Friendship, Success and Growth: Everything was Going Well Until the Pandemic Show Up

Amizade, Sucesso e Expansão: Tudo ia Bem até que a Pandemia Chegou

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ABSTRACT

This case teaching shows us the difficulties in the internal communication of a technology company specialized in retail, in a crisis time. The aims of this case are to provide reflection about the importance of internal communication into an organization; to demonstrate the challenges of internal communication in crisis time, and identify opportunities for improvement in the downsizing communicating process. The case contributes to the study of the proposed theme from a practical case, bringing students closer to the reality experienced in companies. Application to undergraduate courses is recommended, especially in Business and Management courses, in subjects that approach people management, organizational and business communication, change management, internal communication or organizational environment. The case is suitable for students who have previous knowledge in internal communication, crisis management or change management, and those who need practical examples to approach the reality of the job market. The history reported in this case teaching is real and took place in 2020, a sensible time for the world economy due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Internal Communication; Crisis Management; Covid-19; Entrepreneurship.

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RESUMO

Este caso para ensino retrata as dificuldades enfrentadas na comunicação interna de uma empresa de tecnologia, especialista em *trade marketing*, em um momento de crise. Tem como objetivos proporcionar a reflexão sobre a importância da comunicação interna em uma organização; ilustrar os desafios da comunicação interna em momento de crise; e identificar oportunidades de melhoria no processo de comunicação de demissões em massa. O caso contribui para o estudo do tema proposto a partir de um evento prático, aproximando os alunos da realidade vivenciada em empresas. Sugere-se a

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RESUMO

aplicação em cursos de graduação, especialmente nos cursos de Administração, nas disciplinas que abordem gestão de pessoas, comunicação organizacional e empresarial, comunicação interna, clima organizacional ou gestão da mudança. É indicado para alunos que tenham adquirido conteúdo sobre comunicação interna, gestão de crise ou gestão de mudança, e que necessitem de exemplos práticos para aproximação à realidade do mercado de trabalho. A história relatada neste caso de ensino é verídica e aconteceu no ano de 2020, momento sensível para a economia mundial dada a pandemia da Covid-19.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação interna; Gestão de crise; Covid-19; Empreendedorismo.

Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 frightened the whole world and in Brazil it would be no different. On March 13, 2020, TCR Solutions managers held a call conference with entrepreneurs from Italy and Spain, and the discussions revolved around the impacts caused by the pandemic in their companies, considering that the situation was already serious in their respective countries. They left as their advice: "do everything you can to protect people while it is still early. Streamline the processes for remote work, because the advance of the virus is very fast, and the scenario can change at any moment.

Understanding the unique situation, they were experiencing, TCR's managers created a Crisis Committee that began to meet and make decisions about the future of the company's work, focused primarily on the people experience. This Committee included the CEO, the people director, the person responsible for internal communication, and also the person responsible for the administrative part. The first decision was to communicate to the employees that as of March 16, 2020 everyone would work from home, that is, the company would be in full home office for an indefinite period of time. This definition would be valid for all TCR Solutions' offices: Florianopolis, Sao Paulo, Bogota, and Mexico City.

The equipment for the job (notebook, second screen, chair, footrest, etc.) were made available to employees and taken to their homes, without any control of which items were transported, because trust is one of the pillars of the company's culture.

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TCR's managers were worried about the coming scenario, but having most of their customers working with essential goods, they believed they would get through the crisis without major impacts on the business. Initially they communicated this to the people who worked in the company, in a weekly meeting, also with the objective of maintaining transparency and providing security to employees in the face of the moment they were facing.

However, still in the month of March they lost some customers, and the following month they began to feel a drop in income. The loss of more customers and delinquency intensified, as difficulties arose for the work of sales promoters, who could not access the supermarkets to replenish merchandise, which made the commercial and promotional aspects too difficult. A crisis was beginning. There was a need to reflect on the future of the company, think about strategies to retain customers, develop a plan to avoid unnecessary expenses and cut costs and expenses. Would it be the case of firing employees? Such a drastic measure was not in the management's plans, but the moment came.

How it all began

The year was 2008. Five best friends who had known each other since high school had a common dream: entrepreneurship! They were in college, each one in a different course, and shared a taste for technology. Théo, Heitor, Bernardo, and Davi were already working as developers in startups, and Bernardo was even one of the first mobile specialists in the state. They considered that they had the technical capacity to create good products.

Arthur was studying Business Administration and needed to make a Business Plan to fulfill one of the requirements of the course. It was then that the idea arose to use the activity as an opportunity to realize the dream shared with friends and enterprising.

