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Pedagogical Practices

Integrated Strategic Communication (ISC) in Romanian Organizations

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Abstract: In the last 10-15 years, we have witnessed remarkable technological changes and particularly spectacular innovations, which have led to a complete change in the way business develops, in the way communication changes or in the way we choose to live our lives. All these changes have forced organizations to develop and improve their customer relationships and try to find solutions to convey consistent messages in their interactions with all interested parties - the state and local authorities, their own employees, suppliers, financial institutions - using a wide range of **integrated communication** tools.

Keywords: communication; strategy; integrated models; education

The research method used is to create a ISC model that aims at facilitating the communication process on three levels: at the macro level, it is able to produce public debates on any new idea or technology, thus allowing discussions between the organization and any stakeholder on the issue, at the medium level, the ISC Model is needed to generate and correctly perceive interactions between

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organizations and relevant stakeholders, at the micro level, any manager in the organization contributes to the process to the extent that it is able to properly mediate his work and research for the good of his clients and partners. At this level, an important dimension is given by leadership communication guided towards employees.

Results

The ISC model makes the organization's communication process based on principles and values that it believes in, beyond making a profit or the desire for social improvement. Integrated strategic communication, according to the model, focuses particularly on the practices that generate and control organizational success.

The ISC model is based on two principles:

- the strategic intention of the organization leads to integrated strategic communication;
- Continuous organizational development permanently repositions the organization.

In addition to these two principles, the model considers **three areas of integration** for which **communication must become unitary**, namely:

- organizational integration (**Zone A**);
- stakeholder integration (**Zone B**);
- environmental integration (**Zone C**).

Figure 1 shows the four elements (zones) that the ISC model integrates, in order to ensure an efficient integrated strategic communication at the level of Romanian organizations.

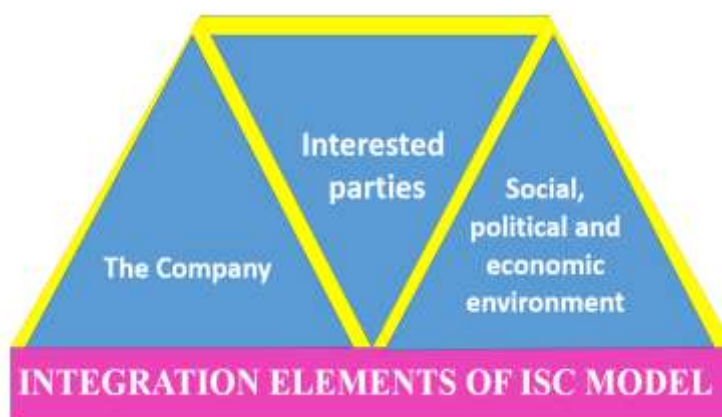


Figure 1. Components of the Integration elements of ISC model

Thus, the elaboration of the model involved the following:

- *an analysis of the stages to which communication can be integrated*, starting from the functional integration and reaching the integration of the management relations;
- *identifying the way in which the communication can be integrated*: externally with the interested parties, vertically between the management staff and employees and horizontally between the same departments;
- *identifying the areas of integration* for which the communication must become unitary: organizational integration, stakeholder integration and environmental integration.

The model (**Figure 2**) is also structurally representative of general systems theory, in that it proposes an open systems approach.

It is also reaffirmed that all systems consist of a subsystem and a super-system in general systems theory. Applying this model assumes that the organization operates in a larger system, namely the environment (supra-system) and consists of a subsystem of organizational functions. This implies that there is a constant interaction between the different parts of the system. This model proposes that the interaction between the different parts of the system to be based on a two-way relationship management.

The strategic intention of the organization drives all its communication to ensure unity of effort in terms of organizational functioning, based on what is learned from the interested parties and the environment. Consequently, the new type of communicator is the central point of communication to ensure alignment between

communication and organizational objectives, so as to ensure a union in the actions and messages of the organization.

