



The Effectiveness of Organisational Communication: Strategic Digital Solutions for Cyprus

Dr. Eleftherios M. Colocassides

College of Tourism and Hotel Management, Department of Business and Management, Cyprus

Email Id: eriscol@hotmail.com

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4730348

Abstract

Effective strategies of organisational communication based on digital solutions can create productive results, which can influence the overall strategic planning of digital communication methods. The geographical location of an organisation is a serious factor in the implementation of a strategic communication plan. This article presents, explains, and analyses implementations based on a research design that has been used to collect data, and interpretate the positive and negative impacts that arise from the higher education sector of Cyprus. It also presents new innovative ideas as well as methodologies that could create change in the way an organisation in the higher education sector of Cyprus is operating, and how the transmission of messages by digital leaders could support strategic communication plans and implementations for organisational development.

Keywords: *Organisational Communication, Digital Leadership, Strategic Planning, Digitalization*

Introduction

Globalization creates new economic challenges that push organisations to design sustainable innovative solutions to achieve their goals. Cyprus as a small Mediterranean island needs to develop and implement innovative strategies to survive as well as suitable digital communication solutions under a complex competitive business environment.

Statement of the problem

Organisations in the higher education sector often place value on new methods of communication, both internally and externally, so the transmission of digital communication messages to stakeholders is very important to the achievement of an organisation's goals.

Objectives of the research

This research is doing an in-depth investigation of existing strategies in the higher education sector regarding digital communication. It also analyses innovative solutions from higher education institutions to fill the gaps which currently exist. The objectives of this research are:

- ❖ To examine and critically discuss the implementation of digital communication for universities in Nicosia (the capital of Cyprus),
- ❖ To examine the role of digital leadership to assure the quality and the functional values,
- ❖ To evaluate the concept of digitalization for learners to bridge the gap for personal development on different levels of employment,
- ❖ To present managerial decisions on strategic communication in the Higher Education sector of Cyprus.

Research questions

The scope of this research was to find answers to the following questions: a) "How the implementation of digital communication for local universities can change the way organisations are operating?", b) "How the transmission of messages by digital leaders could assure the quality and the functional values of higher education institutions of Cyprus?", c) "How the concept of digitalization could bridge the gaps of learners for personal development?", d) "How digitalization could support managerial decisions on strategic communication in the Higher Education sector of Cyprus?".

Literature Review

The progression of the term 'communication' has slowly developed into categories to support practically the new ways of transformation of messages between people. According to DeVito (2007), "Language cannot be used without carrying meaning

and referring beyond itself. Meaning is an active process created in cooperation between sender and receiver, speaker and listener, writer and reader...and combines own social and cultural perspective". "All parts of the message system, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors, work together to communicate a unified meaning" (Literat, 2008). Literat (2008) also argued that "interpersonal interactions in the workplace reduces performance effectiveness and creativity, and increases worker turnover, which is costly for the organisation".

The theoretical framework of digital communication

The definition of the communication model has been presented in many books but is firstly created in the 1950s as a mathematical theory of communication (Hartley, 2007). Shannon and Weaver identified the basic structure of communication in 1948 and Schramm refined it in 1953. Communication can be defined in rather different ways like "shared meaning created among two or more people through verbal and nonverbal transaction" (Daniels and Spiker, 1994:27). According to Dominick (1999), "the communication process is the transmission of information, as well as the exchange of concepts, between at least two individuals". "The key components are: the *sender*, who is seeking to communicate information, ideas, attitudes and desires, and the *receiver*, who is trying to understand the message, its meaning, and its purpose, and what to do about it" (Hartley 2007:17). This model has been developed during the years and became part of work on telecommunications systems. "It aimed to show how information is transmitted from source to destination and to analyze what can affect the quality of the information during this process" (Hartley 2007:17). The exploration of communication is taking a serious role in strategic management as "the relationship between a leader and the team accounts for 90% of working time (e.g emails, skype)" (Huczynski 2007).

Digital Leadership

Effective digital leaders are always responsive to the achievement of corporate goals and create change to gain a competitive advantage for an organisation. Digital leaders are very important for organisations to reach management's goals and missions as their actions could affect the quality and functional values of an organisation. The effectiveness of employees can create an organisation culture and achieve a human value for employees (North, 2018).

All organisations are operating in a very complex environment with dynamic and fundamental changes that can lead to new leadership challenges (North, 2018). According to Ahlquist (2014) "Digital leaders require reflection on online self-awareness and congruence, grappling with the controversy that comes with cyber civility and how to be a digital citizen prepared to inspire positive social change...There is currently a gap in developing competent digital leaders capable of leading change with the use of social media".

