



## CORPORATE COMMUNICATION: INNOVATION, PUBLIC RESPONSABILITY AND CITIZENSHIP IMPACT

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### Abstract:

The essence of innovation is creativity, which allows finding new solutions to existing problems. Innovative organizations do not depend solely on an entrepreneur, but on teams of experts gathered to create an entrepreneurial spirit. For this reason, it is necessary to use scientific techniques to promote creativity, as well as encourage and reward people and organizations that innovate, through the recognition of successful practices, both in the public and private sectors. Thus, public communication is at the basis of the quality and effectiveness of public service, the modernization of administrations and institutions, as well as the exercise of democracy.

**Keywords:** corporate communication, innovation, citizenship

### 1. Introduction

The public and private sectors have increasingly faced challenges in the area of communication due to constant social, technological and cultural changes. The issue of innovation and keeping up with innovative trends in the area of communication become very important and affect the entire functioning of organizations. As Serrat (2017) writes:

*"...innovations sparked by globalization and, especially, information and communications technology have provoked bewildering change and fuelled globalization and technology to compound intricacy. Goods, ideas, information, money, people, and services flow with growing ease. Massive global competition and cooperation have been enabled; markets have shifted dramatically; and the values, aspirations, motivations, attitudes, and fears of customers and employees everywhere have been altered. In a shrinking world, since the rate of change is exponential, we cannot (yet) live on love*

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*alone, and we do not know what the future will bring, one and all must innovate to prepare for and, preferably, fashion change. (Lest we forget, one and all must also, in equal measure and without trade-off, execute in the present. In successful organizations that last, the social architecture of individual behavior, structure, and culture is primed and leveraged for both exploitation and exploration.)” (2017, p. 559).*

Halvorsen et al. (2005) schematically presents the main differences (relevant to innovation) between the public and private sectors, adding, however, that some private companies are more like the public sector and some public organizations more like private ones, so the differences must be carefully analyzed.

**Table VI:** Main differences, with regard to innovation, between the public and private sectors

	<b>Public sector</b>	<b>Private sector</b>
Organizational principles	New policies or changes to policies as a process of opportunities to restructure public organizations.	The Market as a process for selecting innovations. Pursue profit, stability or income growth.
Organizational structures	Complex system of organizations with several (and sometimes conflicting) tasks. Many innovations have to be embedded in a massive complex of organizational structures.	Companies of many sizes, with options for new participants. Many different types of innovations.
Performance measures	Multiple performance indicators and targets to be achieved. The benefits of innovations are difficult to assess.	Return on investment, increased sales, profit. They are often easy to quantify the benefits of innovation.
Management aspects	When efforts are made to emulate private sector management practices, managers are typically under high levels of political security. Successful managers	Some managers have considerable autonomy and successful ones are rewarded with benefits and substantial material promotions. Managers pursue innovations that they believe are important.
Relationship with end users	Relationship with end users End users are the general public, traditionally seen as citizens. There have been recent efforts to get the public sector to see them as customers. Customer relations have been poorly developed, based on the assumption that civil servants know more about the services required	It is typically the market that provides the verdict of innovation. This is often motivated by the need to maintain or increase market share, and success in innovation depends on understanding customer expectations and needs.
Supply chain	The public sector is dependent on private suppliers for much of its equipment, but it is also an important market for many companies. Through public procurement, you can impose standards and other characteristics on suppliers to introduce innovations in the sector. Most companies are part of one or more supply chains, with larger companies organizing these chains. Small companies can find innovation	Most companies are part of one or more supply chains, with larger companies organizing these chains. Small companies can find innovation paths through the demands of large companies.