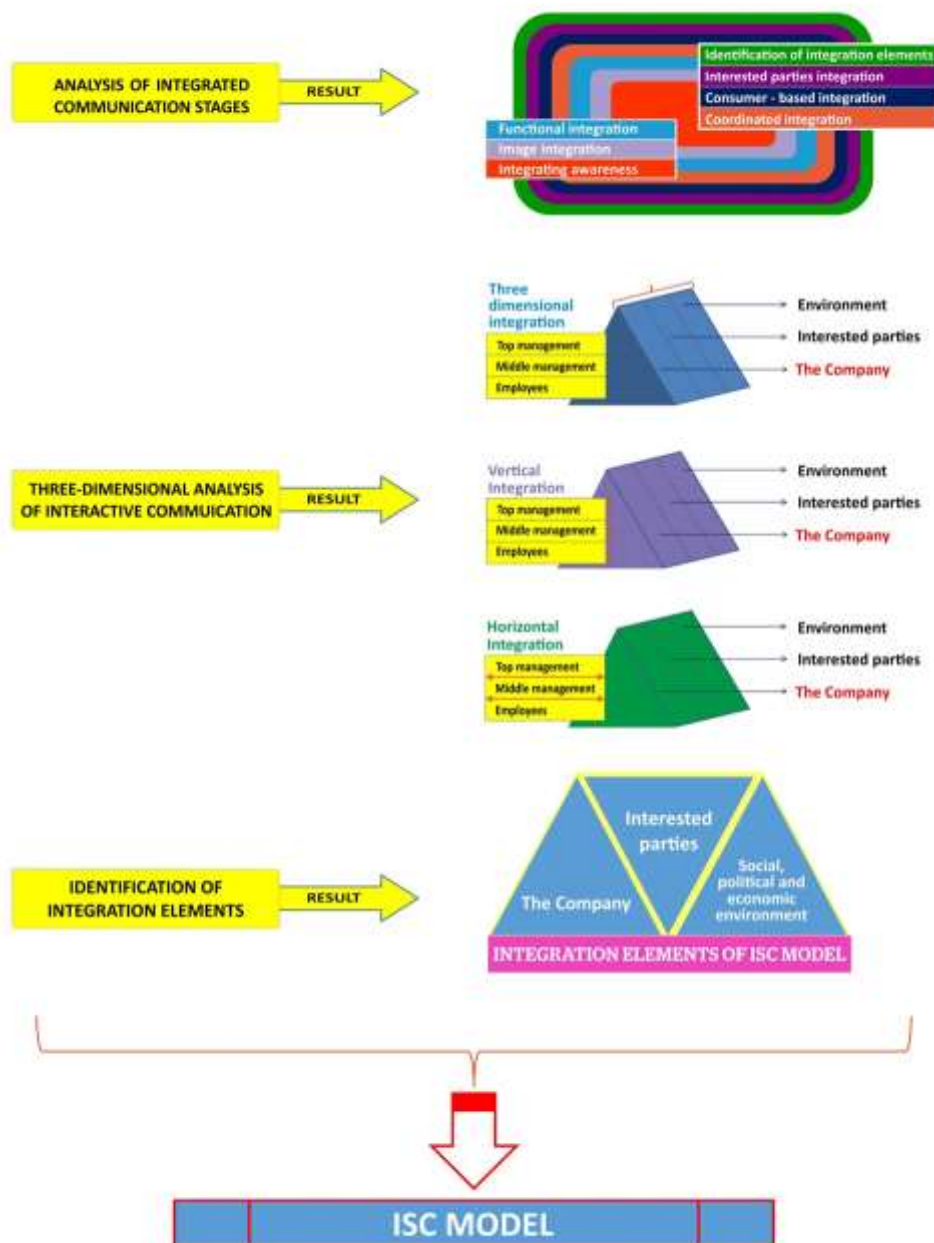


Figure 2. Scheme for elaborating the ISC model

Once the strategic intent of the organization materializes, the ISC Model identifies the three distinct areas that need to be integrated to implement integrated strategic communication management, namely organizations, interested parties, and the environment (Figure 3).

