

## **Strategies and Methods of Communication in Public Institutions**

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### **Abstract**

A good name means greater opportunities for cooperation, greater credit given to the projects mentioned, and almost unconditional support from those around them in backing the public endeavours in which the actors engage, taking significant risks of failure. However, it is not infrequent for the advocacy techniques and methods to be circumscribed to singular, more or less occasional and circumstantial activities aimed at defusing a crisis in the public discourse of an organisation or personality. Instead of building, reconstruction is preferred, although the efforts are incomparable in this respect. As always, repairs involve additional material and imaginative resources, and the effects are seen over much longer spans of time. This is the source of the most concrete dissatisfaction expressed by the beneficiaries of the PR specialist approach, associating disappointment at the absence of a miracle in changing the detestable public image with despair at the money wasted needlessly. We are faced with the supremacy of communication in society. It is supposed to solve all problems: happiness, equality, and the satisfaction of individuals and groups. In the new context, communication—its science and its art —becomes fundamental for winning an audience on the side of a project or a choice.

**Keywords:** Internet, society, information, public, strategy

### **Introduction**

The ingenuity with which a strategy is presented becomes as important as its intrinsic value. We cannot necessarily welcome such equivalence; it is merely a feature of modern evolution. One of the most recent acquisitions in the field of communication is the shift in emphasis from the message and its value to reception and the receiver's willingness to accept it. In other words, the message is not in the text, in the public address itself, but is the result of an interaction, a negotiation between sender and receiver. A message, no matter how well constructed, must, in order to have real resonance, respond to concerns and, above all, provide answers to problems that are troubling individuals and groups. The types of information, their content, quality, frequency, sources, recipients, and an effective system of internal and external communication shall be established within the public entity, so that management and employees can perform their tasks effectively and efficiently, and that information reaches users in a complete and timely manner. The quality of information and

effective communication shall support the management and employees of the entity in carrying out their tasks, fulfilling their responsibilities and achieving their objectives.

The management of the public entity shall establish communication flows and channels to ensure the effective transmission of data, information, and decisions necessary to carry out the public entity's processes. Within the public entity, the types of information, content, quality, frequency, sources, recipients, and an effective internal and external communication system shall be established and developed so that management and employees can perform their tasks effectively and efficiently, and so that information reaches users in a complete and timely manner. Ideally, the implementation of this standard should be ensured by means of a system procedure implemented at the level of the contracting authority, which establishes the procedures, methods and means to be used at the institutional level to ensure the circulation of information, both within the entity and in terms of communication with the external environment, from the originators to the recipients/end-users of the information. Quality information must be: accurate, complete, clear and useful. These four attributes must be ensured regardless of the recipient of the information. The transmission and reception of information must be rapid, non-redundant and non-repetitive, and it is necessary to establish specific and distinct persons with specific and distinct responsibilities in this regard.

The information system must ensure compliance with the principle of transparency in public administration. In the field of public procurement, this principle is likely to ensure that public funds are used efficiently and consistently. The raw material of public opinion is information. It changes with the flow of incoming data on one phenomenon or another. It is hard to imagine the emergence of opinion and its evolution or change without information to support it, to give it arguments for change. As has been said, you cannot have an opinion about anything, just as you are not likely to change your opinion if, in the meantime, no new data and new elements have emerged to suggest such a change. Communication can be formally defined as any process by which the premises of decision-making are transmitted from one member of an institution to another. Communication accompanies the work of public institutions and contributes to their smooth implementation. Public communication is the increasingly clear and organised use of publicity and public relations by state administrations. This is because, on the one hand, the state is faced with new responsibilities and, on the other hand, it is resorting to new management procedures, including opinion management procedures developed in the commercial and industrial spheres.

