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## Communicating changes to employees as a challenge to corporate communication

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## **Communicating Changes to Employees as a Challenge to Corporate Communication**

### **Abstract:**

Communicating and supporting changes constitute a crucial field of interest for corporate communication. Changes in organizational culture is a challenge for internal communication to face as building organizational culture entails changes in management processes, corporate strategies, values, symbols and relations as well as interactions among employees. Governing those spheres through communication processes is a decisive factor which influences the company's functioning. In the following article certain strategies/approaches to communicating changes to employees will be presented. Each strategy places emphasis on a different means of influencing employees, depending on their relationships and creativity, as well as their attitudes to adapt to any changes and challenges. Studying communication interactions among employees and fostering them strategically helps overcome potential problems and reduce communication barriers that finally affect the company's efficacy.

### **Introduction**

The subject of the following paper will be discussed in the context of corporate communication, with particular emphasis on organizational communication since speaking about communicating changes in any organization, including companies and institutions, entails implementing changes in their organizational life.

Organizational communication constitutes an independent area of communication studies which investigates pragmatic aspects of human communication and their influence on organizational practices and outcomes (G.L. Kreps 1990: 103). The knowledge of these aspects is expected to help a researcher and a communication practitioner assess the effectiveness of organizational activities, as well as diagnose current and prospective barriers in communication, and improve effectiveness by implementing a communication recovery plan.

The way a company operates and is perceived by the public is shaped by employees' collective efforts put to its everyday successful functioning. As R.L. Heath puts it, "a company is the manifestation of collective needs and ef-

forts” (1994: 1). This is why the object of organizational communication is the context in which all the people in a company come into relations among one another in order to fulfil their needs and achieve their professional goals. According to the processual approach to communication, where it is perceived as a dynamic and changing process (C. Barnard 1938, B.J. Allen/ P.K. Tompkins 1996), expressing these relations should be considered as communication interactions that build and constitute any company or organization.

It is obvious that employees’ needs and goals will never be congruent. Neither will be their expectations toward ways to accomplish them, as well as employees’ and managers’ perspectives, values and objectives. Organizational communication is designed to study these differences and to offer particular tools which could foster communication practices and, consequently, improve efficacy –which directly results in the improvement of company’s innovation (S. Grucza 2014: 41) – by teaching employees how to communicate strategically with the aim to achieve organizational and corporate outcomes, and how to cope with potential problems, barriers in communication or even with crises. Here is the manager’s role to strategically combine company’s objectives and employees’ involvement in supporting them. As Sh. Holtz emphasizes, it is up to managers as leaders “whether internal communication is a lowly staff function or a vital management function that affects everything from product quality and customer satisfaction to employee retention and your company’s reputation” (2004: 50).

In many organizations the role of communication is still underestimated. This view comes from the fact that managers believe that what truly counts for the effective functioning of a company is fulfilling everyday tasks and employees’ performance. However, they often downplay a proportional relationship between performance and communication, which means that task realization usually involves workers’ cooperation founded on communication. It should be realized that managers spend up to 90% of their time on communication with employees whose everyday tasks are also primarily based on communicating (J. Alnajjar 2013: 9–10). The latest data show that underestimating the role of internal communication in companies results in a real decrease of employees’ performance at work as yearly one employee turns out to be non-productive for about 200 hours, and up to 50% of the time managers devote to communication, which *nota bene* constitutes 90% of their daily tasks is wasted (S. Grucza 2014: 39). Therefore, the significance of communication efficacy should be recognized and reflected in an attempt to work out specific communication strategies, mechanisms for their implementation, management and development.

