

COMMUNICATION – CENTRAL VECTOR IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT*

Adriana, Grigorescu¹
Maria-Magdalena, Lupu²
Fawaz, Al Zink³

Abstract:

As a key concept in modern management, the knowledge management among the knowledge administration, development and transfer between the members of an organization, it also involves the knowledge stimulation to obtain the competitive advantage and the innovations. The association between communication and knowledge is normal; the knowledge without communication is sterile, even useless. The communication's role in the knowledge management is both normal and valuable, because the knowledge, which is a good value, must be transferred so it can be exploited to maximum, and the knowledge transfer is possible only through communication. The managerial decisions, strategies, plans, explanations must be communicated to the organization's members so they know how, where and why it must be acted to assure its success. In turn, the organization's members hold a personal luggage of knowledge that can be developed and putted in the interests of the organization so it can become a collective source that generates new values. The present article presents the results of a research that had as purpose to identify in which way the communication is used to implement the knowledge management.

Keywords: *Communication, Knowledge, Knowledge Management, Informations.*

JEL Classification: D830

Introduction

The roots of knowledge management are found in a philosophical paper work [Polanyi, 2002 (1958)] which introduces the term of silent knowledge (who's meaning is that each of us can know more than we realize) and in which we can make difference regarding the explicit knowledge. Starting from this, in the management domain, appears the idea that encouraging the exchange of idea and sharing the knowledge of the organization's members is a new resource (Drucker, 1988; 1992) that must be explored in the interest of the organization and it involves the creation of conditions for innovation (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995). Lately, it will be clarified the distinction between knowledge and information, it will be defined the organization concept which learns and there will be recognized two research directions in the knowledge management, a direction oriented through creation in knowledge, and the other one oriented to the knowledge transfer that already exists in the organization (Davenport, Prusak, 1998).

Long time studied in the domain literature, this concept didn't obtain a totally accepted definition (Tsui, 2000:11), existing a point of view that is large spread, according to which the knowledge management collects and disseminates the knowledge in the interest of the organization and of its members (Lueg, 2001:151).

Is easily observed that we are talking about intangible values (knowledge) that depend of the social and behaving factors, the ones that are mostly ignored in organizations (Hendriks, 2001:57).

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¹ PhD, Professor, Faculty of Public Administration, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania. Additional affiliations: Doctoral School of Valahia University from Targoviste, Institute of Economic Forecasting - Romanian Academy, adrianagrigorescu11@gmail.com

² Ph.D.Candidate at the Doctoral School of Valahia University Targoviste, magdalupu6268@gmail.com

³ Ph.D.Candidate at the Doctoral School of Valahia University Targoviste

One of the problems that can appear inside the organizations that practice the knowledge management is the one that the employees can choose to keep their own knowledge, without sharing with the organization (Bryman, Bell, 2011:9) and that would put in danger the coordination of the organizational activity and of the taken decision's quality (Eppler, 2006).

On the other hand the decisions, strategies, plans, explanations, must be communicated to the organization's members so they can know how, where and why it must be acted to assure its success, and all these are probable through communication and dialog. The dialog is a teaching way of acceptance and synthetizing the other's opinions (Nonaka, Toyama, 2005:425-426) is a social interaction through which is made the exchange and creation of knowledge (Lehtonen, 2009:41).

Knowledge backgrounds

The knowledge management can't exist without sharing the knowledge and this involves, besides the extended learning processes, the communication (Cummings, 2003) through which is realized and the creation of organizational knowledge (Dieng et al.,1999:574), but it also involves the communication between the persons that come from different environments (Mäkelä et al., 2007).

The literature treats predominantly the communication technologies, according less attention to the communication and communicating relations, the existing studies revealing only the use of a big variety of the communication practices (Mohr, 2007:216). To realize the exchange of knowledge is also important and a good projection of the communication process (Mohamed et al., 2006:109) which through the communication forms and instrument assures the creation of the knowing and the dissemination of the knowledge (Klein, 2008:42).