	paths through the demands of large companies.	
Employees	Public sector employees are highly unionized. Many professionals are organized into professional associations. When status and wages are assured, many workers have idealistic motivations. Employees can object to innovations and new knowledge that could pose a threat to the quality or quantity of jobs or services. Employees can seek to introduce and influence innovations in order to improve the quality of public services.	The nature of the workforce varies considerably and relations between employees and management range from harmonious to hateful. Employee motivations are mainly economic. Employees are rarely consulted about technological or organizational changes, but they can be encouraged to make suggestions regarding how to improve the company's products.
Knowledge sources	The public sector can use a wide range of sources of innovation - relevant information and knowledge. Despite having many resources, part of the public sector may experience constraints in the use of private sources of knowledge (with the exception of suppliers). Recent efforts are being made to make public sector organizations more aware of intellectual property issues in order to promote innovation efforts.	Companies have considerable flexibility in accessing various sources of innovation: information from consultants, sector associations and public sector researchers, but many small companies have limited resources to do so. There is considerable variation between different sectors in terms of extent to which innovation systems allow companies to achieve relevant knowledge of new technical or other developments.
Time Horizon	Often long-term (this means that decision-makers may no longer be there by the time results are achieved) although many decisions have a shorter horizon. Major investments may need to be supported for long periods.	Short term in many sectors. While some innovations can have very long horizons, most innovations have to pay for themselves in the short term.

Source: Halvorsen *et al.* (2005).

We saw how the central objective in the life of organizations should be orientation towards the market / citizen. Public institutions are no exception, as the citizen, as the recipient of the services they provide, deserves continuous improvement work that leads to the improvement of the services provided and, consequently, the level of satisfaction. Quality requires a new management culture that involves people in the process of improving the services provided - both the internal customer (translated into the other departments of the organization and employees in general) and the external customer (people or organizations that acquire or receive the final product, such as, for example, the citizen) (Carapeto & Fonseca, 2005). Given the importance of the latter in the organization's activity, it must anticipate its expectations and, in the pursuit of excellence, it should, in addition to meeting its expectations, offer them more than it expects.

## 2. Specificities of the Communication Models in the two Systems

Marketing tells us (Lendrevie *et al.*, 2010, 1990) that one of the first tasks of any organization is to identify and segment its customers, according to the different services it provides and their needs and expectations. Cumulatively, he must seek to know his opinions, which are essential to define priorities, set the course and improve the organization's services. For this, it is necessary to collect information about your needs and expectations, which can be done through different techniques. The most commonly used are of a quantitative type (surveys, questionnaires distributed in the service centers ...). These instruments make it possible to know first-hand the needs, priorities or degree of satisfaction with the services by the citizen-customers, as well as suggestions for improving the processes. However, for a more in-depth knowledge of the citizen, public bodies should use tools of a more quantitative type, such as focus groups, which allow another level of analysis. From here, decision making and communication with citizens are clearly facilitated. Naturally, and in this specific context, information technologies cannot be underestimated, as they streamlined communication, provided new platforms for the exchange of ideas, for the intervention of citizens in public life, for collaborative innovation ... (Marques (preface), Fonseca and Carapeto, 2009). In summary, what is important to keep in mind, regardless of the methodology used, is that the assessment of citizen-customer satisfaction has as main objective the perception of the distance that separates their expectations and the level of service that they perceive as having received. This information is indispensable so that those responsible can find the best work methodologies, in order to balance the needs and expectations of the organization's client-citizens. By encouraging citizen participation in the construction and assessment of quality parameters, the organization is encouraging social control over its activity. That is why it is so important to periodically evaluate their performance in relation to the established quality standards, using mechanisms such as mystery users, making complaints boxes available at service points, questionnaires to users and maintaining a database of suggestions and comments.

It is in this sense that the study of internal and external processes is important, through the identification, management, evaluation and continuous improvement of all activities, contributing and providing added value to the company. An organization that is able to perform these exercises truly works as an open system, that moves and decides taking into account the market, working based on profit (Teixeira, 2010 [1998]). In fact, even though in the case of companies the need for marketing is evident, since they need to identify the products or services most suitable to the target markets they intend to reach, and develop actions that enable the marketing of these goods successfully, marketing it is therefore not an activity that develops exclusively in for-profit companies. The same is to say that marketing also applies to other types of organizations, since, in one way or another, any organization only justifies its existence in society if it exchanges with the outside goods that society, in whole or in part, values, so public organizations also need to be open systems (Pires, 2008). The difference in relation to public organizations is that, as Rocha (2001: 184) observes, "*the decision-making process in private*

