



Managerial Communication Barriers and Alignment in a Slovak Telecommunications Company

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines managerial communication in a large Slovak telecommunications company and identifies barriers that weaken employee alignment. It is based on a qualitative case study, using semi-structured interviews with six managers from different functional areas, supported by observations of the organisational communication context. The analysis shows that communication problems arise mainly from one-way messaging, incomplete contextualisation, inconsistent interpretation across managers, delayed information, excessive channel fragmentation, and weak ownership of unpopular decisions. At the same time, managers perceive communication as a decisive tool for motivation, engagement, trust, innovation, and strategic alignment. The article proposes a practical communication framework comprising a channel matrix, a monthly electronic newsletter, regular, structured meetings, feedback loops, and training for difficult conversations. The findings suggest that effective managerial communication is not achieved by increasing the number of messages or digital tools but by improving clarity, timeliness, responsibility, and employee voice. The article contributes to organisational behaviour practice by converting evidence into a structured model applicable to service organisations facing rapid technological and customer-related change.

Keywords: Managerial communication, Internal communication, Employee voice, Communication barriers, Telecommunications, Slovakia.

Introduction

Managerial communication is not a supporting activity added to management after decisions have been made; it is one of the core mechanisms through which decisions become understandable, accepted, and executable. Communication gives employees access to the meaning of tasks, clarifies priorities, connects individual roles with organisational goals, and creates a setting in which feedback can correct managerial assumptions. The classic statement that people cannot communicate remains especially important in organisations, because silence, delay, channel choice, tone, and incomplete information all become messages in their own right (Watzlawick *et al.*, 2018). In turbulent service markets, where technologies and customer expectations change quickly, the quality of internal communication therefore becomes an operational capability rather than a soft complement to performance.

The telecommunications industry heightens this necessity, as frontline staff must rapidly and accurately process evolving service features, technical updates, and grievance protocols (Holmes *et al.*, 2024). Any ambiguity or latency in managerial communication risks eroding service consistency and fostering organizational confusion. Academic literature defines internal communication as a dual process of knowledge dissemination and relational development, essential for bridging strategic directives with workforce comprehension (Fitzpatrick, 2017; Ruck *et al.*, 2017; Tkalac & Poloski, 2017; Kunie *et al.*, 2025). Conversely, research highlights that excess messaging, poorly defined

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communication channels, and insufficient feedback loops frequently degrade organizational effectiveness, transforming vital information into unproductive noise (Lee *et al.*, 2016; Hynes, 2016; Grant *et al.*, 2024). Ultimately, clear communication remains a critical determinant of operational success and sustained employee alignment within this dynamic sector.

This paper adapts qualitative research regarding managerial communication at Orange Slovensko, a.s., into a formal scholarly article. The case study remains significant for offering diverse managerial perspectives across various functional sectors within a major Slovak telecommunications enterprise. Rather than viewing communication as merely a technical mechanism for information exchange, participants conceptualized it as a tool for establishing credibility, fostering sense-making, encouraging staff engagement, assuming responsibility, and mitigating misinterpretations. These empirical observations align with organizational behavior literature concerning employee voice, internal communications, corporate social responsibility, and risk management strategies. For instance, research on Slovak e-commerce highlights the necessity of transparent corporate responsibility (Jankalova & Vartiak, 2016), while investigations into transport platforms and foreign investment demonstrate how organizational actors must navigate shifting environments by interpreting risks, advantages, and complex stakeholder expectations (Garbarova & Vartiak, 2021; Kovalova & Vartiak, 2024).

The study asks the following research question: Which communication barriers and managerial practices shape the effectiveness of managerial communication in a large Slovak telecommunications company? The article contributes to practice by proposing a communication architecture that combines clarity, timeliness, channel discipline, feedback, and responsibility for difficult messages. It also contributes conceptually by showing that the effectiveness of managerial communication cannot be reduced to the quantity of information provided. The crucial issue is whether employees receive complete, timely, relevant, and contextualised messages in a form that allows them to understand what is expected and why it matters.

