

The Power of Oratory in Modern Leadership

~ Ph. D. Lecturer **Petru Ionescu-Caibulea** (University of Arts of Iași and University of Bucharest, Romania)

E-mail: caibulea@gmail.com

***Abstract:** Today, more than ever before, modern leadership calls for a greater interest in message composing and conveying from the perspective of persuasive communication. High performance requires varied, extensively elaborated capacities used with maximum impact at the proper moment. Now when the communication means are rather developed and varied and quite easily accessible by anybody, besides the other capacities a real leader should feature, oratory or the art of (public) speaking takes its place back and redefines its part in relation to these modern means of conveying messages precisely by recurring to the "human" essence of the communication relation. Amid the hundreds, thousands of electronic messages, face-to-face interaction fetches that bundle of feelings and emotions the bits and hertz still fail to convey.*

Keywords: Oratory, Leadership, Persuasive communication, Motivation, Empathy, Public speaking, Efficiency, Rhetoric, Expressivity

The 21st century brings along, apart from the economic thinking resettlement at a global level, a need to reconsider team work, employees' /work fellows' incitement, as well as conflict forecast and settlement. The worldwide crisis triggered bankruptcy to some trade companies. Major companies all over the world closed their doors and tied their business down. As for Romania, companies counting hundreds of employees once before 2008-2009 have now gone down to only several dozens of employees. A great deal of the activities formerly carried out within the organizations has been outsourced along with a more careful assessment of expenses and maximization of any contract relationship.

Besides the pecuniary motivation, even now when wages and personal earnings have run low, team establishment and high-performance operation are strictly related to the chiefs'/managers'/leaders' abilities to influence, to pep fellow workers and subordinate employees up by providing personal examples of conduct and action, and by persuasive communication.

Certainly, messages within a team can be sent by any means. Internet and Intranet networks are highly developed, mobile telephony is now accessible to almost anybody, while terminals are more and more sophisticated while staying user-friendly.

The "furious" sales and galloping development of many fields and businesses before the burst of such global economic crisis entailed an emphasis on the concern with sending messages as loyal to their substance as possible, putting into shade the "coating" of such messages, the accompanying elements which, according to the theories of communication, are otherwise of special importance.

This can be seen and accepted in the light of the following justification: since economy seemed "to quake", since there was money on the market and funds were granted quite easily and rapidly, the clients' appetite for consumption was often fed hazardously. Employees' and team members' motivation was maintained by very fast feedback, namely by salary, earnings, as well as by other rewards (i.e. bonuses, teambuilding, various specializations) which the companies could grant to the employees.

In this context, the need to count on a leadership mostly valuing the component of persuasive communication was not primordial. Even if there were problems generated by the poor abilities of "motivating communication", these were somehow settled and subsequently faded away in the dynamics of the day-to-day commercial activities. Though sometimes the components of communication were not harmonized and messages "suffered" as regards empathy or congruency, the need to convey the text / the information was more important. Most often, the mind "delivered" the information which was then sent to another (likewise) mind which received it, processed it, and accomplished it. If somebody failed because of the accumulation of frustrations generated by the "coating" of communication, the same was, usually, quickly replaced since the commercial activities were carried out very fast and many times it was more important that somebody should be in that specific place, in that position than that a certain person of a specific level of competency should be there.

Nowadays, the process of work is more laborious, and the commercial interactions are carried on in a somehow more different manner. Contracts get concluded after

extensive analysis, and commercial relationships are more sensible. For instance, strictly referring to the field of sales, if prior to the burst of the crisis many contracts were concluded swiftly due to the client's immediate need (generated by the need and will to buy), the difference lying in the benefit granted by comparison to another competing seller, at present the decisions to purchase some good are more elaborated and, where speed of response is important due to the immediate needs of procurement, the relation is also based upon the parties' abilities to permanently communicate and negotiate in an environment favourable to motivating relating.

Modern leadership means an advanced and sensible union between the focus on the objectives to be attained by the science and art of the high-performance management, on the one hand, and affective understanding plus people's motivation not exclusively by financial means, on the other hand. Now that remuneration changed because of the current economic changes – the focus being laid on the concrete assessment of the added value brought by every member of the team – we can see how motivation takes other necessary shapes as well. Even if such shapes were manifest before the amplification of the crisis, nowadays, these are so much more necessary as the pecuniary form of motivation cannot be used too easily any longer. Employees, team members have a more cutting need of safety, affection, professional environment that help them reach their goals and besides take care of their emotions and "human" necessities. Today, the effort made by employees is greater and requires interdisciplinary and accelerated development, thus emotional support and empathic stimulation is of special importance.

