

MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION - THE FUNDAMENT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Iuliana Pârvu¹
Cristina Ciami²

Abstract

Leadership is a concept frequently approached in the current managerial practice and literature, organizations and theorists proposing solutions for its implementation in a successful way. A frequently promoted form of leadership in modern organizations is the transformational leadership, in connection with which there is a vast literature. In the context of its implementation, this paper highlights the special role of managerial communication, identifying the objectives that transformational leaders must pursue when communicate. The paper is relevant from a didactic perspective, to guide the approach mainly to the objectives of the managerial communication in contrast to the theorizing of the communication process itself and from the perspective of expanding research to other areas, beyond organizational management, areas where teamwork is relevant.

Keywords: managerial communication, managerial functions, transformational leadership

JEL Classification: M5; M12; M54

1. Introduction

Managerial communication is a topic widely addressed in the field of management literature. The concept is approached from the perspective of its importance within the organization, of the types of managerial communication, of the managerial communication, styles, of the barriers in communication, of the methods of streamlining communication, of the improving the style of communication etc. Thus, in the context of approaching managerial communication, various authors present definitions, classifications, interpretations of aspects related to: formal / informal organizational communication, verbal / written / attitudinal communication, top-down / bottom-up / oblique / lateral communication, communication networks. Also, the managerial communication process is frequently presented graphically, starting from established models such as Lasswell's Model (1948), Shannon-Weaver Model (1949), Wiener's Model (1948), Watzlawick's Model (1976, 1981), Model Osgood - Schramm (1954), (McQuail, 2001) etc.

This paper aims to propose an approach to managerial communication that goes beyond the context of theorizing the process itself, highlighting its role as a managerial tool that the manager can use to achieve a number of objectives, corresponding mainly to the function of Leadership (Leading , according with Anglo-Saxon literature), defined as the social process of influencing others in the organization to realize the major managerial objectives and aims. (Dubrin, 2013).

2. The importance of leadership

Leadership is a function of great importance in all managerial areas, because through it the manager informs subordinates about what to do, how to do and determines them to contribute to achieving the objectives of the organization. Successful fulfillment of this function presupposes the existence of leaders who do more than simply give orders, respectively leaders who manage to excite subordinates in the process of making efforts to achieve organizational goals.

¹ Associate Professor PhD, Spiru Haret University, iuliana.parvu@spiruharet.ro

² Lecturer PhD, Spiru Haret University, cristina.sandu@spiruharet.ro

According to the literature, the foundation for the successful implementation of the leadership function is communication (Towler, 2003). It is scientifically proven that, in addition to the ability to make meaningful decisions, individuals who have exceptional communication skills have a greater ability to engage others in work and, as a result, are more frequently recommended to obtain a leadership position within organizations (Luthra, A., Dahyia, R., 2015).

Regarding the implementation of the leadership, the literature has outlined various theories as follows:

➤ *Contingency Model of Management* - a model formulated by Fiedler (1996), which states there are three situational variables that influence the performance of leaders: the relationship leader - employees; task structure; leader's position power. This is the first theory of leadership that takes into account, in addition to the attributes of managers the situation in which they may find themselves.

➤ *Path-Goal Theory* – the theory formulated by Robert House (1971), argues that the most successful leaders are those who define for subordinates a clear vision and goals and keep them focused on these goals, offering rewards based on results. The theory explains how leaders motivate their subordinates to act to achieve a certain goal. But the theory does not fully explain how leadership style affects the motivation of subordinates, which is one of the many reasons why it does not benefit from relevant studies to support it.

➤ *The Leadership Grid Theory* – it is developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton. This theory is based on two behavioral dimensions of the manager, namely "concern for people" (this is the degree to which a leader considers the needs of team members, their interests and areas of personal development when deciding how best to perform a task) and "concern for goals" (this is the degree to which a leader identifies concrete goals, takes measures for the organizational efficiency and for high productivity when deciding how to accomplish tasks). The combination of the two dimensions results in various leadership styles.

