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Communicative Interaction among Local Editorial Staff Members: Current Situation and the Ways of its Improving

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Abstract

Communication between management and employees is very important in organizations. However, communication problems might be more felt in any media organization as a whole and in the local media staff in particular. It's obvious that news workers have everyday communicative interaction with different newsmakers. The article deals with the study and analysis of the communicative interaction between the local editorial creative staff members. Internal and external organizational understanding data are considered. It is determined that the level of organizational communication development influences the local editorial success and employees' performance. Mutual understanding as the basic criterion of effective communication has several forms. The subject of our study is organizational understanding, that is, a special type of editorial staff relationship which is limited by the boundaries of the organization and is essential for its successful functioning and development. The analysis of empirical data allowed to identify the main problematic aspects and to work out the recommendations for vertical and horizontal communication development.

Keywords: Organizational communication, media organization, internal communication, external communication, journalism.

1. Introduction

Formation and development of communicative culture are one of the most important aspects of local editorial communication. In-depth structure and main criteria development of the editorial border communicative culture is essential. Communication culture and relationship study on individual, organizational, national and international levels are important in modern Russian society. Unsettled problems of mutual understanding and information and communication relationship coherence lead to conflict situations. High-level communicative culture contributes to effective communication in editorial borders and in society in general.

Communicative culture level rising is the factor of adaptation, resilience, self-organization progressive development of any social system. Effective communications contribute to the summary effective management, employees' satisfaction and creation of the feelings of belonging to the company. There are four elements in the structure of editorial staff understanding: 1) service, 2) target, 3) motivation, 4) emotion. This study deals with the most important component – service. Editorial border communication is considered in two directions: horizontal (between employees) and vertically (between bosses and managers). The article presents the results of communicative interaction study of Belgorod and regional editorial staff members.

2. Literature Review

Various aspects of communicative interaction, as well as creating a successful communicative space have been explored in many studies. In particular, the problems related to the staff internal communication are reflected in the works of foreign researchers who stress the importance of communicative interaction and its direct link with organizational success, staff performance, and productivity especially in a media organization. «Effective communication is central to business success, and as such should form an integral part of the strategic planning process for all organizations» (Hargie, 2002). «Organizations understand that effective communication at all levels of the organization improve organizational success and employee relations» (Proctor, 2014). Job satisfaction is closely related to internal communication because «...satisfaction with internal communication is important in all organizations and is influenced by the quality and consistency of communication exchange.

Job satisfaction is also widely studied in organizations and plays a significant role in employee behavior» (Ramirez, 2012).

The issues of business communication as a whole have been studied by A. B. Krutin, M. A. Gorbunkov (1996), A. P. Panfilov (2001). The problems associated with the features of the communicative culture reflected in the work of N. S. Donakin, I. V. Konev, M. V. Korotitskaya (2007). Besides, V. R. Gasparyan and V. I. Nemchina (2000) have formulated the conditions needed to create effective «communication space». A. F. Dzagurova (2014) and O. N. Savinova (2014) have drawn attention to the way how both journalists' responsibilities and media where they work are getting complicated. Moreover, Professor M. Yu. Kazak (2008) has studied the ways chosen by the editors of the regional media organizations to achieve successful communication with their audience. The author has studied both the content of local newspapers and needs, expectations, and an attitude of the audience to its newspaper. The thorough analysis of communication problems has been held by T. Leshchenko, I. Sokolova, L. Teplova (2016), A. G. Kvyat (2014), and P. V. Kolomiets (2014). The social role of the media discourse agents is reflected in the research carried out by E. A. Kozhemyakin (2012). As we see, the analysis of Russian and foreign studies on the research problem leads to the conclusion that today within the framework of humanities the considerable theoretical and empirical material has been already gained on the problem of staff interpersonal interaction. However, there is still an apparent lack of research focused on the study of staff organizational communication in media.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Participants

The purpose of the research is giving empirical and practical features of interactive component of newspaper editorial border communicative culture, revealing conditions and ways of its improvement. This purpose has been achieved by solving the following research tasks:

- analyzing and characterizing interactive level of editorial border communicative culture and justifying its criteria;
- identifying conditions and ways of improving editorial border communicative culture.

