

THE ROLE OF THE SPOKESPERSON IN THE MANAGEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION AND CRISIS SITUATIONS

Georgiana Alina POPA¹, Andreea Luiza BOGHIRNEA²

¹Teaching assist, PhD student, "Apollonia" University of Iași, Romania

²Student, "Apollonia" University of Iași, Romania

Corresponding author: Georgiana Alina Popa; e-mail: georgianaalinapopa@yahoo.com

Abstract

This article aims to analyse the role of the spokesperson in managing institutional communication and crisis situations, highlighting its importance in maintaining the balance between transparency, public accountability and the protection of the organization's image. It takes into account the specific responsibilities of the spokesperson, the mechanisms of informational meditation, and the impact of institutional discourse on public perception. In the context of crisis situations, communication becomes an essential strategic tool, and the way messages are formulated and conveyed influences the level of public trust and the institution's reputational stability. The analysis focuses on the conceptual framework of crisis communication, the response strategies adopted, as well as the ethical and professional responsibilities associated with this role. Thus, the role of the spokesperson is presented not only as a function of formal representation, but also as a central element in strengthening institutional credibility and in the effective management of situations of communicational vulnerability.

Keywords: *Institutional communication, crisis communication, spokesperson, organizational reputation, communication strategy, image, audience, crisis management, charisma, trust.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the spokesperson is to ensure effective communication between the organization and the public. It stands out for its professionalism, trustworthiness, authenticity, reliability and clear communication, building the trust of the public every time it addresses the press or gives a speech. The spokesperson is "regarded as an important actor in the press structure. It is the main source of information for journalists and, at the same time, the accessible and concrete image of the institution." (Bucur,2002) The spokesperson is the business card of an organization, so its credibility and the ability to manage the public image depends on

the way the spokesperson makes press statements, the ideas being exposed directly, clearly and reasoned.

2. BRIEF CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SPOKESPERSON

Since the spokesperson has a special responsibility in maintaining a continuous, fair and coherent dialogue with the media representatives, it is necessary that it possesses the theoretical knowledge in communication matters, to have and develop skills and personality data appropriate to a good communicator. Thus, the spokesperson does not limit itself to rendering information, but structures it, explains it and adapts it according to the context.

The spokesperson demonstrates self-control and lucidity in crisis situations, is able to promptly answer difficult questions and manage the pressure of deadlines and public exposure. All these qualities contribute greatly to strengthening its own image, the image of the institution it represents and that of the society.

By analysing these qualities of a proper spokesperson, we understand that this is the person who knows what is happening in the organization, so as not to be left unanswered in the face of complex questions. At the same time, absolutely all the statements it makes must coincide with the policy, principles, values, identity and culture of the organization. In addition, it must be a charismatic individual, but at the same time it has to impose its authority. Within the company, it must be liked by both management and employees, in order to be

aware of all decisions, opinions and unforeseen situations within it (Academia, n.d.).

3. INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION AND THE FUNCTION OF THE SPOKESPERSON

Institutional communication brings together all forms of communication intended to enhance an organization, its personnel and activities, a product or service performed by it. Institutional communication refers to the organization itself and borrows the style of mass communication. The organization evolves in an environment where creating one's own identity is increasingly difficult to achieve. To succeed in this, it must inform and, above all, "seduce" the public. These are the reasons why the organization regularly communicates data about itself: organization, products, services, results. The main purpose of this communication is to create and maintain a favourable image in the public consciousness.

The image of the institution depends on how it is conveyed to the public through communication. It brings together at the same time the quality of the products or services, the overall level of success, the degree of participation, as well as the totality of the efforts undertaken to build a specificity. The image represents an important factor that has been recognized and studied by a reference author, conceptually defining it as representing "the set of perceptions that an individual has regarding an object" (Kolter, 1996). We therefore understand that a spokesperson has a fairly important role in relation to institutional communication, which means that he/she must perform a wide range of tasks (Portal Management, 2026). The spokesperson does the following:

Prepares the annual communication planning documents, at the level of the unit in which he/she works, in support of the provisions of the Concept of Public Relations, Traditions, Education and Sport, developed by the profile directorate;

Manages relations with the media, monitors the way the unit's activity is presented by the written and audio-visual press, presents analyses and summaries to the bosses;

Supports during field documentaries and provides information of public interest to local and central media representatives;

Assesses the state of achievement of the communication objectives and reports the results of the analysis carried out;

- Prepares and ensures the presentation in both central and local press of information regarding the most important life events and the activity of the unit in which he/she works;
- Drafts draft responses to the materials published in the central and local press concerning the staff and the unit to which he/she belongs, with the approval of the head of the respective structure;
- Carries out, from the point of view of content, media actions through the internet;
- Presents, on behalf of the management of the unit, the official position in relation to various cases and situations in which the institution is concerned;
- Transmits, through public appearances, authentic and credible information in case of special events.
- The spokesperson is also defined by a series of responsibilities such as:
- Research, collection, processing, analysis and synthesis of information;
- Developing, creating or selecting written, video, photo, audio materials;
- Dissemination of information to journalists, shareholders, government institutions and all categories of public that are part of the organization's sphere of interest;
- Effective collaboration with the team in which he/she works and with the other collaborators;
- Permanent contact with the client or team;
- Organizing and participating in events for the benefit of the organization (Portal Just, 2012).

4. CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The crisis situation can be defined as a complex phenomenon, consisting of an unforeseen situation, which may call into question the responsibility of an institution in front of public opinion, which may threaten the institution's ability to carry out its activity normally and which may damage its public image through

negative effects on a symbolic level. It should be noted that a crisis can also be caused by the poor organization of the exchange of information between an institution and the public opinion, carried out through the media or between representatives of various institutions or professionals in the system. The judicial system is susceptible to crisis situations, all the more so as it is an open system, in which the relationship with public opinion is constant and of major importance, being subject to a permanent conflict between the objective rigor of the law and the subjectivism of the Internet.

The absence of rapid communication can generate an informational vacuum, which will inevitably be filled by rumours or speculative interpretations. That is why the communication strategy in crisis situations must be based on controlled transparency, empathy and coherence. It can be emphasized that a crisis is not only a risk, but also an opportunity to build trust, if managed correctly. The spokesperson, in this context, thus becomes the main pillar of institutional stability.

In general, crisis situations are characterized by uncertainty, confusion, pressure and tension. However, the spokesperson cannot afford, under any circumstances, to enter into polemics with the media representatives, to adopt a categorical tone or to resort to a trenchant refusal of the "no comments" type. Such conduct risks deepening the crisis and negatively affecting public perception. On the contrary, the spokesperson has the obligation to show openness, availability and transparency, as it is an official source of information and must permanently strengthen the credibility (Public Prosecutor's Office, 2021).

In managing a crisis situation, the spokesperson will act in a phased and coordinated manner. First of all, it will assure journalists that, as soon as possible, information and an official point of view on the event will be provided. Subsequently, at the level of the institution it represents, as well as at the level of the structures involved or responsible, it will make all the necessary diligence to be completely and quickly informed on all relevant aspects regarding the event, including the objectives resulting from the questions asked by the press, so that it can formulate an official answer within the limits of

publicity of the procedures carried out or to be ordered by the authorities. Depending on the nature of the case and the institutional competences, the spokesperson will be in contact, as the case may be, with courts, the prosecutor's office structures, but it will also cooperate with the spokesperson of the Superior Council of Magistracy. Next, it will analyse all the information received and will draft a document that will respond punctually to the press request, in compliance with the provisions of the media relations guide.

Following consultation with the institution's management and based on the instructions received, it will establish and communicate the manner of transmitting to the press and public opinion the official point of view of the institution, either by means of a press release of the head of the institution, or by a press release published on the institution's website and sent simultaneously to accredited journalists or those who have requested information, either by telephone or audio-video intervention of the head of the institution or of the spokesperson, including in situations where the event takes place outside working hours (Ludmila, 2022).

5. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN CRISIS

Communication must be adapted to modern channels, including the online environment, where information spreads at a considerable speed. The lack of an official reaction can amplify the negative perception and irreparably damage the organization's reputation.

A crisis situation can have both internal and external causes. The category of internal factors includes divergences of opinion on sensitive topics within the same institution, the public expression of contradictory positions, deviations from personnel, possible conflicts of interest, inappropriate professional or moral conduct of management employees at institutional level.

The external factors, beyond the institution's control, are difficult to anticipate and in most cases, impossible to prevent. These include legislative or institutional changes with an impact on the field of activity, hostile media

campaigns, fires, threats, force majeure situations generated by natural disasters (floods, earthquakes, epidemics) or contexts of armed conflict.

In recent times, the frequency and intensity of crises have increased considerably, and their management has become increasingly complex, especially when they are determined by external factors and the need for solutions adapted to each community. However, crisis communication, approached in an integrated way, provides a toolbox aimed at mitigating the negative effects, by correctly informing the public, strengthening social cohesion and ensuring a prompt and effective response.

The strategies for effective crisis communication are the following:

- Speed of reaction – in crisis situations, time is of the essence. For the public, the first source often becomes the preferred source of information.
- Fairness – the fairness of information generates credibility. The information may refer to known aspects, elements still unknown and measures taken.
- Credibility – honesty and truth are basic elements in a crisis situation.
- Empathy – crises generate emotions, and these are good to be recognized and managed.
- Respect – respect-based communication plays an important role, especially in situations where people feel vulnerable. This encourages an attitude of cooperation on the part of citizens.
- Orientation towards solutions – in difficult situations, namely the solutions and not the explanation of the reasons, are requested by the public opinion (Catana, 2008).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis shows that the role of the spokesperson in the management of institutional communication and crisis situations is essential for maintaining credibility and informational balance in the public space. Positioned at the intersection between the institution, the media and the public opinion, the spokesperson becomes the guarantor of the coherence, accuracy

and timeliness of the message conveyed, contributing decisively to the consolidation of the institutional image.

In the context of day-to-day communication, it is responsible for ensuring the transparency of the institution's work, facilitating access to information of public interest and preventing misinterpretations or speculation. Effective institutional communication involves not only transmitting accurate information, but also adapting the message to the specifics of the target audience, as well as maintaining a constant and professional dialogue with media representatives.

In crisis situations, the role of the spokesperson takes on a strategic dimension. It must manage the flow of information promptly and responsibly, provide clarifications in an organized framework and avoid both minimization and excessive dramatization of events. Through transparent, coherent and fundamental communication based on verified data, the spokesperson contributes to limiting the negative impact of the crisis and maintaining public trust in the institution.

Also, the effectiveness of its work depends on close collaboration with the management of the institution and with the relevant internal structures, as well as on compliance with the legal framework and the applicable rules of ethics. The exercise of this role involves balance, discernment and the ability to act under pressure, in conditions of increased public visibility.

In conclusion, the spokesperson is not a simple intermediary of information, but an institutional actor with a strategic function, whose professional conduct directly influences the public perception and legitimacy of the institution. Only through responsible, consistent and transparent communication can the strengthening of the relationship between the institution and society be ensured, as well as the effective management of crisis situations (Rusnac, 2021).

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