➤ *Transformational Leadership* - it is about the leader ability to transform subordinates so as to determine the increase of their work efficiency and the achievement of organizational objectives in the best conditions.

Regarding this type of leadership, there is a vast specialized literature that supports its benefits for the staff development. It has been found that transformational leadership has significant effects on several aspects of organizational life and on the mood of employees (Krishnan, 2012). A number of studies have also shown significant and positive relationships between transformational leadership and the amount of effort employees are willing to put into it, as well as between it and performance in the workplace. Piccolo and Colquitt (2006) presented that transformational leadership positively influences the perceived levels of the five basic characteristics of the job (variety, identity, significance, autonomy and feedback). At the same time, this type of leadership makes the subordinates attracted to the leader, because their mood, in the presence of the leader, will be a positive one. Bono and Ilies (2006) showed that mood is one of the psychological mechanisms by which charismatic leaders influence employees. Transformational leaders influence subordinates by expanding goals, giving them confidence to act beyond expectations. There is evidence that transformational leadership has an effect on self-esteem, motivation, desires, preferences and values of those involved (Dvir et al., 2002). Gill (2006) showed that when employees rate their managers as transformational, workplace stress is perceived as lower. Locke (1996) stated that transformational leaders who set high goals and convey confidence to their subordinates are more likely to develop employees who believe in organizational goals and strive to achieve them. Krishnan (2012) showed that in the context of transformational leadership, the availability of employees to assume more complex responsibilities is

manifested. Jung and Sosik (2002) found that transformational leadership positively influences group cohesion and effectiveness.

Considering the multiple advantages that the transformational leadership brings to the organization, we consider that such an approach of the leadership is typical for a modern managerial process.

3. The role of communication in the transformational leadership

Transformational leadership is a relatively new approach to leadership, which, as we presented earlier, considers how leaders can create valuable and positive change among subordinates. According to this theory, transformational leaders act simultaneously in four convergent directions on subordinates: personal recognition, intellectual stimulation, supportive leadership, inspirational communication. The conceptual matrix of transformational leadership is presented below:

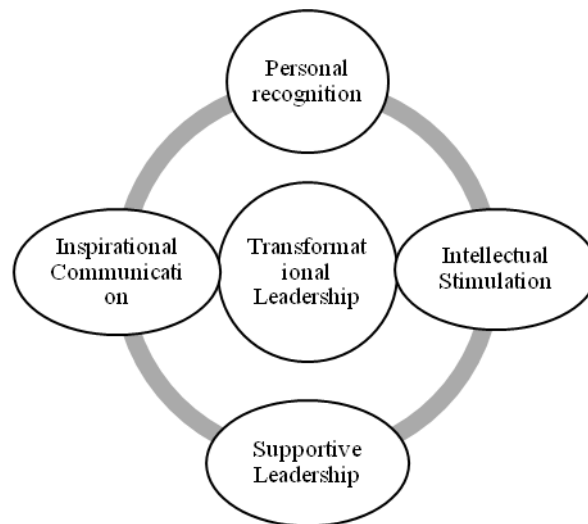


Fig. 1. Transformational Leadership Matrix

Source: Rafferty, A & Griffin, M., 2004

- *Personal recognition* – assumes that leaders recognize and reward employee participation in achieving organizational goals.

- *Intellectual stimulation* – leaders encourage and appreciate innovative and creative staff ideas Through intellectual stimulation, a transformational leader stimulates critical thinking, improves problem solving and empowers followers.

- *Supportive leadership* - it works on the principle that a transformational leader must be a role model for employees to gain their trust and respect and for subordinates to imitate him. When the leader becomes a role model, he is unlikely to meet resistance from subordinates when he wants to make an organizational change.

- *Inspirational Communication* - it is achieved when the leader manages to align individual needs with organizational needs.

