

COMMUNICATION - A KEY TO AGRIBUSINESS SUCCESS

ALINA HAGIU¹

MARINELA BĂRBULESCU²

¹ *University of Pitești, Pitești, Timisoara, Romania*

² *University of Pitești, Pitești, Timisoara, Romania*

Abstract: *Communication is a very important part in the evolution and in achieving success in any business. Obviously this applies also to the agribusiness. If we follow the actors on this market in Romania we notice that they pay very low attention to communication. However, we consider that at the level of these structures, which are often at the beginning, is needed a planning of communication in public space, a professional form of messages, a continuous information of public opinion through the media. In this article we intend to provide some ideas for improving communication of the actors involved in agribusiness, to leave the theoretical plan and to try a customization starting from reality.*

Key words: *communication, succes, agribusiness, strategy, performance*

INTRODUCTION

We will try to identify what really means communication in agribusiness starting from the realities of Romania, but also in the countries with developed agriculture. Agribusiness is a word taken in everyday speech, both abroad and, more recently, Romania, and refers to those types and fields of activity directly related to agricultural production, founded and developed by principles and methods specific to business.

In Romania, agribusiness could be defined as that type of activity related, particularly to agriculture which passed the threshold for subsistence production. Area that includes large agricultural exploitations, but also farms, respectively smaller farms but built after similar models from developed countries.

Like in any other field - sport or art, diplomacy or local administration, education or health, also in agriculture, when it tends to performance is needed public support, final beneficiary - the consumer support, in this case – of agricultural products. So, here also, to communicate is more than talk – it means to make oneself understood and to understand, to build a relationship that unites the public that supports a cause, an initiative or project . It is often the necessary step for that certain themes and priorities to be included in the agenda of priorities of the authorities.

Communication in agribusiness does not mean topics and specialized terminology, but ways in which this problem is modeled in messages understood and supported by public opinion. Managers and specialists design and plan the business. In its performance models, business, including that in agriculture includes also a communication component – internal, local, with mass media and authorities. As this follows from theory, as this practice shows. And the imposition of some strong messages in the public debate involves loud voices, credible, which in specialized terminology mean vectors of communication.

This reality, applied where agriculture is efficient, applies also to Romania, where there are also performing entities and especially producers that tend to make performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was accomplished from a double perspective, in which the conceptual methodological approach is correlated to a variety of references to practical actions aiming the communication activity of the actors that are playing on the agribusiness market.

The results expressed in this paper were the result of a qualitative analysis of the characteristics and the evolution of communication in the agribusiness area.

We didn't have omitted to identify some ways to increase the role of communication in the agribusiness area, and some ways that actors playing in this sector to use for being better communicator and to increase their chances to reach success

RESEARCH RESULTS

A. Online communication.

The most modern and efficient, of perspective, form of communication, including the lowest cost is still a faint presence in agribusiness communication. True, many farmers use online media to make known their offers, to promote their brand, to seek customers or suppliers. The situation changes, however, if we talk about associative structures - cooperative or associations of producers, inter-professional federation. Little information, few images and a professional level rather modest, define the image, the work, the priorities and the development perspective. Could this be one of the reasons that the voice of these entities is so poorly perceived in public? It is true that prejudice, the lack of experience and time are among the main problems that hinder the establishment and operation of these structures. To make from communication a goal and a concern for those who run associations and cooperatives would be exactly what would be missing from basket priority issues they have... pejoratively speaking of course.

B. "Outside" communication

A click on the websites of the various associations or cooperatives in countries where agriculture means an efficient and competitive business, puts us in front of the reality that these structures uses most forms of communication on public space from communication within the group, to the communication trough mass media, from events with the purpose of image to actions of public responsibility, from informing the consumer to institutional dialogue.

To achieve these programs are invested, inherent, resources of time, money, energy and professional experience. In a competitive space in which each investment is choose carefully, it can be assumed that these costs would not be justified and would not be taken unless they produce effect, unless they are effective. And whereas are done, it means that yes, these investments are necessary and effective.

C. Internal communication

Who attended the meetings of some "outside" organizations could remark, without necessarily being a specialist in communication, that strength and solidarity of the group, starts from punctuality, good organization, rigor in the materials presentation and, especially, the content messages sent to the group and out.

