

COMMUNICATION IN COMPANIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA AND WAYS OF RESOLVING DISPUTES IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

KOMUNIKACIJA U PODUZEĆIMA U REPUBLICI HRVATSKOJ I NAČINI RJEŠAVANJA NESPORAZUMA U KOMUNIKACIJSKOM PROCESU

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to find out, by use of the method of employee survey in the Republic of Croatia in private and state-owned companies, whether employees are satisfied with the current way of communication in the company where they are employed and how to resolve misunderstandings in the communication process. Most employees are satisfied with the current communication, they are of the opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic did not negatively affect the communication process, and employees resolve misunderstandings in the communication process with the person with whom the misunderstanding arose.*

Key words: *communication, employees, managers*

Sažetak: *Cilj ovog rada je metodom anketiranja zaposlenika u Republici Hrvatskoj u privatnim i državnim poduzećima doznati jesu li zaposlenici zadovoljni trenutnim načinom komunikacije u poduzeću u kojem su zaposleni i na koji način rješavaju nesporazume u komunikacijskom procesu. Većina zaposlenika zadovoljna je trenutnom komunikacijom, mišljenja su da pandemija COVID-19 nije negativno utjecala na proces komunikacije, a nesporazume u komunikacijskom procesu zaposlenici sami rješavaju sa osobom sa kojom je nesporazum i nastao.*

Gljučne riječi: *komunikacija, zaposlenici, menadžeri*



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1. Introduction

People need to communicate with each other all their lives. In private life, people can choose between several alternatives and the person they want to communicate with, but at work the situation is different, employees have to communicate with co-workers regardless of whether the communication process is successful or unsuccessful. The goal of every employee and every manager is the success of the communication process, which implies the absence of the so-called "noise" in the communication process and which involves two-way communication. Two-way communication includes feedback, interaction in the communication process, asking questions in case of ambiguity and the like. Misunderstandings in the communication process are possible, and to avoid them, managers need to devote time to the process of communicating with employees, communicate clearly and openly, and for as long as necessary. The patience of managers is key to the success of the communication process. Employees are also responsible for their part in the communication process and it is very important that they are patient in listening to interlocutors, that they are active in the communication process and that they express their opinions, views, doubts and ambiguities if they have them. All employees sometimes have doubts and ambiguities in their daily work and daily communication with work colleagues, business partners and superiors (managers).

According to research by Miklošević et al (2022), employees are of the opinion that managers should find more time to communicate with them and keep an eye on their ego during the communication process. According to the employees, the lack of time of superiors was pointed out as the biggest problem of one-way communication between employees and managers. As a solution to the problem, employees suggest that managers find more time to communicate with them and wish that managers listen to them more and organize more individual and group meetings. [1] Porter (1985) emphasizes the strategy of differentiation as a competitive advantage of the company, which means that the company offers a unique product. [2] How will companies succeed in marketing a unique product? Without human resources, it is impossible to market a product better than the competition. For human resources to function successfully in companies, successful and two-way communication between employees and managers (superiors) and employees is needed.

According to Turkalj and Miklošević (2017), human resources are the bearers of all business activities in the company, they are responsible for the growth and development of the company, the improvement of business processes and the satisfaction of end customers. [3]

Sikavica et al (2008: 20) points out that communication between the manager and his associates is extremely important for the successful development of management. Without good and complete communication between the manager and the associate in performing all managerial functions, it would be difficult to expect successful planning, organizing, leading and controlling. [6]

2. The importance of two-way communication in companies

Establishing two-way communication in companies reduces or completely eliminates the risk of potential misunderstandings. When it is clear to each participant in the communication process which job needs to be done, who will do which part of the job, what is the purpose of doing the job and what is the ultimate goal, there should be no problems in the communication process. The responsibility for the communication process in companies is on the managers, and the employees are co-responsible, each employee for his part in the communication process.

By participating in various seminars and trainings related to the communication process, managers and employees can, if they wish, learn a lot about how to communicate.