To implement the goals and objectives we carried out a sociological survey. Employees and managers of 12 editorial borders from Belgorod and Belgorod region were

interviewed (64 respondents in general). The sample is cluster random.

3.2. Instrument

Participant observation, interviewing, questionnaires, method of analysis and comparative method were used in conducting the research. Questionnaire survey was used as a method of primary sociological data gathering. The questionnaire is a system of questions aimed at identifying quantitative and qualitative characteristics of object of research. The empirical base includes the results of personal study «Analysis of Communicative Interaction of Local Editorial Staff Members».

4. Findings and Discussion

The first stage of our study was vertical interaction mechanism evaluation. The aim of the stage was to find out whether employees are able to work with the service information. According to the respondents, employees perceive and understand service information *not always* correctly (54.5%). Nearly a third of respondents 33.4% believe that staff members perceive and understand service information *always* correctly. The index of perception and understanding of information required for local editorial staff members activity is 0.87 (max.=1) of 0.60. The data indicate a high level of perception and understanding of service information by respondents. Deep analysis of barriers emerging in the perception and understanding of information, we identified the causes of misunderstanding of service information by local staff members (Table 1).

Table 1. The ranking of reasons that hinder the correct perception and understanding of service information by local staff members

Reasons	%
insufficient qualification	21.2
insufficient information	18.2
underestimation of information significance	15.2
unclear reporting	9.1
uncertain reporting	9.1
inopportune information	9.1
source of information mistrust	6.1
communication channel mistrust	3.0

Experts believe that the main reasons stem from insufficient professional competence of the staff. Insufficient qualification (21.2%) and underestimation of information significance (15.2%) were indicated by the experts. In addition, the editors-in-chief point to insufficient quality of service information: uncertain reporting (9,1%), unclear reporting (9,1%),

inopportune information (9,1%). It should be noticed that sources of official information are themselves, hence – source of information mistrust (6.1%). Communication reasons or causes in the process of local editorial staff members informing were identified by a smaller number of respondents. We consider they must be specified because responses «uncertain reporting» (9.1%), «insufficient information» (9.1%), «unclear reporting» (6.1%) indicate careless attitude of managers to the process of communication with staff members.

It is important to analyze staff ability of working with the necessary information. Managers believe that employees do *not always* use this information (57.6 %). Nearly a third of respondents (36.4%) – believe that employees *always* use this information. The index measuring the use of information by employees is very high (0.9). Vertical communications in editorial boards imply the editors’ ability to understand and assess the activities of their employees correctly and evaluate each other's work. The distribution of respondents ' answers to the question if the editor-in-chief understands and evaluates the following aspects of local staff members' activities is presented in Table 2 (in %):

Table 2. How the editor-in-chief understands employees’ activities

Does the editor understand and assess the following aspects of employees’ activities?			
	Yes, always (%)	Not always (%)	Difficult to answer (%)
production tasks	75.8	24.2	-
work plans	72.7	27.3	-
work results	57.6	36.4	6.1
personal motives and incentives	36.4	48.5	15.2
team behavior	42.4	45.5	12.1

The data in the table confirm our conclusion that service employee behavior is assessed higher than personal aspects of staff members’ behavior. It is important to pay attention to the fact that the editors show a low level of sensitivity for «personal motives and incentives» and «team behavior» (15.2% and 12.1% have difficulty in answering).

The next aspect of our study concerned the analysis of the process of staff members’ communication with managers and with each other. We indicated the following criteria: whether employees understand the information that comes from management, whether employees understand motives and actions of editors-in-chief. To study the employees’ perception of information distributed by the management, respondents were asked whether editorial staff members understand the information coming from the management correctly (Table 3).