The Transmission of a powerful innovative process

Team building and performance need power, and power encouragement affects 'influence' and 'leadership'. "Without 'influence' people would have no cooperation and no society, and without 'leadership' in medical, political, technological, financial, and spiritual humanity would have no standards of living in today's world" (McClelland, 1970). The transmission of 'innovative' by the leaders through certain channels over a while has been a complex social system, and experts in the media industry are trying to decode to sell productivity methods for the market.

Research Methodology

Each organisation operates differently, so it is up to each organisation to use existing theories and findings in practice to create innovative and competitive solutions, plans, and strategies for a better business environment in the 21st century. A university, college, or any other academic institute usually includes significant theoretical and practical elements to promote their academic and vocational programs of study. This article presents strategic communication plans and evaluates collected data about methods of communication.

"The strategic use of case study has a great ability to produce answers like 'why?', 'What?', and 'how?'" (Saunders et al, 2009: 146). The use of a case study is also very important for researchers if they are looking to gain "a rich understanding of the research framework and the procedures established" (Morris and Wood 1991 as presented in Saunders et al 2009: 146). The main examination area for this research is going to use the Higher Education sector, and more specific private colleges and universities of Cyprus. The research method will use the interview method, to collect qualitative data, and the questionnaire method to collect quantitative data.

Research Design and Procedure

The main investigation area of this research is the Higher Education sector, and more specifically private colleges and universities of Cyprus. Cyprus is a beautiful island in the Mediterranean Sea at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean with a population of approximately 800,000. In May 2004, Cyprus joined the European Union and became its easternmost and southernmost outpost. In January 2008, Cyprus joined the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and the Euro (€). The official languages of the Constitution of Cyprus are Greek and Turkish, but English is widely spoken. English is also the language of instruction in the private institutions of tertiary education for the vast

majority of their programs of study. This article presents a strategic communication plan for the higher education sector of Cyprus and evaluates collected data that could support any new innovative solutions for the future.

Books and any other sources of new information come to fill knowledge gaps. The collection of qualitative and quantitative data for this research includes questionnaires, interviews, observation, and the repertory grid. According to Saunders et al (2009: 136), there are three layers: “research strategies, research options and time horizons which can be considered to be the focus of the research design process and to transform the research question into a research program” (Saunders, as presented in Robson book in 2002). According to Robson: “An empirical strategy is a conducting research of a particular contemporary phenomenon in real-life conditions”. “The strategic use of case study has a great ability to produce answers like ‘why?’, ‘What?’, and ‘how?’” (Saunders et al, 2009: 146). The use of a case study is also very important for the researcher if they are looking to gain “a rich understanding of the research framework and the procedures established” (Morris and Wood 1991 as presented in Saunders et al 2009: 146).

Results and Findings

The changing working environment of digitalization should show more emphasis on the psychological, social, and rhetorical principles of strategic communication. The outcome of strategic communication shows how important is the role of a digital leader on how to improve any new planning and how to implement an organisation’s change. The more experienced digital leaders have better results in achieving their goals and face humanity, characters, and emotions with respect. Strategic digital communication operates on a large scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in the society, like for example in the Market Segmentation, which includes Demographic, Geographic, Psychoanalytic, Behaviouristic usage and benefit key elements for a successful strategic communication plan. Below there is a list of collected data received from staff in the higher education sector of Cyprus:

Human Resource Officer - Nicosia

The arrangement of a meeting with a human resource officer of a public university in Nicosia helped to investigate further the internal communication in the organisation and also investigate in depth the methods and strategies are following regarding communication between employees. This person has provided tangible information about the implementation and development of employees at the workplace. She also informed about the policies and strategies are exist in the university and how digital communication is implemented in practice. According to some people, most expenses and costs for continuous training can be covered by 50% to 100% from funding of the European Union. She also mentioned that “50% of the training courses cover administrative staff needs, 40% heads of departments and 10% are general courses and seminars for staff at all levels. More information can be found in the appendices below.

Training and Development Unit– private institute

A private institute in Cyprus has accepted my inquiry for a meeting to discuss everything related to the training and development of human resources. According to the training and development head of the Training and development unit, Mr. S.C, “the University gives priority to immediate needs in training and development, as defined by the heads of the schools, and heads of the departments, which are aligned with strategic objectives of the University”... “The provision of quality and targeted training is always developed with good communication between employees and the head of their management”. Training programs are prepared for a specific target and reason to satisfy the knowledge needs of employees at the university. The training and development unit decides about the rates of education per semester based on the EFQM system and according to the strategic targets of the university. Mr. S.C. argued that “the annual amount needs that must be spent for an average 4 to 5 days for training per person is around €250.000. According to Mr. S.C. “There is always a reviewing method for the training to examine how helpful and successful was a training course for the participants arise from the 360th feedback”. According to Torrington (2008:311) “The term 360-degree feedback is used to refer to multi-rater feedback and has to do with performance management systems and as a separate development activity. It provides a better way to capture the complexities of performance, and it is often used in a survey questionnaire and statistical analysis. This feedback can be selected from all staff of all levels, and it can be beneficial mainly for the line manager who will be able to observe the individual in a limited range of situations. It can also be mention that the 360-degree feedback needs to be careful when is used so that the employees will not take this experience as a threat for them by their organizations”.