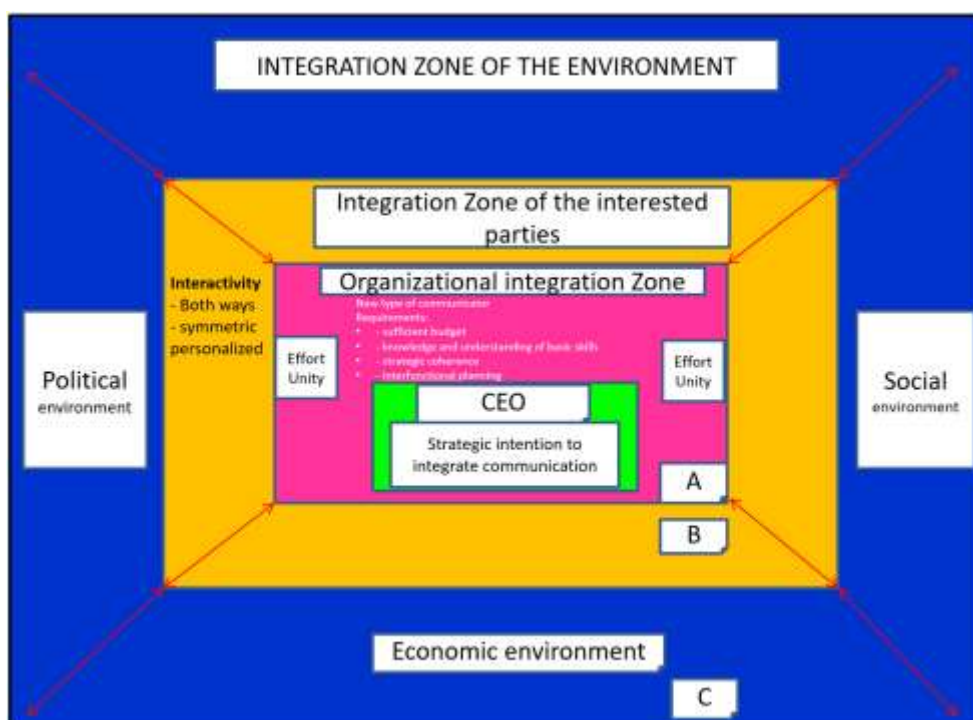


Figure 3. ISC Model - Integrated Strategic Communication

The discussions begin with the area of organizational integration, as integration should be done primarily internally within the organization, before integration can take place in terms of stakeholders and the environment.

Zone A. Organizational integration is the first area of integration in the ISC model. The organizational integration aspect of this model is based on horizontal and vertical integration. It should be mentioned that in Romanian companies, according to the three-dimensional approach, communication is rarely integrated horizontally or vertically, but in most cases it is done externally. In the long run, the ISC model proposes horizontal and vertical integration in organizational integration.

Zone B. Integration of the interested parties

The second area of integration in the ISC model is the integration of interested parties. Focusing on interested parties, this model recognizes that organizations, which incorporate the concept of integrated strategic communication, operate in the “century of the interested parties”. This implies that such an organization has a broader view of the environment and the final users, taking into account all interested parties who have a legitimate interest in the success of the organization, and not just customers. Therefore, the model argues that all stakeholders, not just customers, choose the extent to which they interact with the organization. In other words, most advertising and communication agencies choose to be stakeholders, and when they do, they are automatically given the opportunity to understand and influence what the organization is doing. Integrated strategic communication is important in managing stakeholder relations due to overlapping, interdependence and interaction between the interested parties from the financial point of view. The ISC model argues that stakeholders are increasingly involved in how the product or service is designed, assembled, promoted and delivered.