Thus TCR Solutions was born, a technology company specializing in trade marketing, which has as its main product a software that supports the industry for the execution of its strategies at the point of sale (POS). As time went by, TCR's dream became bigger and bigger. With over 500 customers, in 18 countries and a

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100% growth between 2013 and 2019, the scale-up received its first financial investment in December 2019, through an international investment fund.

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The company's headquarters started in a small improvised room in the house of one of the founders, in the year 2008. The following year, they signed the company's social contract and rented a small commercial room, where they stayed until 2011. Thinking about the future and the goals of growth, in 2011 they moved to another headquarters. It was in that same year that they signed their first contract as a company that provides a Software as a Service - SaaS. Until they arrived at this product, which is currently the company's main product, the entrepreneurs pivoted the business for 12 times. At the time, as a form of alternative income, they hosted websites.

In 2012 they hired their first two employees. In 2013, they closed their first significant contract with a large beauty industry. In 2014, they closed another important contract with the distribution center of a large food company, and moved to the company's fourth headquarters. It was there that the first international contract was signed.

With the increase in the number of customers, they saw the need to hire more professionals, and the team kept growing. The year 2016 was one of expansion, hiring, and structuring of the business, without forgetting the company's culture, which is identified as one of the most valuable assets TCR has. The strong culture, based on friendship, values people as unique, understanding the uniqueness of each employee.

That same year the company held its first external event to talk about trade marketing. The event brought together experts, companies, and professionals interested in exchanging experiences and learning new ways to develop and manage their businesses. Over the years, the event has improved and is now considered one of the largest trade marketing events in Latin America.

Also in 2016, TCR joined the annual list of Great Place to Work (GPTW), which evaluates the organizational climate and awards the best companies to work at national, regional, sectoral and thematic levels. It has even been awarded several times at the state and national levels. Initially it competed in the best small company category, and due to its growth, it moved to the medium company category.

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As the business expanded, the company opened an office in the city of São Paulo (2015), moved the headquarters to a larger space (2016), opened offices in Mexico City and Bogota, Colombia (2019). Also in 2019, it participated in an investment round and received external capital of R$27 million in December. Until then, TCR had grown with its own investments.

In the same year, the entrepreneurs participated in Endeavor Brazil's arduous selection process. All the company's effort was rewarded with the approval to participate in the select group and, since then, the founders have contact with other entrepreneurs to exchange experiences. In addition, they receive mentoring to support the development of the business. In March 2020 the company's team was composed of 290 people.

AND THE CRISIS ARRIVED

The year 2020, due to the pandemic of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19), demanded from organizations the reinvention of their attitudes and actions to respond with competence to the crisis and the impacts (economic and financial) generated by the pandemic. In Brazil, the first actions to contain the virus began in early February, and in 15 days the country confirmed the first case.

According to the research Pulso Empresa (Company Pulse): impact of the Covid-19 on companies, conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in the second half of July (compared to the first half), the new coronavirus crisis caused negative impact on 37.5% of the three million non-financial companies in operation in the country. At the same time, for 36.3% the impact was small or nonexistent (BRASIL, 2020).

TCR Solutions was one of those affected and suffered the consequences with loss of clients, defaults, and reduced revenue. It acted fast, even without knowing how long the quarantine would last, and right at the beginning of the pandemic it revised its planning for the year, reducing its growth prospects. Still in March, the company halted new hirings, suspended investments, froze internal budgets and made negotiations with suppliers in the search to balance the accounts. All these steps were communicated to the employees, during the weekly meetings, or asynchronously by e-mail, always striving for transparency and asking for people's support to map out possible reductions. The speech, while making clear the importance

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of the moment, also demonstrated these actions as preventive measures, in order to minimize possible impacts on the business.

However, as the crisis continued, it was inevitable to look at the amount of payroll, which represented about 60% of cash expenditures. As a first solution, after negotiations and budget reduction, the company joined the provisional measure No. 936, of the Brazilian Federal Government, published on April 1st, 2020, which was created with the objectives of preserving jobs and income, and ensuring the continuity of labor and business activities, in order to reduce the social impact resulting from public calamity and public health emergency.

The entire TCR team had their working hours and salaries reduced, and some employees also had their contracts suspended. This reduction occurred even in the pro-labore of the entrepreneurs who work at the C-Level of the organization. At this moment, also aiming to keep the accounts balanced, 20 employees who had been presenting low performance were dismissed.