Public communication pursues four categories of effects: modernisation of the functioning of administrations. Administrations have to cope with increasingly precise and complex requests; those administered expect to receive information to which they believe they are entitled and no longer accept answers that are hidden behind the secrecy of administrative decisions and give the impression of arbitrariness; the adaptation and modernization of administrations also depend to a large extent on changes in the behavior of those administered, who increasingly see themselves as consumers, or even customers; some campaigns aim to bring about changes in behavior; for some administrations or public enterprises, the main concern is to ensure a modern image through communication; seeking public support for an issue by raising awareness. Public communication is particularly concerned with the personal lives of citizens through the media, addressing messages in a particular way to citizens as private individuals. Public communication is as much about exchanging and sharing information of public utility as it is about maintaining social

cohesion. The administration is made up of all the institutional departments that act in accordance with the public's expectations in relation to a particular issue under debate.

The institutional components are dependent and hierarchical. More often than not, the administration is the source of public communication through the spokespersons who represent it, through the messages sent to the press, and through the publications of its own communication activity. The message is made up of information or opinions formulated and framed according to a set of rules specific to each communication channel and each type of target audience. From a communication point of view, the audience is made up of individuals, governmental or non-governmental organizations, private companies, as well as social actors dispersed in space and characterized by their momentary common interests in the subject. From a communicational point of view, the action of the public aims at imposing its own opinions for a possible social change.

Communication in institutions is a two-way act: it involves both the transmission of orders, information and advice to a decision-making center (i.e. an individual vested with the responsibility to make decisions) and the transmission of decisions taken from this center to other parts of the institution. Moreover, it is an act that runs up, down and sideways in the institution. The communication channel ensures the transmission of messages from the administrations to the target audience. It differs according to the type of communication. The media play an important role here. Communication channels in public institutions can be of two types: formal and informal. Formal channels transmit official information flows. Informal channels of communication are generally established between individuals and informal groups. They are made up of employees who share common interests or affinities. The information transferred through these channels is informal and of a personal or general nature: it is not verified. Depending on how the message is received, the effects of the communication will be different. They will lead to actions, attitudes, behaviors or mindsets among the audience, which may be partly measurable, having a long-lasting positive or negative effect on the receivers. There are also situations in which the message of the institutions may be distorted because of "noise" or "disturbances". These will hinder or even interrupt the flow of information.

Therefore, in order to reduce these communication disruptions, it is important to choose a fluent and technologically advanced communication channel. Audience feedback is essential because, through its attitudinal and behavioral measure, it can highlight the degree of perception of the message, providing the possibility of timely correlation, if necessary. Studying opinion formation and attitudinal change is fundamental to understanding the process of public opinion formation. The process of public opinion formation is a phase of influencing collective decision making, and its investigation requires knowledge of the channels of communication, the power of societal structures, the characteristics of the mass media, the relations between elites, between various groups and the broad masses, the role of formal and informal leaders, and the institutionalized access of officials. As with ordinary institutional communication, government communication is a process that involves an exchange of messages between individuals, groups, organizational levels in order to solve individual and collective objectives. And at the governmental level, it is essential to ensure effective communication that occurs when the right people receive the right information at the right time. Government communication involves the establishment of a feedback

correspondence, in a universe that includes the transfer of information from the sender (government authority) to the receiver (firm, organization, individual, society). The effectiveness of government communication will be reflected in the reactions of social partners to the information received. Usually, senders tend to modify the behavior of the receivers through the public information transmitted, to obtain a favorable behavior or even mass adhesion. Thus, governmental campaigns are created that include non-profit organizations or various central government bodies out of the need to solve a number of social problems or to improve ongoing programs. "Fight against domestic violence"; "The children's home is not home" - against abandonment of minors, are just a few examples of actions in which the state plays an important role. Government communication is also exercised by central and local public administrations. The state public authority, central or local, provides a variety of public services. The public service is intended for public consumption and is enjoyed only by those who can contribute to its financing. A public good or service is usually accessible to the general public and is financed from public funds. According to its statute, the production or execution of the public good or service is not carried out for profit, but for considerations of social, political, economic or legislative strategy. According to Law No 215/2001 on local public administration and Law No 189/1998 on local public finance, the public service is the responsibility of the central or local authority. It promotes strategic objectives of the responsible authority and aims to realize the community interest at national or local level. For countries in transition, effective institutional communication is very important. Only in this way will the public sector be able to track, with the aim of gradually decreasing, the volume of subsidies and thus control their use. Even when they require considerable funds, but are of benefit to the community, the state intervenes to support them through relevant government policy.