Zone C. Environmental integration

By including the integration of the environment in the proposed model, it is supported the idea that the organization operates in an open system. The considered environment refers to three aspects, respectively: the economic environment, the social environment and the political environment. Organizations need to keep up with the environment in order to survive. Again, this implies that the organization should function as a lifelong learning organization. The model emphasizes the interaction between the organization, the interested parties and the environment to effectively manage integrated strategic communication, to ultimately build strong relationships.

Establishing good practices for the implementation of the ISC model

Effective communication at the level of organizations is based on active listening. This type of listening involves attention, empathy, lack of criticism, and it is beyond prejudices and opinions and can identify the needs of the dialogue partner, his expectations in the communication process.

In order to meet the conditions of active listening, the elements shown in Figure 4 must be taken into account:



Figure 4. Active listening - a condition for effective communication

At the same time, the person who knows how to communicate effectively is able to be an excellent listener, being able to convey the original message according to what he thinks and manages to use a language within the meaning of the person to whom the message is addressed. This type of communicator is constantly concerned with the way the interlocutor understands the message sent, he intends to obtain feedback continuously, being thus able to permanently adjust his message in order to transmit the information that the interlocutor needs to understand correctly what is transmitted to him. Effective communication, both in personal and work relationships, has the effect of interpersonal relationships established on the basis of trust and mutual respect, are not subject to tensions and divergences and can lead to positive results for the organization. This paper highlights the necessary steps to be taken in order to achieve effective communication within Romanian organizations. It involves six stages of communication (whether we are talking about written or verbal communication), their completion is not necessarily achieved in the presented order, they are not mutually exclusive, they can be combined according to the concept and style of each individual participating in the communication process within the organization.

Figure 5 shows the 6 stages of efficient communication within Romanian Companies.

Choosing the presentation model of the message

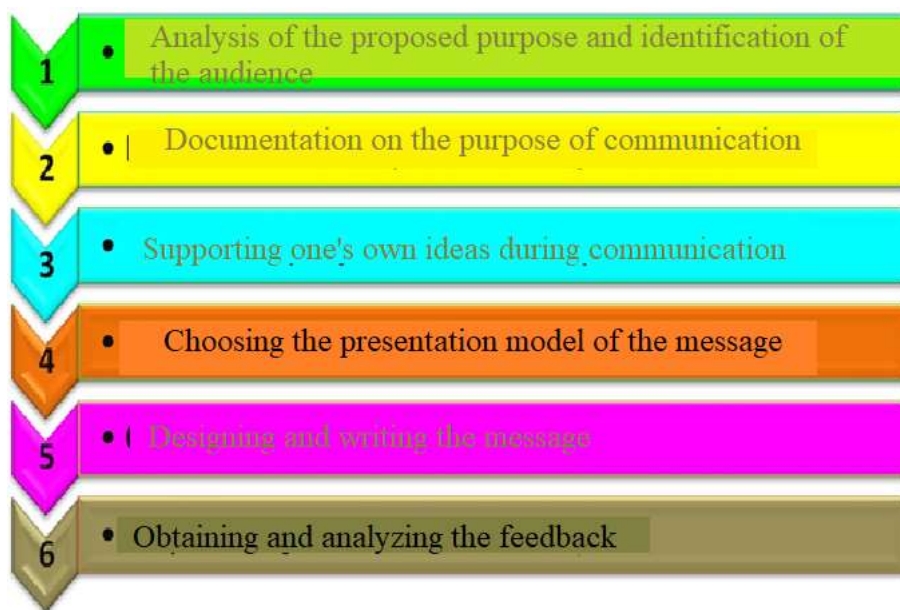


Figure 5. Good practices on effective communication

Analysis of the proposed purpose and identification of the audience

The motivation of communication within the organization is the direct result of the answers to be formulated to three questions, stated before starting the communication process (Figure 6.).

