

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNAL CEO-COMMUNICATION IN A DIGITAL WORLD OF WORK: CHECKING THE FACTS

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Abstract:

In this study, we examine the actual and future role of internal CEO-communication in a digitalized world of work.

Theoretically, we base on the classical framework of internal communication which consists of the three elements hierarchical communication (communication from one hierarchical level to the next), parallel communication (consisting of CEO-communication and internal communication organized by a specialized communication-unit) and informal communication (communication between colleagues and in teams; rumors). We suppose that this clear conceptual separation between these elements get blurred due to digital media. As a consequence, CEO-Communication is no more only parallel but also institutional, i.e. the boundaries between the specialized communication-unit and the CEO become more open. Additionally, CEO-communication may also is informal sometimes. We presume one of the role-changes is from communicating facts and strategy to inform more also about values. Lastly, the examination shall shed light on which digital media are effectively used by CEOs for their internal communication. Overall, CEO-communication is defined as the communication of the leading executive in a company.

Methodologically, a focus group discussion with five heads of communication from large Swiss companies (all with more than 1'000 employees) was conducted to refine theoretical considerations. In February 2019 a survey with 25 items was sent to the heads of communication of the 120 largest companies in Switzerland concerning the number of employees. The statistical analysis of the data is done in March 2019. Preliminary results will be provided at the conference.

Keywords: CEO-communication, internal communication, digital media, focus group discussion, survey-study