This type of high-performance (efficient) and sensible leadership is not easily applicable still it yields extraordinary benefits to all stakeholders. Under such economic and social conditions exercising significant pressure on every individual, a labour relationship based on empathic support as well will considerably reduce the impact of the objectives hard to attain and of the assiduous work. Besides all the other psychological components, the capacity to express oneself, and not in any way but so as to convey those messages "dressed" according to the scope of communication, in other words, the power to have a message and to act in congruence with the pursued outcome of communication comes back to actuality with a maximum impact.

Concretely and correctly understanding the situation, the scope of communication, thinking empathically, building the message to eloquently express what is meant; using only those "tools", abilities capable to bear the idea of the message so that they should not alter the relation or "parasitize" the communication rendering it inefficient and maybe even "corrosive", destroying the message in its contents and particularly in its intent by an erroneous understanding, translation, decoding of the "ballast" (or because of the scarcity of means of expression) by its receiver who should also act in accordance with the requirements of the sender; acting so that all these actions should be fulfilled in an intelligent manner, to get the pursued outcomes, represent the quality and even the definition of modern leadership.

In modern society, the "functional" team requires:

- heterogeneity,
- efficiency,
- harmony,

Heterogeneity helps sharing the roles, generating innovatory ideas, and, not at last, reducing monotony.

Efficiency is important due to the fact that attaining the set objectives by using only the strictly necessary resources is a characteristic of management in time of crisis.

While harmony, full and delightful union of all actions, diminishes pressure and stress, considerably increasing team's effort tolerance.

Oration in modern leadership should provide the following defining features:

- be conceived, structured and uttered so that it clearly reveal "the pillars" of the message, the information, the main components to be retained and, especially important, be the true "translation" of the sender's language, that is the meaning of the main information should be "impressed" from the very moment of communication so that any "chances" to be subsequently "parasitized" should be minimal;

- strengthen cohesion among team members and develop attachment towards objectives and organization; often, a poor management of teams and conflicts leads to all kind of animosities, prides, secret agendas that can trigger dysfunctions or even team dissolution with consequences easily foreseeable, on the one hand; on the other hand, this may determine a kind of "group thinking" that can maintain the team but it can also drive it away from the objectives set by the organization or the project it belongs to. Team "survival" and/or exclusive promotion of the team interests, ideas, and agenda by replacing the objectives initially set are undesirable issues that require increased attention so that the initial scope for which the team was formed should not be affected.

- satisfy team expectations as regards the moment of communication ("the show", "the performance").

Concerning this last issue, we consider admiration incitement as the highest-impact persuasive component. Appreciation generated by delight sprung from the audience's soul represents a characteristic of special importance of the orator. We could say: "Touch their feelings and you'll convince them." Actually, there was and still is a trend in the nowadays communication that mind should be treated more respectfully than the soul. Some people's tendency to ascribe messages to the "template" of mind understanding is both a kind of efficiency appanage, and a dysfunction caused by wandering from empathy. Empathising with the each other develops not only communication but intelligence as well, in the sense of adjustment to various life situations. People who communicate by information almost lacking any "coating" will suffer in the end a kind of "social diseases", incapacities, and forms of depression.

The appreciation generated by the speaker's /leader's "performance" may be gained by an adequate use of power (for us, power means the capacity of exercising influence) detailed as follows:

- empathy
- passion
- rhetoric
- expressivity

Empathy develops social relations and intelligence.

Passion is like heartbeats; if it lacks, any message – even any public apparition– will be "lifeless". A "lifeless" message will never be convincing but if sent from the deathbed.

Rhetoric, the art of argumentation, is also essential since the call for blind trust in

the messages sent can be a sign of manipulation, indoctrination or, in the simplest case, a proof of poor preparation or ignorance of what is essential or of expression based on personal trusts or opinions, which cannot be provided as a pertinent analysis to be followed by the others.

Verbal and body expressivity are components of the charismatic leader's power. Messages backed up by the necessary expressivity will have the required impact. The extent, the level of what is "necessary" will be provided by the audience analysis and the scope of communication and, not at last, by an intense practice where audience feedback should not be absent.

In this economic-social context that provides a wide range of activities, fields and abilities that should be developed in an interdisciplinary way, various products and services which are bitterly competing, apart from the quality of the product, service, team performance, thinking and expressing yourself so as to stir up attention, to maintain lively listening and to convince the audience to "buy" what you "sell" (that is to get the expected feedback forecast in the stage of thinking and achieving such communication) are defining capacities.