Table 3. Understanding of the information coming from the management by editorial staff members

Do editorial staff members understand the information coming from the management always correctly?			
	Yes, always (%)	Not always (%)	Difficult to answer (%)
Orders	72.7	21.2	6.1
Instructions	21.2	54.5	21.2
Opinions and assessments	24.2	57.6	12.2
Recommendations	30.3	18.2	21.2
Tips	27.3	54.5	12.1

Data analysis gives grounds for important conclusions: official information (orders, instructions) is always understood by staff better due to its structuring. Thus, according to respondents, editorial staff members understand the instructions always correctly (understanding coefficient = 0.83), while the coefficient of instructions understanding is much lower (0.43). It is likely that employees are not satisfied with the technology recommended by the management (otherwise, the method of professional activities organization). This conclusion confirms the analysis of employees' understanding of the informal information coming from the management. Most likely that creative people do not like strict regulation of their activities.

The next step is to analyze local editorial staff members' horizontal interaction. Respondents were asked whether editorial staff members understand and evaluate the following aspects (Table 5).

Table 5. Editorial staff members' understanding and evaluating the activities of each other

Aspects	Yes, always (%)	Not always (%)	Difficult to answer (%)	Understanding and evaluating rate
production tasks	45.5	45.5	9.0	0.70
work plans	48.5	42.4	9.1	0.72
work results	42.4	45.5	12.1	0.74
personal motives and incentives	42.4	42.4	15.2	0.75
team behavior	54.5	48.5	3.0	0.81

Questionnaire data show that in assessing understanding and activities of media staff members' responses were divided approximately in half. Understanding and evaluating rate is above the average line which indicates a high level of awareness and evaluation of their colleagues. It is necessary to draw attention to low staff members' sensitivity on such key

parameters as personal motives and incentives (15.2% – difficult to answer) and work results (12.1% – difficult to answer), which may indicate that staff members have poor knowledge about their colleagues and their work motivation.

To clarify this point we asked staff members the following question: «What motivates local editorial staff members to work more productively and efficiently?» (Table 6).

Table 6. Motives and incentives for employees' productive and quality work

Motives and incentives	%
Financial incentives	66.7
Work dedication	39.4
Moral incentives	30.3
Favorable psychological climate	27.3
Striving for success	27.3
Reduction threat	18.2
Desire to be better than the others	12.1
Permanent accounting and control	12.1

When identifying reasons that prevent colleagues from proper understanding and evaluating each other's work we found that the most popular answer was «lack of interest»: about a third of respondents (30.3 %) indicated this reason. Options «turnover» and «lack of time» which do not allow staff members understand and evaluate production tasks correctly, «team behavior plans», «rumors impact» (24.2%) were also popular. These reasons are directly correlated with informal information in editorial boards; many organizational communication researchers (E. Rogers, R. Agarwal-Rogers, G. Vorobjev) associate rumors appearance with this situation. Hence, there is a legitimate reason, «lack of information» (18.2%).

Sometimes rumors circulating may be caused by inadequate team management style, and unfavorable team climate, which may be a consequence of the previous factor. 15.2% of respondents indicated «lack of sensitivity», «sensitivity to the individual differences of staff members» and «strained relationship» as causes of misunderstanding and evaluation of their colleagues' activities. Despite the fact that staff members do not always understand their colleagues, they are often asked for necessary additional information (51.5%). They noted that rumors are an integral part of organizational communication.

The effectiveness of rumors usage by editorial staff members and adequate attitude to them is an indicator of the high-level communicative culture. The presence of rumors in the offices was determined by the question: «Do rumors appear in your offices?» The answers were the following: «Yes, often» – 15.2%, «Sometimes» – 45.5%, «Rarely» – 15.2%,

«Never» – 12.1%. The frequency of occurrences is = 0.58. This confirms quite prosperous organizational situation: rumors start, and that's normal, «sometimes» – it is good. However, it was important to know the attitude of the staff members to the rumors. The analysis of the responses to the question: «What is the attitude of employees to the rumors?» gave the opportunity to come to the following conclusion: approximately half of the respondents (45.5%) have ambiguous opinions on this phenomenon, 15.2% show negative attitude. The distribution of the answers was the following: «mostly negative» (9.1%), «mostly positive» and «difficult to answer» (6.1%), «indifferent» (3%). The reasons for rumor appearance are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Reasons for rumor appearance