Academic Director – private college

In February 2020, the Academic Director of a private college has accepted me in her office and mentioned that one of her main duties is to receive inquiries from all academic staff regarding their continued training and development on new knowledge. The academic director explained that she receives all inquiries and then transfers them to the Director of the college that will examine the possibilities on how to satisfy their needs. Also, the college gives its students a questionnaire that needs to complete at the end of each semester. On that questionnaire is included everything that has to do with the course they study as well as an appraisal to evaluate their instructors regarding their communication and engagement during the semester. Based on these



evaluations the academic director will inform the general director to see what kind of training and development need to be prepared for academic staff. All questionnaires are collected and kept safe in case someone wants to ask and see them. A general report is prepared each semester by the academic director with all information mentioned before. Unfortunately, the academic director was not authorized to give more information on these results during the interview due to the policy of the college. A leader should develop people's cultures in a way that can be 'connected' with others. Motivation can be achieved internationally with good communication within organizations even that is across cultures or between organizations, and even between men and women.

Academic Staff – private academic institute

Dr. L.K is teaching in areas related to Human Resources. She mentioned during the interview that "the University does not organize any training courses for its staff very often, for economic reasons mainly, except in special cases, like programs that have to do with soft skills i.e. team building or communication, and other like methods of how to 'handle' special needs students, and training on the use of Moodle (learning management system).

Academic Officer – private college

The academic officer said that "the college is examining all available options that could improve the quality of a class environment both for academic staff as well as for students... Projectors, borders, tables, chairs, air-conditioning and heating, health and safety issues are very important to have a healthy environment in every academic year....All are discussed with the general director of the college to examine if the available budget could solve most of the inquiries for each academic semester".

Career Centre – private sector

The manager of this career centre argued that "they give the tools for the improvement of needs in someone's career and their organizations". Personal development training programs, gain skills in minimizing and dealing with stress which helps to avoid feeling overwhelmed in any area of life. Time management is also a positive attitude to achieve practical goals and aid in every aspect of life. Also, this Centre informed about the options of internships to help students get new working experiences in real-life situations. The number of students who took part in internship programs based on available places was increased in 2019 from 15 to 30, and the number of staff from the private sector that attended training programs was 126 persons. Cyprus' entrance into the European Union offers the opportunity to further improvement based on the Erasmus Plus program for academic staff around Europe.

Discussion Analysis and Interpretation

Good interpersonal skills and time management skills by digital leaders are very important for the success of an organisation which always helps in giving a competitive advantage. Scientists around the world have researched and understood the importance of leaders, and have recognized the 'power of motivation' as their main tool of success. This investigation aimed to find answers to the following research questions: a) "How the implementation of digital communication for local universities can change the way organisations are operating?", b) "How the transmission of messages by digital leaders could assure the quality and the functional values of higher education institutions of Cyprus?", c) "How the concept of digitalization could bridge the gaps of learners for personal development?", d) "How digitalization could support managerial decisions on strategic communication in the Higher Education sector of Cyprus?".

How the implementation of digital communication for local universities can change the way organisations are operating?

The action of not paying attention to employees equally could show a serious misunderstanding of multigenerational differences. Managers who show more attention to how to earn more money create a lack of trust and bad communication between employees, and colleagues do not respect each other. The research showed that the differences between generations have an immediate effect on productivity. This is because older employees do not collaborate with younger employees and act based on experience 'mechanically', without paying attention to the modern methods or techniques that have been learned by digital leaders and managers. On the other side, younger employees have entered an organization with modern skills and methods that have been learned at colleges and universities. Those helped them to follow modern rules and computerized skills to survive in the competitive workplace environment. As a result, the two sides come in contact, by being competitive between them by having bad communication (like emotions, words, tensions). Here comes the role of a leader that needs to find a solution to this conflict to bring the two sides together.

How the transmission of messages by digital leaders could assure the quality and the functional values of higher education institutions of Cyprus?

The role of a digital leader is to find any gaps so that could have the best possible communication between employees. For example, if an instructor does not speak good English or a student does not speak or write good English then both should participate in English language classes. Also, the leader is responsible for the communication between the top management and



other administrative staff, as well as students regarding e.g examinations, registration of students, schedule of class, and payments or salaries.