Starting from the knowing creation model of Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), which makes the distinction between the tacit knowing and the explicit one, it had been proposed a communication model in the knowing management (fig. 1), (Tingoy, Kurt, 2009:48) in which all the communication types are very important for the knowing flow achievement in the organizational context.



Fig. 1 - The model of the communication importance in the knowledge creation and dissemination

Source: Tingoy Özhan, Kurt Özlem Efiloğlu, (2009), Communication in knowledge management practices: a survey from Turkey, Problems and Perspectives in Management, vol. 7, issue 2, p. 48

The communication is a social binder (Greenberg, Baron, 2003:317) especially if it is based on transparency, trust and on the opened door policy regarding the employees (Bhirud et al, 2005). On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that the transformation of the tacit knowledge in explicit ones and their broadcast is possible only with the help of the communication (Lehr, Rice, 2002).

One of the most important aspects of the communication in the knowing management is the efficient communication (Crawford, Stronthkirch, 2006) especially that this is the heart of any modern organization (Thomas et al, 2001: 870) through which it is influenced the attitude regarding the organization. Another important aspect is the communication style (Gumus, Onsekiz, 2007) through which are created feature expectations (Coeling, Cukr, 2000:65).

A study regarding the communicational abilities in managing the knowledge revealed that to create knowing, extremely important is the attitude through which the experience is communicated and the way it is shared (Treem*, 2012). That is why the organization's leaders must put themselves as partners of the organization, to be stimulated to use their aptitudes (Kalkan, 2008) to create and transfer the knowing. The relational aspects of the communication underlines even more the complexity of the making of the communication efficiency and of the knowledge transfer specific to a named context.

The knowing creation is a social-organizational and cultural problem that needs approaches from the organizational communication and learning area for the communication and know-how transfer (Allix, 2003). In the learning process inside the organizations, the critical factors are the organizational culture of the company (Yang et al., 2008), the strategy's characteristics, the communication processes and structures, the linguistic competent (Brannen et al., 2014) or the leaders' intercultural skills (Welch & Welch, 2008).

The communication of the professional knowledge became crucial for the well function of an organization (Epler, 2007), either it is made through interpersonal communication or through group conversations (Gratton, Goshal, 2002), but the social interaction is a must and is a result of the communication (Treem**, 2012). It can be defined as being a deliberated activity of know-how, know-why, know-what and know-who transfer through direct or mediated communication (Epler, 2007:291). In the knowing communication, thanks to the nature of the human factor, can also appear serious and hard to pass problems, such as:

- The information excess – too many complex information must be assimilated and fast interpreted (Eppler, Mengis, 2004:277);
- The defensive routine – the new knowledge is ejected so the effort to understand complex problems is extremely low (Argyris, 1990:101);
- The false consensus – we assume that others have the same perceptions and the same interpretations of the received information (Manzoni, Barsoux, 2007);
- Preference for outsiders → the valorization trend of the knowing that came from outside of the organization (Menon, Pfeffer, 2003);
- The hostile exchange of knowledge – reluctance in sharing the knowing because of the hoarding policy of the knowing, of the fear regarding the "knowledge parasites" or to avoid the exposure (Husted, Michailova, 2002:66).

The research based on questionnaire, regarding the identification of the communication's role in the implementation of the knowing management.

Context

For an organization to survive the fierce competition, characteristic of the globalized economy and of the informational era, must continuous upgrade its management.

The solution is the promote of the flexibility, of the transparency, of the organizational learning, the improving of the efficiency and efficacy, the permanent

instruction of the organization's members, the reevaluation and adaptation of the working methods for the development of an open organizational knowing – more exactly, the practice of the knowing management.

Either we refer to the internal communication or to the external one, the advantages brought by the use of an open, explicit communication, make the adoption of this communication form to be imperative.

