

Organizational Change Communication in Latvia: Management Practices and Practical Challenges

Ieva Zaumane¹, Anita Gaile²

¹Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Valmiera, Latvia

²Riga Technical University, Riga, Latvia

In recent years, alongside the rapid development of artificial intelligence tools and the demand for digitalization processes at the national policy level, as well as challenges in the external political and economic environment, organizations in Latvia have been implementing changes at various levels. As a result, the practice of change management and communication has become increasingly relevant, either facilitating the successful implementation of change or undermining it.

The research aimed to examine change management and communication practices, as well as the main issues in strategic change communication. To achieve this objective, a survey was conducted. Data collection took place between November 20 and December 20, 2024, through the distribution of an online questionnaire via social media platforms. A total of 191 respondents completed the survey. Of these, 55% held managerial positions and 45% were employees. Regarding organizational size, 68% represented large companies, while 32% were from small and medium-sized enterprises. In terms of ownership, 81% were employed in state-owned enterprises and 19% in privately owned companies. The gender distribution was 71% women and 29% men.

Since the critical role of *change communication* in successful change management was recognized in the research, this construct was analyzed separately. Change communication planning examines six statements like: "Leadership involves communication professionals in the process when planning changes" and "Change communication in our organization is planned purposefully"; "The communication professional is involved in the change planning process". These items were developed based on the work of Lewis (2019), Hodges (2016), Heide and Simonsson (2021), Haumer et al. (2021), and Johansson and Heide (2008). Change communication implementation includes four items: "During the change implementation process, it is clear who communicates what and with what purpose", "During the change implementation process, leadership seeks feedback from employees", "Communicated messages are clear and understandable - they help people understand what is expected of them", and "The previous change communication practice has been successful". The formulation of these items draws on Armenakis and Harris (2002), Bayraktar and Kabasakal (2022), and Cornelissen and Werner (2014). All statements were measured using the four-point Likert scale (Chang, 1994; Leung, 2011). Descriptive statistical methods were used in the data analysis.

The survey reveals that more than half of the respondents (N=191), alongside assessment of overall change management practices in their organizations, identify insufficient communication as one of the main barriers to effective change implementation. Additionally, more than 50% acknowledge that management typically begins informing employees about changes only after decisions have been made and implementation is set to begin.

Moreover, responses from managers indicate that only 8% of organizations have developed a change communication strategy, and just 14% involve communication professionals in the change planning process. In addition to this data, a significant gap is evident between the views of C-suite executives and middle managers regarding employees' opportunities to provide feedback to leadership during the planning and implementation of change. These

findings highlight systemic-level issues in the practice of change management and communication.

Limitations of the study related to the volume of collected data, which does not ensure representativeness. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalized to all companies in Latvia. However, the study provides insight into the trends of the change communication practices in the management level, particularly in the public sector.

Keywords

change management, change communication, leadership, internal communication