*companies enjoys much more flexibility”, besides that, as Sousa (2009 [1990]) reinforces, the company it is an economic agent that is autonomous, and therefore endowed with independence, which is not the case with each of the state organizations. Even so, in recent years, some public organizations have been importing typically business management practices and processes, introducing autonomy and flexibility (in its organizational, personal and financial dimensions) and implementing a set of techniques such as marketing or public relations. For Gouveia (apud Penteado, 1993: 87), “public relations vary from institution to institution, from one situation to another, from one circumstance to another. And they also vary in time and space (...), from an easy and prosperous economy to one in depression, from Public Administration to private administration”. This position is shared by Lozano (2001: 197), when he affirms: “public relations must be as important for Public Administration as the backbone is for all living beings that want to walk and win. (...) Public organizations have a duty to serve society and to do so with enthusiasm, professionalism and speed, using all the means and resources necessary to provide an effective service to the country”.*

In the same vein, Fonseca (1998: 47) considers that Public Administration customers are the set of users of its services and that this, *“by definition, should correspond entirely, with quality and promptness, to what is required”*. Consequently, communication is a duty imposed on public powers and services, in order to make citizens' right to information and public debate effective. Likewise, public communication itself is at the basis of the quality and effectiveness of public service, the modernization of administrations and institutions, as well as the exercise of democracy. Public communication began to be conceptualized in the early 1980s, in France, and as systematized by Barros & Bernardes (s.d.), at first it tried to level itself with the parameters of private initiative, using marketing techniques such as advertising. However, this specific area of communication needs different approaches. Respecting the recipient of the message is an essential element in democracy. The relationship and dialogue with the citizen are essential expressions of public communication, and equality presupposes respect for individuality, promoting diversity. Public communication is not just advertising and visibility in the media, but effectively the relationship with the citizen. *“Communication must be a component of public policy”* (Lemaire and Zémor, 2008). Transparency and democratic participation are pointed out by Zémor (2005, 1995) as pillars of public communication, prerequisites for the full functioning of this system, insofar as they guarantee the common interest. This emphasis is justified by the nature of public information services, whose domain must go beyond the sphere of the State or the specific institution that produces the content. As this is a highly visible communication, the citizen's view is more relevant than the control of the State. It is in this assumption that Zémor's argument that ensuring the general interest necessarily implies transparency (Barros & Bernardes, s.d.) is supported. Thus - and based on this assumption - listening to the requests, expectations and questions of the public must be primary functions of public communication, in the same measure of stimulating and strengthening public debate, a requirement to foster civic participation.

Systematizing the main functions of public communication, Lemaire and Zémor (2008) highlight:

- a) to adequately inform the public, which implies bringing comprehensive and contextualized news to the population, in addition to rendering accounts about the services provided by the institution;
- b) to contribute to ensure and strengthen social relations (feeling of belonging to the collective, making the citizen aware as a social and political actor);
- c) to monitor behavioral and social changes at each historical moment;
- d) nurture civic knowledge.

Public sector communication, therefore, supposes exchanging with a receiver that is, increasingly, also issuing, and it is the latter's active characteristic that establishes communication. In the view of Zémor (2005 ©1995©), the mission of public communication is not limited to informing a passive public, but also bringing public institutions closer to society. Therefore, public communication comprises a set of external communication activities that bring together public journalism, institutional dissemination and institutional advertising, in an increasingly closer and unmediated dialogue with its audiences. Libois (2002) also certifies the right to public communication as a basic requirement for the consolidation of citizenship rights. In his view, and today, the formation of personal and cultural identities and political communities is inseparable from media communication, in a context of visible weakening of the State in the face of the power of the media and highlights that, in parallel, media systems seem increasingly disconnected the opinion of its audiences.