In response, for whom attended a group meeting of an association or cooperative in Romania, it is obvious that, from the call until the agenda, from the material drafting until the conclusions or decisions taken, from punctuality until the space itself of the meetings, for objective reasons, everything is hastily organized, with improvisations and clumsiness.

Obviously, correctly and effectively manage internal communication means a cost – of time, energy and money. There is the option to ignore because to communicate well and

substantially outside, the first requirement is to be able to operate the simple mechanisms of communication within the group.

There is, however, the option to ignore this reality because at first glance, it is important to produce milk, meat, cheese, eggs and less to think about the details of the image, message in communication, or institutional communication, which neither help nor diminishes profit. Such an approach is obviously wrong.

D. Local communication

Few of associative structures which works and includes prestigious farms and farmers with locally image and reputation, enjoys the same reputation and good image as an entity that operates in a village. It is true, the ability to communicate locally, it also means effort. To put at entrance a firm with the logo and the slogan that can be retained even in passing by the locals, to organize an event at which to invite the local press, local authorities and people, ordinary fellow, means a investment of money and time. But the image, the respectability, good reputation doesn't mean just goals of each one, but also of the structure as a whole. Image and respectability, the good local reputation of the association or cooperative, seem often inappropriate or ineffective spending. In reality it is very important that those who wish to obtain some information or to submit an application for membership to get where they need without groping on the road.

E. Communication through the media

The news about agriculture are sporadic in the media. In information flows are included, first, the bad news – “the price of meat, milk, cheese, eggs goes up”; “were found in the market or on shelves altered or smuggled goods”; “were discovered clandestine shipments from import”. People in agriculture, farmers have, however, other serious problems that concern and affects them - grants, loans from banks, retail market, the prices of inputs, etc. No one promotes them in mass media to be heard and taken in consideration by the public and the authorities. There is a specialized media, agribusiness media, namely some respectable periodicals, two, three shows really heard on radio and television, and more recently several online publications. Those offer professional approach of some major issues, information, analysis and substantial debates, supported by scientists and experienced practitioners. These media could provide extremely valuable communication support between people involved in agribusiness, but also between them and the public opinion. Limited mintage of these niche publications is due mainly to the fact that they just are not made in the logic of obtaining audience at any price. People and agribusiness firms should understand that supporting these media channels support their own cause, their own interests.

F. Communication crisis

Some food scandals, occupied for the first time in the last two or three years, first place in news feeds, both internally as well as externally - horse meat scandal, the one of the turkey meat, the one of aflatoxin, of vegetables contaminated with drugs, etc. Many of them have proved simple manipulation or information presented sensationalist. Their effect, however, was dramatically for manufacturers, in this case farmers in the production of meat, dairy and vegetables. Aside from their unpredictable character, such events are largely related to the professional way to respond to such information through good communication, specific to crisis situations.

In a pejorative way, we could say that we are too small and have too few resources, to have other priorities to prepare in a field so esoteric as it is the communication crisis.

G. The main ways to obtain success in agribusiness communication

If we are trying to accomplish something in life that deal with interacting with other human beings, whether it be in the personal or professional realm, good communication skills are integral for success. Good communication is at the root of everything—resolving conflict, successful collaboration, persuading someone to do what you want, having successful interactions with bosses, co-workers, clients, friends and family. In our professional life in particular, it can make or break us.

From my point of view some important ways to obtain success trough communication are:

❖ *to ask questions.* Making more effective use of questions in our business interactions, whether we are talking to our boss or a potential client, is a great way to uncover useful information, get a better idea of the other person's thoughts, feelings and perspective and keeps us from falling into the dangerous trap of assuming. Asking questions also lets the other person know we are listening to them and that we care about what they think. If we find ourselves assuming something that was not explicitly stated, we should ask a question to confirm our understanding. If we feel our client has not been clear enough on what they want from us and their desired outcome, we have to ask questions that will get us these answers. If we feel like our employee is not doing something right or we do not understand why they do things certain ways, we have to ask questions to find out why they take the approaches they do.

