

Katarzyna Gajek

University School of Physical Education in Wrocław

e-mail: katarzyna.gajek@awf.wroc.pl

**NEW INTERNET COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES
IN POLISH SPORTS ORGANIZATIONS**

Summary: There are three goals of this article. First is to identify the most popular forms of internal and external communication based on computer technologies in an organization. The second goal is to underline the need of improvement in the field of competence in the use of NICT through understanding the purpose and scope of each medium. The third aim is to reveal how sport organizations and Polish sport organizations deal with NICT in their communication practice. Literature review is the main method of collecting data concerning the most often used NICT solutions by the organizations. The last part, focused on the NICT used in Polish sport organizations, is based on the available international literature and introductory results of the analysis of media used by Polish sport organizations in the processes of internal and external communication.

Keywords: New Internet communication technologies, sport organization, organizational communication.

DOI: 10.15611/ie.2014.4.04

1. Introduction

Since the 80s computer technologies have determined the work of many researches in the field of social sciences such as communication, psychology, sociology, management (and many others) in their findings on the impact of IT on human lives [Kiesler et al. 1984]. An organization reflects the processes that exist in every social group in a high intensity. The organization also absorbs all the new solutions helpful in optimizing its performance. That is why following the communication changes in organization may show us the main trends in developing NICTs.

There are three goals of this article. First is to identify the most popular forms of internal and external communication based on computer technologies in an organization. The author aims to show some important changes in organizational communication as a result of new technologies (e-mail, teleconferences and videoconferences, wikis and blogs, social media). The second goal is to underline the need of improvement in the field of competence in the use of NICTs through understanding the purpose and scope of each medium. The third aim is to reveal how

sport organizations and Polish sport organizations deal with NICTs in their communication practice.

The research problem is an answer to the question: *How the new Internet communication technologies shape the communication of Polish sport organizations?*

We can also ask some detailed questions:

1. What are the most frequent used Internet communication tools in organizations and what makes them efficient?

2. What NICTs are present in communication design of a sport organization?

The author adopts in this article the literature review as the main method of collecting data concerning the most often used NICT solutions by the organizations. The last part, focused on the NICTs used in Polish sport organizations, bases on the available international literature and introductory results of the analysis of media used by Polish sport organizations in the processes of internal and external communication.

It is necessary to underline that there are only few Polish scientific descriptions of the mentioned problem. That is why this article is just the beginning of further research reflection.

2. The NICT solutions in an organization – a review

The oldest form of the communication via the Internet is obviously e-mail. The interesting change in the usage of this medium since 80s is that e-mail is no longer a tool of communication over long distance. The everyday practice shows that a major part of the internal communication in an organization takes place online [Derks, Bakker 2013]. Every organization tends to optimize all of its processes and the most desired supplies are information and time. The main advantages of using e-mail communication for an organization are greater availability of information, time saving, speeding up information circulation, a possibility of creating virtual teams, teleworking and increasing availability of employees for work [Derks, Bakker 2013; Wróbel 2012, p. 297]. There are although still many challenges that an organization has to meet. The research of Pew Internet & American Life Project shows the e-mail communication could be the reason for communication jams. According to very interesting American findings 68% of asked employees, named “power emailers”, claim they spend two hours of the work time dealing with e-mail communication and 16% of them need about four hours to answer the e-mails and solve problems [Wielki 2004, p. 228]. It seems that the process of speeding up information circulation and greater availability of information could abolish time saving function of e-mail. Another danger from the viewpoint of organization efficiency emerges when private life matters involve an employee during his work-time. There are many other papers that show also the negative impact of this kind of the communication on private lives of organization members. Teleworking and availability of employees, which clearly increased with the introduction of mobile devices, provoke higher flexibility but they are also responsible for disruption of the gentle work – life balance.