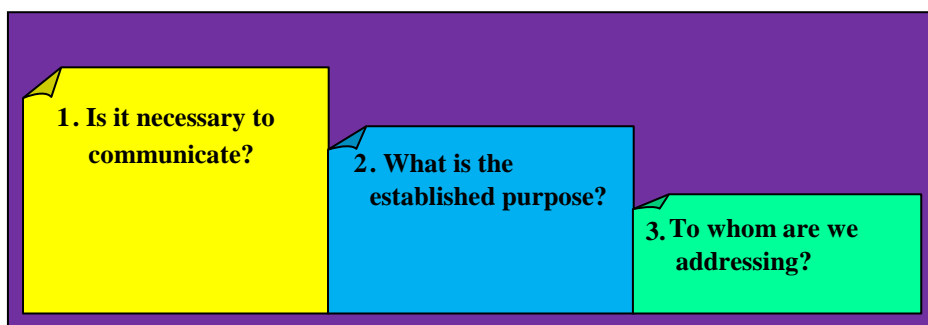


Figure 6 Motivation of communication

Is it necessary to communicate?

What is the purpose of communication? Once the need for communication is identified, we move on to the next step of the analysis, namely the analysis of its objective. Almost any communication in the organization, whether written or oral, is subject to the following three general objectives, as shown in Figure 7:



Figure 7. Communication Objectives

In view of these objectives, it is recommended to make an analysis of the general purpose of the communication in order to identify its specific objective.

What needs to be done after the communication?

The answer to this question is the very specific purpose of the communication.

To whom are we addressing?

When the issue of the audience receiving the transmitted message is discussed, a new series of questions appears that must be answered in order for the communication process to become effective, which is highlighted in Figure 8.

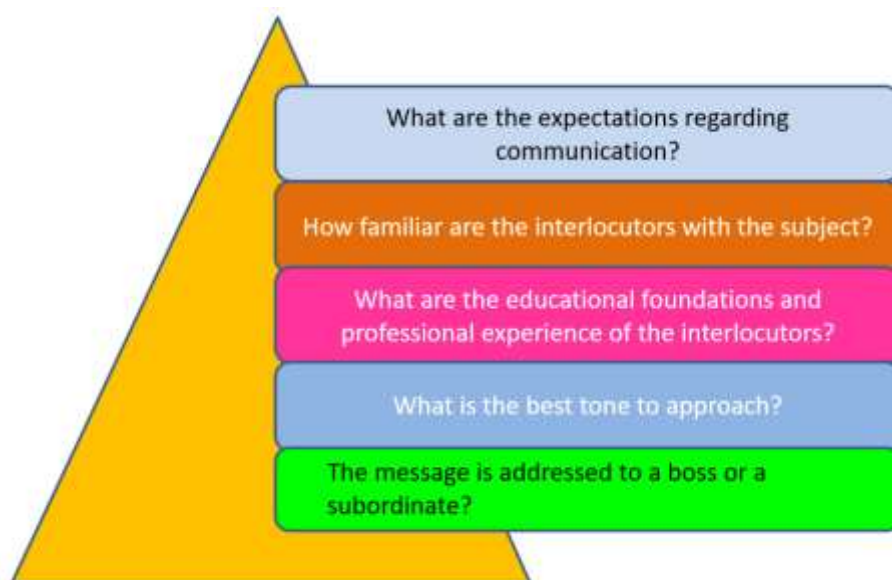


Figure 8. Communication auditor

Analyzing the purpose of the communication and its auditor, a first step is made for an efficient communication within the organizations, by obviously attracting the interlocutor on the side of the one who is going to send the message. The second step for effective communication, according to the proposed guide, involves documentation. The purpose of the documentation is either to identify if there is a problem or to find a solution to the present problem. The result of the documentation process can take various forms, starting from a paper with a few lines and reaching a complete and in-depth analysis of materials from various sources.

During the collection of the data necessary for the documentation, an impartial attitude is recommended, in order to prevent subjectivism in approaching the respective problem. For example, one can end up in a situation where some data are ignored just because they do not correspond to the philosophy of the person performing the operation.

