

EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS WITH EMPLOYEES ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE KAUFLAND POLAND BRANCH

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Purpose: The main purpose of the research was to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication process with employees on the example of the Kaufland Polska branch located in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. A complementary goal was to identify the most important managerial tasks and skills in this area.

Design/methodology/approach: The article presents a theoretical approach to internal communication based on the literature, while the own research allowed for the analysis and evaluation of this process. The survey method was used, in which the research technique was used in the form of an interview according to the developed questionnaire.

Findings: Communication between the manager and employees is two-way and there is feedback, both sides show commitment and show an open attitude to make the process effective. Employees assessed the current internal communication process and the functions performed by the manager in this process very positively, however, they are also able to notice shortcomings related to communication.

Research limitations/implications: The study was conducted among all employees of only one branch of Kaufland Polska. An additional limitation was the epidemiological situation in Poland caused by covid-19, which made it impossible to apply an additional research method – a participant observation method that would enrich the results obtained in the main study.

Practical implications: In order to improve the internal communication process, the manager should encourage employees to express their opinions and suggestions on topics related to their job position, team communication or observed problems. It is important that the manager cares about the quality and continuous improvement of the communication process and his own interpersonal skills, so that there are as few communication barriers as possible.

Originality/value: The communication process should be tailored to the specificity of the organization. It is completely different in a small enterprise than in a large hypermarket chain, where there are teams of employees in various positions, working in shifts, often with customers present and under time pressure. The obtained research results made it possible to assess the current internal communication process, and the application of the formulated guidelines will certainly improve the communication process and increase employee involvement, and ultimately the quality of service and customer satisfaction.

Keywords: manager, internal communication process.

Category of the paper: research paper.

Introduction

Internal communication is a pillar of a strong organization and is perceived as an important factor contributing to the development of the organization (Meyer, 2014). Practice shows that most of the problems in the organization are the result of improper communication. It is not surprising that there is a constant interest in this subject. Nowadays, in the ‘information age’, which surprises with the amount and speed of information and the development of communication tools, effective communication does not lose its importance and topicality. It is the foundation of the success of each group (Penc, 2001). Currently, it is said that communication is the engine of all changes, and its benefits will be achieved much faster (Quirke, 2011; Kożusznik, 2011).

Effective communication takes place when the flow of information takes place in the right form and time, and the messages are received in accordance with the intention of the sender and produce the intended effect. In order for communication to run smoothly and effectively, there must be feedback between the participants in the process.

The communication process depends on many factors and should be tailored to the specifics of the organization. It is completely different in a small enterprise than in a large hypermarket chain, where there are teams of employees in various positions, working in shifts, often in the presence of customers.

The priority of all employees is to satisfy each client every day. The implementation of the business goal and assumptions is the result of the effort and commitment of the entire team. Daily interactions and relations between a manager and employees are an integral part of the work performed at individual positions, therefore the quality of communication determines the quality of work results. It also indicates the daily challenges of the manager to unite the staff and achieve mutual success.

The article presents the theoretical approach to internal communication based on the literature on the subject, while the own research allowed for the analysis and evaluation of this process on example of the Kaufland Polska branch.

Internal communication – theoretical approach

Communication can be seen as a ‘strategic path’ (Scandeliu, and Cohen, 2016; Birim, 2016) in the processes of the organization's relationship with the environment (external communication) and interactions with staff (internal communication). Both types of communication should be integrated with each other. However, internal communication is one of the fundamental axes of business activities, as it constitutes the central system of all processes of the organization (Martinez, and Fernandez, 2018). For the organization to function, the tasks of individual units and teams must be carried out in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner, and the necessary harmonization of these activities would not be possible without internal communication (Yeomans, and FitzPatrick, 2017). M. Welch and P.R. Jackson (2007, p. 193) define it as ‘communication between the strategic managers of the organization and its internal stakeholders, aimed at promoting involvement in the organization, a sense of belonging, awareness of a changing environment and understanding of its evolving goals’. In a metaphorical way, internal communication is defined as the bloodstream of the organization. In other terms, internal communication is a systematic process of information processing and distribution (Verčič et. al., 2012) and take place in two directions: vertically and horizontally.