In 2009 Harvard Business Review Poland defined several new trends that would change the communication in an organization. According to D. Coleman and S. Levin, among them there are three the most significant: the integration of different channels of communication, widespread availability of users and installing new tools of communication into processes and models of business [*Poznaj nowe...*]. There were described such meaningful communication media as videoconferences, wikis, blogs and instant messaging.

A videoconference is a substitute of a face-to-face communication, while a teleconference is poorer medium than a videoconference because of the impossibility of transferring image and movement. This feature changes a lot in the definition of interpersonal communication. Although there is a distance and sometimes time gap between the participants of communication the characteristic of face-to-face communication could be persist because of availability of two important channels of interpersonal communication: vocal and body language. B. Rapp and Skamedal (1996) and Arnfalk (1999) identify three kinds of situations in which videoconferences are useful tool: they can replace face-to-face meeting, can complement interpersonal communication and can also create the need of face-to-face meetings [Rapp, Arleback 2001, p. 142]. B. Rapp and P. Arleback [2001, p. 144] point that the main barrier for videoconferences is limited availability of equipment and limited possibilities to arrange proper place (studio) for this kind of communication. It causes a low level of familiarity with medium – videoconferences still are perceived as something new. In spite of everything the authors are convinced that videoconferences are a really good tool in developing multinational virtual teams over long distance because they are richer medium than e-mail or simple telephone call.

A wiki is a collaborative website where users can create and edit pages, and “what is unique about wikis is that they drive (asynchronous) consensus through the wiki document” [Coleman, Levine 2008, p. 43]. K. Kopecka and W. Idzikowski indicate that wiki’s phenomenon is supported by participation as the key idea. According to D. Tapscott and Williams wikis are the way in which people can participate in the global economy [Kopecka, Idzikowski 2012]. The organizations create an environment where the individual knowledge and experience can meet and link into the wide highway. To mobilize the collective knowledge, capacity and resources nowadays organizations have a powerful tool to manage business reality and persist in the highly unstable organizational environment. It lets the human capital create new ways of communication and change the business [Tapscott 2009, pp. 174–178].

Online collaborating platforms are experimented widely by IBM as a user and creator of technology.¹ The syndicate uses wikis and blogs to explore “how online discourse through social computing can empower IBMers as global professionals, innovators and citizens. These individual interactions represent a new model: not

¹ Their own wikis have such giants as Yahoo, Nokia, Kodak, Disney, Motorola.

mass communications, but masses of communicators. Through these interactions, IBM's greatest asset – the expertise of its employees – can be shared with clients, shareholders, and the communities in which it operates” [www.ibm.com]. IBM created a set of guidelines for its members how to use **blogs**, which is a tool protecting bloggers as well as whole organization. Blogs, as we can read on IBM's WWW, are treated as a form of communication and relationship among individuals. Blogs are used as a tool of reinforcing the engagement among the members of organization and between the company and its customers [Lewis, Kitchin 2010].

There is also a question of social media that occurs in the subject of organizational communication. P.M. Leonardi, M. Huysman and Ch. Steinfield claim that in an organization we face enterprise social media which are “Web-based platforms that allow workers to (1) communicate messages with specific co-workers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular co-workers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing” [Leonardi et al. 2013, p. 2]. According to them the difference between ESM and others bases on visibility of human communication actions in WWW site and leaving communication traces within the medium, available to the users for a longer period of time. They distinguished two directions of the circulation of information in social media: external and internal. The external organizational communication is carried out by such social networking as Facebook, MySpace or Twitter. Internal communication could be also realized through public platforms but members of organization could use instead wikis, blogs or other tools.