Literature Review

Communication is commonly defined as the process of transmitting information between a sender and a receiver, but organisational communication requires more than mere transmission. It involves encoding, channels, decoding, feedback, and the management of barriers that can distort meaning (Janda, 2004; Winkler, 2022). Letovancova (2015) emphasises the exchange of information between two or more subjects, while Reifova *et al.* (2004) draw attention to the production and exchange of meanings through sign systems. In managerial practice, these definitions converge: managers do not merely distribute data; they frame meaning, create expectations, and invite or suppress employee interpretation.

While communication is conventionally described as the conveyance of data from sender to receiver, organizational contexts demand a more nuanced approach. It encompasses encoding, message transmission, decoding, feedback loops, and the mitigation of interpretive interference (Janda, 2004; Winkler, 2022). Letovancova (2015) highlights the interactive nature of such exchanges, whereas Reifova *et al.* (2004) focus on constructing meaning via semiotic systems. Within management, these perspectives align: leaders do not simply disseminate information; they actively cultivate frameworks of meaning, establish professional expectations, and either facilitate or restrict the diverse interpretations developed by their workforce throughout the organizational environment.

Managerial communication also has a relational function. It affects trust, engagement, and identification with organisational goals. Employee voice can strengthen organisational engagement when employees believe that their opinions are heard and can influence decisions (Ruck *et al.*, 2017). Internal communication is associated with employee satisfaction and integration of organisational processes (Jacobs *et al.*, 2016). Content decisions matter: employees need concise, complete, concrete, clear, courteous, and credible messages, especially when communication concerns change, performance expectations, or unpopular decisions (Hynes, 2016; Pazeraite & Repoviene, 2018). These principles explain why vague managerial messages may create uncertainty even when communication volume is high.

Barriers arise at several levels. Sender-related barriers include unwillingness to share information, inconsistent messages, unsuitable language, and lack of credibility. Receiver-related barriers include weak listening, different mental models, stereotypes, and selective filtering. Relationship barriers include status differences, semantic



disagreements, previous conflict, and unequal power. Environmental barriers include time pressure, communication noise, and information overload (Letovancova, 2015; Hynes, 2016). In modern organisations, digital tools can reduce distance but also increase fragmentation. Multiple platforms may create a false impression that information has been communicated, while employees still do not know where authoritative information is located (Lee *et al.*, 2016). Managerial style determines how barriers are handled. Managers who use communication as a directive instrument may secure short-term compliance but risk low involvement and weak feedback. Managers who combine clear expectations with listening and authenticity can support a psychological climate in which employees understand decisions and feel invited to contribute (Robbins & Judge, 2016; Belohlavek, 2017). A manager's communication is, therefore, a strategic behaviour. It affects not only local work coordination but also the credibility of corporate values such as responsibility, teamwork, transparency, and people orientation.

Materials and Methods

The article is based on a qualitative case study on managerial communication in Orange Slovensko, a.s. The original research used a theoretical-empirical design: the theoretical part summarised communication concepts and barriers. In contrast, the empirical part examined the current state of managerial communication in the selected company through guided interviews and observation. The company was selected because it is a major Slovak telecommunications operator with a complex internal structure and multiple communication channels. The empirical focus was not on measuring employee satisfaction statistically but on interpreting communication practices from the perspective of managers responsible for different areas.

The dataset consisted of semi-structured interviews with six managers across different managerial positions. The respondents included managers from customer care, operations support, information support, sales, and quality and support. The interview questions asked managers to identify the biggest problems in internal communication, describe their rules for communicating with employees, explain the goals they pursue when communicating, identify the main contribution of managerial communication, and reflect on whether they prepare for communication with employees. The research also used observation and internal organisational knowledge to contextualise the interview results. The analysis followed thematic logic (**Table 1**). First, repeated barriers were identified across interviews. Second, managerial rules and communication principles were grouped into broader categories. Third, the reported benefits of communication were linked to organisational behaviour outcomes such as engagement, trust, coordination, innovation, and reduced turnover. Finally, recommendations were formulated as an integrated communication framework.