❖ *to pay attention.* This may sound obvious, but it is something we are often pretty bad at. We know we should be putting all of our focus on the current task at hand, but, we tend to let our minds wander; if we are on the phone, we may be checking emails or tending to other things while we should be fully focused on the person at the other end of the line. This is something we can improve by developing a greater awareness of when we are drifting and making a concerted effort to shift focus back. If we start making a more sincere effort to pay attention, we will become better at catching ourselves when we start mentally moving towards something else.

❖ *to be an active listener.* There is a difference between just listening and being an active listener and this difference is crucial for successful communication in our business endeavors. Active listening really helps us connect with the person we are talking to, get the whole message. The first step in being an active listener is to pay attention. Other strategies for active listening include body language to show we are engaged, such as nodding our head, making comments that encourage the person speaking to continue, etc. Do not interrupt when we disagree with a point. Every so often during the conversation, summarize what the person has said. This mode of operation can be difficult as it is a big departure from our usual poor listening skills, but if we can remember to keep the ultimate goal in mind - to truly understand and hear what the other person is saying - we will make the transition with greater ease.

CONCLUSIONS

To really appreciate the multiple aspects of the communication process, one first must be cognizant of the world around him and the events therein. Our world is composed of an infinite number of interacting processes; each occurring in a different manner and responding to a continually changing reality.

The manager must be aware that he is confronting a changing environment and dealing with dynamic events.

This awareness will help to establish an attitude of change. Consequently, the manager should be better able to respond effectively to the endless variety of demands placed on him by his particular business.

Models of the communication process have been developed by many writers. Generally speaking, most of these models are composed of two parties (the source and the receiver) and four elements (encoding, the message, the channel, and decoding). The source is the instigator of the message. Encoding is the psychological process of selecting and organizing the signs to be included in the

message. A message is an organized set of signs. The channel is the medium by which messages are carried from the source to the receiver. A receiver is the intended recipient of the message. Finally, decoding is the process of interpreting and assigning meaning to messages that have been received.

Most times it all starts with an idea that you - the receiver – receive from the transmitter that can be an read article, a friend, collaborator, and just like that you mobilize and start a business. And afterword sometimes you need a partner to develop the business, certainly a competitive team and do not forget the customers without which, if is not materialized the sale, the business doesn't exist.

All of these, even though we realize it or not, involves communication. That is we have: *communicating the vision* to your business partner, to the whole organization, *communicating the objectives* of work to the production team respectively the sales objectives to the sales team, *communication between departments*, *communication with suppliers/collaborators* and not least *communication to target market*, the final customer.

Often between partners coordinating a company, appear differences in vision, perception, hence the different shades of messages sent by the team. This causes further misunderstanding/partial of tasks, sales targets by the personnel and so it is that the transmitter has a range of expectations that will not be met and this not necessarily as a bad will but because the receiver got the wrong information. Not to mention the importance of the message sent to the market and often the entrepreneur “thinks” that through the slogan chosen for instance, surely the client will understand what it is about - which is not true just because the idea was so beautiful and that its “producer” understands it.

Every business involves people, and as a quote said, people are the most precious capital in a business. On how to use this capital, knowing that business means relations between partners, employer-employee, departments, company - customers and suppliers depends the success it will register your company.

Given the fact that the rules have changed in times of crisis, communication at the level of organization, departments and in relation to the target market becomes an important prerequisite. Today you are forced to get better, it's not enough to understand the situation in the market but you must have the proper tools for business development.

The communication process in agribusiness is necessary to start from the manager.

An agribusiness manager is responsible for providing guidance and control over a complex set of processes. In the conduct of this guidance and control, the manager is likely to spend the largest proportion of his normal workday engaged in communication.

Because communication is such a critical component of most managerial functions, a more thorough understanding of the communications process is proposed as the starting point for managers who wish to improve their communicative ability. The communication process was shown to require an in-depth managerial involvement as a message source, encoder, decoder and

receiver. Communicative skill is extremely important to agribusiness managers because receipt and transmission of messages is a fundamental element of planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling. An understanding of the communications process will enhance a manager's awareness of his own communicative deficiencies and encourage self-improvement.

Communication, in all of its forms, is a complex process. All managers should strive to improve their communicative ability and understanding. In this way, and in this way only, will other administrators, employees, stockholders, and the general public receive and comprehend the messages directed to them by agribusiness managers.

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