

INFORMATIONAL FLOW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE'S CHANNELS AT BRAZILIAN MAIL AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY

Tatiana Falcão de Souza Fernandes

Master Program of Post Graduate in Information Science
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB)
Brazil

Joana Coeli Ribeiro Garcia

Professor Program of Post Graduate in Information Science
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB)
Brazil

ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the informational flow of the Customer Service Channels of the Brazilian Post Office and Telegraph Company, Regional Board of Directors of Paraíba, under the perspective of information management, questioning how the information of such flow has influence on the formulation of tactical actions for decision-making. With regard to the objectives, the methodology is classified as descriptive with qualitative approach of the case study type. For data collection, the research used the guided interview and documental analysis categorizing the information according to the content analysis for interpreting them. As result, the research found that every action, in a corporate level, occurs in a standardized manner, inclusive in reference to solution and response proposed to customers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the information flow of the Customer Service Channels, if treated in a systematic manner, is a useful tool for qualitative diagnosis of the offered services so as to identify the client's need as well as to add value to the company, by improving its image and, finally to the local society.

Keywords: Information Flows; Customer Service Channels; Information Management.

1 INTRODUCTION

Information flow management is considered to be a crucial element for organizations. By means of such an element, information that is produced, distributed and used on the three organizational levels – strategic, tactic and operational one – passes through. The proper use of the management model determines the criteria

and the direction of all processes and, thus, consequently, decision making. Therefore, Information Management (IM) is indispensable in organizations.

Based on this assumption, the analysis of the informational flow of the Customer Service – CAC's channels, at Mail and Telegraph Company [*Empresa de Correios e Telégrafos* (ECT)], Paraíba's Regional Board of Directors [*Diretoria Regional da Paraíba* (DR-PB)] –, is proposed, considering that the information produced by those channels, reflect the demanded needs. Such an amount of information is essential to the development of the organization. Its success and its durability relate to the ability in achieving the clients' expectations and needs which have to be identified, understood and translated into actions.

Clients, more and more, take a new interesting and complex role in relation to business processes; not only do they consume their products and services, but they are also further and further interrelated and participative [...] acting directly into the definition and final specification of goods and services created by the mentioned processes (DE SORDI, 2008, p.75).

According to the cited author's point of view, clients are constantly interacting with organizations. At ECT/DR-PB, this interaction takes place by means of the CAC, which has allowed for some closeness or accessibility of citizens-clients. This process is the result of re-democratization, in the 80th decade, in which organizations, especially public ones, started to apply information systems, with the purpose of improving management processes. Among these, the CACs are highlighted, whose beginning took place in the 90th decade, with the establishment of the CDC- Consumer Defense Code, making Brazilian company universe focus its attention on the external context, and that is, in the ecosystem that engages companies (MIRANDA, 2001, p.1).

Nowadays, there is a process of information proliferation, of the most varying kinds, among which publicizing ones with advertisements of goods and services even more attractive and varied are emphasized, making, then, consumption more proper. Abuse histories are noted, as well as not fulfillment of contracts, negotiation targeted only towards the interest of just one of the parts, among irregularities that cause the client material and moral problems. The advent of the CDC has led clients to take a

prevalent and differentiated role from the perspective of demand of their rights in face of both producer/furnisher agents (organizations) by means of the CAC.

What can be learnt with what enters by magistracy, through *Call Center*, through *help desk*, through talk to us mailbox, thus, is priceless. Highly important information about clients, products, processes, etc. can be gained. And knowledge is crucial today. The organization should expose itself, if it really wants to improve itself (TEIXEIRA FILHO, 2002, p.84).