Vertical communication takes place between people at different levels in the business hierarchy and can go up and down, and the criterion for applying this classification relates to the place where the initiatives come from. Downstream communication is initiated from the top management and penetrates the various levels of the organization, stopping at executive employees, and consists in communicating what is important (mission) and valued (principles) (Cornelissen, 2012). The main task is to advise, educate and instruct, inform, direct, evaluate employees and transfer the goals and tasks that are necessary for the efficient operation of the organization. It is obvious that communication is filtered, constantly modernized and held at certain levels, because each manager individually decides what information needs to be provided to employees (Kožuch, 2001). It is important for employees to receive information without delay, in a form that is useful and acceptable to them (Welch, 2012 for: Verghese, 2017), which will enable them to correctly read management's expectations and effectively perform their duties at individual work positions (Atambo, and Momanyi, 2016).

Upward communication is the transfer of information on the progress of work at lower levels to higher levels in the business hierarchy. D. Tourish and P.J. Robson (2006) emphasizes that critical upstream communication is valuable to the organization as it provides a potential safeguard against unrealistic views from senior management. In addition to feedback on the duties performed, employees should be able to communicate upwards their ideas, their own perceptions of the work environment or express opinions on plans and suggestions that may contribute to improving the profitability and efficiency of the organization (Cornelissen, 2012).

Sharing ideas, information and opinions related to work (feedback) has been recognized as a factor stimulating employee engagement (Ruck et al., 2017). Thus, a two-way process of vertical communication can be an opportunity for employees and managers to exchange views on problems occurring in the organization, as well as participate in decision-making, by enabling employees to express their opinions on specific topics (Wilkinson et al., 2004).

Horizontal communication occurs between members of a given team, groups, departments. The most important task of this communication is the development of a natural channel of organizational coordination and elimination of problems that slow down the information provided indirectly from the common superior (Kozuch, 2001). Usually, the development of horizontal communication proves an increase in the maturity of employees who, without waiting for orders in advance, show initiative themselves, activity and creativity as well as the ability to cooperate effectively (Oleksyn, 2001).

The process of communication in the organization follows a specific model (Figure 1). Typically, in this process there is feedback between the sender and the receiver of the message, which enables a better understanding of the message and sometimes also its modification. So far, no model of internal communication has been created that would be effective in every organization. However, it should be consistent with the value system and business philosophy, as well as optimally suited to the specificity and resources of a specific entity and adapted to changing environmental conditions.

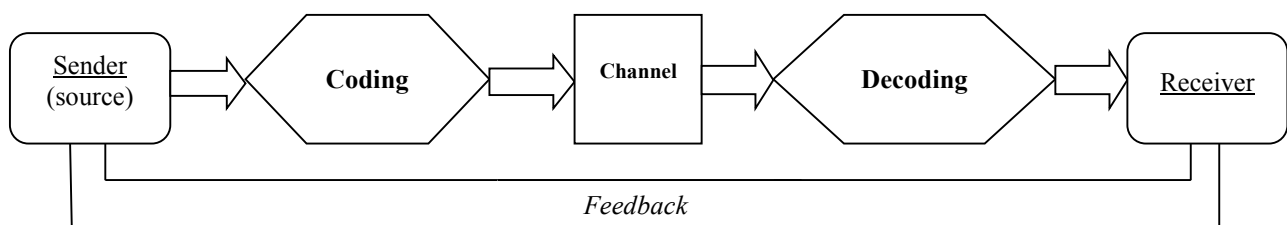


Figure 1. Model of the communication process in the organization. Adapted from: „Sztuka kierowania” by T. Oleksyn. 2001, p. 207.

