. If you want your messages to reach employees, you must serve them up where employees spend their time, with the use of proper channels and tools of communication.
5. Re-think your newsletters. Other than email, there is perhaps no more widely used internal communication tool in workplaces than newsletters. Most newsletters are published on a pre-determined schedule according to an established template.
6. Know your audiences. Fewer messages that reach the right audiences are far more effective than lots of messages being sent to all.
7. Establish a consistent cadence in messages. Another way to break through information clutter is to establish a consistent way that information is presented. Setting patterns for information-sharing can help to keep messages clear and direct.
8. Create a central communication hub. Do not confuse an intranet as a centralised hub of information with the intranet as the centrepiece of your internal communication strategy.

9. Think vertically and horizontally. A key component of any organisational communication strategy must be avenues for communicating and collaborating across sectors. This is essential for coordination, efficiency and avoiding redundancy.
10. Create calls to action. A call to action is the difference between providing information to increase knowledge and providing information to spur productive activity.
11. Tell employees first. Oftentimes, the most tricky communication challenges occur when there is little time to plan – a crisis, breaking news (good or bad) or time-sensitive updates. In particular, when the information to be relayed will reach both internal and external audiences, one fundamental rule to follow is to tell employees before anyone else.
12. Connect the What, When, Who and How to the Why. As we strive to meet employees where they are at and keep messages to the point, it is essential to understand that the “WHY” behind the changes being explained or the events that have occurred is not extraneous information. Connecting the dots between the what, when, who and how to the WHY is a key strategy for making information relevant and personal.

Improving communication processes depending on the management model, information flow, communication channels and technical solutions, both inside and outside the organisation, is a necessary activity for creating efficient internal communication.

3. Method and research methodology

The examined organisation represents an international financial group, acting within the markets of Central-Eastern Europe. The organisation offers consumer and business credit in the following countries: Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Bulgaria and Russia. The structure of the organisation is based on regions, controlled by the central office. The main purpose of the organisation is concentrated around the fulfilment of the needs of financial customers and creating an offer ensuring stabilisation for and development of the organisation.

Dynamic development of the organisation is possible through high quality of work, engagement of employees and advanced internal communication. Efficient and effective communication is realised with use many communicative tools that are useful during daily activities. Employees have access to a Help Desk application and can provide information about different malfunctions. Recommendations are realised by an email, which improves the rapidity and precision of the information flow. Managers organise trainings and meetings for employees, which results in important information being delegated quickly. The organisation is also socially responsible and implements the commitments of Rules of Good Practices, sponsoring many socially useful events.

The Polish subsidiary of the analysed organisation is represented by 300 employees working in different departments. The research population was 90 employees (30% of the total). The main method used during the examination was a questionnaire survey. Table 1 presents the assumptions of the research. Two goals – theoretical and empirical – were formulated and expanded upon by the research questions.

Table 1.
Assumptions of the research

Item	Description
Research goals	Theoretical: description of the meaning and role of communication and internal communication in an organisation, as well as the tools of its realisation Practical: analysis and assessment of internal communication, especially factors creating communication and the effectiveness of tools of its realisation
Research questions	1. Can internal communication have an influence on quality of work? 2. Which barriers can make realisation of communication difficult? 3. Which communication factors are the most important? 4. Are communication tools effective?
Research method	Questionnaire survey. Open-ended and close-ended questions were used in the questionnaire. In some questions, the Likert scale was implemented.
The interviewees	Employees of the analysed organisation, representing different departments
Date of realisation	October-December 2018

Note. Personal elaboration.

Table 2 presents the structure of the interviewees.

Table 2.
Structure of the interviewees

Criterion	Description
Sex	1. Female – 72% 2. Male – 28%
Age	1. 18-25 – 18% 2. 26-35 – 54% 3. 36-45 – 22% 4. 46-55 – 6%
Education	1. Average – 24% 2. Higher (Bachelor level) – 16% 3. Master's Degree – 60%
Practice	1. Less than 1 year – 11% 2. 1-2 years – 25% 3. 3-5 years – 33% 4. 6-7 years – 12% 5. More than 7 years – 19%
Department	1. Audit – 7% 2. Call Centre – 2% 3. Current service – 41% 4. Vindication – 16% 5. Financial – 8% 6. Trade – 10% 7. HR – 4% 8. IT – 10% 9. Administration – 2%

Note. Own research.