According to the survey of RR Communication Consulting in 2012 there are only 55% of enterprises that use social media in internal communication. The managers of organizations who have decided to implement such platform of communication declared it as additional channels of communication to make information flow faster (enterprises employ to 1000 people) and relationship between its members – easier (syndicates). There are 79% of respondents who are users of social media and 59% respondents who do not use them are convinced that the role of these platforms of communication will grow in the future [Kawik 2012a]. The respondents' answers are coherent with the research of C.Y. Yuan, Z. Xuan, L. Qinying and C. Changyan – almost all social media users think social media tools are good at supporting social interactions and are better in knowledge sharing than others [Yuan et al. 2013, pp. 1663, 1664]. The state of involving social media into organizational communication processes in Poland that was identified by RR Communication Consulting survey in Poland is close to results of the research of A.J. Bradley, M.P. McDonald [2014]. Most of the questioned enterprises still perceive the social media as a threat for their efficiency, intellectual capital, security, or authority of managers.

Worth mentioning is the impact of mobile technologies on media usage in an organization. According to D. Tapscott in 1990 there were 11 million users of mobile phones and in 2005 the number of people with mobile phone was 2.2 billion [Tapscott 2009, pp. 65, 66]. Within two years Internet mobile devices traffic increased four times. According to the forecast of Morgan Stanley in the end of 2013 the amount of people using Internet via mobile devices would be greater than people who use computers [Hatalaska, Polak 2012, p. 27]. Mobile access to a communication tool has many advantages such as possibility of teleworking or being available in non-specific hours of the day but it also carries some difficulties connected with erasing the bond between privacy and working life.

3. NICTs in communication design of sport organizations and Polish sport organizations

The very important problem the managers of all kind of organizations must take into consideration is to unite two things: (1) implement new technologies of communication into organization and convince employees of benefits of using them, and (2) make people learn how to use media with regard to the purpose and scope of medium. The author wants to focus on the second issue in the aspect of sport organization.

The everyday practice of organizational life shows that many communication jams are the result of improper use of media. R. Kreitner and A. Kinicki compiled a contingency model that indicated two important dimensions in the efficiency of communication channels usage in an organization: the richness of medium and the complexity of problem/situation [Makowiec, Matusiński 2009, p. 475]. The greater is the convergence of both dimensions, the higher efficiency of communication processes. The richness is characterised as (1) a level of diversity of information one medium can transmit (providing simultaneous multiple information cues), (2) the level of providing the immediate feedback, and (3) the level of personalization the message. Taking under considerations the new Internet communication technologies in an organization, the first dimension refers to interpersonal channels of communication as verbal, vocal and non-verbal ones as well as graphic, animation, film, photo. The second dimension describes the possible feedback delay. The third one describes the degree that the communicator may profile the communication and makes communication more personalized. We can assume that particular media are different in regard to their richness dimension so the goals of their use must be differentiated too. To build an effective communication platform there is a necessity to combine the media in organizational internal and external communication.

Sport organization is not a specific one with regard to structure or managerial functions. The product, and more precisely one of the some possible types of products – a sport spectacle, provides the specificity.² The relevant thing about sport spectacle

² The others are: club products (gadgets with club logo), rights to media transmission of a sport event and promotion through sponsoring and advertisement.

is the participation of customers (fans) in the creation of this product. It leads to the conclusion that the tools of communication of particular importance are these of external communication. J. Hanarz [2007] points out that sport business is built on the basis of relations with the surroundings. It means that public relations are an important factor in sport organization strategy. According to R. Panfil and P. Barylski [2004] the introduction of NICTs to the processes of management of the sport club must be oriented on efficacy increasing in the fields of receiving information, allocating information into organization and sharing information and in particular it concerns the external communication. Thus the interesting question is how the sport organizations manage information and communication technology in the process of building a relation with the environment?

There is a wide background in scientific reflection as regards new Internet communication technologies in organizational performing what was presented in the first section of the article – the efficacy of use, goals of use and personal motivation for the use of NICTs. There is also some significant research referring to sport organization [Pedersen et al. 2007; Egelman 2013; Stavros et al. 2013] but there are still missing the holistic reflection and widely designed research. And as regards the Polish findings to provide a good introduction to the subject the author wants sketch the examples of the use of NICTs by selected Polish sport organizations (the wikis are excluded due to being a solution supporting mainly the process of internal knowledge sharing).