New concepts have begun to emerge in the literature on establishing an effective institutional communicational vision of the future. Effective government communication must lead to major institutional changes. In this respect, state administration bodies should fulfill the following characteristics: community-based. State government bodies can develop a range of programs that work best when they are community-based, because they build empowered capacities that have a low degree of bureaucracy. competitive - to generate a range of improved, innovative, low-cost services for the community; mission-driven - i.e. the state body must take seriously the mission for which it was created, put itself at the service of society and manage according to the reality of the time and/or abstract rules. Results-oriented - funding must be based on results, not resources; customer-driven. The state body must be at the service of the citizen, meeting the needs of its own customers and not those of the bureaucracy; entrepreneurial - entrepreneurial talent must prevail to reduce costs; decentralized - institutional communication should be more participatory, bringing together different government institutions and organizations to solve problems and not always taking into account existing institutional hierarchies; market-oriented. State bodies need to think creatively about how to use markets in order to achieve good results in public activity. Comprehensive information on the nominated policy documents and their mediatization will ensure transparency and public support for the launched social-economic reforms. For this reason, their communication to the general public will be possible only in the case of effective dissemination of information within the Government - both within the Government Apparatus and within the ministries and central administrative authorities. This objective can be achieved by means of an integrated system of internal communication, so that

information flows between the central public administrations do not encounter bureaucratic, technical or interdepartmental cooperation barriers. The creation of an improved and more efficient system of government communication will enable the government as an entity to create and maintain a favorable communication environment, enabling public authorities and civil servants to respond better and more efficiently to the needs of information and communication with society and the media.

The persons authorized with communication responsibilities on behalf of the Government will identify and establish, at the beginning of each activity year, the key messages that will be used constantly and consistently in communication during the year under review. These messages will be presented from the perspective of the receiver, rather than the sender, and will be succinct, relevant and easy to understand. Before being issued and published, messages will be tested and approved. A special communication plan will be developed by the responsible institutions for crisis and exceptional situations. The development of local public services has been driven by the adoption of legislation in the field of local public finance. Thus, it was considered that rules granting autonomy to local authorities in different branches of activity (culture, social institutions, health, agriculture) cannot produce the desired effect and become formalized if they are not supported by appropriate legislation to create the conditions for the development of autonomy in the financial field as well. The communication specialist is always faced with a changing universe, interacting with people with different views and knowledge. In order to adapt, to advise, to convince and to seduce, the communication specialist must possess a solid general culture and a certain form of humanism. Community legislation in the field of internal control is made up of general principles of good practice, also accepted internationally, the manner of their transposition in internal control systems being specific to each country, and determined by legislative, administrative and cultural conditions. In the context of the general principles of good practice found in the Community legislation, internal control is associated with a wider meaning, as it is seen as a managerial function and not as a verification operation. By exercising the managerial function, the management notes the deviations of the results from the established objectives, identifies the factors and analyzes the causes that determined them, ordering the necessary corrective measures. General objectives of internal managerial control: The realization, at an appropriate level of quality, of the attributes of public institutions, established in accordance with their own mission, under conditions of regularity, effectiveness, economy and efficiency: protecting public funds against loss due to error, waste, abuse or fraud; compliance with the law, regulations and management decisions. Development and maintenance of systems for collecting, storing, processing, updating and disseminating financial and management data and information, as well as systems and procedures for adequate public information through periodic reports. The Internal Managerial Control and Interinstitutional Relations Directorate (DCIMRI) operate within the General Secretariat of the Government, based on art. 11, no. 86/2014 regarding the establishment of reorganisation measures at the level of the central public administration and for the modification and completion of some normative acts, approved by Law no. 174/2015, with subsequent amendments and additions. The department of internal managerial control and inter-institutional relations has as its main responsibility the elaboration and implementation of the policy in the field of the internal managerial control system and the coordination and supervision through verification activities and methodological guidance of the implementation of the internal managerial control system. In this sense, DCIMRI carries