Emotional Intelligence (EQ), is a very good tool that someone needs to make training, to 'take someone else's position' to understand how he/she feels about a specific situation. The development of this kind of performance could help to improve communication between employees. For example, by understanding each other's needs, culture, religion, behaviors should get prepared for a better and 'healthy' environment. This is not easy to send a message to a 'difficult and problematic' personality. There is also the generational difference so a message must be sending clearly and simply. A multinational working environment is also a complicated case that speaks different languages or has other believes, even the majority of people communicate in English, there is also a difference in decoding a message in another language.

How the concept of digitalization could bridge the gaps of learners for personal development?

Bad communication that does not work properly can create mistakes which could damage the whole strategy, and affect development and performance at the workplace. Managers and leaders should understand the personal needs of employees and try to feel the gaps for personal development. The information received from this investigation showed the important role of a leader in different departments of the higher education sector (universities and colleges) in the Republic of Cyprus.

How digitalization could support managerial decisions on strategic communication in the Higher Education sector of Cyprus?

Leaders have everyday communication with employees. Leaders prepare everyday plans and suggest changes according to each situation. Leaders are moving together with the team, and they do not give orders like managers. They must understand the team's needs and decisions to transfer them to the general management. This article presents the role and the 'power' of a leader as well as the important role of a leader in teamwork. Everyone needs each other to succeed, and to create passion, motivation, and organisational culture.

Conclusions and Recommendations

New creative ideas and strategies must be updated very quickly as technology progress very fast which produces a need for a competitive advantage for higher education institutions. Over the last few years, higher education institutions around the world are looking for innovative solutions to online education and strategies to create the best digital environment for their organisation. Digital leadership and managerial solutions are important powerful tools for any higher education institute to succeed. This thesis presented current theories and critically explained digital communication from a different point of view It has also evaluated and analyzed the role of a digital organisation in an everyday situation, as well as the relationship of employees based on organisational cultures and communication methods in the Republic of Cyprus.

The findings of this research demonstrate that the market for Cyprus is continually improving the digital technologies available on the island at very competitive prices. Higher Education Institutions are also continuing to improve their services by creative or buying available learning platforms, as well as communication platforms available in the global market to arrange meetings and other contact needs between colleagues. It also uses new digital methods to communicate with students (except emails) like Edmodo, Moodle, Webex as well as answering inquiries live on the university's website. As Maringe et al. (2009) argue "The future of Higher Education lies not so much in increasing or decreasing fees and programs available to students, but in encouraging young people to acquire qualifications and achieve their goals".

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the College of Tourism and Hotel Management for its support to complete this article. I would like also to thank the Director of Research for the opportunity given to me to design and to perform this research to achieve my goals on the highest education level.

Declaration of Interest Statement

This is to confirm that this article is an original own piece of work that does not use any kind of information and data that has been submitted to any other journal. Any secondary data that has been presented in this article has been mentioned at the end of this article under the list of references.

References

- [1]. Ahlquist, J. (2014). *Trending Now: Digital Leadership Education Using Social Media and the Social Change Model*. [Online] <https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21332> [Accessed: 27 January 2019]
- [2]. Astin, A. W., and Astin, H. S. (2000). *Leadership reconsidered: Engaging higher education in social change*, Battle Creek, MI: W. K. Kellogg Foundation.
- [3]. Barrett, D.J. (2006). *Strong communication skills a must for today's leaders*, *Handbook of Business Strategy*, 7(1), 385 - 390
- [4]. DeVito, J.A. (2007). *The Interpersonal Communication Book*, Pearson Education Inc.
- [5]. Dominick, J.R. (1999). *The Dynamics of Mass Communication*, Boston: McGraw Hill
- [6]. Fitz P. L. and Valskov V. (2014). *Internal Communication; A manual for practitioners*, Kogan Page



- [7]. Hartley, P. and Bruckmann, C.G. (2002)/ *Business Communication*. 1st Ed. London: Routledge
- [8]. Kahn, R.L. and Ch. F. Cannell. (1957). *The Dynamics of Interviewing: Theory, Technique, and Cases*. New York: John Wiley and Sons
- [9]. Kondalkar, V.G. (2007). *Organizational Behaviour*. New Delhi: New Age
- [10]. Kopperschmidt, B. R. (2008). *Multigeneration employees: Strategies for effective management*. *The health care manager*, 19(1), pp. 65-76. doi: 10.1097/00126450-200019010-00011 [Accessed: 20 January 2020]
- [11]. Larkin, TJ and Larkin S. (1994). *Communicating Change: winning employee support for new business goals*, New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, Inc.
- [12]. North, K., Maier, R., and Haas, O. (2018). *Knowledge Management in Digital Change: New Findings and Practical Cases*. [Online] <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73546-7> [Accessed: 25 January 2020]
- [13]. Saunders, M., Thornhill, A., and Lewis, P. (2009). *Research Methods for business students*, Essex: Pearson Education
- [14]. Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.