In organizations, communication can be formal and informal. In the first case, communication is carried out in accordance with a hierarchical structure, division of duties, responsibilities, decision-making powers and through official information flow channels used to transmit messages. A wide range of information exchange within the organization can be in writing or orally, among others. through: e-mail, computer network, internal normative acts, information bulletins, notice boards, meetings, employee opinion polls, etc. (Oleksyn, 2001). In the process of internal communication, the use of digital solutions and tools is becoming more and more common. Information provided in this form reaches employees on time or in real time (Martinez, and Fernandez, 2018). One of the newer communication trends within the organization is presenting employees with a task in the form of a video. The idea is to replace too long emails or articles that are targeted at all employees with a short video. Research shows that over 70% of employees are more likely to watch corporate video than read long e-mail.

As a result, employees are better able to understand the message (Tarnowski). On the other hand, social networks allow employees to quickly transfer information and provide an extensive form of dialogue. This form is characterized primarily by range, accessibility, intuitiveness in use and constantly growing usability. This area of communication is constantly evolving. It is considered an increasingly innovative way of communicating with employees in the organization (Smolağ, and Ślusarczyk, 2018). In addition, the situation caused by covid-19 and the epidemiological threat forced the reorganization of the work of many organizations, which is why the above solutions and applications, such as MS Teams, Zoom, have been widely used for ongoing contact with employees.

On the other hand, informal communication is substitute and consists in transmitting, receiving and agreeing information, behavior and actions, regardless of the defined channels and forms of information flow in the formal communication process. In this case, it is difficult to predict when and to whom the message will be addressed, as well as whether it will reach and be properly received at all (Kozuch, 2001). From the organizational level, the consequences of informal communication may be positive (e.g. reducing the information gap among employees), but also negative (e.g. leakage of information covered by a trade secret, gossip, inability to express an opinion on a given topic, anxiety among employees). Usually, the less good formal communication there is, the more informal, not always positive, communication (Oleksyn, 2001).

It is worth adding that the process of communication also has an interpersonal dimension, which consists in sending and receiving information between the sender and the recipient, causing specific effects and types of feedback. Communication in the organization can be factual, instrumental and emotional. In order for communication to be effective, it is worth building it on a level that will allow the manager to communicate during subsequent conversations. Each emotion or intention will affect the quality of the interlocutor's relationship level, or the lack of it (Kozyra, 2019). Thus, the goal of effective internal communication is also to build mutual trust between communication participants, and to increase the degree of acceptance and friendship (Waters et al., 2013).

Communication undoubtedly covers and applies to all members of a given organization, therefore it is important to determine the way of cooperation within the organization and to indicate the most important communication roles and tasks at individual levels of the organizational structure.

As D.H. Holt noticed, 'managers work on the system, contractors work on the system. Managers are responsible for creating, shaping and modifying the system in such a way that all people working in it can act in the most effective way to achieve the goals of the organization' (Bolesta-Kukulka, 2003, p. 22). Thus, managers as creators of success organizations, define work processes (including the internal communication process) and decide on the way of using the organization's resources to achieve its goals. Therefore, as J. George emphasizes, 'managers of all levels should be good communicators' (Slijepčević et al., 2018, p. 329). The task of the

communicator is to activate employees to two-way communication to ensure the possibility of dialogue (e.g. through face-to-face discussions, online meetings, joint analysis of topics highlighted on internal blogs, surveys). Employees should be able to express their opinions and share ideas that are aimed at improving or introducing change (Ruck et al., 2017). Employee involvement allows managers to get a complete picture of a specific problem and enrich the decision-making process with new solutions (Robson, and Tourish, 2005).

On the other hand, the target recipients of internal communication are all employees of the organization perceived as internal stakeholders or 'ambassadors of the organization' who can best represent the values of the organization and influence the formation of its reputation in business (Slijepčević et al. 2018).

In any organization, both managers and employees need appropriate systems and means of communication, as well as appropriate communication skills related to the way messages are communicated and information circulated. Effective communication is the foundation of the success of any group, and the success of the communication process is its continuous improvement (Penc, 2010).

According to P. Jaworowicz, M. Jaworowicz (2017) and J. Penc (2010), effective communication in a modern organization consists mainly of the following elements:

- clearly stated intention of the sender;
- an appropriately selected form of communication using the language of the recipient;
- a convincing and motivating message;
- matching the type of recipient;
- making sure that the message was received and understood by the recipient;
- observing the recipient's reaction, especially when the employee's favor is expected;
- holding a reply message when necessary.