### **1. Communication as a construction of meaning**

The primary goal of every company, organization and institution is to maximise profits, to be productive and to accomplish established objectives. In order to achieve this, employees need to be willing to increase their effectiveness, and

proper communication between management and employees is an absolute prerequisite for that. In early management theories, communication between bosses and employees was designed to be dominant, flowing in only one direction (from sender to receiver), which means that the latter were supposed to perform an explicitly imposed plan. Such a view presupposes an “indirect nature” of managing interpersonal communication (J. Alnajjar 2013: 11), which is common for transportation models of communication. In these outmoded models, meaning is perceived as a vehicle for information which is packed and transmitted from one point to another (S. Braman 2004: 250), and the very act of communication is seen as a “pipeline” along which the “transportation of an inert material – the information that actors exchange with each other” takes place (R.J. Varey 2002: 25). According to this theory, knowledge is treated as an object, existing independently of a human factor of processing information, and the transportation from the sender to the receiver is devoid of any basic image of the world, i.e. of what T.A. van Dijk (2001: 15) defines as *Cultural Common Ground*, which is differently profiled by different communities – according to their axiologies and cultures in which they function (cf. also M. Wilczewski 2012: 43).

Due to the cultural common ground which encompasses communicator’s shared knowledge, presuppositions and information background, information stops being regarded as an invariable object, but it is rather perceived as a culturally and socially dependent construct serving as a means of conveying intentions and obtaining communication goals. The indirect relation between discourse (understood broadly as an act of communication aiming to transfer information) and society is manifested in social, political and cultural reproductions, and such social mental representations as opinions, beliefs or ideologies serve communication participants as an “interface” connecting the level of interaction between the sender and the message with social macrostructures (T.A. van Dijk 1993, M. Wilczewski 2010: 146).

The information background commonly shared by communication participants allows for reducing obscurities and ambiguities by applying particular – often specific for a given group – linguistic mechanisms, and hence influences communication and enables it to be effective (J.K. Gundel 1997: 84). Nevertheless, information background cannot function in e.g. business communication irrespective of such a sender’s competence as interaction competence which consists in recognising the receiver’s communication competencies as well as all the differences in the sender’s and receiver’s information background, which influence proper interaction actions to be taken up by the sender (J. Łompiś 2009: 176).

## **2. The role of corporate communication in company’s reputation**

Research on corporate communication has resulted in the appreciation of the role organizations exert on internal communication and, consequently, theory of

communication has focused on such questions as how and to what extent successful communication helps organize effective functioning of companies (see e.g. study by G. Morgan 1986). In other words, the centre of gravity for the direction of communication has shifted towards two-way communication manifested by the “exclusive domain of managers toward cooperative balance between bosses and employees” (R.L. Heath 1994: 1).

J. Cornelissen’s perception of corporate communication, understood as the “function and process of managing communication between an organization and important stakeholder groups (including markets and publics) in its environment” (J. Cornelissen 2004: 185), suggests that corporate communication ought to be discussed in the functional and dynamic perspectives, and hence as a means of building and maintaining relations between a company (organization or institution) and its audiences – both internal and external, such as employees, stakeholders, government institutions, customers and prospects. Unlike other types of communication, e.g. business communication or management communication, directing specific messages to specific audiences, corporate communication aims to target many different audiences simultaneously with a coherent set of messages since orchestrated and integrated communication spanning over both internal and external communication allows companies and organizations to survive and prosper (cf. J. Cornelissen 2004: 18; L.T Christensen et al. 2008: vii). The demand for coherence is crucial for communicating professional corporate image which is recognizable among target audiences. This effect can only be achieved if all the communication processes meant to promote the image are incorporated in its communication strategy:

The ambition of corporate communications is to project a consistent image of the organization across multiple audiences. The reasons why organizations embark on corporate communications programmes are many, but often centre on issues of identity and legitimacy. Contemporary managers seem to believe that in a globalized world of increased complexity, organizational existence hinges on the ability to establish and maintain the organization as a unified and integrated whole across different audiences. This belief increasingly shapes the communication strategies of contemporary organizations. As one manifestation of this trend, a growing number of organizations are branding themselves rather than their products. The fact that many organizations now place their communication activities under the umbrella of corporate communications, however, reflects more than a shift in branding strategies. The pursuit of the “corporate” in the communications of contemporary organizations illustrates an orientation with total images of organizations – images that are able to cover both symbolic and behavioural dimensions of an organization’s life (L.T. Christensen et al. 2008: vi–vii).