Without the communication process, it would be impossible to conduct business processes, conclude new deals, improve existing products, take care of human resources in companies and people's daily private and family life. Communication should be a two-way process, in which one interlocutor expressed certain information and the other interlocutor listened to the same information, so both interlocutors in the communication process are satisfied with the process and have the feedback they expected. Furthermore, successful communication involves asking questions from interlocutors and suggestions. There are often situations in which the interlocutors do not understand each other, conclude wrongly, or do not understand the meaning, purpose and goal of the communication process. A communication process that is incomplete or full of misunderstandings and wrong conclusions can lead to great losses for the company: loss of time, money and unnecessary waste of resources, which causes financial costs, misunderstandings and problems within the company. Therefore, all participants in business communication processes should care that this process ends to the mutual satisfaction and benefit, and ultimately to the satisfaction of customers and clients of the company. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly affected communication processes in companies, due to the impossibility of organizing live courses in companies. The entire business in companies has been conducted online in the last two years, which has slowed down, made more difficult and brought many problems in the communication processes in companies.

Turkalj et al (2016: 19) emphasize that managers have a great task to achieve the set organizational goals at the lowest cost and in the best possible way, with the satisfaction of all employees and customers. [4]

Sigurnjak (2016: 959) points out that human resources are the most important part of any organization and people with their knowledge, skills and creativity contribute the most to achieving the goals of the company. [5]

Bahtijarević-Šiber (1999) points out that managers are aware of the importance of the art of working with people, as evidenced by the organization of various seminars for managers, and are related to motivating people, communication, interpersonal skills and the like. [7]

According to the research of Miklošević et al (2022), managers due to the COVID-19 pandemic have difficulties in performing the managerial function of planning and

organizing, due to frequent and unpredictable sick leave, and communication, organizing trainings, seminars and teamwork due to sudden sick leave. [8]

Miklošević et al (2022) state that the sum of the efforts and commitment of each individual employee in companies makes the overall business success of the company. According to the results of the research, the authors conclude that in addition to salary, employees also value intangible satisfaction factors, of which the leading factor is employee satisfaction in their workplaces with a good work atmosphere. [9]

The success of communication depends on all participants (Lamza - Maronić and Glavaš, 2008: 10), because their previous experiences and giving common same or similar meanings to the message greatly affect the success of the communication event. [10]

Without a two-way communication process, there is no good working atmosphere in companies. All employees and managers should care that a two-way process takes place in their mutual communication, to the mutual satisfaction of all actors in the communication process and that all problems and misunderstandings are resolved promptly, with feedback and compromise, to the satisfaction of both managers and employees. Customers and clients of the company, in the case of inadequate and one-way communication between employees, and employees and managers, could feel such a working atmosphere, which is not conducive to the company's reputation towards customers and clients. Therefore, both managers and employees need to make great efforts every day to improve the communication process, both internal and external to customers, clients, suppliers and business partners.

3. Methodology and research results

The aim of this paper is to find out, by using the method of employee survey in private and state-owned companies in the Republic of Croatia whether employees have problems in the communication process with their colleagues or superiors (managers), whether misunderstandings occur in the communication process and how to resolve misunderstandings in communication process in the company in which they are employed. The survey was conducted online via the Google Forms, during March and April 2022, on a sample of 244 employees in private and state-owned enterprises in the Republic of Croatia, without regional restrictions (N=244). Employees aged 18-65 were interviewed. 153 respondents (62.7%) are employed in state-owned companies, 79 respondents (32.4%) are employed in private companies, while a small number of respondents are founders of their own company, namely 12 respondents (4.9%). The largest number of respondents graduated from college (51.6%), followed by high school (29.5%). A smaller number of respondents completed the master's degree (16.0%), while the smallest number of respondents have a doctorate (2.9%).

The following research questions were asked:

RQ1: Are employees satisfied with the way they communicate in the workplace where they are employed?

RQ2: According to employees, did the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affect the communication process?

RQ3: How would employees rate the current level of communication in the company?

RQ4: How do employees resolve misunderstandings in the communication process?

Two hypotheses have been set:

H1: Employees are dissatisfied with the way they communicate in their workplace

H2: Employees resolve misunderstandings in the communication process with their colleagues, in the highest percentage with the person with whom they have a communication misunderstanding

The age of the respondents is shown in Table 1. The survey was attended by 244 respondents (employees) working in private and state-owned companies in the Republic of Croatia. The youngest respondent is 19 years old, while the oldest respondent is 63 years old. The difference between the oldest and youngest respondents (range) is 44 years. 25% of respondents are up to 35 years old, 50% of respondents are up to 40 years old while 75% of respondents are up to 48 years old.