The interviewees represent different departments. This fact allowed the author to analyse internal communication through many different factors and circumstances.

4. Results of conducted research

The results of the research were grouped into five divisions:

1. General analysis of internal communication in the analysed organisation.
2. Factors creating the process of internal communication.
3. Assessment of the effectiveness of communicative tools.
4. Factors determining the effectiveness of communication.
5. Final analysis of internal communication.

At the beginning of the research, those questioned were asked for a general assessment of the communication process in the analysed organisation. The results are presented in Figure 2. The overall assessment of communication was good and average, which together amounted to more than 80%.

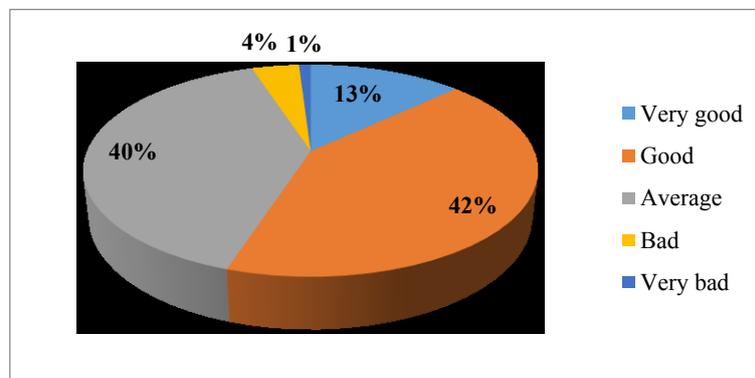


Figure 2. General assessment of the communication process. Own research.

According to the research, internal communication created by various conditions and tools has a very strong influence on the quality of work (Figure 3). Possessing proper information is relevant to make accurate decisions. Information adds to the knowledge of employees and the organisation, which is a very important resource for management.

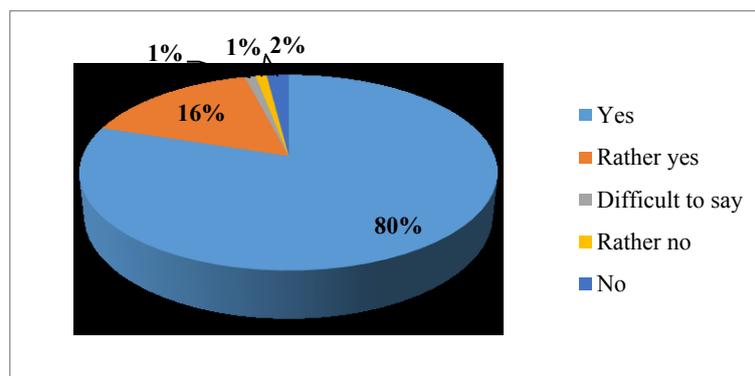


Figure 3. Influence of internal communication on quality of work. Own research.

The role of internal communication is described as:

- a way of delegating commands,
- a main source of information,
- support to understand delegated tasks,
- a way of building relations with fellow workers,
- a way of control of delegated tasks.

The following questions in the first division concentrated around barriers of communication in the analysed organisation and their possible solutions. The questioned identified the following barriers of internal communication in their organisation:

- lack of trust in a manager and fellow workers,
- lack of information in the communication process,
- too large an amount of information in many areas/decisions,
- lack of direct contacts between all employees,
- lack of communicative tools dedicated to the analysed organisation,
- too lengthy information flows from the top to the bottom,
- gossip,
- contradiction in announced information,
- blocking of flows of information by managers and employees.

Overcoming the presented barriers is possible through the use of solutions concerning “soft elements” of management, especially those concentrated on human resources, e.g. larger cooperation between managers and employees and between employees themselves, implementation of negotiation and compliance in operational management, making information about managers’ decisions available for all interested, etc.