The above explanation of the function of corporate communication shows that it is a means of conveying company’s identity, i.e. its profile and values communicated to its audiences, which therefore is determined and expressed by its image – the way a company is perceived by stakeholders and the public. Due to the fact that corporate identity is company’s innate character influenced by everything the company makes, e.g. products, services, all communication practices, strategy,

behaviour, etc. (J.M.T. Balmer 1995: 25), corporate communications serves as a tool for communicating certain meanings, themes and signals so that the identity is shared, maintained and distinguishable (cf. J. Cornelissen 2004: 185, R.R. Dolphin 1999: 2).

Communication strategy is often referred to public relations. The cause for that is that CEOs believe that a crucial determinant of their company's survival and well-being lies in acceptance and trust of the public. This is why managing the field of public relations effectively is reflected in the organization's position in the market. In the U.S.A such strategic planning is known under the name 'public relations', and in Europe it is rather referred to as 'information management', 'communication management' or even 'corporate communication'<sup>1</sup> (B. van Ruler/D. Verčič 2004b: 1, 3). Some researchers see no theoretical differences between 'public relations' and 'corporate communication' and, accordingly, use the terms interchangeably (see e.g. B. Steyn 2000, 2003). Such a conceptual dispersion should not be regarded as surprising, illogical or incoherent, for – as J.R. Finlay (1994) notes – corporate communication functions as a dynamic process which integrates the following three tasks within the corporate public affairs function: 1) supporting changes, 2) helping to define roles a given company plays in a society, 3) helping to create company's vision, value and purpose.

In today's business environment, corporate communication observes a shift from a trendy business field to a critical factor that influences the company's well-being in the market. As K.U. Nielsen, an executive partner at Reputation Institute, puts it in his interview for "Forbes":

In today's world, the Chief Communication Officer is expected to implement a structured process for 24/7 brand and reputation management for all stakeholders, across all channels and across all markets. (...) For Corporate Communications to become relevant to the business they (Chief Communication Officers – M.W.) need to build a bridge to the business strategy and join the fight for market share, customer loyalty, license to operate, and stock price. And to win that battle, new tools, processes and competencies are needed ("Building the Bridge").

It turns out that the communications area cannot merely be limited to a communication department being responsible for the uninterrupted flow of information but, essentially, it must play an active role in the company's core strategy and be a constituent of that strategy in order to make the company more competi-

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<sup>1</sup> The study by B. van Ruler and D. Verčič (2004a) presents the outcome of comprehensive research over the status of public relations in Europe, including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom and Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Greece, Malta and Turkey. Two projects had been conducted in these countries: the EBOK project ('European Public Relations Body of knowledge') with the aim to explore and codify the literature of European origin on public relations, and the Public Relations in Europe project meant to study European public relations within the context of cultural, societal and political interrelations.

tive in world markets. To rise to such a challenge, new competitive tools and competencies within the field of communication have to be extended.

The bridge that connects communication with the central company's strategy is reputation management:

Through reputation you become relevant to all C-suite executives. From the CEO and the CFO who want to make sure that you have the license to operate in all countries and that the market believes in your future potential – to the COO who wants to be sure that your sales force has the latest proof points on hand to convince customers that they should trust your company. Communicators have the responsibility to support these C-suite needs, even though the mode of action takes them off their comfortable communications island.

But you're not alone in this – Marketing, Public Affairs, HR, and Communications need a common platform to engage from if they are to deliver real and sustainable value to the company. Reputation provides that platform. And the Chief Communication Officer should be the facilitator of this ("Building the Bridge").