Table 1. Research design and data sources

Element	Description
Research design	Qualitative case study based on a theoretical-empirical research.
Organisation	Orange Slovensko, a.s., is a large telecommunications company in Slovakia.
Participants	Six managers from customer care, sales, quality, support, operations support, and information support.
Data collection	Semi-structured interviews, direct observation, and analysis of the internal communication context.
Main analytic focus	Communication barriers, managerial communication rules, goals, benefits, and improvement recommendations.

Results and Discussion

The interviews revealed that managers perceive communication as a decisive condition for organisational alignment. However, they also identified recurrent barriers that reduce its effectiveness (**Table 2**). The first barrier was one-way communication. Several managers observed that employees often receive instructions without enough context and that upward feedback is not always embedded in the communication process. One respondent stated that communication becomes problematic when employees have no opportunity to react. This finding aligns with the literature on employee voice: communication must provide employees with not only information but also influence and clarification (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2014; Ruck *et al.*, 2017).



The second barrier was incompleteness and inconsistency. Managers reported that information is sometimes communicated without the broader rationale, which may create distrust. In some cases, the same message is interpreted differently by different managers, producing communication noise. In other cases, only the positive part of a message is shared, while difficult or unpopular aspects are avoided. Such selectivity is especially risky in change-related communication. When employees receive partial information, they may fill gaps with assumptions, informal rumours, or interpretations from other channels. This supports Hynes's (2016) emphasis on clarity, completeness, and timeliness as conditions for effective managerial communication.

The third barrier was channel fragmentation. The organisation uses several digital and interpersonal tools, including e-mail, WhatsApp groups, an internal social network, and Microsoft Teams. Multiple channels increase reach but also complicate the search for authoritative information. A message distributed across several channels can lose visibility, and employees may not know where to find the current version. This finding aligns with the concept of communication and information overload (Lee *et al.*, 2016). It also suggests that digitalisation does not automatically improve communication. The value of a channel depends on whether its purpose is defined and whether employees understand which channel is for which type of content.

The fourth barrier was responsibility avoidance in difficult communication. Several respondents noted that unpopular decisions are sometimes communicated as if the responsibility lies with another part of the organisation. This weakens trust, because employees expect managers to interpret decisions, take ownership of the message, and explain consequences. The finding is important for corporate responsibility. Transparent communication is part of how organisations demonstrate responsibility toward employees, just as external corporate responsibility practices shape stakeholder trust (Jankalova & Vartiak, 2016).

Table 2. Communication barriers and managerial responses identified in the case

Barrier	Managerial response reported or recommended
One-way communication	Create space for questions, discussion, and upward feedback after important messages.
Incomplete information	Explain not only what is changing, but why the change matters and what consequences it has.
Inconsistent interpretation	Use a single briefing note for managers before cascading sensitive information.
Channel fragmentation	Define the official channel for each message type and archive decisions in a single searchable location.
Late information	Communicate early about projects and changes that affect customers or employees.
Avoidance of unpopular topics	Prepare managers to communicate risks, constraints, and unpopular decisions responsibly.

Despite these barriers, the interviews also showed a strong practical understanding of effective communication. Managers repeatedly emphasised authenticity, honesty, respect, clarity, timing, and appropriate channel selection. One manager explicitly listed six rules: be honest, be authentic, express oneself clearly, present information positively, pay attention to timing, and choose the most suitable channel. Another manager stressed that communication should be fair, transparent, and understandable. Another emphasised that every member of the team should know where the 'ship' is heading. These principles show that managerial communication is understood as sense-making rather than merely message transmission.