One perceives that information that is produced in the CACs, besides being used to respond to and to satisfy the client's need, can allow for, among other aspects, a severe control of the company's target processes. In this sense, the study aims at giving a response to the following issues: How does information that is produced in CACs' informational flow exert influence on the formulation of tactic actions for decision making? Thence, it is its major goal: to assess the influence of information which is created in the CACs' informational flow as to the formulation of tactic actions for decision making on the part of the ECT/DR-PB's managers. In relation to the operational objectives, these can be the following: to analytically describe information flow by means of categorization of causes, effects and clients' demands' aims, by relating them to the management processes; examine the information demands done by CACs in order to compare them with solutions given by civil servants and managers; as well as to compare the resulting indicators of previous stages with what is registered in the Company's documents, so that it is possible to identify whether information is used for decision making.

2 THEORETICAL METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

Information is a highly important resource for organizations. It can be compared to a compass in the direction of management processes. It takes position of collective interest, featured by its changing action in promoting organizational performance and in supporting managers in the decision making and in the planning of strategic, tactic and operational actions. It is regarded, by several authors, as a vital resource for the survival of organizations in the market. Choo (2003, p.27) states that "[...] information is an intrinsic component of almost everything an organization

does". Thus being so, informational resources need to be managed to add value to the produced content, and also to contribute to the organization performance towards success achievement in the market. Or, in Valentim's words (2008, p.21), "[...] information contexts and flows constitute themselves as something extremely valuable, from both strategic, tactic and operational perspective for any kind of organization, in any professional area".

As such, the importance of information flow is observed in all organizational levels. Therefore, monitoring of information produced in the flow asserts the development of pro-active and strategic actions which foresee solutions in face of market's uncertainties, as Barbosa affirms (2008, p.2).

The more professional and business contexts become complex and varying, the more information changes, undoubtedly, into a gun able to guarantee the proper anticipation and analysis of tendencies as well as the capacity to adapt, to learn and to innovate.

Information is the basis of the dynamics of productive and organizational processes, being at the same time, an outcome of such processes. Its effective use is directly related to the capacity of interpretation, comprehension, innovation and management in a way that the organization has credibility and can be at the disposal in the favorable moment with regard to decision making. As a consequence of this double relation, changes in the productive processes of organizations are observed. The latter have started to interact with their clients and have put them in a differentiated position in terms of production.

[...] the client has become the honor spot in the directors and employees' worries. In search of better approaching him/her as well as understanding his/her needs and expectations, each day, companies, interested in developing relation systems with their clients, multiply themselves (MIRANDA, 2001, p.1).

According to the author, with the purpose of identifying, comprehending and responding to clients' demands, companies and public institutions produce special channels of communication. Such channels consist in people that demand and other ones with specific assignments in relation to the guiding of demands (TEIXEIRA FILHO, 2002). In this sense, information produced in the CACs must be managed, so

that, besides being applied to answer to and to satisfy the client's need, it can support the management of internal processes, connected with IM.

2.1 Methodological Procedures

The research is classified as descriptive, when one considers its goals, since that its searches for understanding the CACs information flow, with the purpose of describing the process, from the information need up to its effective use. As to the procedures, the research constitutes a case study, considering that the CAC of ECT/DR-PB is the focus of the analysis, where the analysis of the informational flow will be carried out. In relation to the nature, the research is regarded as qualitative because, in its essence, it seeks to understand and realize CACs, thus, promoting space for reflection and interpretation under the area's theorists' point of view.

The ECT-DR/PB has been kept under review because it is a company whose consumers of its products and services represent significant part of society; understanding that the analysis of the information flow interests the referred company and society.

Data gathering will be developed by means of the guided interview and documentary analysis. In the interviews, fourteen (14) managers will be asked, "[...] focusing on attention into the experience each one has", as Pádua believes (2004, p.70), because the aim is to get the comprehension of the CACs by means of the clients' demands and later relate the presented solutions, in order to make them analyzed, based on the reports and on the interview with the research's subjects.