Communication strategy, understood as the general direction taken by a company with regard to its choice of businesses and markets, and approach of its stakeholder groups (J. Cornelissen 2004: 184), strongly affects the perception audiences have of a company, organization or institution, which is founded on their experience with products, services and activities, which is known under the name of 'reputation'<sup>2</sup>. The concept of reputation constitutes one of the most crucial "intangible assets" of a company (E.M. Burke 1999: 86). The reason for that lies in the fact that it is a decisive factor for selling products and services, since reputation attracts customers, and for attracting stakeholders, such as shareholders, investors, customers, consumers, employees and community members. Its value for the functioning of today's companies and organizations is best described by C.J. Fombrun (1996) who regards reputation as a competitive advantage which is even stronger than patents and technological development. Community reputation, i.e. reputation among members of the community within which a company operates, should become a starting point for evaluating the company's global reputation since what the general public thinks about a company, organization or institution is calculated to be of limited value. What truly counts for measuring reputation is studying attitudes of specific groups, which are shaped by direct experiences with a given company, and hence their evaluation of the company proves relevant and representative, and it is not merely based on media reports (O. Lerbinger 2006: 426). Consequently, building a global reputation ought to begin at a local level through the assessment of the perspective community members

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<sup>2</sup> Here, an important distinction between managing the company's reputation and brand should be drawn. Namely, managing brand means building it through communication activities. This amounts to communicating to audiences everything a company desires them to think about the brand. Reputation, in turn, is everything audiences think and feel about the company (cf. Ph.J. Kitchen/ D.E. Schultz 2001: 181), and thus it constitutes a broader concept than brand. In other words, reputation reflects the way a given brand is perceived from the angle of real, direct or indirect contact with the brand.

have on the company assessed, as well as of their attitudes, concerns and expectations about it (cf. E.M. Burke 1999: 87).

### 3. Communicating changes as a challenge in internal communication

Efficient communication is a decisive factor for a success of any company, institution or organization. It is so as communication determines a flow of information which enables proper, uninterrupted functioning and cooperation between all the organization's departments and at all levels of management and operational processes. Communication in the context of a company or organization has recently been appreciated by academics and corporate practitioners to such an extent that from not as late as the 2000s corporate communication started to be regarded as a "specialized management field" (B. van Ruler et al. 2000) which ought to be treated as managerial and strategic (R. van Ruler/ R. de Lange 2003: 146) – not merely as applicable, i.e. as the practical field of knowledge meant to devise comprehensive communication strategies to be implemented off the shelf by companies.

In response to a strong need for specialist management of information, more and more consulting companies are emerging in the European market, which offer consulting services in the scope of *inter alia* IT technologies, internal and external communication and transformation projects, and hence are aimed to enhance and improve company's competitiveness as well as new graduate and postgraduate programs relating to public relations which additionally offer students courses in management, communication and media theories. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that since 1970 the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) has been thriving in Europe, uniting over 15,000 communication professionals sharing their experience by publishing how-to articles and case studies. Figure 1. shows areas of responsibility in their work environment.

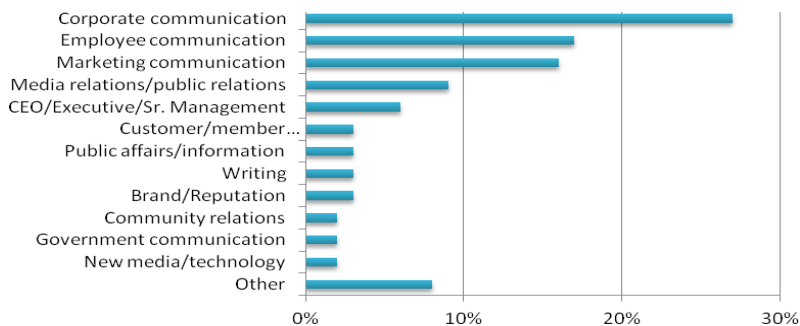


Figure 1. IABC members' areas of responsibility (Source: "IABC/About").



The graph proves how popular, necessary and significant the area of corporate communication remains as compared to other spheres of public and professional activities. This fact does not seem surprising in the light of the organization types IABC members belong to, with over one-third taken by corporations (see Figure 2).