In the relationship between public communication and citizenship, Libois highlights a series of mistakes. One of them is to conceive the former in an instrumental way only, since its ultimate aim is, in reality, to provide conditions for the exercise of citizenship. Therefore, there must be harmony between the public sector and its publics, in a context in which the latter should be remembered as *"a set of duly organized individuals, equipped with sufficient information on a given subject, in permanent discussion on the same, in search of a common agreement"* (Corrêa, 1998: 42). Another mistake, already pointed out by Zémor and reinforced by Libois, is the transposition of parameters from the private to the public communication systems. This idea is also defended by Ferry, in the preface to a work by Libois (2002: 5-8). For the former, by imitating private techniques, public communication repeats and perpetuates the bad habits of the market, harmful to citizenship. Moreover, it disseminates to the citizen the idea that the standard of communication is that achieved by private organizations, which for this reason must be copied. And in this way, employees of public communication systems deprive citizens of differentiated information, in terms of themes, plurality of approaches and deepening of themes.

In short, public communication is one that highlights the public interest, not only by providing information, but above all by responding to citizens' requests. As Zémor (1995) recalls, messages are sent, received and handled by public institutions on behalf of citizens; therefore *"this communication is necessarily located in the public space, under the eyes*

of the citizen. Your information, with rare exceptions, is in the public domain, as ensuring the general interest implies transparency" (Zémor, (2005, 1995: 1).

For all the reasons presented above, Matos (2009) and Brandão (apud Barros and Bernardes, s.d.) also recognize the difficulty in conceptualizing the term "public communication". In a text summarizing the emergence of the concept, the latter identifies five different areas of knowledge and professional activity involved:

- 1) organizational communication, that is, the flow of information and opinions between organizations and their audiences. In this logic, "*public communication is treated in a strategic and planned manner, and aims not only to establish relations with the different publics of the institution, but also to create an institutional identity, or, to put it another way, an "image" of the company*" ( Garrido, nd);
- 2) scientific communication, especially scientific dissemination;
- 3) governmental communication, constituted by the rendering of accounts of the government and formation of the public agenda;
- 4) political communication, which means the expression of political opinions by political parties and actors;
- 5) and community communication, as a way to ensure the right to information and communication.

Brandão summarizes the different formulations in an attempt to synthesize public communication as "*a communicative process that is established between the State, the government and society with the objective of informing for the construction of citizenship*" (2007: 9).

In fact, the State apparatus must fully understand the citizens as the clientele of the Public Administration, and respond to them promptly and effectively, as is the case in private organizations, which have always been dependent on the relationship with the environment that surrounds them, they absolutely need to deal with other priorities that require different structures and action plans. Lemaire and Zémor (2008) affirm that it is imperative to establish a "*perennial trust relationship*" between the public institution and the citizen, listening to him and informing him about what is or is not possible to do in public administration, in an adult dialogue with the population. In the specific case of crisis communication, they point out, what restores confidence is the exact information of what is happening. "*When we don't know what to do and how to act, we must recognize this. The crisis does not penalize public communication; marketing is expensive*". The authors therefore emphasize the difference between a communication made with the objective of establishing a dialogue, for the purpose of clarifying and serving the public interest, and the dissemination of information for persuasive purposes, aimed at convincing citizens about the viability of a proposal or idea.

### 3. Conclusion

We thus see that the evolution in the concept of organizational communication has also been influencing the public sector in this sense. To this end, the dissemination of social communication has contributed to a great extent, which has increased exponentially with