The reported goals of managerial communication can be grouped into four categories. The first is cognitive alignment: employees should understand the company's objectives, tasks, priorities, and their own contributions. The second is motivational influence: communication should encourage employees to accept goals, remain engaged, and perform better. The third is relational trust: communication should maintain contact with colleagues, convey that employee opinions matter, and build confidence. The fourth is operational problem solving: communication should help teams find solutions, prevent misunderstandings, and respond to customer-related changes. These categories align with internal communication research linking communication to engagement, satisfaction, and integration (Jacobs *et al.*, 2016; Tkalac & Poloski, 2017).



A particularly important result concerns the role of preparation. Some managers prepare formal points, presentations, visuals, or anticipated answers before important communication. Others prepare depending on the topic, while weekly operational meetings may require less preparation. The study indicates that preparation should be proportional to message complexity and emotional risk. Routine updates may need a concise agenda, but strategic changes, unpopular decisions, or customer-impacting projects require structured preparation, including anticipated questions, evidence, risks, and a follow-up channel. This resembles risk-benefit reasoning: managers should anticipate how a message can create value or harm depending on how it is framed and implemented (Kovalova & Vartiak, 2024).

The case also shows that managerial communication has a strategic link to employee loyalty and innovation. Respondents associated good communication with motivation, engagement, productivity, healthy culture, lower turnover, and support for innovation. While the original research did not statistically measure these relationships, the managerial perception is consistent with the broader literature. Employees who understand strategy and feel respected in communication are more likely to identify with the organisation and contribute ideas. Conversely, employees who experience vague or contradictory communication may become passive, skeptical, or resistant.

Proposed Communication Framework

Drawing from these insights, a five-tiered strategic framework is recommended. Primarily, organizations should implement a channel matrix to standardize communication protocols across platforms like email, Teams, meetings, newsletters, and social networks, while codifying authoritative decision repositories. Secondly, a monthly newsletter should synthesize corporate priorities and project updates to minimize information fragmentation. Thirdly, monthly meetings must be structured as formal working sessions, mandating advance agendas and dedicated inquiry periods. Fourthly, robust feedback mechanisms, comprising brief post-communication check-ins, anonymous portals for sensitive discourse, and systematic peer-to-peer managerial briefings, should be institutionalized. Finally, leadership must undergo targeted professional development focusing on active listening, the management of complex interpersonal dialogues, and rigorous message preparation. This integrated approach aims to optimize internal information flow, thereby enhancing overall organizational cohesion and ensuring consistent alignment with fundamental corporate objectives (Table 3).

Table 3. Managerial communication improvement framework

Component	Purpose	Expected effect
Channel matrix	Clarify which tool is used for which message type.	Less overload and fewer lost messages.
Monthly newsletter	Summarise strategic and operational updates in one place.	Better shared awareness and easier search.
Regular meetings	Create structured dialogue between managers and employees.	More feedback, trust, and coordination.
Difficult-message checklist	Prepare rationale, risks, timing, and follow-up for unpopular decisions.	Higher credibility and lower rumour risk.
Listening training	Develop active listening, question technique, and emotional control.	Improved manager-employee relationships.

The framework is intentionally simple because complex communication systems often fail through overdesign. The case suggests that employees do not need more channels; they need clearer ownership, better context, and reliable feedback. The recommendation, therefore, is to move from channel multiplication to channel governance. In practical terms, every important message should answer five questions: What is changing? Why is it changing? Who is affected? What should employees do? Where can they ask questions or find the current information? If these questions are answered consistently, the probability of distorted interpretation decreases.

These results underscore the ethical imperative inherent in managerial discourse. While obscuring unfavorable data, deflecting accountability, or stifling staff feedback might offer temporary relief, such practices erode long-term organizational trust. Conversely, transparent communication, defined by clarifying limitations, admitting uncertainty, and encouraging dialogue, fosters a more accountable culture. This is especially vital within service sectors, where



staff comprehension dictates customer satisfaction and where rapid market shifts mirror the complex transformations observed in recent sharing-economy research (Garbarova & Vartiak, 2021).