Figure 9 shows the primary sources of information that are analyzed in the documentation stage on the problem:



Figure 9. Primary sources of information

To increase the credibility and strengthen the persuasive capacity of the audience, we can propose the following five ways, as illustrated in Figure 10:

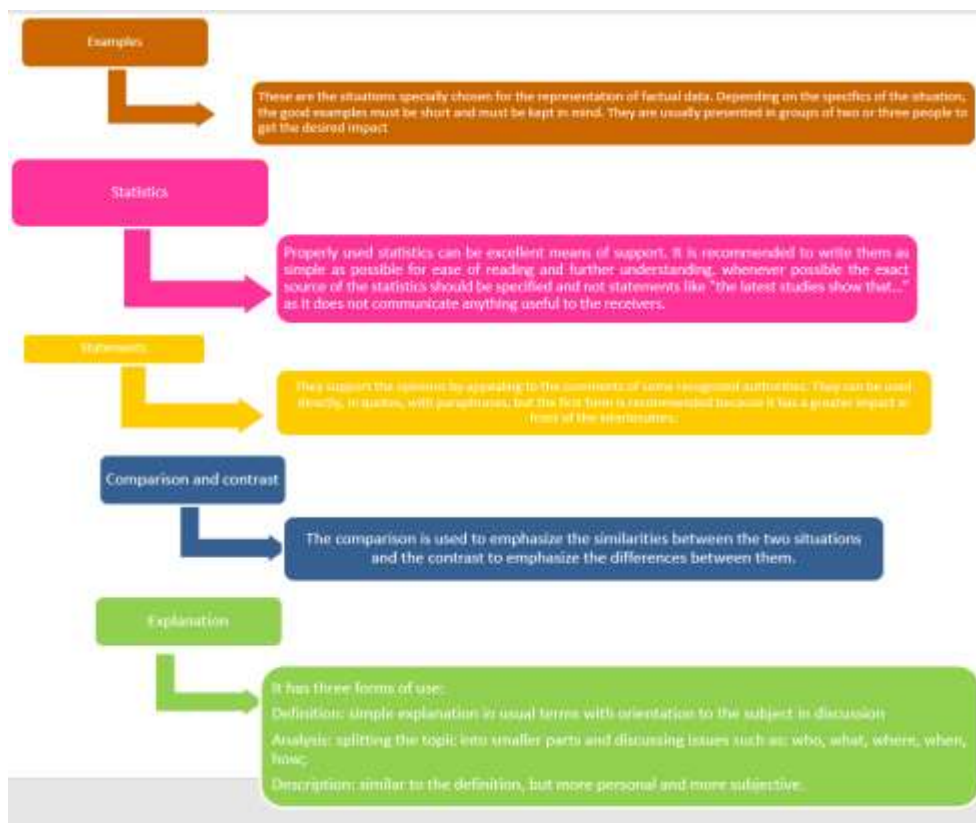


Figure 10. Ways to support your own ideas

It is recommended to avoid considering only those data and events that are in favor of the person in question, avoiding subjectivism as much as possible. There are situations in which the trap of subjectivism cannot be avoided. For example, when a hierarchical superior has a subjective point of view on a certain issue, there is a risk that his subordinate, without permission, will adhere to this point of view. In such situations it is recommended to notify the superior about this fact, because there is a risk that he does not achieve the subjectivism, and if it persists in the same direction, at least the subordinate has a clear conscience.

In the communication process within the Romanian organizations, the coherence of the transmitted messages can be affected, unintentionally, by the incomplete thinking or the so-called in Figure 11: "logic leaks". Among such ways of affecting the transmitted messages are those presented below.