Despite the preventive measures, in June the scenario worsened significantly and unexpectedly. The new government incentives, with the extensions of provisional measures, were not enough to offset the high customer defaults, causing an imbalance in the accounts, since TCR Solutions was in a process of acceleration, with no extra cash on hand. This movement forced the company to structure a downsizing plan, considering the possibility of dismissing more than 30% of the team.

The CFO, aware of the situation, shared his concern with the CEO:

– Arthur, I am very concerned about the current situation of the company. Our clients are being affected by the crisis and defaults are getting higher every day. I am afraid that we will have to make more radical decisions to ensure the sustainability of the company. We don't know how the rest of the year will go; the scenario is very uncertain.

– Bruno, we will analyze the data to base our decision on - emphasized the CEO. We need to draw possible scenarios and the impacts of each one of them. I'm afraid this may be the most difficult decision of my life as an entrepreneur

THE PROBLEM

On July 20, visualizing the need for massive layoffs because of the much lower than expected financial results, Arthur made a decision. Even without having total

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clarity of the plan that would be executed, he announced to the whole team, in the weekly meeting that brought together the entire company, that TCR Solutions would go through a very hard time, requiring the dismissal of more employees.

Arthur began his presentation by sharing information about the monthly recurring revenue evolution, as well as the evolution of the company's Quick Ratio indicator, which were not in line with expectations. Bruno, the CFO, also participated in the presentation, showing a graph that summarized the company's cash flow, opening the receivables forecasts, as well as what was expected, what was accomplished, and the gap found in the month. Finally, in his speech, Arthur presented a comparison between the months of June 2019 and 2020, in which he demonstrated that with the same revenue, the previous year's staff was 30% smaller than the current one. In his speech, CEO Arthur stated:

> It's very bad to bring information without the ball rolling, but I believe that we have to be transparent. So, I want to inform you that we are working on a new downsizing plan, unfortunately there are people here who are going to lose their jobs at TCR Solutions, and we will make these decisions this week. We don't know yet how big this downsizing will be, we will define it as soon as possible. This information is very serious, the executive team has been working hard since the information came out, and this is all very recent. I wouldn't want to go through this again, but unfortunately, we are going to have another downsizing. If anyone is feeling surprised, please know that for the executive team it is also a surprise, because of the theme of default."

This news took many managers by surprise, some of whom had not been informed previously. Two days after the CEO's speech, some of the managers themselves were fired, and others had to decide immediately which people from their teams should be let go.

Three days later, on July 23, 81 layoffs were carried out, which represented 30% of the company's employees. This staff cut occurred shortly after the three-month workday reduction agreement, a period in which employees had to dedicate themselves even more to the company. Not even the fine for the contract termination, since the legislation determined stability for the same period of the workday reduction, prevented the action.

The company did its best to conduct the entire dismissal process in a humane way, in line with the company's culture. All dismissals were carried out individually,

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conducted by the immediate management, using a video call. So that the managers could have control of the situation and face it, they received an orientated script in PDF, with tips on how to conduct the moment and all the necessary information to pass on to the disconnected employees.

In order to support the outplacement of the dismissed employees, the company published in its social networks the list of positions of the people dismissed, receiving more than 300 contacts from other companies interested in the professionals.

After the dismissals, the CEO and the People Manager held a conversation with the people who were dismissed, to explain the company's decision and clarify doubts about the moment. Group consulting was offered, with the company's Business Partners, for support in building a resume and preparing for new interviews, in addition to providing instructional material on the subject.

The remaining people in the company also had a moment with the CEO. In an unofficial meeting with the whole company, after all the dismissals had taken place, Arthur communicated to the team what had happened that day, who were the people leaving the team, and informed them that there would be no more dismissals at that time.

Despite all the actions, the CEO's communication about the dismissals was the big dilemma of the moment. The employees that were not fired were apprehensive and unsure about the future of the company and their jobs, impacting the organizational climate and reducing productivity. Was the communication conducted in the best way possible for this critical moment?

Education Notes

This topic will present:

- the applicability of the case for teaching, starting with the educational objectives and followed by the recommended use, data source, and suggested lesson plan;
- the description of the questions for discussing the case in class;
- the presentation of the literature connections with the theme.

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EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The case portrays the difficulties faced in the internal communication of a technology company, in a moment of crisis, and has as learning objectives:

i.   to provide reflection on the importance of internal communication in an organization;

ii. illustrate the challenges of internal communication in a moment of crisis;

iii. identify opportunities for improvement in the communication process of mass layoffs.