out regulatory activities in the field of implementation and development of internal managerial control standards, at the level of the main credit orders through verification missions and methodological guidance of the process of implementation and development of the internal managerial control system within public entities. The General Secretariat of the Government ensures the evaluation of the internal managerial control system at the level of public entities, through DCIMRI, in accordance with point 3 of OSGG no. 201/2016 for the approval of the Methodological Norms regarding the coordination, methodological guidance and supervision of the stage of implementation and development of the internal managerial control system at public entities, through the following functions: the policy regulation function in the field of internal managerial control system; the coordination function in order to harmonize the activities in the process of implementing and developing the internal managerial control system; the function of supervising the activity of verifying the reality and accuracy of the submitted reports and the activity of methodological guidance for the implementation and development of the internal managerial control system; the verification function for monitoring the veracity of the reports of public entities in the process of evaluating the stage of implementation and development of the internal managerial control system; the function of methodological guidance to ensure the advice of the staff of public entities in the process of implementing and developing the internal managerial control system during the course of the verification and methodological guidance missions. In each public entity, the types of information, their content, quality, frequency, sources, recipients are established and an efficient internal and external communication system is developed, so that the management and employees can perform their tasks effectively and efficiently, and the information reaches the users complete and on time.

The quality of information and effective communication support the entity's management and employees in fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities and in achieving the objectives and targets regarding internal managerial control. Leaders of public entities must establish communication methods and channels that ensure the effective transmission of data, information and decisions necessary to carry out the organization's processes, including the fulfillment of control objectives. Managers of public entities must systematically and periodically reevaluate information requirements and establish the nature, size and sources of information and data that correspond to satisfying the entity's information needs. According to <https://sgg.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Raport-SCIM-OPC-2020.pdf> in the 2020 Report Document on the stage of implementation of internal managerial control systems at the level of public institutions where the function of the main credit ordered of the state budget, the state social insurance budget and the budget of any special fund is exercised; the degree of implementation of internal managerial control standards at the level of public institutions, own apparatus and subordinate public entities is shown for the period 2018- 2020. The main responsibility of the Prefect's Institution is to respect the state of legality at the county level. According to art.134 of the Local Administration Law, the Prefect, as the representative of the Government in the territory, performs the following main duties: ensures the achievement of national interests, the application and observance of the Constitution, laws, Government decisions and ordinances, other normative acts, as well as public order; exercise control over the legality of administrative acts adopted or issued by local and county public administration authorities, as well as by the president of the county council, with the exception of current management acts; orders the appropriate measures for the prevention of crimes and the defense of citizens'

rights, through the legally empowered bodies; ensures, together with the competent authorities and bodies, the preparation and implementation, under the conditions established by law, of non-military defense measures, as well as civil protection measures; the military authorities and local bodies of the Ministry of the Interior have the obligation to inform and support the prefect to solve any problem of national or county interest, under the law; submits an annual report to the Government on the status of the tasks assigned to it according to the government program, as well as in connection with the control exercised over the legality of the acts of the local public administration authorities. The prefect is the representative of the Government at the local level. The ministers and the leaders of the other central public administration bodies subordinate to the Government can delegate to the prefect some of their management and control attributions regarding the activity of the decentralized public services subordinated to them. The prefect leads the decentralized public services of the ministries and other central public administration bodies subordinated to the Government, organized at the level of administrative-territorial units. The media relations activity is very important in any public institution. The person in charge of the press office of the Prefect's Institution has the following duties: makes analysis and synthesis materials requested by the prefect; monitors and evaluates the image of the prefect in the mass media; maintains and develops the links with accredited mass media for press activities; broadcast releases, press briefings, organize press conferences, interviews or briefings; provides any information of public interest regarding the activity of the institution to satisfy the need for information of the press and the public; informs in a timely manner and ensures journalists' access to activities and actions of immediate public interest; informs the prefect as soon as possible about the occurrence of a media crisis and reacts in order to reduce the negative effects; organize specific public relations actions; grants, without discrimination, within no more than two days after registration, the accreditation of journalists and mass media representatives; informs in good time and ensures the access of journalists to the activities and actions of public interest organized by the institution; ensures, periodically or every time when the institution's activity presents an immediate public interest, the dissemination of communiqués, press briefings, the organization of press conferences, interviews or briefings; organize events to inform the mass media and public opinion about the actions of the institution's management; performs other duties given by the prefect. Most of the time, a change in the work schedule or the personnel in a work team coincides with the state of confusion of the employees, with the failure to fulfill their duties on time, due to the fact that some of them have accommodation problems or prefer to work together with a colleague whom he has known for a longer period of time. The participation of citizens in the decision-making process leads to the increase of social capital and the improvement of relations in the community. We suffer from the fact that people are not attached to where they live and are not interested in "public issues". Bringing people together around a common problem can reduce disinterest and lack of communication. People get used to expressing themselves, listening to different opinions, deliberating, redefining the common interest (a necessary step after a long period of confiscation of public space) and learning new things. Communication between groups provides the opportunity to reconcile divergent points of view, avoiding or resolving tensions in the community.