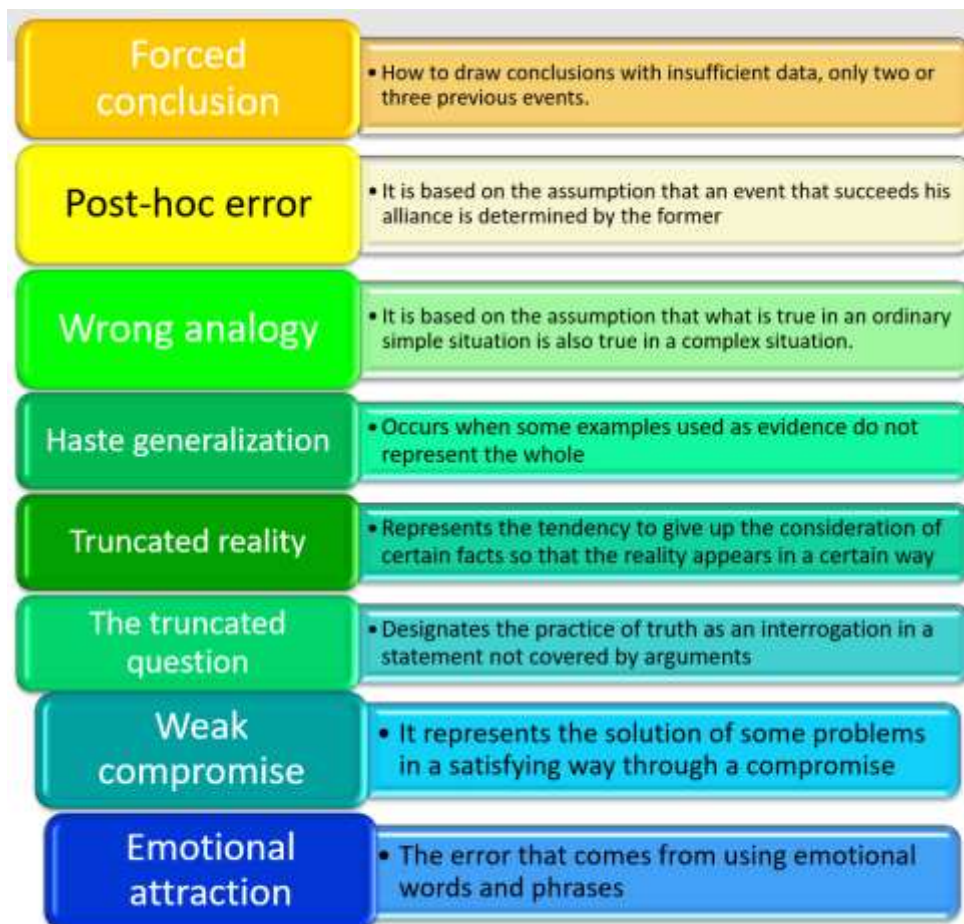


Figure 11. Logic leaks in message transmission

The aforementioned errors are observed almost daily within organizations, each being part of this way of thinking. The best thing that can be done in these situations is to develop a professional sense that can allow them to be detected and subsequently to remove them.

Written messages involve three parts: introduction, contents and conclusion. The logic of this three-part arrangement is commonly used in organizations, and the effect of this simple mode is much greater if the introductory part is able to capture attention in the first place states as clearly as possible the purpose pursued and establishes precisely the relationships between the problems considered. Next, the

content must have a logic, be relevant in ideas, and finally, the conclusion should summarize what is significant and was stated in the content.

The next step in organizing communication involves choosing a model that helps, to the same extent, both transmitters and receivers, to convey ideas logically and systematically, from the beginning to the end of communication. The required model is determined by the purpose of the communication, the needs of the auditor and the type of material used (Figure 12.).