To sum up, it can be assumed that internal communication is a comprehensive process that includes various ways of employee interaction within the organization (Cornelissen, 2012). Its importance is emphasized by both theoreticians and practitioners. Effective internal communication is a prerequisite for achieving motivation and job satisfaction, employee engagement, productivity growth and, as a result, solid business performance of the organization (Meyer, 2014; Ruck et al., 2017; Slijepčević et al., 2018; Potocki et al., 2011; Verčič et al., 2012). Additionally, effective communication can reduce uncertainty and gossip, serve as a catalyst for change, and contribute to community awareness, knowledge sharing and trust building among members of the organization (Verghese, 2017). On the other hand, dysfunctions in the internal communication process are detrimental to managers, employees and the organization as a whole - they can lead to poor performance, strained interpersonal relationships, poor service, and dissatisfied customers (Atambo, and Momanyi, 2016).

In order to fully use the potential of the organization, it is necessary to simultaneously involve employees and managers in improving the internal communication process. The challenge of today's leaders-managers is to build bilateral, trust-based relationships with employees in order to improve the efficiency of the organization (Yeomans, and FitzPatrick, 2017), and in a broader perspective, customer satisfaction, which is 'the only path to true enterprise development' (Reichheld, 2006, p. 118).

Methodology of the conducted research and characteristics of the respondents

The main purpose of the research was to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication process with employees of the Kaufland Polska branch located in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. The Kaufland hypermarket chain belongs to the German Schwarz group and sells food and everyday items. Kaufland hypermarkets operate in European countries, including in Germany, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Croatia. Kaufland in Poland has been present since 2001. As of January 2020, there are 213 Kaufland stores in Poland, which employ 15,000 people (Kaufland.pl/...).

The subject of the study was a branch of the Kaufland hypermarket chain operating in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship since 2010. Throughout the period of operation, the store has been constantly strengthening its position on the market, and customers are already convinced of the quality of services and product offer. Efficiency and maintenance on the market is proof of modern management of the company, consistent with the fundamental values of the company, such as: efficiency, dynamics and fair play as well as management principles, which are an obligation towards employees. The head of the department attaches great importance to ensuring the timely execution of tasks at a high level. One of the main factors influencing the efficiency of the store is undoubtedly communication with employees.

An empirical study, aimed at obtaining primary data, was carried out among all employees of the Kaufland Polska branch located in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. The results were supplemented by a telephone interview with the head of this department. In order to ensure complete anonymity of respondents, the exact location of the enterprise is not disclosed.

The survey method was used, in which the research technique was used in the form of an interview according to the developed questionnaire. The study was conducted in April 2020. Due to the ongoing epidemiological threat in Poland and the risk of the spread of the coronavirus, the study was conducted in the form of an online survey, lasted 7 days and proceeded smoothly.

All employees completed the survey correctly, which means 100% feedback. Analyzing the gender structure of the respondents, the enterprise employs significantly more women (85%) than men (15%), which may be related to the dominant share of women employed in administrative and customer service positions in commercial enterprises. The largest number of respondents indicated up to 50 thousand as their place of residence. residents (57%), 37% of the respondents indicated that they live in the countryside, and 7% of the respondents live in a city with more than 100,000. residents. This means that more than half of the respondents live and work in the same city, the rest commute to work from neighboring towns. Taking into account the age of the respondents, it can be noticed that most people are in the age range from 31 to 40 (46%), then in the age range from 41 to 50 (30%) and currently there are no employees under the age of 20.

Table 1.
Characteristics of the respondents

		Share in numbers	Percentage
Sex	Woman	63	15%
	Man	11	85%
Age	20-30 years	15	20%
	31-40 years	34	46%
	41-50 years	22	30%
	51 years and older	3	4%
Place of residence	Village	27	36%
	Town up to 50.000 inhabitants	42	57%
	Town up to 100.000 inhabitants	5	7%
Seniority	up to 1 year	-	-
	from 2 to 5 years	17	23%
	from 6 to 10 years	29	39%
	over 10 years	28	38%
Current workplace	1 st workplace	11	14%
	2 nd workplace	27	37%
	3 rd workplace	27	37%
	4 th and more	9	12%

Source: own study based on research.