The new communicational technologies support the knowing management practice, and the mode in which the organization's management chooses to use them or not, can bring or not services to the organization's interests.

The identified problem that made us proceed to a research theme is the low grade of implementation of the knowledge management inside the organizations from our country.

The quantitative empirical research presented in this article represents a part of a more ample research, which results will be included in the doctoral dissertation that I prepare.

The research methodology

The subject of our research is the identification of the communication's role in the implementation of the knowing management.

The purpose of this research is to determinate the measure in which the managers understand the importance of the knowing management practice and the communication's role in the implementation and practicing of this type of management.

The study had as *objectives*:

- The analyze of the knowing the communication's role and its use as main vector in the knowing management;
- The identification of the knowledge level and of the interest to the knowing management

The *hypotheses of our research* are:

- The communication is understood as a central vector in the practice of the knowing management, especially by the organization's managers;
- The implementation of the knowing management is the managers' preoccupation;
- The organization's management is preoccupied with the assurance of the communication strategy used for practicing the knowing management.

The research method was the sociological investigation, made through surveys. The data have been collected through interview, using as an investigation technique, the face to face investigation.

The data collecting data instrument was the questionnaire, which beside the identification data, contained a number of 12 questions.

For the research it was used the semantics differential, the five steps way.

The processing of the collected data was made with the help of Excel program.

To obtain a more exact image regarding the communication situation in the knowing situation, the questions have been grouped in three *analyze domains*, as it follows:

- 1 – The communication with the help of the new technology;
- 2 – The organizational communication based on the human resource stimulation;
- 3 – The communication with other organizations through the cooperation network.

The sample used for our analysis was represented by 242 managers of an organization from the south of Romania.

The observation unit is represented by the organization no matter of the activity domain.

The study unit is established as being the person with a lead function, no matter of the gender.

The period of the data collection was between 07/12/2014 and 08/30/2014.

The study was made using a simple, random sample scheme.

The appreciations for each answering version to the questions contained by the questionnaire were evidenced by calculating the medium score after the weighted average formula:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum x_i * n_i}{\sum z_i} \quad \text{where: } x_i = \text{ is relative frequency,}$$

$n_i =$ is the grade given to the answer and

$z_i =$ is the total answers to the analyzed question.

There have been applied 300 questionnaires, from which 242 were validated. To establish the size of the representative sample regarding the obtaining some significant statistical data, it has been used the Taro Jamane formula, a method that starts from the total population's volume, without calculating the population's characteristics and it is recommended for small collectivities. The total number of the persons with leading functions inside the studied organizations is 308.

$$M_E = \frac{N}{(1 + N * e^2)} \quad \text{unde: } e = \text{ is the maximum admitted error,}$$

N = researched community size

$$M_E = \frac{308}{(1 + 308 * 0.03^2)} \cong 241 \quad \text{The maximum admitted error degree is 3\%.$$

The medium obtained scores after the analysis of the obtained answers from the respondents represent the values on which we made the interpretations of the received answers from the questioned sample in this study.

The average score and the global score, obtained after analyzing the received answers from the respondents, represent the values on which base we made the interpretations of the received answers from the questioned sample in this study.

The results of the research

Grouping the contained questions in the sample, the study followed to analyze of the following interest domains:

- the evaluation of the interest for communication with the help of the new technologies;
- the management's preoccupation for the organizational communication based on the human resource stimulation;
- the evaluation of the communication's situation with other organization through the cooperation networks.

1. *The interest's evaluation for the communication with the help of the new technology*

The technological revolution and the new technologies based on communication are the base on which it is build the society based on knowing. The relation between science and technology produced deep transformations from which result the immaterial economy whose principal resource represents the knowledge that can produce economical grow.

The communication, appliance, use and development of the knowing capital are the result of the way the leaders of an organization succeed to mobilize and stimulate the organization's members in practicing the knowing management.