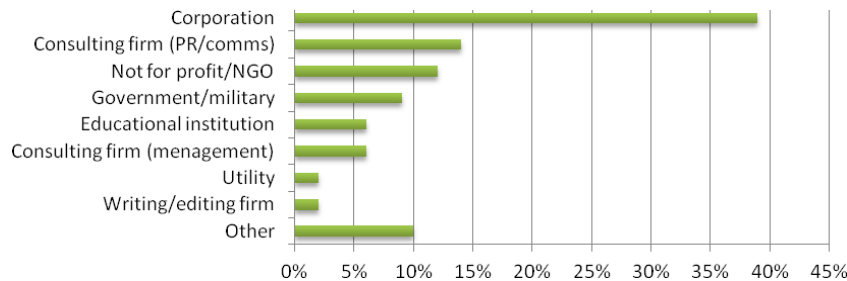


Figure 2. IABC members' organization types (Source: "IABC/About").

In summer 2013, GFMP Management Consultants performed research, in cooperation with the portal Proto.pl, on some issues concerning internal communication in companies. Quantitative research was carried out in the form of a representative survey sent out to employers responsible for internal communication in 115 companies and institutions of public utility comprising medium-size and big companies, 15% of which employing under 100 people, 25% – between 101–500, 26% – between 501–2,000 and 34% – over 2,000.

One of the questions raised in the survey was: "What issues within corporate communication would become meaningful in the future?". The answers are provided in Figure 3.

As revealed by the graph, top two challenges indicated by the respondents refer to supporting changes in the company and building organizational culture. This means that most companies surveyed might anticipate some changes, including changes in organizational culture<sup>3</sup>. This fact, doubtlessly, constitutes a serious challenge for internal communication to face for building organizational culture entails changes in management processes, corporate strategies, values, symbols

<sup>3</sup> Organizational culture is a concept comprised of three components: socio-cultural system, cultural system and organization's imagery (Y. Allaire/ M.E. Firsirotu 1984). The first component embraces formal structures, strategies and management processes which build organization's reality. Cultural system consists of such dimensions as organization's values, ideology, symbols, legends, design, etc. Finally, organization's imagery presents organization's "hidden face", i.e. all the interactions between organization individuals triggered by individual and team values (M. Brun 2002: 149–150: see also: B. Moingeon/ B. Ramanantsoa 1997: 386) or what M.A. Diamond (1993: 62) defines as the manner in which people speak to each other, the way they dress at work, and informal protocol people adhere to in everyday work; organization's imagery may be also understood in terms of what A. Olsztyńska (2002) defines as informal internal communications which influences organization's image and effective managing information between managers and employees.

and relations as well as interactions among employees. All these spheres are governed by communication processes and their efficiency is a decisive factor which operates to succeed in organization's functioning.

Another challenge is a relatively high percentage of the answers indicating an increase in directing communication onto supporting company's strategy (20%), improving information flow between employees (20%) and involving management in communication (18%). Such expectations show that corporate representatives express the need to enhance a flow of information, indicating that communication obstacles involve communication with senior management. This feeling seems to be so strong that respondents regard involving management communication as strategic.