Reasons	%
Official information insufficiency	36.4
Official information uncertainty	18.2
Informal relations importance	15.2
Business and personal relationship tensions	15.2
Organization and distribution of work shortcomings	15.2
Payment and stimulation shortcomings	15.2
Hostile business and personal relationship	12.1
Leadership style shortcomings	9.1
Official information unreliability	6.1
Difficult to answer	3.0

Among the reasons for rumor appearance, respondents named problems related to official reports organization – insufficiency (36.4%) and uncertainty information (18.2 %). This is confirmed by the fact that the staff members perceive and understand their work information *not always* correctly (54.5%). Other reasons indicate, firstly, ambiguous team situation: significant role of informal relations (15.2 %), hostile business and personal relationship (12.1%). Secondly, there are problems in labor organization: organization and distribution of work shortcomings (15.2%), payment and stimulation shortcomings (15.2%) and leadership style shortcomings (9.1%). In general, media staff members are rarely involved in conflict situations. 51.6% only sometimes enter conflict situations, 35.5% – «rarely» and only 12.9% indicated that they often find themselves involved in conflict situations.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said the basis of the editorial border structure is grounded on communicative interaction, mutual acceptance of roles, consensus and understanding.

Communication ensures the major management functions implementation such as planning, revision, management and control. Considering editorial staff members we have taken into account both creative part of the team (reporters, photojournalists) and technical services. As the relevance of research is connected with the necessity of editorial border activity efficiency increase. Thus, it can be achieved by means of the information and communication processes improvement, economic and social issues resolution aimed at employees' intellectual and cultural potential development. It is obvious that communication culture rise is the factor of survival and successful development of editorial border.

6. Concluding Remarks

Basing on these results we would like to advise local editorial managers to use effective communicative interaction rules. *The rule of effective communication*. There is a large number of different lists of such rules. It is connected with the issue importance and its breadth. The most important of these rules are as follows (Karpov, 2005). *The rule of setting goals*. You cannot start posting ideas, if they are not clear or not well understood by yourself. «Clarify your ideas before starting their transmission». *The rule of «constant readiness to misunderstanding»* and assumptions «rights for the misunderstanding». *The rule «you can be wrong»*. While communicating you should always assume you're your personal point of view may be incorrect. It often helps to avoid serious mistakes. *The rule of «time and place»*. The effectiveness of any message and especially an order increases in the case of timeliness and selection of the most adequate environment. *The rule of openness* means readiness to change your point of view under the influence of newly-opened circumstances, and also the ability to accept and consider the point of view of the other. *The rule of active and constructive listening* Natural human behavior implies coincidence of the primary analog information (content) and secondary analog information (nonverbal behavior) implemented by the goal-position. This correspondence lies in the basis of determining the rules of congruence (integrity, by E. Rogers) which means, «primary and secondary analog information is not contrary to the primary and secondary sign information i.e. what the person says in words is supported by gestures, facial expressions, posture, tone of voice – his non-verbal behavior» (Snetkov, 2002). The most important for effective communication is the rule of *expectation consideration*. Any socially significant action causes expectation of a certain resonance, a certain reaction from the partner. It is necessary to reckon expectations of other people to look for the optimal tactics of contact (Zankovskiy, 2002). Keeping the rules above requirements

sets the basic guidelines for communicative functions realization, determines its content and specificity.

The heads of editorial boards recommend doing the following. Firstly, the management must regulate all information flows: velocity, volume, direction and, of course, the content in order to avoid information loss or distortion. It is necessary to know the importance of expressions, gestures, movements, intonations of speech. Secondly, it is important to establish feedback system (including negative feedback), not only for improving information exchange but also for achieving psychological security, emotional comfort. It leads to the ultimate goal of communication – mutual understanding. Thirdly, developing effective joint communication activities, it is important to take into account the peculiarities of information perception. The communicative competent manager must remember that the process of knowing and understanding the other person is very important. It is based on dynamic reflective activities. Fourthly, information exchange involves the partner's behavior impact. It is important to note that persuasive impact effectiveness depends on the emotional acceptability of the arguments of persuasion. Fifthly, it is necessary to organize communication information space. This is possible due to the use (implementation, improvement) of information technology. It is advisable to change organization structure and establish communication networks activity or efficiency of the existing communication network.

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