DATA SOURCE

The story reported in this teaching case is true and the problem situation happened in the year 2020, a sensitive time for the world economy given the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors of the case have easy access to the organization, so primary source data was used to construct this material, collected through an interview with a company employee and informal conversations in digital media. The names of the characters and the company are fictitious. The story was adapted to the teaching case structure for better use in the classroom.

LESSON PLAN

To conduct the case, it is suggested to divide the students into small groups and ask them to read the text. For this stage, a minimum time of 20 minutes should be considered, in order to ensure the understanding of the context of the case and prepare the students for the subsequent discussion.

After the reading, a discussion of the case should be encouraged in the groups, based on a critical analysis of the story told. In this first analysis, students should be guided to identify the impact of the change on the organization, as well as reflect on the importance of internal communication in companies, in a situation like the one reported.

Next, the teacher should ask a member of each group to share with the class the main points that were analyzed, with the teacher being responsible for mediating the conversation. It is expected that at this moment the students bring not only a critical analysis of the situation, but also their opinions, based on the theory previously studied, about the importance of communication in a moment of crisis: Coping

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Theory, Crisis and Uncertainty Management Theory, and Internal Communication Theory. With this discussion and sharing, it is understood that the first learning objective will be met.

With the understanding of different points of view of the class, the students should be guided to go back to their small groups and jointly identify at least one positive and one negative point of the conduct of the situation, as well as point out improvement suggestions for the communication of the layoffs in the company.

After the period of reflection on the positive and negative points and suggestions for improvement, each group must present to the class the points analyzed, in a three-minute pitch. Before this sharing, it is recommended that the teacher explain how this pitch should be done, for the class's guidance. During the presentation, the teacher should also be responsible for mediating the moment and encouraging reflection and discussion about the points presented by the groups. It is also advisable that, at the end of the activity, the teacher reinforce the theoretical points covered in class.

To carry out the activity as proposed, we suggest three different possibilities for its use:

– 1st possibility: use approximately three consecutive class hours for the execution of the complete case (as presented in Chart 1);
– 2nd possibility: ask the students to read the case beforehand, starting the activity in class after the critical analysis of the case in small groups;
– 3rd possibility: divide the execution into two meetings, following the critical analysis of the case in the first meeting. In the second meeting, start by identifying the positive and negative points of the dismissals.

Table 1. Summary of lesson plan guidance for 1st possibility of use

Activity	Responsible	Estimated duration
Contextualizing the activity	Teacher	5minutes
Dividing the class into small groups	Teacher and class	5minutes
Initial reading of the case	Small Groups	25minutes
Critical Case Analysis	Small Groups	15minutes

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Sharing the key insights from the first analysis	Mediation: teacher	30min
Sharing: one person from each group	30minutes	25min
Identifying the positive and negative points of conducting layoffs	Small Groups	25minutes
Explanation on how the pitch	Teacher	5minutes
Presentation of the pitch and discussion among the class	Mediation: teacher	10min
Pitch presentation: one person from each group	60minutes	180min
Closing the case and closing the activity	Teacher	10minutes
Total activity duration		180minutes

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Table 1 summarizes the guidelines for applying the teaching case in the class-room, taking into account the 1st possibility of use, including the estimated time for each activity and the person responsible for them. For the other two possibilities, the teacher should observe the estimated time for each action and adapt to the possibility chosen for the application of the case. In addition, the teacher can adjust the estimated time for each step according to the number of students and groups that participate in the class.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSING THE CASE IN CLASS

The following guiding questions are suggested to foster the discussions:

1. What is the importance of internal communication in the moment of crisis experienced by the company?
2. Analyze the case and find positive and negative points of the company's conduct in communicating the dismissals;
3. Indicate improvement suggestions for the negative points.

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CASE ANALYSIS AND CONNECTION WITH THE LITERATURE

This topic is intended to present possible answers to the case presented from theoretical arguments. However, before delving into the theme of the case for teaching, it is essential to understand the role of internal communication.

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Communication, in Kunsch's (2003) perception, is intrinsic to organizations, as well as for Berlo (2003), who points out that an organization of any kind is only possible through communication.

In the case of internal communication specifically, Kunsch (2003) points out that the objective is to enable interactions between the organization and its employees through the use of institutional and marketing communication tools. The author also mentions that internal communication permeates all sectors of an organization, and is what ensures its full operation.

