

## The role of communication in the transformation process of public institutions in Romania

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**Abstract:** *As a result of changes that take place in the Romanian economical-political-social environment before and after the integration in the European Union, the public administration must be able to rise up to the challenges that it has to confront. On the other hand, the civil society and the private sector, in order to develop, must find in the administration a partner that can facilitate communication and can offer the levers and instruments for them to express themselves and develop. A rigid administration, constrained by its own resources, norms and regulations cannot offer the most prompt answer to the needs of society, forming a barrier, often hard to surpass. That is why change should be a priority for the public administration in order to adapt to the same rhythm through a strategy that can promote communication, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness.*

*Despite all this, it is required that the reform initiatives of the public administration to involve all factors that can contribute to the reform process: institutional, governmental factors, the European Union regulations, the requirements of the private and civil society. In order to answer to and involve all this factors, a communication strategy made and, precisely, adapted in the frame of the implementation process of the management of change is needed. In this process, the communication is answering the following wishes: the need of transparency of the decisional system; the need of communicating everything, immediately; the internal and external credibility of the institution management; the need of changing the people perception in regard to the institution, and, in this case facilitator and instrument in the change process.*

**Key words:** communication, responsible management, management of change, feed-back, informing.

In the past few years, the public administration in Romania has been dealing with significant changes in regard to the proper frame of functioning, the expectations of the political domain and citizens and of attributions and responsibilities. Its integration, at least as a statement, in the general process of reform resulted into a confrontation with a set of dilemmas familiar to the entire Romanian society. The reform idea, frequently talked about, is too much related to the general formulations, the statements without substance, the request for infrastructure and formal solutions; unfortunately, the management and organization processes are not really taken into consideration in the equation of the administrative system reform, seen as exclusively dependent of legal solutions.

The ignorance of the necessity of a strategic perspective, the lack of consistent preoccupations regarding the managerial preparation of the administrative executives marked and is still marking several administrative institutions that are not really based on initiative and flexibility. Besides all this, a complex plan of change that includes a better image of the public administration institution is needed. This goal can be achieved through a coherent communication plan, a management adapted to the external problems of the citizen and the internal problems of bureaucracy, unprofessional staff and to other pressing problems. Besides, these problems occur repeatedly in the multi-annual modernization plans, but without any practical finality. Also, another weak point that we should take into account is the fact that the Romanian public administration doesn't have a successful system of instruments and procedures verified in practice from the members states, procedures that we can generically call "the best practices".

In the case of all actions regarding change, the communication plays a central role. It constitutes a strategic element of the process once it represents an essential mean of obtaining adhesion. Even from the start, a strategy of communication orientation based on the different phases of change must be designed. Before the beginning of the action of change, the communication must explain the motivation that lies underneath, must prepare the environment that is the object of change, must convince of the necessity of some modifications, and must counteract the individualisms through information. In a secondary stage, communication will be confronted with the resistance of the actors that start to feel destabilized regarding their previous functioning, being forced to choose the action methods.

Firstly, it must explain everything. In the third stage, doubts regarding the success rate inevitably start appearing. The communication will become, in this moment, securing, emphasizing the road made and the accordance with the initial predicaments. After the first successes appear, the finalization of the process being still far away, at this moment, the communication can be encouraging, emphasizing the collective results. We must be aware that this process is not linear: there is, of course, the back and forth motion from a stage to the other. The initiated changes in the public administration imply:

- investments in top technologies;
- redefining the customer relations;
- reorganizing work;
- using quality management;
- information campaigns.

Change for the sake of change is not recommended because is not good for the institution; the necessary transformations in a institution must be thought through, decided

and supervised based on the particularity and complexity of each, on the challenges with which the respective structure is confronting. The observation of the public administration evolution in the past years indicates that they evolve in the same way: towards a responsible management, because all the public institutions are forced to show more flexibility and reactivity, characteristic that only a management of this type can provide.

We can affirm that the public service was for a long time built based on a bureaucratic reasoning that implied a clear distinction between the persons that create/decide and the persons that make a decision; a lack of initiative coming from the executor and a strict respect of the procedures; an extremely powerful separation on the vertical plane (between the hierarchical levels), as well as on the horizontal one (between the offices and services). This type of organization proved to be of high end when it was conceived, for the private firms, as well as for the public administration, giving a solution to the existing situation (the necessity of assuring some mass services standardized in the context of a majority population with a low level of education).

The needs and expectations of today's public administration "clients" are profoundly different and based on a role switch: the expectations no longer come from the admin-

istration, that, in the past, concentrated on the observance of the rules by the "administered", but from "the consumers – citizens", who have increased expectations regarding the public services and regarding the way in which they are treated. The main elements that are the basis of these new needs/expectations are: personalized answers from the administration; the simplicity of administrative actions and procedures; the promptitude in solving problems. Obviously, these principles are not very compatible with the classical bureaucratic organization and functioning. Equally, we can consider that the citizens have the right to call on a smart public service that uses managerial and informational techniques which were inexistent in the past. Thus, the necessity of an efficient public service, able to answer correspondingly to the requests of the citizens and society in the whole. All this have as support the communication process that represents the basis of the entire management activity and, especially, when a change in this institution is needed, a change that can answer to its public through a communication adapted to the requests of the citizens, to their partners and to higher institutions. Thus, in order for this public service to be effective, it must take in account a continuous feed-back between the administration and its publics.

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