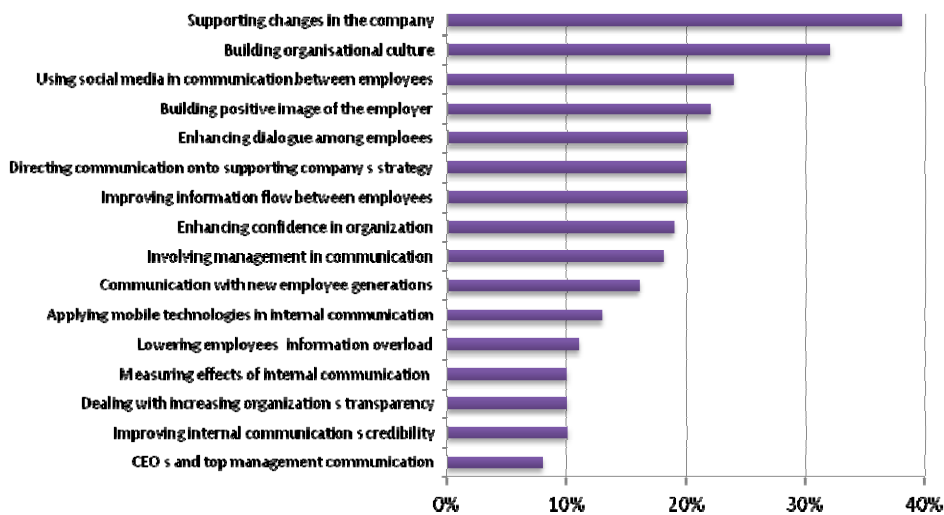


Figure 3. Challenges in internal communication  
(Source: "Internal Communication 2013").

B. van Ruler (1998: 76) presented four basic communication strategies to be applied within a company in order to e.g. communicate changes to employees. These are strategies by which information flows either in one direction, and hence these are informative and persuasive strategies, and the ones where a two-way communication takes place, i.e. dialogue and calibration strategies. On the basis of B. van Ruler's typology, L. de Caluwe and H. Vermaak (2000) formulated four colour-coded strategies for launching an organizational change program in a company. These were further developed by C.B.M. van Riel and J.J. Hasselt (2002) in such a way as to focus on various ways of mixing employees' behaviour and communication tools.

The strategies are determined by the mode of planning a certain change: it can be planned either rigorously or openly, and by the mode of instructing the change to employees: they can be, as a group, explicitly instructed how to implement the change, or the focus is shifted onto individual learning experience. Table 1. outlines specific aims of the four communication strategies, their impact on employees' behaviour supporting the desired change, and exemplary tools for achieving that impact.

Communication strategy	Behaviour may be changed if...	Communication procedures
Blue-print/ persuasion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clear idea is provided</li> <li>• the change is well-planned and phased</li> <li>• the plan is simplified</li> <li>• people are convinced into the change and their interest aroused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ group meetings</li> <li>✓ forum discussions</li> <li>✓ newsletters</li> <li>✓ fact sheets</li> <li>✓ dashboard</li> <li>✓ opinion media</li> </ul>
Yellow-print/ forming coalitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coalitions are formed</li> <li>• people join with others in a cause</li> <li>• new views are shown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ lobbying activities</li> <li>✓ search conferences</li> <li>✓ gaming</li> </ul>
Green-print/ creating learning experiences by informing and holding dialogues with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people are motivated to learn</li> <li>• learning potential is unlocked and maximized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ inter vision meetings</li> <li>✓ sessions for sharing learning experiences</li> <li>✓ brainstorm</li> </ul>
White-print/ creating a dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• people are motivated to use their creativity</li> <li>• conflicts are settled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ adventures and heroes</li> </ul>

*Table 1. Impact of basic communication strategies on employers' and stakeholders' behaviour (Source: based on the research by C.B.M. van Riel and J.J. van Hasselt 2002).*

These communication strategies exemplify four different approaches to the implementation of a changed identity organization. Nevertheless, they cannot be utilized arbitrarily as they are designed for different teams, situations and work environments, and are suited to various management policies. Each strategy places emphasis on a different means of influencing employees, depending on their relationships and creativity, as well as their attitudes to adapt to any changes and challenges.

To bring about a change means for a company to involve such factors, in each of the strategies discussed, as 1) a communication aim/mode (persuasion, coalitions, triggering learning situations or creative dialogues), 2) a certain way in which it will be accomplished/applied, e.g. by clarifying the idea, involving people in one cause, motivating them or exploiting their creativity, and finally 3) a procedure/instrument necessary to affect employees' behaviour so that the change be successfully implemented.