Factors creating a process of internal communication were the object of analysis in the second division. The factors are described in Table 3. Employees of the analysed organisation defined the following factors: communicative skills of a manager, quality of statements delegated by managers, communicative skills of fellow workers, organisational structure, organisational culture and climate and relations between employees. When analysing the answer “very good”, the dominant value concerns: Communicative skills of a manager (32%). In the case of the answer “good”, the largest result concerns: Organisational culture and climate (65%).

Table 3.
Factors creating the process of internal communication

Factors	Assessment
Communicative skills of a manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 32% ▪ Good – 48% ▪ Average – 16% ▪ Bad – 4% ▪ Very bad – 0%
Quality of statements delegated by managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 12% ▪ Good – 55% ▪ Average – 21% ▪ Bad – 11% ▪ Very bad – 1%
Communicative skills of fellow workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 24% ▪ Good – 59% ▪ Average – 12% ▪ Bad – 5% ▪ Very bad – 0%
Organisational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 11% ▪ Good – 64% ▪ Average – 25% ▪ Bad – 0% ▪ Very bad – 0%
Organisational culture and climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 17% ▪ Good – 65% ▪ Average – 13% ▪ Bad – 5% ▪ Very bad – 0%
Relations between employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 22% ▪ Good – 57% ▪ Average – 20% ▪ Bad – 1% ▪ Very bad – 0%
Maximum assessment – factor: Communicative skills of a manager (32%).	

Note. Own research.

The third division, described in Table 4, relates to assessment of the effectiveness of the selected tools used in the communication process. During the research defined following, characteristic in analysed organisation communicative tools: direct conversation, meetings with managers, teleconference, knowledge resource in the Help Desk, announcements, integration parties, gossip and informal meetings of employees. In this division, the assessment was realised through the use of the six-degree scale, with an additional option of “not use”. This part of the results of the research point out that in the case of the answer “very good”, the dominant value concerns the tool: Direct conversations (48%). In the case of the answer “good”, the tool: Meetings with managers dominates (42%). A cohesion between answers in the following division and the previous one could be noticed. For the interviewees, the communicative skills of managers create very strong internal communication. Often, these skills are formulated and developed by direct conversations with the staff and meetings. Further results of the discussed sub-topic are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.
Effectiveness of communicative tools

Tools	Assessment
Direct conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 48% ▪ Good – 38% ▪ Average – 12% ▪ Bad – 1% ▪ Very bad – 0% ▪ Not use – 1%
Meetings with managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 28% ▪ Good – 42% ▪ Average – 19% ▪ Bad – 4% ▪ Very bad – 0% ▪ Not use – 7%
Teleconference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 15% ▪ Good – 37% ▪ Average – 16% ▪ Bad – 5% ▪ Very bad – 2% ▪ Not use – 25%
Knowledge resources in Help Desk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 20% ▪ Good – 31% ▪ Average – 21% ▪ Bad – 10% ▪ Very bad – 5% ▪ Not use – 13%
Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 12% ▪ Good – 13% ▪ Average – 17% ▪ Bad – 11% ▪ Very bad – 8% ▪ Not use – 39%
Integration parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 36% ▪ Good – 29% ▪ Average – 19% ▪ Bad – 5% ▪ Very bad – 2% ▪ Not use – 9%
Gossips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 11% ▪ Good – 8% ▪ Average – 23% ▪ Bad – 13% ▪ Very bad – 18% ▪ Not use – 27%
Informal meetings of employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good – 27% ▪ Good – 34% ▪ Average – 20% ▪ Bad – 7% ▪ Very bad – 2% ▪ Not use – 10%
Maximum assessment – tool: Direct conversations (48%).	

Note. Own research.

During the examination, factors determining the effectiveness of communication were identified, which are presented in Table 5. Those selected were as follows: personality of a manager, practice of a manager and employees, style of management, relations between employees representing different departments, relations between employees in working teams, conflicts and organisational changes. The “Very important” option of the answer dominates in the case of factor: Style of management (55%). The “Important” option is defined by the largest value in the case of factor: Relations between employees representing different departments (60%). Those questioned also noticed the importance of conflicts as a factor determining the effectiveness of communication. This factor was “very important” and “important” for 75% of the interviewees.