For the implementation of the transformational leadership, managerial communication is essential, because it is the one that connects leaders with subordinates (Thomas, Zolin and Hartman, 2009) and, through effective communication, leaders can exercise their role, namely to do things through to the others. This is also supported by Madlock (2008) who demonstrated the existence of an interdependence between communication and leadership success, arguing that the leader's communication skills can create greater employee

satisfaction, which leads to increased performance. Moreover, various studies have found that when leaders fail to communicate effectively with their employees, they are unmotivated and dissatisfied with their tasks. Based on these reasonings, we state that the communication process is the foundation of all four components of transformational leadership.

➤ *Personal recognition* – Recognition of employee participation often involves personal communication between the leader and each team member, being important in building trust between them. Communicating recognition in a useful way for transformational leadership requires the message to be personal, reasoned, adapted to the characteristics of the employee. If the message is correctly transmitted then the leader is appreciated as attentive, interested in subordinates and eager to participate in their development, which will increase the level of involvement of subordinates (Xu and Cooper, 2011).

➤ *Intellectual stimulation* - Leaders can stimulate intellectual stimulation through a set of behaviors and attitudes in communication, such as: providing information and exchanging solutions, stimulating curiosity, encouraging employees, promoting a culture of learning, providing training, transferring learning (Carmeli and Scheaffer, 2009).

➤ *Supportive leadership* - In the context of transformational leadership, the supportive leadership must be manifested in the changing process that employees must go through. In this context, the leader's communication style must aim to increase the level of security and the willingness of employees to overcome the challenges posed by any change / transformation.

➤ *Inspirational Communication* – Managerial communication to support this component of transformational leadership must send messages, in an organizational context, that have the ability to excite employees. Therefore, it is important for leaders to adopt a personal communication style in order to have an emotional impact on employees and to identify mutual interests. The communication style must be adapted in relation to the interlocutor, it must be flexible (Madlock, 2008). Empirical data show that in order to develop an inspirational communication process, leaders must be good listeners, in order to understand how employees feel and reason. The recommendation is that, in this context, online communication should be avoided, because the message could be misunderstood or the leader should develop exceptional written communication skills. At the same time, the leader must know very well the subject on which he communicates, to demonstrate that he has self-confidence and also to have the ability to provide useful feedback (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).

Summarizing the presented, in the table below we identify a series of objectives of managerial communication that managers must develop in order to support transformational leadership:

Table 1. Managerial communication objectives to support transformational leadership

Components of transformational leadership	Managerial communication objectives
Personal recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of direct communication skills - Sending personal messages, reasoned, adapted to the specifics of the employee
Personal recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developing an interactive communication style, frequently asking questions to employees; - Challenging employees to find their own solutions to the organization's problems; - Sending messages to support learning; - Sending messages in order to train employees

Supportive leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication of messages oriented towards the construction of hope (communication style: emotional, encouraging, captivating) - Communication of rational messages (communication style: concrete, structured, impartial, with complete information) - Employee-oriented communication (communication style: determined, strong, empathetic) - Communication aimed at supporting employees (communication style: imposing, dominant, fearless, helpful)
Inspirational Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal communication style; - Good listening skills of employees - Flexibility in communication to adapt to the way employees feel and reason - Avoid written communication in favor of face-to-face communication - The tone of the communication must induce participation - Ability to provide useful feedback

Conclusions

Evidence from relevant research clearly demonstrates that groups led by transformational leaders have a higher level of performance and satisfaction than groups led by other types of leaders (Riggio, 2009). Transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire employees to achieve very good results and to develop their own leadership skills.

In this paper, the managerial function of leading the staff (leadership) was approached from the perspective of the opportunity to be implemented according to the characteristics of transformational leadership. Thus, starting from the characteristics of this type of leadership, as suggested by the literature, we highlighted the role of managerial communication in supporting the implementation of modern leadership. As a result, for each characteristic of transformational leadership, we have highlighted certain communication objectives that the managers of current organizations should pursue.