N	Valid	244
	Missing	0
Mean		40
Median		40
Range		44
Minimum		19
Maximum		63
Percentiles	25	35
	50	40
	75	48

Table 1: Age of respondents, *Source: author's work according to research results*

Table 2 shows the respondents by gender. 79.5% of women and 20.5% of men responded to the survey.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent	
Valid	male	50	20.5	20.5	20.5
	female	194	79.5	79.5	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Gender of respondents, *Source: author's work according to research results*

Respondents were asked if they were satisfied with the way of communication in the company where they are employed (Table 3). 42.2% of respondents are satisfied with the way of communication in the company in which they are employed, 34.0% of respondents are sometimes satisfied with the way of communication, while a smaller number of respondents are not satisfied with the way of communication (23.8%).

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	103	42.2	42.2	42.2
	no	58	23.8	23.8	66.0
	sometimes	83	34.0	34.0	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

Table 3. Respondents' satisfaction with the way of communication, *Source: author's work according to research results*

Table 4 shows the attitude of respondents to the assessment of the current level of communication in the company where they are employed (grade 1 - very poor communication, grade 2 - poor communication, grade 3 - good communication, grade 4 - very good communication, grade 5 - excellent communication). The largest number of respondents rated the level of communication in the company where one works with a score of 3 (32.4%), followed by a score of 4 (27.0%) and a score of 2 (20.1%). Only 13.5% of respondents rated the current level of communication as 5.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	17	7.0	7.0	7.0
	2	49	20.1	20.1	27.0
	3	79	32.4	32.4	59.4
	4	66	27.0	27.0	86.5
	5	33	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Assessment of the current level of communication in the company, *Source: author's work according to research results*

Table 5 shows the attitudes of respondents about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the communication process. Respondents were asked whether the COVID-19 pandemic had worsened the communication process in the company where they were employed. The vast majority of respondents think that the pandemic did not worsen the communication process (52.0%), 21.3% of respondents think that the pandemic sometimes worsened the communication process, while 26.6% of respondents think that the pandemic worsened the communication process in the company where they are employed.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	yes	65	26.6	26.6	26.6
	no	127	52.0	52.0	78.7
	sometimes	52	21.3	21.3	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the communication process, *Source: author's work according to research results*

How employees resolve misunderstandings in the company they work for is shown in Table 6. Most respondents resolve misunderstandings in the communication process with the person with whom they have a problem (60.2%), 10.2% of respondents contact their superior in case of disagreement with colleagues in the communication process, and 8.6% of respondents solve this problem by silence, while 20.9% of respondents stated that there is no misunderstanding in communication with work colleagues.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I deal with that person myself	147	60.2	60.2	60.2
	contacting a superior	25	10.2	10.2	70.5
	by silence	21	8.6	8.6	79.1
	I have no misunderstanding	51	20.9	20.9	100.0
	Total	244	100.0	100.0	

Table 6. Ways to resolve misunderstandings in communication in companies, *Source: author's work according to research results*

The first hypothesis (H1: *Employees are dissatisfied with the way they communicate in their workplace*) is not accepted, because 42.2% of employees are satisfied with the communication in the company where they are employed, and 34.0% of respondents are sometimes satisfied. The second hypothesis is accepted (H2: *Employees resolve misunderstandings in the communication process with their colleagues, with the highest percentage with the person with whom they have a communication misunderstanding*) because the survey results show that a high percentage of respondents (60.2%) said that misunderstandings in the communication process with work colleagues solve on their own with colleagues with whom they have a problem. The openness of employees in the communication process towards the research results is also quite visible.

4. Conclusion

Communication between employees and between employees and managers in a company is a basic prerequisite for the establishment, existence and development of the company, and the ultimate goal is to meet the needs and desires of all customers or clients of the company. Human resources are the bearers of all business activities in the company. According to the survey results, employees are mostly satisfied with the way they communicate in the company where they are employed (42.2% of respondents), 23.8% of respondents are dissatisfied with the communication process in the company where they work, while 34% of respondents are sometimes satisfied. The largest number of respondents (32.4%) rated the level of communication in the company where they work with a rating of 3 - good communication, on a scale of 1 to 5. Respondents believe that the COVID 19 pandemic did not worsen the communication process in the company where they are employed (52.0%). Most of the respondents resolve misunderstandings in the communication process with the person with whom they have a problem (60.2%). The results of the research conclude that the respondents are open in communication with each other because they solve problems in the communication process on their own with a colleague with whom they have a disagreement in the communication process.

5. Literature

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