The participation of citizens leads to the improvement of the quality of the decision and the increase of the development potential. Citizen involvement means new ideas, new solutions, is an effective method of accessing information and brings the perspective of the "client",

providing information directly from the source. Decisions tested by the community are easier to apply because: they are understood, they are agreed upon, they respond to the real needs and the ability of the "client" to "pay". Many times, citizens support the decisions they took part in because they end up being emotionally involved. Public participation increases trust in the administration. At the decision table, people understand the constraints that the administration has and the reasons why things cannot be resolved as quickly and well as they would like. I understand that resources are limited and I understand the administration's efforts. We understand that you are on the same side of the barricade. Participation also has disadvantages: it costs - time, money, people; it lasts - depending on the complexity of the decision, a participatory process can last several months; it can lead to the manifestation of some community conflicts. Considering both the benefits and the costs, it remains for everyone to decide the right balance between the advantages of participation and its costs. Another aspect that must be considered regarding public involvement in decision-making refers to the limits that this involvement has: the decision must be taken urgently; the issue cannot arouse public interest; it is too complicated to be discussed with the general public and consultations are needed only with the interested factors; it cannot be done as the public wants.

### **Methods of informing citizens - Display spaces within the institution**

The information that the administration wants to convey can be displayed in the place most frequented by the public within the institution. It can be announcements or information about the structure of the institution, the services it offers, draft decisions, budgets, reports. If there is not enough space to display large materials, only the announcement that they exist and where they can be obtained can be displayed. Although the notice board is the simplest and cheapest method of information, in reality it is inefficiently used: it contains old information, in an unattractive form, sometimes very difficult to read (poor copy quality, overlapping sheets, small writing), sometimes it is placed in dimly lit spaces. To be effective, notice boards must contain a little information, updated, nicely arranged (colored paper can be used, and the announcements must be written in large letters), which will attract the attention of visitors. The website <https://ag.prefectura.mai.gov.ro/#> offers practically unlimited possibilities for providing information. It can be built in such a way that it is very easy for anyone to get to the information they want and to the level of detail they want. It is very important that the website is permanently updated - this responsibility can fall to a person/department, each department in the institution through an account that allows them to update their own section or a company. In order to avoid wasting time, the route of the information, the format in which it is transmitted and the time in which it is uploaded to the site are minimal elements to be established and known by all parties involved (possibly included in the internal organizational regulation or contract).

