

The problems of development of an effective management system of internal communications and ways to overcome them ¹

The communication process at each of its stages can undergo certain distortions that negatively affect the overall effectiveness of information exchange, which, in its turn, leads to a decrease in the management effectiveness of the enterprise activity as a whole. Thus, according to the research [5], more than 80% of errors in business processes are due to the absence of necessary information in necessary place.

So, at all stages of the enterprise activity there are many obstacles on the way of effective communications. They can be of interpersonal nature (individual perception and interpretation of the message content, limited information capacity of perception (short-term memory); inability to listen to another person, etc.), as well as various organizational, technical and other barriers (message distortion, information overload of the existing communication system, etc.) (Table 3) of different degrees of complexity for overcoming.

Many researchers distinguish different causes of inefficient communication. So, for a detailed consideration of communication problems M.Kh. Meskon, F. Albert and M. Khedoury [4] proposed a cyclic model that allowed investigating of various types of problems in communications, based on the structure of models and the connections between its elements.

Based on the elemental composition of the model, we can distinguish the following groups of obstacles:

- 1) groups related to communicator or communicant. The authors distinguish three main types of communication problems: biological, psychological, sociological;
- 2) groups related to message: problem of message style, its language dictionary and the possibility of unambiguous interpretation;
- 3) encoding (decoding) the message and response (problems of identity searching);
- 4) direct communication channel and feedback.

According to Osovska G.V. [6], the significant obstacles to effective communications establishing include: the authoritarian attitude of the administration towards subordinates, the vagueness or reluctance of managers to perform their duties, the lack of healthy atmosphere in the development of business policy and motivation for communication among employees, incorrect determining of rights and responsibilities, the fear of managers and subordinates for the consequences of the transfer of forthright information, etc., as well as a number of subjective factors that reduce the effectiveness of contacts between individual employees: different interpretations of concepts, different level of knowledge, different emotional state, etc.

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Table 1 – Obstacles to effective communication

Subsystem of IC	Subsystem element	Obstacles		
		Controlled	Partially controlled	Uncontrolled
Organizational	Managerial technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – problem of the message address targeting; – the absence of healthy atmosphere in the development of business policy and motivation for communication between employees; – analysis by the recipient of the message from other perspective than the sender, as a result of the replacement of some concepts by others because of their fuzzy definition; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – authoritarian attitude of the administration towards subordinates; – discrepancy between the way of information transfer and its perception; 	
	Organizational structure of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – inefficiency of the organizational structure; – increasing the probability of distortion of information with the growth of the vertical power structure; – inefficient way of work organization and task distribution; – incorrect determining of rights and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – conflicts between units and between individuals; 	
	Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – incompetence of workers; – communicative, professional and methodological incompetence of personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – inaccurate performance or reluctance of managers to perform their duties; – fear of managers and subordinates for the consequences of the transfer of forthright information; 	
Social and psychological	Social interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – psychological incompatibility of persons participating in the communication process; – inaccuracy in the interpretation of the meaning of words, gestures, intonation, facial expressions, etc .; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – inability to listen to another person; – propensity to correlate one's reaction to messages with the reaction of other individuals; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the instinctive feeling of protest against imposing somebody's will;
	Roles in management system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the recipient desire that consists in fact that a message should be received by someone else; – obstacles to adaption; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – different needs, interests, gathered experience; – prejudiced attitude of both contractors of communication to the topic of discussion and given arguments; – psychological state of mind of the information sender about the recipient and vice versa; 	
	Psychological features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – limitedness of information capacity of perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – individual perception and interpretation of the message content; – different emotional state; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the inherent qualities of a person to exaggerate what concerns himself and reduce what concerns others;
Information	Communication channels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a large number of directions for information obtaining; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – distortion of the message content; 	
	Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – competition between messages (simultaneous impact on the recipient by several information sources); codification – the loss of part of the message while encoding and decoding of the message; – difficulties in receiving the feedback; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – information overload; – the excess of the real information processing capabilities of the communication system and people, who belong to it; 	
Technical and technological	Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the obsolete software of information and communication systems; – incomplete use of the functions of information and communication systems; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – vulnerability of communication systems; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – high cost of modern information and communication systems
	Hardware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the obsolete systems of data-storage and data transfer; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – failures in the equipment operation; 	
	Information processing system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – simplifying of information that reduces the number of meaningful ideas, reduces the connection with the message context; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – imperfect processing algorithms regarding unstructured problems; 	

As a result, the author determines the following main types of communication obstacles:

1) competition between messages (in situations when the recipient is simultaneously impacted by several sources of information, the recipient prefers the message, which is the most important for him at the moment);

2) perception of the message by the recipient;

3) language, logic, abstraction;

4) the status of the person sending the message;

5) resistance to change.