The need to also convince by the power of expression yields a very beneficial effect. In order to convince an audience, the speakers should express themselves so that during their communication to address to and fascinate every person in the audience, every type of personality. This requirement is both a necessity, and an instrument for the self-growth of the speaker. In order to be able to address every type of personality, one should permanently train his/her attention and introspection (even when not before the

audience), get informed, and be up to date with the latest information and abilities required to understand the soul and mind of the other one. Thus, starting from "a technical" requirement, that of talking "the language" of every personality and satisfying its expectations, by assiduous practice, one can develop capacities that will increase the level of empathy and adequate expression in various contexts; thus one can reach the "native" holding of such technique, its melting into the being of the one who will use it as a native ability. This type of transformation represents, from my point of view, the main principle of efficient personal development.

An issue of special importance is that of the atmosphere during communication. The auditor, every participant comes with his/her own inner atmosphere, with his/her own state of mind determined by events occurred prior to communication and/ or arising from their expectations in relation to the moment of communication. Convincing an audience showing various states of mind will be particularly difficult for any good orator; that is why a previous "scanning" of the audience is desirable. Such "scanning" will be achieved more rapidly if they know each other, if they work together; if not, it can be made before entering the communication room (just as actors watch their audience through a hole in the curtain) or/and during the few minutes after entering the precincts, while "breaking" the ice or during the required offices (greeting, roll call etc). It is important that, while preparing his/her communication, the speaker should be aware of /determine what atmosphere will be beneficial in getting the desired outcome. Thus, retorting to his/her capacities of assessment, drawing conclusions, motivating and so on, cumulated to identifying the "support points" in the audience (the leaders

of opinion), the speaker should dissipate any "parasite" atmosphere (or let us call them "obstacle" atmospheres) and impregnate the desired atmosphere. It is important that the speaker as well (actually, the speaker firstly) should prove the emanation of the necessary atmosphere uninterruptedly. Once the required atmosphere has been set, the way to conviction is much smoother.

A speaker may establish before the moment of communication what atmosphere he/she wants impregnated in the meeting room (as I said above that it would be convenient!) and he/she may subsequently ascertain "on the spot" that such atmosphere he/she wanted impregnated should not be that which in relation to various conducts, expressions of the audience should yield the required result. Certainly, in this case, orator's intelligence will generate another solution, atmosphere which combined to those of the audience should yield the necessary outcome. For instance, the orator comes with the will to impregnate a cooperating atmosphere based upon silence, careful listening to what is to be said and addressing constructive questions in a relaxed mood. Still, this ascertains that the audience, due to the fact that it is week-end or the holiday is near, or due to the fact that before the communication moment it participated to other insipid communication, is already very relaxed and bored and its attention will be difficult to catch during the entire communication act. At that moment, our speaker may decide "to inflame", agitate, enliven the atmosphere by various means, exercises, games. He/she can make various statements, "launch" various ideas which cannot pass unobserved by the audience, taking care to cautiously manage the situation so as not to degenerate and compromise the scope of communication.

A subtly "inflamed" audience will certainly keep ears, eyes, mind and soul open, paying continuously attention to the speaker's communication. It is of special importance to find out those "subtle attacks" to keep them at the border between interest and "burst" and, to the end, to change the focus of audience to another issue producing relaxation and, desirably, a kind smile. This could be a way, especially for those counting on experience and capable of "holding" such a situation. Equally, sense of humour is a particularly important ingredient. Communication scattered with comic stresses, causing laugh and stirring up high spirits, will keep attention alive and will trigger much easier the will of cooperation, finally succeeding to dissipate the "obstacle" atmospheres.

In conclusion, these times characterised by new approaches in business and personal development, approaches more sensitive to the market sensibilities and the development of the personal capacities by intense practice, impose, in communication among peoples, a higher inclination on the thought that underlies word birth, a more accentuated feeling of the emanated attitude and its adjustment in relation to the situation and the scope of communication; a continuous "sharpening" of the instruments of expression so that in the end the uttered word should bear the "crystal" or, as the case may be, the "fog" (and so on) that should incite auditor's emotion, corroborated to the adequate body expression, bearer of symbol and accents that, sometimes, should not be necessarily expressed in a verbal way.

Such improvement and, in the end, professional, oratorical communication should not be mistaken for dissimulation. The ethical scope of professional expression is to send with maximum accuracy and full impact what the speaker thinks and wants to communicate to the others.

The union between the art of making profit and the art to be followed by the team members is ideal and much more necessary today than it has been at any other time. Fast understanding of market changes, of changes in general (and their forecast in the extent possible), quick decisions following actual identification of problems, correct assessment of the capacities of the team members and the harmonious union of the organization's interests and the employees' personal ones closely related to assiduous practice of

communication skills may be a successful receipt in modern leadership.

It would be quite frustrating to have something to say, that the others expect you to say, say it (finally) and, because of the "rough" personal communication tools not exceeding the level of "intent", the outcome of communication be disastrous, something totally different that didn't even cross your mind. Then, to walk away upset thinking that what you actually wanted to tell the audience meant..... well.