The data showed in Table 1 are partly the result of research on Polish sport organizations undertaken in the beginning of 2014 by the author and the students of the Sport Faculty. The NICTs usages in organizational external communication were a part of this analysis. There were analysed 30 sport organizations of different sizes and goals. There are 11 of them showed in the table as an example due to the research being in progress. The data are acquired through the content analysis of WWW and proper social medium used by a particular sport organization. The comment to the results of this introductory research focuses mainly on social media because any others examples of NICTs were hardly found. Table 1 presents the simplified data.

The main platforms of communication of sport organizations mentioned in Table 1 are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, what shows the supremacy of social media in the analysed sample. Unfortunately, that supremacy is not followed by the quality of messages and reliability of communication activity. There are many profiles in social media where irregular posts occurred, sometimes with irrelevant content. These two mistakes lead to decreasing the attention of audience and do not motivate social media users to interaction. The third sin of described sport organization is avoiding answering to the comments or delayed answering – the social media require immediate feedback. Not taking advantage of the richness of the medium is the main error of communication via social media. Polish leagues of football, volleyball or basketball are rather poorly involved in social media activity. In comparison – American sport organizations have already developed compact marketing strategies.

Table 1. Review of selected Polish sport organizations and presentation of NICTs' solutions in external communication

| Organization | Type of sport organization | Used NICT | Short comment (in aspect of use) |
|--|--|--|--|
| Fundacja "Piłka jest piękna" | NGO | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube | Irregular messages at Facebook (sometimes 4 times a month, sometimes a month gap between posts) |
| Jastrzębski Węgiel | Sport Club | E-mail, Newsletter, Facebook, Twitter | Facebook: 35.000 likes and over 1.300 active people; very regular and frequent posts Newsletter and e-mail: option on WWW site Twitter: the last tweet in November |
| WKS Śląsk Wrocław – football | Sport Club | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter | Facebook: frequent and regular posts YouTube: movies of sport events, interviews, others Twitter: last tweet in April |
| WKS Śląsk Wrocław – basketball | Sport Club | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube | Facebook: regular posts and various content YouTube: movies of sort events, interviews with players |
| Zaksa Kędzierzyn-Koźle | Sport club | E-mail, Facebook, videoconferences via Twittcam | Facebook: regular and frequent posts, events, photos, no movies |
| RKS Radomsko | Sport Club | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube | Rare Facebook posts (one per few months) |
| Wrox Gym | Fitness Club | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube | Facebook: almost 2.000 likes and only 43 people are active, regular posts |
| Wrocławskie Centrum Treningowe Spartan | Fitness Club | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube | Facebook: few events and movies, photos, discussions; frequent and regular posts (1, 2 posts per day) YouTube: advertisement clips |
| Pro-staff Animation Agency | Animation agency | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube | Facebook: profile with low activity (196 people discuss/6.000 likes) YouTube: advertisement clips |
| PKOL | NGO –free association of federations and other legal persons | E-mail, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Google+ | Instagram: 58 posts Facebook: regular posts (4, 5 per month) Twitter: 1900 tweets YouTube: many movies of sport events and Polish sportsmen and sportswomen |
| PZPN | Sport association (football) | E-mail, Facebook, Google+, videoconferences (via Google+), Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest | Facebook: frequent and regular posts, photos, events, competitions Google+: over 55.000 observers, few comments Twitter: frequent tweets YouTube: movies of matches, press conferences, sport events, expert studio |

Source: own study.

They use such social platforms as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Tumbler, Telly or Foursquare, and blogs, videoconferences and newsletters are widely used [Kawik 2012b].