Most of the employed are people with 6 to 10 years of work experience, such an answer was given by 39% of the respondents. Slightly fewer people answered that their work experience exceeds 10 years (38%). On the other hand, the lowest number of people indicated that they had a professional experience of 2 to 5 years (23%). It can be observed that for the majority of respondents the current workplace is the second or third place of employment – such an answer was given by a total of 74% of the respondents. The youngest staff admitted that Kaufland is their first place of employment. On the basis of the answers obtained, it can be concluded that the percentage of respondents has been employed in the enterprise almost from the beginning of its 10-year operation, the team consists mainly of employees with many years of professional experience.

Characteristics of the communication process with employees

The internal communication process in the Kaufland Polska branch is formalized. The efficient flow of information and action begins with the manager. The manager provides the employees with all necessary messages on an ongoing basis and in person, which allows to avoid distortions and misunderstandings. He is aware that an informed employee is an appreciated employee who is more committed to achieving the company's goal. Systematic sharing of work-related information is fundamental to building mutual trust and commitment across the group. The success of communication with employees is not attack and criticism, but effective information, consultation and careful listening to their opinions. The course of the conversation largely depends on him, he is responsible for maintaining the appropriate tone of the conversation and providing the necessary information as well as the quality and continuity of the conversation.

Each message that is to be sent to employees is carefully thought out in advance and built in such a way that it is fully understood by each employee. However, in the event of additional queries and difficulties – especially in the case of new, complex tasks - the manager is available to help and support. According to the manager, the best and most convenient form of communication with the team is a direct meeting. Then he is able to notice how the employee accepted the task, or if he has any doubts. The employee can ask questions and the manager answers immediately. The store staff is located in one facility, so the best form of communication is a face-to-face meeting. In a situation where the employee is outside the facility, the manager chooses the telephone form of contact. On the other hand, he provides general information by e-mail, which he himself receives by e-mail. Guidelines for new, complex procedures and with a lot of detailed information are provided in writing because he is confident that the employee can always remember what he is obliged to do. He communicates current tasks orally during a meeting with the team and divides activities for each employee.

The manager knows the skills and disposition of his employees, which makes it easier for him to assign individual and group tasks. In the latter case, the team can work more effectively, without disputes, and employees are more willing to share knowledge. Based on his own observations of team relations and the quality of internal communication, he decides whether there is a need to organize a communication meeting.

The manager describes his relations with employees as good, but usually does not give the opportunity to comment on assigned tasks in order to avoid unnecessary chaos in the team. Tries to rationally assign tasks, taking into account the character and predispositions of employees. He tries to consult decisions about the team with employees. Although it is demanding, it cares for a friendly working atmosphere, as it affects the satisfaction and efficiency of everyone's work. In his opinion, the ability to assign tasks and good communication between the leader and the team is the key to the company's success.

The interview with the manager made it possible to characterize the communication process in the surveyed company and to compare its responses with the responses of employees, which are presented later in the article¹.

The results of the survey

The main purpose of the manager's communication with employees, indicated by the respondents, is assigning and discussing the task (77% and 70% of responses, respectively) and checking the progress of work (57%). The following answers were given in the following places: gaining opinions on a given topic, motivating and evaluating conversation, solving problems of the organization. All the above answers were selected by 5% of the respondents.

Employees positively assessed the effectiveness of the current internal communication process. More than half of the respondents stated that the messages conveyed by the manager are fully understandable. If necessary, employees can count on a detailed explanation of the message. Usually, such inquiries concern the clarification of new, complex or higher difficulty tasks. Respondents' responses also indicate that the manager often allows employees to ask questions (Figure 2). Such an attitude proves the willingness to explore the subject and the commitment of employees' forces to the most effective implementation of the activity.

The relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate was assessed as good by the respondents, employees are aware that they can ask questions and openly talk to the manager, but usually they are not able to comment on the assigned tasks.

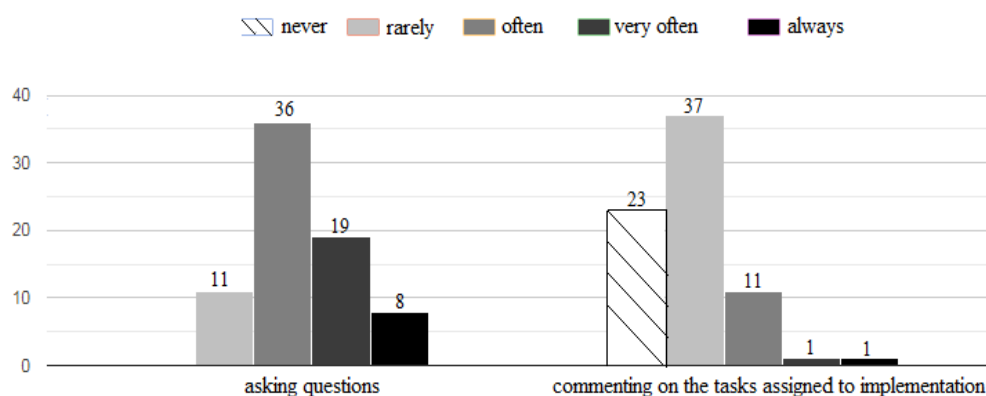
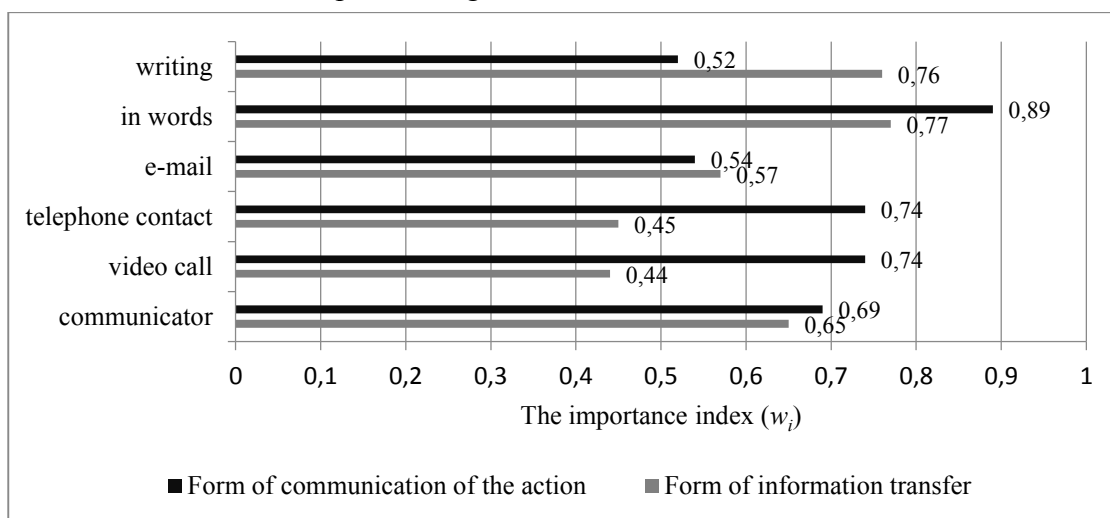


Figure 2. Possibility to ask questions and comment on assigned tasks to be performed. Source: own study based on research.

¹ This part presents selected results of the empirical study conducted by A. Pietrzak for the thesis prepared under supervision of D. Sobol, PhD at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn.

Employees also assessed the effectiveness of various forms of communication used by the manager in the internal communication process (Figure 3). The highest-rated form of information transfer is oral and written. The respondents assessed their effectiveness in relation to the rest very highly – the importance index exceeds 0.75. Verbally conveying the message gives the possibility of immediate reaction and obtaining an answer in case of doubts. They justify the high assessment of the effectiveness of the written form of transferring information by the open possibility of returning to a given document, especially when it concerns a more complex procedure of task implementation. They are sure that nothing has been missed.