Conclusion

The article examined managerial communication in a Slovak telecommunications company using qualitative evidence from interviews with six managers. The findings show that the main communication barriers are one-way communication, incomplete context, inconsistent interpretation, channel fragmentation, late information, and avoidance of responsibility for difficult messages. At the same time, managers recognise that effective communication requires authenticity, clarity, fairness, transparency, timely preparation, and a feedback orientation.

The proposed communication framework recommends a channel matrix, a monthly newsletter, regular structured meetings, feedback loops, and manager training for difficult conversations. The core implication is that managerial communication should be managed as an organisational system. It should not depend only on individual managerial preference or spontaneous digital messages. For practice, the case demonstrates that clear and responsible communication can support engagement, trust, innovation, and employee alignment. For future research, a survey of employees could test whether the managerial perceptions identified in this qualitative study align with employees' experiences across departments and hierarchical levels.

Managerial Implications

The case indicates that managerial communication should be evaluated through three practical criteria: accessibility, interpretability, and accountability. Accessibility means that employees know where to find the message and can return to it when needed. Interpretability means that the message includes context, concrete implications, and language appropriate to the recipient. Accountability means that the manager communicating the message accepts responsibility for explaining it, even when the decision originated at a higher level. Without these three criteria, communication can be formally completed but behaviorally ineffective.

For telecommunications companies, the accessibility criterion is particularly important because operational changes often affect customer contact. Employees who work with customers need a stable and searchable source of truth. A monthly newsletter can play this role only if it is not treated as a public-relations text. It should include concise operational summaries, links to detailed procedures, and a clear distinction between confirmed decisions and information that is still under preparation. The newsletter should also show who is responsible for each topic, so employees know where to direct questions.

The interpretability criterion requires managers to translate strategy into practical meaning. The interview findings show that employees are more likely to identify with a message when they understand the reason behind it and the expected action. Therefore, every strategic message should be tailored to the recipient's level. A customer care employee may need examples of how the change affects customer dialogue, while a team leader may need escalation rules and indicators to monitor adoption. This does not mean creating contradictory messages; it means keeping the core message stable while adjusting examples and implications.

The accountability criterion is most visible in unpopular decisions. In these situations, employees evaluate not only the decision itself but also the courage and fairness of the manager who communicates it. A manager who shifts blame to another unit may protect personal popularity in the short term but weakens managerial credibility. A responsible manager can explain that a decision has constraints, acknowledge employee concerns, and remain transparent about what cannot be changed. This is where assertive and empathetic communication intersect: the manager is clear about reality while remaining respectful of employees' reactions.

The proposed framework can be implemented gradually. In the first month, the company should audit channels and identify which messages are duplicated, lost, or difficult to find. In the second month, a manager briefing template should be introduced for messages that will be cascaded through departments. In the third month, feedback tools should be piloted after selected meetings. After six months, the company should evaluate whether employees perceive information as more timely, complete, and understandable. This staged approach prevents communication improvement from becoming another abstract project disconnected from everyday practice.



Limitations and Future Research

The article is limited by its reliance on managerial interviews and observation. The findings, therefore, represent managerial perceptions rather than a full measurement of the employee communication experience. Managers can identify important barriers, but employees may experience those barriers differently or attach different importance to them. For example, a manager may view a channel as clear because it is clear from the sender's perspective, while employees may still perceive it as fragmented from the receiver's perspective.

A second limitation is that the study is qualitative and organisation-specific. Orange Slovensko, a.s. is a large telecommunications company with its own structure, tools, and culture. The proposed framework can inform other service organisations, but it should be adapted to their size, hierarchy, and digital infrastructure. In smaller organisations, direct meetings may be more important than a newsletter, while in geographically dispersed organisations, asynchronous digital communication may be essential.

Future research should combine employee surveys, focus groups, and analytics of communication channels. Survey items could measure clarity, timeliness, completeness, credibility, feedback availability, and perceived opportunity for voice. Focus groups could reveal which messages employees found useful or confusing. Channel analytics could identify whether important content is actually opened, searched, and reused. Such a mixed-methods approach would enable testing whether the managerial framework improves not only communication processes but also engagement, trust, and service consistency.

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