The blue-print strategy is conceptually founded on a traditional rhetorical theory, i.e. the study of structured public discourse focused on persuasive discursive mechanisms (W.C. Redding/ P.K. Tompkins 1988), and refers to what was termed above as a rigorous plan explicitly imposed on the group of employees. This means that a given organizational change or project is devised in advance and no individual opinions are taken into account. The strategy in this case consists in persuading employees into accepting the plan unconditionally. In order to achieve this aim, a clear idea about the purpose of change needs to be provided. Employees should be presented with an already drafted plan of action which has to be deprived of any redundant complexity, and they should become convinced that the change is necessary for the well-being of the company. Exemplary communicative tools for the strategy are:

- *group meetings* – organized meetings where the idea and ways of introducing the change are presented,
- *forum discussions* – meetings where the contents of the change and strategy are thoroughly discussed,
- *newsletters* – the idea and strategy are shown in a printed or electronic form and handed or e-mailed to employees,
- *fact sheets* – periodically delivered documents providing the idea and strategy as well as the progress of the change,
- *dashboard* – a visual document presenting the progress of the change,
- *opinion media* – printed or electronic media containing reading materials where views, opinions, objectives and expectations of delegated team representatives are expressed.

The yellow-print strategy can be characterized as projecting the change openly and developing it in a group, and it is executed in the environment of employees pursuing different objectives. In order to cause employees to accept the change, forming coalitions is demanded so that support for it within a group can be secured. Accordingly, the appropriate shape of the change needs to be worked out by involving employees in the drafting process<sup>4</sup>. The group should recognize responsibility for that change and make use of individual potential of each group member so that the cause is perceived by them as meaningful. This can be accomplished via:

- *lobbying activities* – influencing employees by appointed representatives and explaining them the importance of the change,
- *search conferences* – a planning method with the objective of defining employee's desired future and planning the process of reaching it,

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<sup>4</sup> N. Lakin and V. Schuebel (2010: 226) consider giving employees a chance to get involved as one of the main tactics for launching a key change program, beside such tactics as *inter alia* senior company representative's talking about community involvement, presenting employees the project being launched and the adopted approach, program beneficiaries' talking to employees about their experience, promotional materials, etc.

- *gaming* – placing employees in a simulated situation which allows them to gain or broaden their experience in new and challenging circumstances.

The green-print strategy consists in forcing a rigorously planned change by the use of employees' learning experiences and by unlocking their potential to take on new challenges in the company's organization, and hence with the emphasis on their individual cognitive skills. Due to the fact that the change is implemented through placing employees in different learning situations, thanks to which they acquire new experiences favourable for the change, the efficiency of this strategy remains highly dependent on their learning potential. The only difference between the green-print strategy and the yellow-print one is that workers are expected to undertake a given task and regard it as a challenge being a source of new learning experiences, which can be gained through:

- *inter vision meetings* – periodic small group meetings where people introduce certain cases and are asked to discuss possible solutions to potential problems,
- *sessions for sharing learning experiences* – meetings arranged to exchange employees' learning experiences and ways of overcoming encountered problems during the process of implementing the change,
- *brainstorm* – meetings where workers discuss the change and exchange their own ideas of its introduction, delegation of tasks and responsibilities.

The white-print strategy, in turn, serves to introduce openly planned changes by exploiting employees' learning potential. It allows employees to take unhampered action and gain advantage from observing the situation. As a result, employees become part of the decision-making for the way the change will look like, so the change is produced naturally and introduced to the extent that corresponds exactly with managers' and employees' ability to enter into a dialogue and to develop the change in an unconstrained manner. The communicative tool for that is labelled as "adventures and heroes" which means choosing exemplary symbols for the change, e.g. existing cases of changes successfully implemented in other companies, which stimulate people responsible for the change.

In autumn 2010, GFMP Management Consultants in cooperation with the portal Proto.pl conducted research on the significance of internal communication in Polish companies. Employers responsible for internal communication in 119 companies, public administration institutions and institutions of public utility (excluding public relations agencies), comprising medium-size and big companies, 16.8% of which employing under 100 people, 25.2% – between 100–500, 11.8% – between 500–1,000, 16.8% – between 1,000–2,000, 27.7% – over 2,000 and 1.7% – no data. The employers were asked to participate in qualitative research and to answer the following survey questions: 1) Is the significance of internal communication increasing or decreasing in Polish companies? 2) What internal communication tools are employed or planned to be implemented in the nearest future? 3) What will Polish companies concentrate on in the field of internal communication? and 4) What challenges are people responsible for internal communication confronted with?