On the other hand, the most highly rated form of communication is the oral form ($w_i = 0.89$). This is due to the fact that it is the fastest form of communication of the action, but also in case of doubts, the fastest way to get a response from the manager (feedback), which allows you to start a conversation and maintain a positive relationship between the interlocutors. The effectiveness of telephone contact and digital forms (video call, communicator) of communication of activities was also rated high (the importance index is about 0.7). It should be emphasized that during the research, the use of digital forms was relatively new and resulted from the necessity (limiting direct interpersonal caused by covid-19), however, significantly improved the process of communication between the manager and the staff during the period of restrictions related to the epidemiological state in Poland.



Explanation:

The importance (influence) index (w_i) of the effectiveness of forms of information transfer and activities in the opinion of employees participating in the study was calculated as a weighted arithmetic mean as per the following notes on the Likert scale from 1 to 5, where: 5 – very effective, 1 – ineffective. The importance index is a number between 0 and 1, whereas: index $w = 0$ – ineffective form; $0 < w \leq 0,5$ – neutral form; $0,51 \leq w < 1$ – very effective form; $w = 1$ – ineffective form. The index corresponds to the idea proposed by W. Karaszewski and S. Sudol (1997, pp. 17-18).

Figure 3. Assessment of the effectiveness of forms of information transfer and activities. Source: own study based on research.

Analyzing the research results, it can be concluded that the communication process in a company takes place mainly at the emotional level of interpersonal communication (37 responses). During the conversation, the interlocutors can express their views, values and emotions, which will affect the level of the interlocutor's relationship or the lack of it. The participants of the conversation are then very involved in the communication process, they also learn a different point of view of a given topic. However, in certain situations, the exchange of information and opinions devoid of emotions takes place (27 responses), and sporadically communication is limited only to one-way communication (10 responses). It is worth adding that during direct conversations with the supervisor, employees pay close attention to the way of non-verbal communication: tone and strength of expression (42%) and the manager's facial expressions and body posture (31%), and then the content and style of expression (15% and 12% respectively).

Interesting results are also provided by employees' opinions on the most important tasks and managerial skills in the process of effective communication in the Kauflan Polska branch. The obtained answers made it possible to create a profile of an effective manager in the process of communicating with employees (Table 2).

Table 2.

Manager's profile in the process of effective communication with employees

Managerial tasks	Skills	Traits and attitudes
– listening and speaking carefully	– communicate intelligible messages	– personal culture
– taking care of the quality and continuous improvement of the communication process	– listening carefully	– honesty
– properly selected form of communication	– conflict resolution	– empathy
– appropriate selection of information to be communicated	– making decisions	– openness to opinion
– fair division of labor	– motivating	– sincerity
– motivating during the conversation and recognition	– negotiation	– sense of humor
– adequate remuneration for work and awards		– kindness
– clarification of the goals and plans of the organization		– firmness

Source: own study based on research.

Analyzing the answers to the question ‘what does an effective manager provide employees in the communication process?’ it can be generally concluded that the expectations of employees relate to the key roles and boil down to the effective implementation of the most important tasks of the manager in the process of creating the company's success. In the supplementary question, most of the respondents indicated that the most important task of a manager in the process of effective communication is listening carefully to all employees and speaking clearly (76%). Immediately after that, the respondents indicated the care for the quality and continuous improvement of the communication process (61%) and the appropriately selected form of communication (55%). However, they admit that the manager rarely organizes meetings concerning the issues of internal communication.

Useful skills in the process of effective communication are primarily: communicating messages to employees in an understandable way, but also listening carefully and solving problems and conflicts in order to prevent unnecessary chaos from destroying the prevailing atmosphere at work (e.g. as a result of being uninformed, gossiping). It is also important that employees feel that they can turn to the manager for guidance or help in solving a problem, even one that has occurred unexpectedly. The respondents perceive the manager as a rational decision maker. Depending on the specificity of the problem, the manager makes decisions on his own (17 responses), supports the decision-making process through consultations with the first-level management (48 responses), and also with employees (17 responses). In rare cases, the manager uses the help of experts. Employee participation in decision-making processes is a positive phenomenon of two-way communication, which certainly strengthens their sense of belonging and recognition.