technological democratization, changing the forms and time of distribution of information, expanding access to it for citizens (Matos, 2000). As a consequence, the public became more aware of their rights and began to demand more often that they be respected. The liberalization of markets, the prosperity that was experienced in Europe at the end of the 20th century, and privatizations in the public sector led to an increase in the supply of services, many of which were previously exclusive to the State. This reality has therefore transformed the behavior of consumers: they have become more enlightened and consequently more demanding, they have started to compare the offers made available, and, when justified, to defend their interests. These behavioral changes forced organizations to renew and recycle their communication strategies, with the aim of improving the quality of services and meeting objectives. Matos (2000) and Tenera (1998) consider that planning techniques based on Total Quality can be useful in this aspect, substantially facilitating the design of the company's communicative action. Strategic planning will allow determining the orientation of the organization's communication plan, clearly defining who the audiences are and their needs, developing products and processes that respond to those needs, and transferring the resulting plans to the operational forces (Matos, 2000 : 3). In the scope of internal communication, all these changes would generate a greater demand for information on the part of employees, greater participation when requested to do so and, consequently, their co-responsibility with regard to the efficiency and image of the institution (Garrido, sd). In Corrado's opinion (apud Matos, 2000), the collaborators' aspirations when it comes to communication are easily understandable. They intend to know exactly the situation of the organization at each moment, the problems it faces, the ways to solve them and what is the role of each worker in this context. If communication does not answer these questions, there is room for rumors, so strategic communication planning is vital in order to fill these gaps and, above all, to aggregate the different organizational levels around common languages, practices and objectives, on the path to creating an organizational identity. This need for a communicative practice for the different segments of audiences in organizations is also addressed by Nogueira (s.d.), who highlights the impact of changes in organizational administrative models, traditionally oriented towards efficiency. Gaino (apud Nogueira, sd.; 2) says: *"we have to look for effectiveness, which is adult and collective, and which requires sharing responsibly, integrating information"*. The author also proposes that public agencies adopt management practices in their communicative processes. Communicators need to know deeply the organization in which they work; with the support of communication techniques and instruments, it is possible to detect the current management model (which influences the entire organizational culture) and, from there, develop an appropriate communication plan, with a view to behavioral changes and the improvement of relationships among employees - whose participation in decision-making processes has visibly increased. As Viana (apud Garrido, s.d.) reinforces, *"when a company makes a communication plan it is willing to look at itself, its competitors and the context in which it operates. Over time, under the pressure of competitors and the demands of the public, it becomes another company for itself. This is what will determine your renewal or aging."*



Since information can considerably change the perception of quality on the part of citizens, public organizations must produce and provide adequate and reliable information to their citizen-customers, using the appropriate channels. Currently, electronic communications are of particular importance. The good use of information and communication technologies by the public organization must serve not only the computerization of internal processes, but also accessibility and transparency for citizens, whenever they need to find information, to dialogue with someone in the organization or to trigger some administrative procedure. For this to happen, it is essential that the organization has a website and that mechanisms are made available that allow and promote interaction with the citizen (Sousa, 2004). In fact, as mentioned in the Guide to Good Practices in Building Web Sites of the State's Direct and Indirect Administration, released by the Innovation and Knowledge Mission Unit (Oliveira, Santos and Amaral, 2003), Internet's power is, alongside publishing content, the ease with which it is possible to establish communication or interaction between people. The Guide recommends that any public organization use the Internet and its website, as a vehicle for information, so that citizens can consult content, but also as a tool for interaction between citizens and their services. To this extent, the Guide recommends that several services should exist, included or referenced on the website: newsletter; e-mail; forum; online chat; telephone lines dedicated to supporting users; suggestion and complaint books. In this orientation for the citizen-client that technologies also allow, in a line of modernization (which goes beyond mere computerization), electronic mail plays a fundamental role. The use of electronic mail in the organization can effectively serve two modernization objectives: to make public services more accessible and transparent to citizens; and, consequently, improve its internal functioning. However, it is necessary to understand that its implementation as a privileged means of communication with citizens, requires a complete integration in the administrative functioning of the organization and this may even imply changes in the processes (Carapeto & Fonseca, 2005). It is therefore, and currently, the issue of the use of electronic resources that an organization has to communicate with its stakeholders. For this reason, and inevitably, we approached the theme and the respective instruments within the scope of our case study, which was - as explained above, in "Analytical model and methodological strategy" - in the analysis of the information conveyed in reference journals in the also on corporate websites. The conclusions will allow us to understand that, especially everything that the Good Practice Guides and the recent literature on the subject recommend, in times of tension, very little use of the potential of the internet is verified.

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