Content analysis will be applied in the treatment assessment of the interviews. To Bardin (1977, p.34), "[...] it can be understood as a set of techniques that analyze communication by using systematic procedures and objectives of description of message content. The choice of categories will be based on the individuals' speeches and on the content about the data sources, as well as on the registered information in the process of approaching the ECT's client. Afterwards, the documents will be related for analysis. The documents to be chosen will be the only ones which have direct and indirect relation with the CACs. We perceive that by

means of this analysis and data gathering route, we will get to the influencing categories, when regarding the use of information produced by the CAC system for decision making. The period of the effectiveness of the research will be described in Frame 1.

Frame 1: Research effectiveness period - May2012 February 2013.

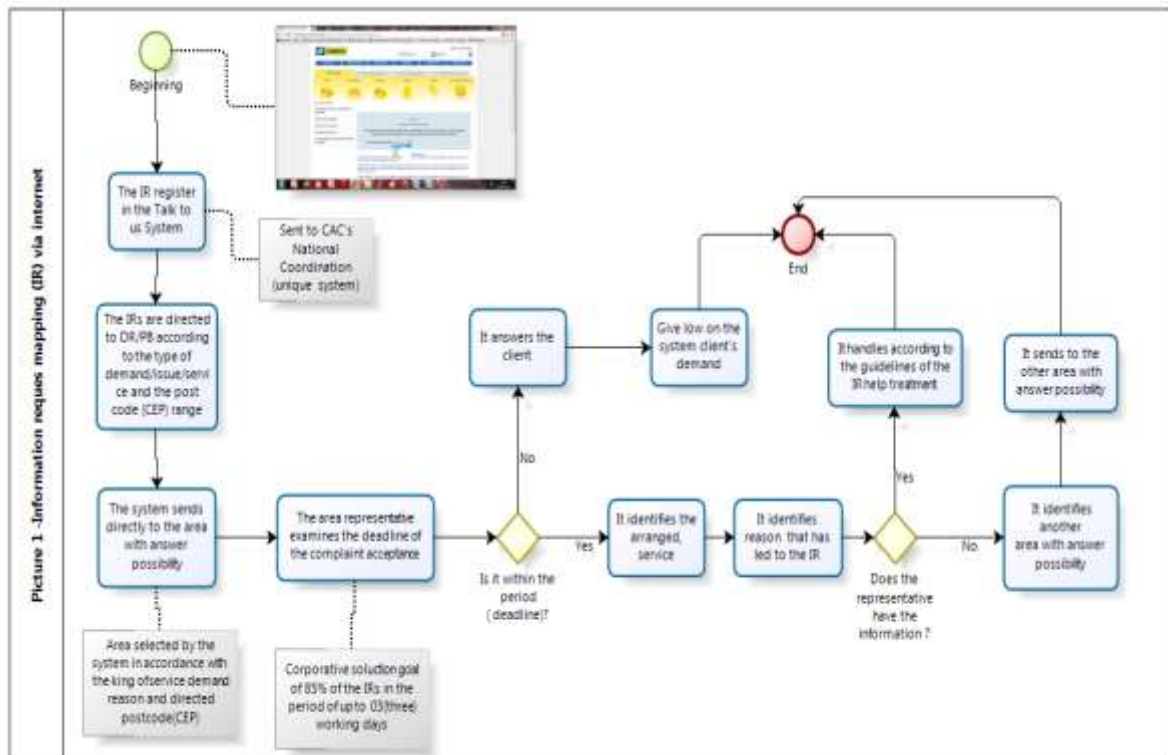
| | Objectives | Actions | Period |
|--|----------------|---|----------|
| Research effectiveness period May2012 February 2013 | 1 ^o | To identify and to categorize the amounts of information produced by the CAC, relating them to the stages of the management process. | 4 months |
| | 2 ^o | To verify the information demands of the CACs done by them, relating such demands to the presented solutions by civil servants and managers, on documents with direct (CACs' reports) and indirect (entrepreneurial management reports, patrimony balance, among others) and also in the interviews with the research's subjects. | 4 months |
| | 3 ^o | To compare the indicators that were identified in the previous stages and to relate them to the company's documents, what shall result in the understanding about the use or no use of the CAC's information towards decision making. | 2 months |

Source: Elaborated by the authors – 2012.