Blogs as the next discussed NICT carried on by Polish sportsmen and sportswomen are more common in individual disciplines than in team sports. There can be mentioned blogs by Justyna Kowalczyk (cross-country skiing), or Ewa Chodakowska (personal trainer). R. Lewis and P. Kitchin point out that professional sport clubs and bodies in Europe do not follow the trend so visible in USA: "The major North America sports (National Football League (NFL), MLB, NBA and the National Hockey League (NHL)) have adopted blogging on their core sites, as have the vast majority of the teams" [Lewis, Kitchin 2010, p. 202]. The authors assume that it is connected with the attitude towards the Web mainly perceived by the organizations as information and content control tool with far less emphasis on interaction with fans and wider community via the Web [Lewis, Kitchin 2010, p. 202].

There are few examples of videoconferences that are realized through social media among analysed sport organizations. Unfortunately these events have incidental character and are not a part of wider communication strategy. Felipe Fonteles from Zaksa Kędzierzyn-Koźle Club in 2013 connected with his fans via Twittcam to thank his fans for their loyalty. Also in May 2014 the players of Polish football representation met with selected fans during videoconference via Google+.

Newsletters, the oldest and well-known solution based on e-mail, are surprisingly underestimated by analysed Polish sport organizations. There is only one among presented 10 (Jastrzębski Węgiel) which uses this kind of NICT. The newsletter contains such topics as sport events, communicates concerning organization of matches, promotion information, commercial information. Obviously all described sport organizations use e-mail as a basic form of communication with the environment (the e-mail address is always placed on the WWW site bookmark Contact).

The undertaken research even at its initial stage shows that Polish sport organizations try to make the available NITCs a part of communication activity. However, individual approaches are different. On the one hand, some of them treat NICTs as a relevant element of the organizational communication strategy. On the other hand, there are some sport organizations which do not pay attention to proper use of available channels of communications. Perhaps there is a question of lack of competences with simultaneous awareness that NITCs are a new way for organization to communicate with the fans and others participants of internal and external environment.

4. Conclusions

The tools of simple one-way communication go down in history whereas the necessity of immediacy and multidimensional feedback and collaboration increases. The future of sport communication belongs, as international examples show, to new

Internet technologies of communication. There is a great opportunity for a sport organization, due to its nature, to develop the external communication with customer towards new quality of interactions and establish mutually beneficial relationship. The main field of activity could be social media marketing and public relations.

However, to take up this challenge the key issue is to identify the most convenient medium which facilitates the interactions [Stavros et al. 2013].

References

- Bradley A.J., MacDonald M.P., 2014, Większość organizacji nadal obawia się mediów społecznościowych, www.hbrp.pl/news (22.01.2014).
- Coleman D., Levine S., 2008, *Collaboration 2.0. Technology and Best Practices for Successful Collaboration in a Web 2.0 World*, HappyAbout.info.
- Derks D., Bakker A.B., 2013, *The impact of e-mail communication on organizational life*, *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychological Research on Cyberspace*, vol. 4, no. 1, <http://www.cyberpsychology.eu>.
- Eagelman A.N., 2013, *Acceptance, motivations, and usage of social media as a marketing communication tool amongst employees of sport national governing bodies*, *Sport Management Review*, vol. 16, pp. 488–497.
- Hatalska N., Polak A., 2012, *Raport. Komunikacja firm i konsumentów w epoce cyfrowej – nowe technologie a wykorzystanie tradycyjnych mediów*, MGG Conferences, Warszawa.
- Kawik A., 2012a, *Social media w firmach usprawniają komunikację i budują relacje między pracownikami*, SocialPress. Media społecznościowe w praktyce, 05/09/2012, www.socialpress.pl.
- Kawik A., 2012b, *Ligi sportowe w Internecie: Media społecznościowe wypierają inne kanały komunikacji e-marketingowej*, SocialPress, 28/11/2012, www.socialpress.pl.
- Kiesler S., Siegel J., McGuire T.W., 1984, *Social Psychological Aspects of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *American Psychologist*, vol. 39, no. 10, pp. 1123–1134.
- Kopecka K., Idzikowski W., 2012, *Medialne narzędzia kształtowania innowacyjnego kapitału intelektualnego organizacji: Knowledge brokering, crowdsourcing, wikinomia*, *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu* nr 274, pp. 102–112.
- Leonard P.M., Huysman M., Steinfield Ch., 2013, *Enterprise social media: Definition, history, and prospects for the study of social technologies in organizations*, *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1–19.
- Lewis R., Kitchin P., 2010, *New communications media for sport*, [in:] Hopwood M., Kitchin P., Skinner J. (eds.), *Sport Public Relations and Communication*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, London–New York, pp. 195–222.
- Makowiec M., Matusiński W., 2009, *Komunikacja wewnętrzna a sprawność funkcjonowania organizacji*, [in:] Potocki A. (ed.), *Globalizacja a społeczne aspekty przeobrażeń i zmian organizacyjnych*, Difin, Warszawa, pp. 287–302.
- Panfil R., Barylski P., 2004, *Technologie informacyjne w zarządzaniu klubem sportowym*, [in:] Niedzielska E., Perechuda K. (eds.), *Koncepcje i narzędzia zarządzania informacją i wiedzą*, Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej, Wrocław.
- Pedersen P.M., Miloch K., Laucella P.C., 2007, *Strategic sport communication*, Human Kinetics, Champaign.
- Poznaj nowe trendy, które na zawsze zmienią komunikację w miejscu pracy*, 2009, *Harvard Business Review Polska*, vol. 4, no. 74, <http://www.hbrp.pl/biblioteka>.