It is through the stimulation of dialogue and the exchange of information that communication is established in organizations. For Marchiori (2010) internal communication can be seen in two levels: tactical and strategic. The author defines the tactical level as the communication of facts that have occurred, focusing on basic information. Strategic communication, on the other hand, is seen as generating facts, responsible for creating contexts. "It suggests a new behavior because it has the function of co-creating the future of the organization" (MARCHIORI, 2010, p. 149).

Kunsch (2003, p. 162) cites seven points that characterize the true role of communication in organizations, and they are:

> Establish trust; enable co-creation, through the participation of the receiving audience; contribute to a favorable and conducive climate in the work environment; make the connections with all communication modalities; involve people to seek conscious commitment; celebrate and make the necessary corrections and adjustments; and always communicate the actions and programs that will be carried out.

In general, authors such as Kunsch (2003) and Marchiori (2010) point to the need to consider internal communication as a strategic area for the organization, taking into account that the benefits of its practice reach both employees and the organization itself.

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Question 1: What is the importance of internal communication in the moment of crisis experienced by the company?

The current dynamism of society requires a new way of thinking and acting all the time to avoid possible organizational crises. Still, for being considered "a serious catastrophe that can occur naturally or as a result of human error, intervention or even criminal intent" (ARGENTI, 2011, p. 259), a crisis is always susceptible to happen and can shake the image, reputation and the relationship of a company with its publics.

The reputation of a company, according to Van Rieel (OROFINO; TOLEDO; MONTEIRO, 2011), depends on the purpose of the organization and its relationship with people. The employees, in turn, are the first people in this relationship and, therefore, considering respect and transparency with this public is essential for them to have a positive image of the institution. It is precisely the accumulation of this positive image over time that gives rise to an organization's reputation. In the view of Carramenha, Cappellano and Mansi (2013), for a positive reputation to be recognized, it is essential to create an emotional link between company and employee. The authors consider this emotional bond "a place where the employee feels respected, welcomed: and that also welcomes, respects the market, wishes well to everyone with whom he relates" (CARRAMENHA; CAPPELANO; MANSI, 2013, p. 65).

In times of crisis, the internal audience's identity bonds, or the emotional bond as cited by Carramenha, Cappellano, and Mansi (2013), can break along with the organization. That is why "maintaining communication with its employees creates a bridge to build reliability and loyalty capable of generating voice and overcoming obstacles" (RUSSO, 2017, p. 13).

To maintain these bonds, it is also necessary to have knowledge of each employee's needs. In Russo's (2017, p. 13) view, this knowledge at the moment of crisis can prevent "organizations from running into teams that are demotivated, uninterested in the company, without security to make a decision or do something to help."

The internal public must also be an ally of the organization in moments of crisis. First, because it is the public responsible for keeping the company running in its normal mode, but also to support the maintenance of the organization's reputation. For Argenti (2011) it is essential that employees are provided with the version of the story by the company's vision, so that they feel part of the team. By using this strategy, companies have greater control over the messages, not depending on how the media positions them. Argenti (2011) also points out that the company's internal

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communication needs to be well structured and planned in times of crisis, because information can also be shared with external audiences - including the media - by employees. This idea corroborates the vision of Kunsch (2003, p. 159), who considers the internal public as a multiplier, since "in his family and in his professional and social life, the employee will be a spokesperson for the organization, in a positive or negative way". Furthermore, Li et al. (2021) point out that it is not enough to communicate with employees in a transparent manner regarding organizational change. It is also necessary to educate them about the skills and resources that will enable them to understand the benefits of coping control and encourage them to adopt such a strategy in times of organizational change.

It is also understood that internal communication in times of crisis is essential for the maintenance of the organizational climate. In Oliveira's (2017) view, it is essential to keep in mind that moments of crisis are usually charged with emotions due to the rupture of predictability, especially in mass dismissals. Thus, transparent internal communication, coping strategies, and uncertainty management can be factors in facilitating or inhibiting employee-company relations during organizational change (LI et al., 2021). While employees are suddenly forced out of their comfort zone, communication becomes a means of management to support organizational decisions and support climate maintenance. "Everyone needs to understand what is happening, not only those directly affected, but also those who are not, so that no negative expectation or doubt remains that the communication [of the terminations] has not ended" (OLIVEIRA, 2017, p. 48).

In addition, using internal communication to welcome employees' emotions, and share the actions taken to support the outplacement of those who have been laid off, demonstrates to employees that the company continues to be a good place to work, supports the maintenance of the climate, and, strengthens the internal and external institutional image.