Table 5.
Factors determining the effectiveness of communication

Factors	Influence
Personality of a manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 36% ▪ Important – 55% ▪ Average – 9% ▪ Rather important – 0% ▪ Not important – 0%
Practice of a manager and employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 28% ▪ Important – 53% ▪ Average – 12% ▪ Rather important – 7% ▪ Not important – 0%
Style of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 55% ▪ Important – 34% ▪ Average – 10% ▪ Rather important – 1% ▪ Not important – 0%
Relations between employees representing different departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 32% ▪ Important – 60% ▪ Average – 7% ▪ Rather important – 1% ▪ Not important – 0%
Relations between employees in working teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 35% ▪ Important – 51% ▪ Average – 13% ▪ Rather important – 0% ▪ Not important – 1%
Conflicts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 34% ▪ Important – 41% ▪ Average – 21% ▪ Rather important – 2% ▪ Not important – 2%
Organisational changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very important – 15% ▪ Important – 42% ▪ Average – 40% ▪ Rather important – 2% ▪ Not important – 1%
Maximum influence – factor: Style of management (55%).	

Note. Own research.

The last discussed division was a form of summary of the analysed internal communication. It was of an open nature, and the interviewees were asked to complete the following sentence: “Internal communication in the analysed organisation...”. The most representative answers were:

1. allow one to hand over to employees information relevant for its proper completion.
2. motivates employees to act in favour of the organisation.
3. creates a positive climate in the workplace.
4. prepares employees for changes and supports them during their realisation.

The above results and comments presented in the following article are of a limited and selected character coming from the limitation of the publishing process of the scientific papers. More information could be created through deeper analysis of the presented results and direct contact with the author.

5. Summary

Basing on the following article, relevant conclusion could be made – internal communication influences the quality of processes realised in the organisation. This conclusion is described by analysis of the theoretical and empirical parts of the article. The communication process is complicated. Like many other processes, it is affected by internal and external factors. Its proper realisation requires highly-skilled managers and employees and efficient communicative tools.

The article touches upon many elements of internal communication. The most important from the theoretical point of view are described in the section “the role of internal communication in an organisation”. The author decided to take into consideration the following topics: the meaning of organisational communication, myths and misconceptions occurring in this area, key factors of communication, functions of internal communication and exemplary strategies for improvement of communication.

The empirical part of the article was based on the questionnaire survey, carried out in the selected organisation, representing the financial sector. The research was of a complex nature and concerned many elements of internal communication. The interviewees in the research emphasised the positive influence of internal communication on the quality of work. The role of internal communication was described as a way of delegating commands, a main source of information, support to understand delegated tasks, a way of building relations with fellow workers and more. During the examination, the key barriers of internal communication realisation were formulated: lack of trust in a manager and fellow workers, lack of information in the communication process, too large an amount of information in many areas/decisions, lack of direct contacts between all employees, lack of communicative tools dedicated to the analysed

organisation, too lengthy information flows from the top to the bottom, gossip, contradiction in announced information and more. Many of them could be solved through the use of the soft skills of management, e.g. conversations, negotiations, direct contacts, etc. According to the research, the most relevant factors creating a process of internal communication are: communicative skills of a manager, quality of statements delegated by managers, communicative skills of fellow workers, organisational structure, organisational culture and climate and relations between employees. The interviewees assessed the effectiveness of the selected tools of communication. Two tools were dominating – direct conversations and meetings with managers. Basing on the examination, the significant factors determining the effectiveness of communication process were: personality of a manager, practice of a manager and employees, style of management, relations between employees representing different departments, relations between employees in working teams, conflicts and organisational changes.

The directions of internal communication examination are open. Those presented in the following article are exemplary studies showing the importance of internal communication. The author plans to continue further theoretical and empirical studies on the analysed topic.

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