Frolov S.S. [9] determines two groups of communication problems in the organization:

1) problems of structural communications connected with the barriers that arise in the process of information transfer, when the functions of each unit are not clearly and unambiguously defined;

2) problems of interpersonal communication connected with behavioral aspects of the organization activity.

At the same time, the author does not take into account that there are barriers connected with the process of information transfer as well as with interpersonal communications (the excess of the real information processing capabilities of the communication system and people, who belong to it; difficulties in feedback receiving; simplified information; competition between messages; a large number of directions for information obtaining, etc.)

Syrotyna K.V. [8] suggests a similar approach, adding the problems connected with a lack of understanding between employees of different units to the structural and interpersonal communication problems. The author also gives the causes for these obstacles.

Shepel V.M. [3] distinguishes six types of communication problems:

1) discomfort of the physical environment, where the message is perceived;

2) concern of the listener with other problems;

3) antipathy to other people's opinions, stereotyping of consciousness, ambitiousness;

4) language barrier;

5) professional rejection: incompetent intrusion of the communicator into the professional sphere of the communicant;

6) rejection of the communicator's image.

Lazarev S.V. [3] also talks about filtration (conscious manipulation of information by the sender), selective perception, information overload and gender differences that hinder the communication process.

Kurbatov V.I. [2] grouped the errors that arise in the communication process in way as follows:

1. Sending a message (the message is poorly worded and stated, the message is incomplete and insufficient, the message codes are badly selected, erroneous data are transmitted).

2. Receiving messages (the message is incomprehensible; the message is understood incorrectly; the recipient's prejudicial attitude to the sender's message; the message is not received at all; the message is not acknowledged).

3. Personal attitudes (inattention while sending and receiving messages; lack of interest; incompetence; haste; irritability; extreme emotionality; aggressiveness; non-compliance with communication rules).

4. Collective action (absence of a common goal; the struggle for leadership in the group substitutes the common goal; very strong dependence on the leader; excessive authoritarianism; the absence of a leader).

5. Organization (poor organization of the group, absence of distribution of functions among the participants; absence of a method of work; lack of control, insufficiently developed communication structure; a structure of communication doesn't correspond the problem being solved; the structure of communication is too tough; there are several communication structures that are not coordinated with each other) [6, p. 43-44].

According to Fysun A.V. [9], the effective functioning of the internal communications system is impeded by such factors as: lack of corporate identity, controlled reputation; the problem of cognitive dissonance (the situation when a person receives conflicting judgments of approximately the same status about the same subject from different sources); the growing amount of information and the lack of time for its consideration; limited information capacity of perception (limitedness of short-term memory); poor structuring of the message; discrepancy between "text" and "pictures"; irrelevance (inconsistency of the way of the information presentation to its perception); the problem of targeting of channels and content; ignoring of audience information requests. The author calls the absence of a real marketing approach to the development of the system of intracorporate information distribution as an integral problem that prevents the effective functioning of internal communications funds.

Russian researcher Rybkin A. [7] determines four main groups of communication barriers: problems connected with goal-setting, enterprise structure, technical and personal problems.

Thus, within the first group, the author identifies following key obstacles: the absence of common goals or their misunderstanding, inconsistency of goals and actions, incorrect goal wording, convergence (crossing) of goals, incorrect wording of tasks within a clear goal.

Another group of possible problems is connected with the structure of the enterprise and contains the following obstacles:

- non-optimal structure;
- poorly organized business processes and distribution of documentary and information flows;
- unclear distribution of responsibilities and spheres of responsibility;
- the lack of information among employees concerning the functional responsibilities of the employees of the enterprise and to whom and concerning which issues one can address;
- limited access to information;
- absence of the procedures of information exchange, decision making, etc.