This supposes the use of the technologies that are loved by the organization's members, but it also means the stimulation of the use of proper technologies for the organizational activity.

Inside our study we let the respondents to appreciate which of the communication ways with the help of the new technology are more important in the implementation and practice of the knowing management (fig.2).

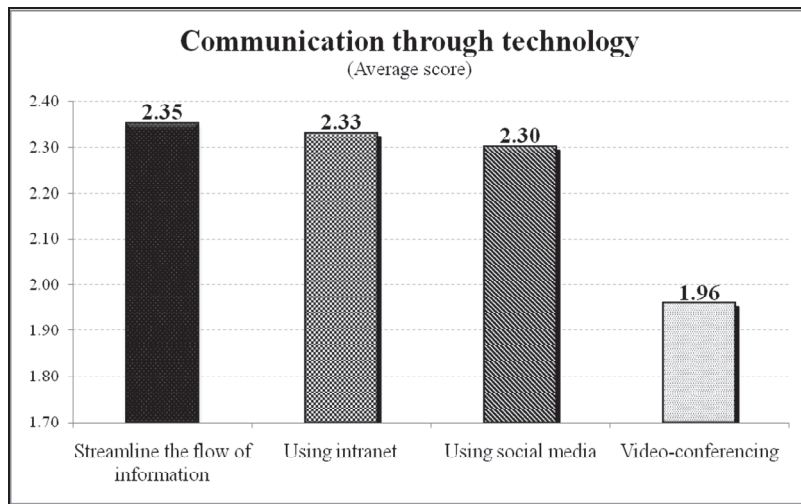


Fig. 2 - Source: own projection

The obtained results after the evaluation position the average score of each knowledge transfer instrument presented by us, at a distance between two and 4 hundredths, from 1.96 for video conferences, to 2.35 for an efficient informational flow. Inside this interval is situated and the communication with the help of social media and the communication by intranet, each of them offering the possibility of live communication, including through interpersonal communication, for an almost unlimited number of users.

The expressed opinions of the questioned managers show that no matter of the type of communication technology that got their attention, these consider it unimportant.

2. The management's preoccupation for the organizational communication based on the human resource stimulation

Inside the most of the organization it is few known about the human resource, about the tacit knowing level of the personnel or about the organization's memory and these are the reasons that make them not be exploited, stimulated and developed to give the organization the chance to learn and to adapt to the working environment.

From this point of view we can say that the knowing resource socked in each member of the organization represents the strategic development capital of the organization through which it can be optimized the adopting process of some decisions, there can be reintegrated corporative experienced, can grow the number of innovative processes that can transform the information in knowledge and to obtain new knowledge.

The organizational communication axed on the stimulation of the human resource to implement and practice the knowing management, must reach few aspects considered by us essential, which we submitted to the respondents' appreciation, with the purpose of finding which of these are more important for their organization's activity.

According to the obtained average scores, the respondents' interest for the human resource stimulation by practicing a communication that facilitates the innovation is positioned from the lack of interest to the incertitude (fig.3).