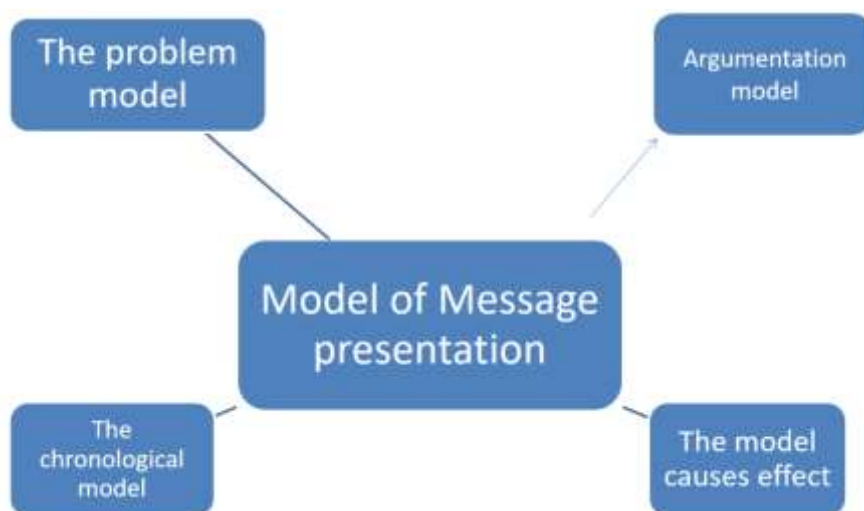


Figure 12. Models for presenting a message

The problem model	The chronological model
It is used to make statements followed by listing issues that come to support, explain, or develop those statements. Any list attached to the statement must be run in a logical order to be structured from simple to complex, from general to particular and so on.	It is used when discussing events, problems or processes in chronological order, which have already taken place or are about to take place. It is the most useful model for written approaches, because situations based on temporal succession are common.
Argumentation model	The model causes effect
It is useful when you want to formulate an opinion or a point of view, which are then supported by discussing the arguments. It involves nothing more than a description of the logic behind which that point of view is supported.	It is used to demonstrate how one or more ideas or actions lead to other ideas or actions. Two variants of this model are available: from cause to effect or from effect to cause. The appeal to one or the other of the variants depends on the context of the discussion or the proof, but in any case, the false or singular causes are avoided.

Figure 13. Description of message presentation patterns

Once the subject of the message has been established, after any main or auxiliary point has been identified, after the most suitable transmission model has been selected, the next step is to sketch the material, in the form in which it is to appear in the letter, request, report, message, etc. Even if the sketching of the main ideas is a work that can consume time, the fact itself requires the sequence of the main ideas and the auxiliary ones in the logical order, before the actual writing of the message. In the work of organizing the material there is no “absolute”, each individual having his own mental methods by which he can achieve this goal.

Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn from this study on effective communication in Romanian organizations are the following:

- It is essential to know exactly those for whom the message is to be conceived (regardless of its form, written or verbal) from the desire to try

to anticipate their expectations. Knowing these things, one can conceive with great precision the content of the communication and enter the most relevant information for that message.

- Designing a summary helps to structure the message.
- Inserting an introduction or a table of contents obviously helps readers in structuring the information they receive.
- Even if the vast majority of communications are essential, it should not be neglected that they could be made very successfully with fewer words, fewer pages or in the shortest possible time.
- An analysis of the general purpose of the communication must be made in order to identify its specific objective. If the specific objective cannot be summarized in a sentence or phrase, then the general purpose of the communication cannot be achieved.
- Analyzing the purpose of the communication and its auditor, a first step is made for an efficient communication within the organizations, by obviously attracting the interlocutor to the party that is to send the message.
- Documentation tasks must be clearly specified with the purpose and objective of the communication, and in this regard it is necessary to call for a plan that is able to maintain attention to the various issues for which it is necessary to inform both people, as well as from other sources.
- It is recommended to avoid taking into account only those data and events that are in favor of the person in question, avoiding as much as possible subjectivism. A dark view of subjectivism can never be able to properly assess any other argument to the contrary.
- In the communication process within the Romanian organizations, the coherence of the transmitted messages can be affected, unintentionally, by the incomplete thinking or the so-called “logic leaks”.
- If what is to be transmitted is not well structured, not being able to lead the interlocutor from one end to the other, it is advisable to give up that message.
- In the work of organizing the material there is no “absolute”, each individual having his own mental methods by which he can achieve this goal.

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