- Rapp B., Arleback P., 2001, *An explorative study of videoconferencing in Swedish companies*, [in:] Jackson P., Suomi R. (eds.), *E-business and Workplace Redesign*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, London–New York.
- Stavros C., Meng M.D., Westberg K., Farrelly F., 2013, *Understanding fan motivation for interacting on social media*, *Sport Management Review*, vol. 17, no. 4, pp. 455–469, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.11.004>.
- Tapscott D., 2009, *Grown Up Digital*, McGraw-Hill, New York.
- Wielki J., 2004, *Analiza wyzwań związanych z wykorzystaniem poczty elektronicznej w działalności organizacji*, *Prace Naukowe Akademii Ekonomicznej we Wrocławiu* nr 1044, pp. 226–234.
- Wróbel P., 2012, *Źródła nieporozumień w komunikacji w organizacjach przy wykorzystaniu poczty elektronicznej*, [in:] Stabryła A., Woźniak K. (eds.), *Determinanty potencjału rozwoju organizacji*, Mfiles.pl Encyklopedia Zarządzania.
- Yuan C.Y., Xuan Z., Qinying L., Changyan C., 2013, *The use of different information and communication technologies to support knowledge sharing in organizations: From e-mail to micro-blogging*, *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, vol. 64, no. 8, pp. 1659–1670.

NOWE INTERNETOWE TECHNOLOGIE KOMUNIKACYJNE W POLSKICH ORGANIZACJACH SPORTOWYCH

Streszczenie: Pierwszy cel artykułu dotyczy identyfikacji najbardziej popularnych form komunikacji wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej opartych na NICT we współczesnych organizacjach. Drugim jest podkreślenie potrzeby poprawy kompetencji w używaniu NICT poprzez rozumienie celu komunikacji oraz zasięgu danego medium. Trzeci cel to pokazanie, w jaki sposób polskie organizacje sportowe radzą sobie z zastosowaniem NICT w praktyce. W artykule przyjęto metodę przeglądu literatury, aby zidentyfikować najczęściej stosowane rozwiązania komunikacyjne w obszarze NICT w organizacjach. Druga część artykułu, koncentrująca się na prezentacji rozwiązań NICT w polskich organizacjach sportowych, osadzona została na badaniach literaturowych oraz na wstępnych wynikach badań mediów pośredniczących w komunikacji wewnętrznej i zewnętrznej polskich organizacji sportowych.

Słowa kluczowe: nowe internetowe technologie komunikacyjne, organizacja sportowa, komunikacja w organizacji.