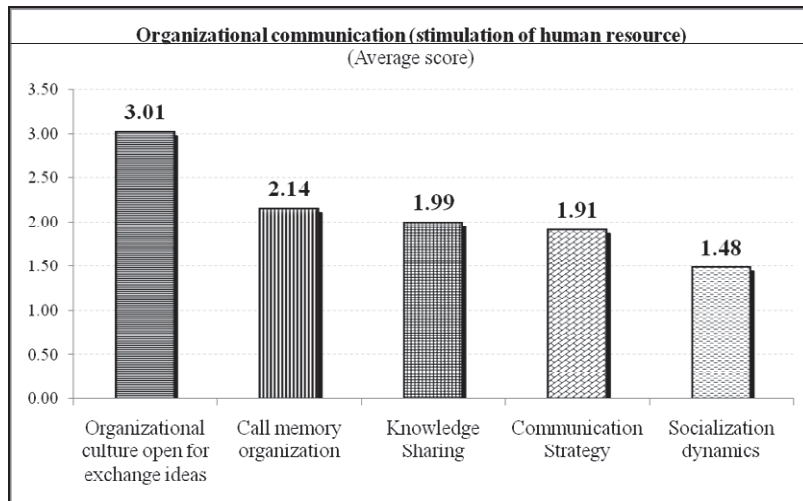


Fig. 3 - Source: own projection

The stimulation of the socialization dynamic by communication is considered out of importance (average score - 1.48).

Unimportant are appreciated as being and the calls to the organization's memory (average score - 2.14), the knowing dissemination (average score - 1.99) and the communication strategy (average score - 1.91).

The questioned managers, are uncertain about the importance of the development and consolidation of an organizational culture favorable to the idea exchange, this aspect obtaining a average score of 3.01.

3. *The evaluation of the communication's situation with other organizations through the cooperation networks*

For the productive use of the human knowing is necessary the organization in cooperation/ partnership networks, which by applying the information and the knowing will generate new knowledge, will be able to process information and develop advanced communication instruments that can support the learning, research and the innovation. The partnership programs' projection, insertion and management with other organizations are actions needed to stimulate the scientific cooperation, to value the potential of the information and communications' technology to contribute to the development of the strategies and activities used in the cooperation with other organizations. The communication by partnerships/ networks, the involvement in international research programs, and the development of some modern applications for their actions, for the interconnection of all the departments, will increase the quality of the developed actions, of the products/ services that these offer.

In our study we wanted to find out what is the managers' opinion, from the evaluated sample, about the importance they give to the communication and to the knowing's dissemination through the cooperation/ partnership networks with other organizations.

The received answers show that the respondents consider for the communication inside the knowing management as being not important the common data base (average score - 1.90) and the providing of informational services (average score - 2.34).

Surprising was to find out that these give importance to the partnership interactivity, which average score is 3.67 (fig.4).

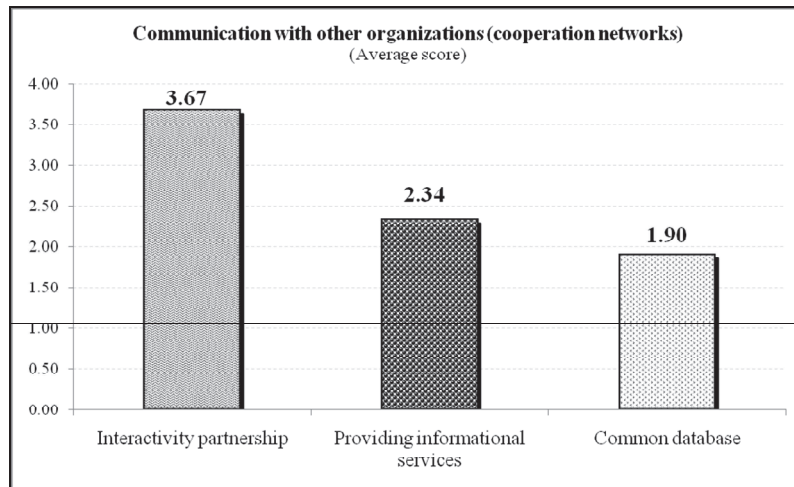


Fig. 4 - Source: own projection

The respondents' interest regarding the domains of this study

The medium obtained scores by the checked interest domains and which are between 2.11 and 2.24, show that our study's subject is unimportant for the respondents (fig.5).