2.2 Research Present Stage

In this study, it was assumed, in the beginning, that the information within the CACs' information flow has brought light to reflection about its use for the process of decision making. Throughout the study, the following steps were effected: 1st one: theoretical material research in order to base the study's issues. Such a literature has comprehended periodicals, books, articles, etc. 2ⁿ one: visit to DR/PB where there was some closeness to the study field, and the proposal of the research was presented to the regional director, to the general coordinator of the CAC system, and finally, to the auditor, with acceptance on the part of all of these, including supporting statement. 3rd one: at the Customer Service Management [*Gerência de Atendimento (GERAT)*], the mapping of the information flow was performed by means of the tool called *BizAgi Process Modeler*¹, in a demand modality (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Information request mapping (IR) via Internet.



Source: Elaborated by the authors – 2012.

3 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, it could be seen that due to the information attained in the mapping of the CAC process, each action takes place in the standard way on the corporative level, including in the solution and in the answer to the client. Even though such actions are standard, questions were raised which will be answered throughout the research. Are these actions used to effect improvement tactic actions of the processes that originate the CACs' demands? or are they used to enhance the relation with the client, taking, thus, an opposite direction in the communication towards dissemination of new products or services?

What result from such relational context, are possibilities to be identified in the management of the CACs' information, like the following: to develop or to improve the offered products and services; to add indispensable value to conquer and keep clients in relation to consumption fidelity as well as to deepen his/her relation with the company. Therefore, what can be concluded is that the CACs' information flow, if treated in a systematized way, presents itself as useful tool to the qualitative diagnosis of the services done, as far as it identifies the need of the citizen-client and it adds value to the company, improving the latter's image, and as a matter of fact, it adds value to society.

REFERENCES

CHOO, C. W. **A organização do conhecimento**: como as organizações usam a informação para criar significado, construir conhecimento e tomar decisões. São Paulo: SENAC Editora, 2003.

BARBOSA, R. R. Gestão da informação e do conhecimento: origens, polêmicas e perspectivas. **Informação & Informação**, Londrina, v.13, n. esp., p.1-25, 2008. Available: <<http://www.uel.br/revistas/uel/index.php/informacao/article/view/1843/1556>>. Access: Sep. 15, 2011.

BARDIN, L. **Análise de conteúdo**. 3.ed. Lisboa: Edições 70, 2004.

DE SORDI, J. O. **Gestão por processos**: uma abordagem da moderna administração. 2.ed. São Paulo: Saraiva, 2008.

MIRANDA, R. C. R. Fonte de informação estratégica e não-estratégica. **DataGramaZero**: Revista de Ciência da Informação, v.2, n.3, p.1, jun. 2001. Available: <http://dgz.org.br/jun01/F_I_art.htm>. Access: Sep. 16, 2010.

PÁDUA, E. M. M. **Metodologia da pesquisa**: abordagem teórico-prática. 10.ed. Campinas (SP): Papyrus, 2004. (Coleção Magistério: Formação e Trabalho Pedagógico)

TEIXEIRA FILHO, J. **Comunidades virtuais**: como as comunidades de práticas na internet estão mudando os negócios. Rio de Janeiro: SENAC Editora, 2002.

VALENTIM, M. L. P.(Org.). **Ambientes e fluxos de informação**. São Paulo: Cultura Acadêmica, 2010. 282p.



_____ (Org.). **Gestão da informação e do conhecimento**. São Paulo: Polis, 2008.

NOTES

¹ Available: <<http://www.bizagi.com.br>>, free, with some tutorials, so as to widen the user's understanding while employing it.

Tatiana Falcão de Souza Fernandes
Master Program of Post Graduate in Information Science
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB)
E-Mail: tatianafalc@gmail.com
Brazil

Joana Coeli Ribeiro Garcia
Professor Program of Post Graduate in Information Science
Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB)
E-Mail: nacoeli@gmail.com
Brazil