As shown in the graph (Figure 4), the most popular tools for internal communication are traditionally used events and meetings for large groups of employers, frequently accompanied with presentations. Highly popular remain dashboards, Intranet and informative materials in the form of posters, brochures of electronic newsletters. This fact proves that a dominating communication strategy in Polish companies is the blue-print strategy based on persuasion. On the contrary, communication tools which are often categorized as social media seem to be still marginal as forums, chat rooms, social-networking websites, blogs or microblogs were used in 2010 in no more than 15% of all the companies surveyed. Obviously, we should make allowances for the fact that the situation may have improved today due to a growing interest in the use of social media sites within Polish society. Nevertheless, it is hard to estimate that in detail in the scope of corporate communication as no representative qualitative research has been conducted since the 2010 survey discussed.

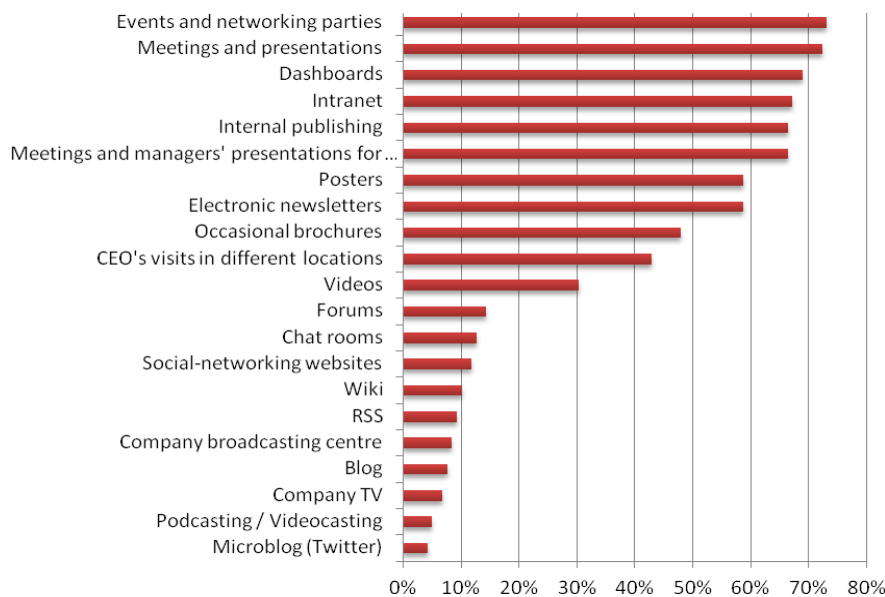


Figure 4. Internal communication tools (Source: "Internal Communication 2010").

#### 4. Conclusions

Communicating changes to employees still represents a significant challenge for communication practitioners in the field of internal communication as well as for managers whose role is to combine company's objectives with employees' efforts to support them. Corporate and organisational communication cannot merely be limited to designing effective tools for promoting a company's identity among its stakeholders and the public, but it should also concentrate on studying communi-

cation interactions among employees as fostering them strategically results in overcoming potential problems and reducing barriers that finally affect the company's efficacy.

Employees' anticipations relating to future issues corporate communication will have to face clearly indicate that introducing changes within the work environment and organisational structure is seen as an area which requires intense scrutiny and solutions to be incorporated in the company's core strategy. Due to the great cultural and organisational diversity of companies and organisations, such solutions should be sought with reference to a communication mode of introducing a change, a manner of its application and communication procedures needed for influencing employees' behaviour in favour of accepting the change, but also taking such factors into account as a specific work environment employees work in, their individual cognitive skills and attitudes toward new situations and challenges.

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