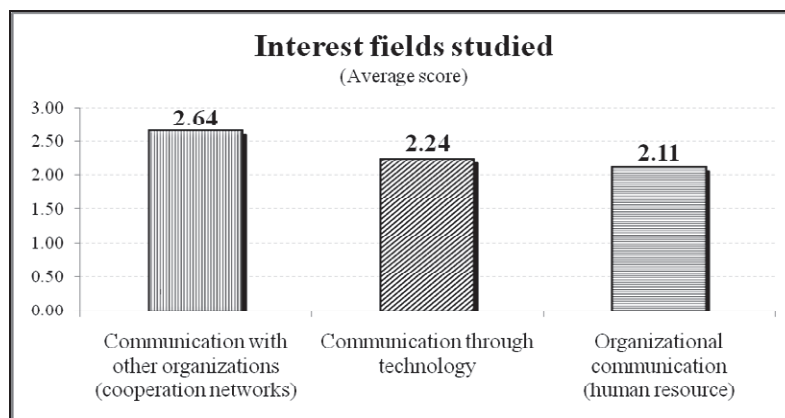


Fig. 5 - Source: own projection

The average score obtained by one aspect, 2.64 – the communication with other organizations (the cooperation networks), succeeded to bring the respondents in the situation of being undecided.

Over all, the all three interest domains targeted by the made study, that obtained a global score of 2.33, proved to be for our respondents, unimportant.

Conclusions

The main conclusion that imposed after this study, is that there is no interest for practicing the knowing management and nor for the communication's role in the implementation and practice of this type of management.

The study reached its objectives by making an analyze of knowing the role of the communication and of its use as a main vector in the knowing management and through the identification of the knowledge level and of the interest regarding the knowing management

Regarding the hypothesis from which we started in making this study, we can say that:

The first hypothesis - the communication is understood as a main vector in the practice of the knowing management, especially by the organization's managers – refutes.

The received answers prove that the persons with leading functions from the organizations that formed our sample, are far away of our expectations.

In proportion of 91.9%, the respondents don't understand the role and importance of the communication in the implementation and practice of the knowing management, their answers being between lack of importance (8.33%), unimportant (75%) and so and so (8.33%).

These persons that have leading functions, have no manager talent and more than sure neither the required studies, proofing that they rather remain stationed in a world they knew and don't want to leave even if the reality crossed those temporary borders.

The second hypothesis – the implementation of the knowing management is the managers' preoccupation – refutes.

Considering that the most of the respondents don't understand the concept of knowing management and it doesn't even represent the smallest interest, it is obvious that from this reasons, its implementation isn't a part of their preoccupations.

For the managers from our sample, the partnership interactivity is the only important aspect regarding the communication with other organizations, even if this aspect represents only 8.33% of the received answers.

The third hypothesis – the organization's management is preoccupied with the assurance of the communication's strategy for practicing the knowing management - refutes.

The studied organizations' management, not being preoccupied of the implementation of the knowing management, can't be preoccupied of the assurance of the communication strategy for its practice.

Overall, the preoccupations of the persons with leading functions inside the organizations from our study, regards anything else but the interests of the organization from which they are part of and upgrading in real time and to the economic conditions in which their organizations develop their activity.

Following our efforts to obtain an image as clear as possible of the actual situation regarding the communication as a central vector in the knowing management, we discovered that the real situation is not at all encouraging and it determined us to offer some proposals:

- It is necessary a sustained preoccupation for the identification of the internal knowing resources and of the development of a communication strategy that stimulates the knowing creation and innovation.

Unfortunately, this preoccupation is not present, and that shows a deficit of knowledge or interest. There is still a lot to work in the direction of communication activity consolidation, to understand that it is one of the most important managerial instruments through which knowing management is implemented and practiced.

- The existence of a specialist in communication or the collaboration with a communication specialized agent, can bring big advantages to the organization.
- Is necessary the existence of a sustained preoccupation to identify and develop the unique abilities inside the organization, by encouraging the opened expression stimulation in any situation.

In the end of this study we can conclude that as we know for a long time, it takes a profound modification of the way which we report to the knowledge universe, to its use in the current activities, to become the best ones in the domain that we activate.

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