The paper is relevant from at least two perspectives, on the one hand from a didactic perspective, in order to orient the approach mainly towards the objectives of managerial communication in contrast to the theorizing of the communication process itself and, on the other hand, from the perspective of extension to other fields of the organizational management, areas in which leader-team members type relations are formed.

References:

1. Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E.m 2008, "Towards a model of work engagement", *Career Development International*, 13(3), pp.209 - 223
2. Beciu, C, 2011, *Sociologia comunicării și a spațiului public*, Ed. Polirom Iași
3. Bono, J, T. A., Ilies, J. R., & Gerhardt, M. W. , 2002, "Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 765–780. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.4.765>
4. Burciu, A. et al., 2008,. *Introducere în management*. Ed. Economică București, p. 55
5. Carmeli, A & Sheaffer, Z, 2009, "How Leadership Characteristics Affect Organizational Decline and Downsizing". *Journal of Business Ethics*, 86, pp. 363-378
6. DuBrin, A. J.,2010, *Essentials of management* (9th ed.). South-Western, p. 10.

7. Dvir, T & Eden, D & Avolio, B & Shamir, B, 2002, "Impact of Transformational Leadership on Follower Development and Performance: A Field Experiment", *Academy of Management Journal*, 45, pp 735-744
8. Gill, R., 2006, *Theory and practice of leadership*. Sage Publications Ltd
9. Krishnan, V. R., 2012, "Transformational leadership and personal outcomes: empowerment as mediator", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 33 (6) pp. 550 – 563
10. Jung, D. I., & Sosik, J. J., 2002, Transformational Leadership in Work Groups the Role of Empowerment, Cohesiveness, and Collective-Efficacy on Perceived Group Performance. *Small Group Research*, 33, 313-336.
11. Luthra, A., Dahyia, R., 2015, "Effective Leadership is all About Communicating Effectively: Connecting Leadership and Communication", *International Journal of Management & Business Studies*, 5 (3), 43 – 48
12. Madlock, P., 2008, "The Link Between Leadership Style, Communicator Competence, and Employee Satisfaction", *Journal of Business Communication - J Bus Comm*, 45, pp 61-78
13. McQuail, D, Windahl, S, 2001, *Modele ale comunicarii*, traducere de A. Bargaoanu si P. Dobrescu, Ed. comunicare.ro, București, p. 59
14. Piccolo, R. F., & Colquitt, J. A., 2006, "Transformational Leadership and Job Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Core Job Characteristics", *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(2), 327–340. <https://doi.org/10.5465/AMJ.2006.20786079>
15. Rafferty, A & Griffin, M., 2004, "Dimensions of transformational leadership: Conceptual and empirical extensions", *The Leadership Quarterly*, 15, pp. 329-354
16. Reza, M., 2019,. "Components of Transformational Leadership Behavior"., *Multidisciplinary Research*, 5 (3)
17. Riggio, R, 2009, "Are You a Transformational Leader?", *Psychology Today*, disponibil la: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/200903/are-you-transformational-leader>
18. Thomas, G., Zolin, R., & Hartman, J. L. (2009), "The Central Role of Communication in Developing Trust and its Effect on Employee Involvement", *Journal of Business Communication*, 46(3), 287-310.
19. Towler, A. J., 2003, "Effects of charismatic influence training on attitudes, behavior, and performance", *Personnel Psychology*, 56(2), 363–381
20. Wenhao L. și colab., 2016, "How does leader communication style promote employees' commitment at times of change?", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 29 (2) pp. 242 – 262
21. Weaver, B, 2016, "The Transformational Leadership Communication Of Socially Close And Distant Leaders On Vision Integration". Wayne State University Dissertations. Disponibil la: https://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2667&context=oa_dissertations
22. [Xu, J.](#), [Cooper T. H.](#), 2011, "How can leaders achieve high employee engagement?", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 399-416.