The manager's qualities and attitudes that influence building lasting, trust-based relationships with subordinates, and thus the quality and level of communication, are: personal culture, honesty, empathy and openness. It is important to treat team members with respect, avoid favoritism, and be able to see the situation from the other person's perspective. Openness in communication is one of the most desirable features of a successful leader (Men, 2014), it favors two-way communication, which has a positive effect on employee involvement and shaping a good working atmosphere.

Moreover, good internal communication is the basis of good relations in the company. Most of the employees assessed the relationship with the manager at a good and very good level (46 responses in total) and average (23 responses), and in 5 cases the relationship was poorly assessed. Developing a good relationship is a key aspect of leadership. Employees who have a good, trust-based relationship with the manager show greater commitment at work, are more motivated, achieve better results and are ready to make various sacrifices for the team.

Comparing the answers given by the employees and the manager, it can be concluded that their opinions do not differ significantly. Both parties - participants of the communication process – define it as effective. Information flow takes place in the right form and time, and messages are received in accordance with the intention of the sender and produce the desired effect. Vertical communication in the surveyed enterprise can be described as two-way, the manager shows interest and openness to accepting employees' opinions, uses feedback.

Based on his own observations and anonymous opinions of the team, the manager can pick up signals earlier that require attention and improvement in order to constantly improve the communication process and increase its effectiveness.

Summary and Conclusions

Communication is a social process of great importance for the functioning of small and larger organizations. It is a chance for an exchange of views and cooperation. Employees who are kept informed and aware of the current situation, including new challenges and threats to the company, understand their roles better. They feel respected and appreciated by the management, therefore they have a positive and specific approach to the tasks they carry out.

The internal communication process should proceed in such a way that the tasks entrusted by the management staff are performed most effectively. A manager who knows his staff knows how to maximize potential benefits and minimize communication barriers. Therefore, thanks to effective communication, the company is able to achieve success in a faster time, while the lack of formal communication and information flow, as well as ignoring communication dysfunctions can lead to a spectacular failure.

The main purpose of the own research was to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication process with employees of the Kaufland Polska branch located in the Mazowieckie Voivodeship. A complementary goal was to identify the most important managerial tasks and skills in this area. Research has shown that:

1. The process of internal communication in the enterprise covered by the study is formalized.
2. The employees assessed the current internal communication process very positively.
3. The most effective form of transferring messages used by a manager in the process of internal communication is oral and written (during the transfer of information) and oral (during the transfer of activities).
4. Communication between the manager and employees is two-way and there is feedback, both sides show commitment and show an open attitude to make the process effective.
5. Employees positively evaluate the functions performed by the manager in the process of internal communication and the atmosphere in the company, but they are also able to notice shortcomings related to communication.
6. The most important task of a manager is to listen carefully to employees and to speak to them in an understandable way. It is important that the manager takes care of the quality and continuous improvement of the communication process and selects the appropriate forms of communication. The skills that should be characterized by a manager, which are useful in the process of effective communication, include the ability to understand messages, resolve conflicts and listen carefully. The key features of a manager that are of great importance in the process of effective communication are: personal culture, honesty and empathy.

Based on the research results obtained, the following recommendations for the manager can be formulated:

1. In order to improve the current process of internal communication, it is worth encouraging employees to express their opinions and suggestions on topics related to their work position, communication in the team or observed problems, e.g. through regular joint meetings and brainstorming sessions (face-to-face meetings and remote sessions using communicators, e.g. MS Teams), "idea boxes", or workshops on communication (including non-verbal communication), which will not only improve the communication process, but also enable integration, especially with new employees.
2. Managing and communicating with a large group of people of different characters and dispositions, having different professional experience, performing their tasks in the presence of clients and under time pressure is a great challenge. It requires many skills from the leader, not only conceptual and decision-making, but also interpersonal, which should be constantly improved so that there are as few communication barriers as possible.

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