Unlike most information channels, the mass media represent a great advantage: the information transmitted through a media can reach a very large number of people. In addition, it is also cheap, especially when the solution of buying advertising spaces is not resorted to and the idea of stimulating the media's interest in the subject to be promoted is used. The disadvantage is that it is the least controllable instrument. Press releases and conferences are two ways in which the administration can communicate with the mass media. It is recommended that the administration invite journalists not only to the events



they organise, but also for interviews or discussions with people responsible for certain fields. A high level of professionalism is needed in the relationship with the mass media. Ideally, the people responsible for managing the relationship with the media are specifically trained and prepared for their work. The lack of trust in public participation is attributed to people's general distrust of public authorities and, in particular, to the extent to which their opinions would be taken into account. The passive-reactive attitude is also evident among citizens. They wait for the initiative to come from the administration and possibly react when something bothers them. The public administration should be especially concerned about this general lack of trust and make an effort to demonstrate its good intentions. The lack of trust in how public authorities will take into account opinions expressed in public consultation processes is compounded by many organisations' belief that, to influence public decision-making, they need contacts and relationships within the institution. Any public institution must communicate effectively with citizens. For this, the Argeş County Prefecture made available to the public, starting in January, a "suggestion box" whose results were not evaluated until the end of the investigation. The website of the Prefect's Institution, <https://ag.prefectura.mai.gov.ro/#/>, contains a page dedicated to communication with the citizens. The interests of the county's citizens are the first, and this website is precisely for their benefit, offering helpful information of general interest. I wish you a pleasant navigation and look forward to an excellent collaboration with you. People can find out about the schedule of hearings with the leadership of the Ministry of the Interior or find the number of the free phone line for obtaining information related to accessing structural funds. On the same page, you can find the orders given by the prefect, as well as the press release post of the prefect and the sub-prefect. Citizens can also request information by accessing <https://ag.prefectura.mai.gov.ro/informatii-de-interes-public/solicitare-informatii/pdf>.

The fulfilment of this standard is achieved through work meetings and workshops. Changes of an internal or external nature (legislative, organisational, administrative) that may affect the performance of the institution's activity in good conditions must be sent to the authorised staff. Also, unique communication channels must be established to avoid information duplication and overlap. The information system must ensure compliance with the principle of transparency in public administration. The transmission and reception of information must be fast, non-redundant, and non-repetitive, and it is also necessary to assign specific, distinct duties in this regard. Information can be internal or external, general or private. They can be addressed to one or more receivers, targeting an operation, an activity, a fact or a specific situation. At the same time, the decisions formalised at the management level must be brought to the attention of the responsible personnel. Regardless of the conceptual apparatus to which it adheres or which it uses, the communication department must deal primarily with defining and knowing the public of the organization for which it works, because only such knowledge allows them to build differentiated messages, in accordance with the values, representations about the world, the expectations and the language of the many types of audiences with whom they and their organization come into contact. Expectations regarding the quality of the public image resulting from a campaign can exceed the reality that inspired them. However, failures are not accepted, and the culprits are unilaterally the same: PR specialists. In such situations, almost every time the same explanation is given for the failure to achieve good communication with society and the inter-institutional environment in which social actors evolve day by day: the lack of resources to build a public image appropriate to the specifics and organisational or individual interests. In this way, one omits,

consciously or not, an essential fact for the correct understanding of the role and functionality of PR actions, namely that the material investments made for a good public image, internal and external, are much lower than the value of the trust capital that acquire those who spend for this purpose.

Of course, information does not automatically determine the transformation of public opinion. There is a process of processing information, of assimilating it, that depends on several factors: the general level of instruction, degree of interest, options, etc. A method of "internal metabolism" is triggered, reordering the existing elements under the impact of the new fact and framing it. At the same time, public opinion has other steps, other rhythms of change than the daily flow of information. It records, stores, and metabolises. The actual change does not occur as a result of a single piece of information, however important it may be. New information is only "an invitation to change". The change, when it occurs, follows a series of information and facts and spans a much larger time span. From this point of view, there is a phase difference between the linear graph of daily information and the evolution steps of public opinion. Public opinion is not organised according to this chart, but is subject to uninterrupted information, which, in the medium term, can generate changes and reorientations, even of public opinion.

It is also through communication that new beliefs are formed, previous ones are strengthened, and outdated mentalities and practices are removed that are in discord with the organisation's demands. Direct communication (face-to-face) is the most suitable for transferring information and correcting behaviour. Communication is the basis for exercising the act of modification in the form and content of the human "material" that undergoes the preparation process. Completion of the process is achieved through the exercise of the respective power of influence by a communication agent or transmitter.

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