

Preface:

Workplace Communication in Hybrid Environments

The world faced the COVID-19 pandemic for more than two years. Daily life has changed dramatically, and social distancing and working remotely have become the “new normal”. Several countries have experienced multiple periods of isolation during which many work activities have become hybrid or completely remote. Since then, digital communication is developing not a virtual world, but a real virtuality integrated with other forms of interaction in an increasingly “hybridized” everyday life.

As we write this presentation, we are dealing with this time of post-coronavirus pandemic crisis that has also affected brands, organizations, and institutions, without having encountered an effective model to deal with this new reality. The current situation exposes the impact of living in an increasingly digitally connected world.

Research about how people are coping with these challenges, conducted in different countries, point out common findings and concerns. First, the pandemic has increased inequalities in income, access to digital technology, learning, work, and even well-being and affection. Second, the pandemic has had an impact on many people’s mental health, with anxiety and depression being the most common consequences. Finally, the use of digital technologies, for fun, for learning, for social relationships, but also for work, has increased significantly. Moreover, after the first lockdown, many people have not completely returned to their pre-pandemic routines but have maintained a more frequent and intense use of digital technologies, which has been reinforced by a second period of lockdown and remote working. At the same time, many workers suffer from “digital fatigue” and struggle to self-regulate as the permanent digital connection to work becomes established, blurring boundaries regarding privacy, leisure, or rest. It is in this context that we present this book on how organizations reinvented themselves to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic consequences, looking to understand which of the reactive workplace communication practices and makeshift solutions were deemed advantageous and persisted in a post-pandemic scenario. Furthermore, it is relevant to comprehend the workers’ perspective and assess how these changes in communication (physical and/or virtual) in their workplace (both formal and informal) have affected their well-being. This book therefore aims to understand how workers are coping with these new workplace communication practices, the advantages and disadvantages of these changes, emerging needs, and how organizations can reinvent themselves to promote the well-being and happiness of their members.

With this line of study in mind, the editors of this book have shared several research questions about the design and use of Information and Communication Technologies in workplace environments. There are many challenges in analyzing, prototyping, evaluating, and developing digital plans and services to provide information and communication to either internal or external audiences.

To rise to these challenges, we need both social and technological approaches to communication strategies. Thus, the aim of the book *Perspectives on Workplace Communication and Well-Being in Hybrid Work Environments* is to provide an in-depth review of research related to the concepts and theories

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around topics such as Organizations and Communication, Digitalization, Connectivity, and Interactivity, among others. We aim to contribute to an improvement of the understanding of Digital Communication in Organizations. In order to do so, this book brings together different approaches that explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communication in the workplace, focusing specifically on internal communication, mapping new communication practices, and assessing their consequences, notably on the well-being of workers, who are coping with these changes. The book combines a scientific exploration of these ongoing changes, as we transition to a post-COVID-19 world, with a collection of examples and best practices that help different organizations to support their members through these transformations and nurture their well-being.

This book contains 13 chapters that analyze several key issues related to virtualization processes in organizations and the growth of digital ecosystems, while discussing the challenges and opportunities of those phenomena for the development of organizational structures and communication practices during and after COVID-19 pandemic.

The first chapter, “Digital Wellbeing in the Workplace Environment: Definition, Dimensions, Strategies, and Best Practices,” presents wellbeing as a multidimensional concept, which can be seen as a balance between the psychological, social, and physical resources that an individual possesses, and the psychological, social, and physical challenges one faces, by making an overview of the referred concepts and connecting them in an organizational communication perspective.

The second chapter, “Linking Internal Communication and Organizational Performance During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” discusses the relationship between internal communication and organizational performance. It was carried out at Natixis in Portugal, a company in the banking sector, which structured and outlined an organized, original, and creative internal communication strategy in a record time during COVID-19.

Chapter 3, “Reporting and Feeling: Considerations on the Mental Health of Journalists During the Pandemic,” presents the mental health challenges faced by journalists, through a review of existing literature and a brief survey of journalists in Brazil.

The chapter “The Hype of the Hybrid on Work Culture Compatibility” promotes a reflection on a new work model known as the “Hybrid Model,” combining the advantages and disadvantages of “On-Site” and “Work from Home” cultures to create a balance between the two worlds.

Chapter 5, “The Luxury Stores of the Future: The Impact of Technology on the Relationship Between Consumers and the Brand’s Staff,” presents the growing investment and interest of leading brands in the applicability of digital transformation strategies that seeks to meet the high expectations of a progressively more informed and, consequently, more detailed consumer profile.

Chapter 6, “Is Internal Communication a ‘Bet on the Right Horse’ on the Path for Promoting Employees’ Eco-Friendly Behavior? The Mediator Role of Organizational Green Culture,” presents the guidelines of the “Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs) which are a key area of development for contemporary organizations. The commitment towards the development of internal organizational policies with the alignment of the SDGs clearly invites the adoption of employee-oriented environmentally friendly actions, in which the role of Internal Communication policies and practices should be discussed.

“Spillover Stress From ‘The Great Resignation’ in the United States: Broken Cross-Departmental Dependencies,” is the seventh chapter. The authors examine the repercussions of stress following the so-called “Great Resignation” in the United States after the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The eighth chapter, “Inside Out-Radio Being Radio Outside the Studio: Renaissance’s Communication During the First Wave of COVID-19”, proposes a reflection on how radio had to rethink its strategies and resort to new technologies and digital devices to continue its broadcast.

Chapter 9, “The Post-COVID-19 Communicator: What Makes the Professional’s Head in New Times?” presents a project that intends to highlight how the topic of mental health has become a relevant agenda for Brazilian professionals in organizational communication and public relations offices and agencies, since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next chapter, “Hybrid Work Organization and Well-Being Strategies in Advertising Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” explores the topic of how advertising agencies have organized hybrid work and develop well-being strategies for workers during the pandemic period (2020-2022) in Romania.

Chapter 11 is “Reimagining Communication in Pharmaceutical Industry in the Next Normal,” which aims to reflect on how the COVID-19 crisis made pharmaceutical organizations move towards new communication strategies with some new business models in order to survive and reach their target audience.

Chapter 12 presents “Communication and Coordination Issues in Managing Distributed Scrum Teams” by analyzing software development companies that have been progressively feeling the need to migrate their traditional development processes to agile environments.

Finally, the last chapter, “The Growth of Cyberbullying at Workplace After COVID-19: The Problems of New Forms of Communication,” aims to explain the role of internal communication in organizations as one of the fundamental pillars for their proper development.

Throughout the 13 chapters, the book highlights the relevance of organizational communication strategies and practices to give employees information, direction, and support in a post-COVID-19 world. In a crisis situation, employees face pressures and challenges as they deal with unexpected disruption in their routine working conditions with a high level of uncertainty. In fact, the COVID-19 emergency had a great impact on individual and collective health, but also on working processes. The mandatory remote working and the constant use of technology for employees raised different implications related to technostress and psycho-physical disorders. In such a period of crisis and changes, the role of organizational communication was quite important for reestablishing mental balance and confidence in the system, and by reorganizing new working processes.

After the pandemic many of these organizational practices continued, leading to a technological addiction and an information overload, and this environment can bring once again confusion, uncertainty, worries, fear, stress, or anxiety to organizational members. However, communication is pointed out in the chapters of this book as the core of organizational reconstruction in the search for a new equilibrium in the post-pandemic world.

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