Questions 2 and 3: Analyze the case and find positive and negative points of the company's conduct in communicating the terminations. Indicate suggestions for improvement for the negative points.

Conducting mass dismissals is a very delicate situation for an organization. It is a critical moment, when communication is essential to preserve the climate and

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culture of the company, as well as its reputation among employees. The company cited in the case went through the situation of mass dismissals for the first time in its history and, from the facts reported it is possible to identify positive and negative points of communication.

In this question, therefore, some possibilities of answers for positive and negative points are signaled, but it is also clear that there are other possible answers. Since the story was summarized, this suggestion concentrates on the main points presented, but it is suggested that the teacher be attentive to the other shares of the class and make a critical analysis of the answers.

1. Company transparency in the dismissal process

According to Sangaletti (2017), transparency in internal communication increases employee trust, as well as engagement with the company, and in a moment of crisis, it becomes even more important for the maintenance of corporate reputation. According to Russo (2017), the company should convey to employees the information in an agile and objective way, with a focus on eliminating possible controversies, corroborating the perception of Sangaletti (2017), who points out that the company is responsible for taking positive or negative information to employees in an accurate, timely and balanced way.

According to a study specifically targeted at Covid-19's case and conducted by Li et al. (2021), transparency in internal communication affects employees' organizational change management. It can impact on how employees deal with these changes and reduce uncertainties related to timing. Internal communication transparency practices, along with the adoption of control coping strategies and uncertainty reduction, can effectively promote healthy relationships between employees and their organizations.

In the case presented, it is noted that the company shared with employees sensitive information about the moment it was going through and was transparent in its communication by signaling that layoffs would happen. The timing of this communication, however, can be questioned, since the communication was not precise or avoided controversy, as indicated by the authors.

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2. Preparing managers to conduct layoffs

Being a manager in a time of mass layoffs is challenging. Having a team prepared to execute the layoffs is very important for the success of communication and maintenance of the company's reputation. In Horowitz's (2015) view, the management team must be trained to execute the layoffs, because if they are not prepared, most will fail. The author also points out the need for each manager to fire their direct subordinates, since "people will not remember all the days they worked for the company, but they will certainly keep in their memory forever the day they were fired" (HOROWITZ, 2015, p. 77). He also states that the following are considered important information to be shared by management at the time of dismissal: the reason for the dismissal, highlighting that the failure is the company's and not the person's, the clarity that the decision of dismissal is not negotiable, and the support that the company will make available for those dismissed.

Considering these points, it can be seen that this was a positive point of the communication of layoffs at TCR Solutions. After managers were informed of the downsizing decision, they received support material to execute the dismissals and were prepared to face the situation instead of running away from it.

3. Make it clear to employees that the dismissals have been finalized

In case of mass dismissal it is natural that employees feel insecure about the process and its finalization. Therefore, it is important that the company's top management inform the entire organization of the end of the layoffs. For Mansi (2016) an official communication from top management is essential to ensure the organizational culture and reassure the employees who remained in the company. Li et al. (2021) point out that transparent internal communication and reduced uncertainty can improve relations between organizations and their employees, particularly in times of crisis and change.

Mansi (2016) also signals about a resistance of companies to disclose the amount of people disconnected, but reinforces the importance of being transparent in this information, since "this information is necessary and relevant to avoid that employees, by themselves, do the math. The fact that the company does not treat the number with transparency gives rise to rumors and speculation" (MANSI, 2016, p. 137).

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Considering the notes of Mansi (2016), one can notice a positive point of TCR Solutions regarding the dismissals, since after the completion of the dismissals the CEO communicated the whole company about what happened.

4. Communication in advance generating a feeling of chaos in the company

One of the concerns in managing a crisis should be the content of the message, but also the moment in which it is shared. In the case of the company presented, the CEO communicated that there would be mass layoffs three days before executing it, which generated stress and anxiety throughout the team.

This chaos paralyzes the company, since employees cannot be productive, and that is why, in Russo's (2017) view, communication in crisis management must be agile and objective. Also, according to the author, the focus should be on avoiding controversy and ensuring psychological safety for employees.

Having clarity on the strategic planning for the company's next steps and sharing them with the company is very important for employees to feel less impacted. "Promoting transparency, continuous openness to dialogue, for employees to understand what is going on with the company, and feedback makes all the difference to avoid communication noise" (OLIVEIRA, 2017, p. 48). The company plays an important role in this, as the combination of transparent communication and coping control education can reduce uncertainty related to organizational change and improve relations between organizations and their employees (LI *et al.*, 2021).

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