Technical problems can negate all efforts, even if there is a desire to convey their point of view to the personnel of other departments or organize the exchange of views, primarily due to the following reasons:

- slow speed of information transfer;
- wrong choice of information sources;
- incompleteness and inaccuracy of information transfer;
- insufficient information literacy of personnel;
- inadequacy of information transfer, “noise” distortion.

Accordingly, the personal component includes informal relationships between employees and groups, clashes of ambitions, personal characteristics, inconsistency of joint projects to interests, inevitability during the interaction of time expenditures that provide additional load, inconsistency of the existing “balance of power”, feedback neglecting.

Pushkar R.M., Tarnavska N.P. [2] consider that the main barriers of communication are as follows: competition between messages; perception of the message by the recipient; language, logic, abstraction, i.e. sender must adapt his messages to the level of the audience, skillfully select a dictionary, design of his messages; the status of the person sending the message; resistance to change.

In general, regardless the approach of one author or another, the considered obstacles worsen the condition of the internal communications and the state of the communication processes management at enterprises as a whole. At the same time, ineffective management of communications can manifest itself in many negative consequences for the enterprise –from insignificant, concerning individuals, to large-scale ones, which significantly affect the activity of the whole enterprise.

Thus, the examples of ineffective management of internal communications can be as follows: duplication of functions, loss of time with simultaneous use of various communication channels, providing of unnecessary information, etc. Let us consider them in more detail.

Therefore, during simultaneous use of different communication channels for the same information transfer (Fig. 1), there is a loss of time and the information load on the department or on its employees increases which have to analyze all received information and compare its identity.

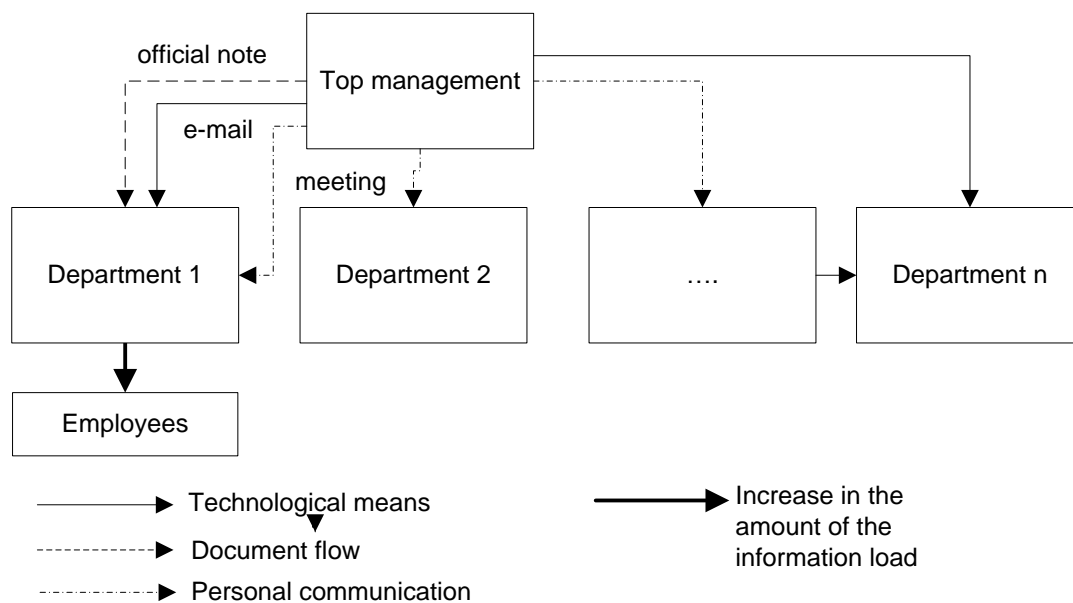


Fig. 1. Scheme of simultaneous use of various communication channels for the transfer of identical messages (hypothetical example)

Thus, in Fig. 1 we presented a typical elementary scheme, which shows the transfer of identical information through various communication channels with use of various communication media. At the same time, there may be a situation when messages are transferred via different channels by one type of information transfer means (for example, within the technological one: by phone, e-mail, Skype, etc.), that can be complicated by obtaining a number of similar messages from some departments or some people. In practice, it

is an array of information. As a result duplication of messages leads to their accumulation, an increase in processing time and the appearance of errors in the interpretation of their content and the decision making.

The duplication of functions (Fig. 2) is considered as the fulfillment of the same work at different hierarchical levels of management by different structural units and different persons.

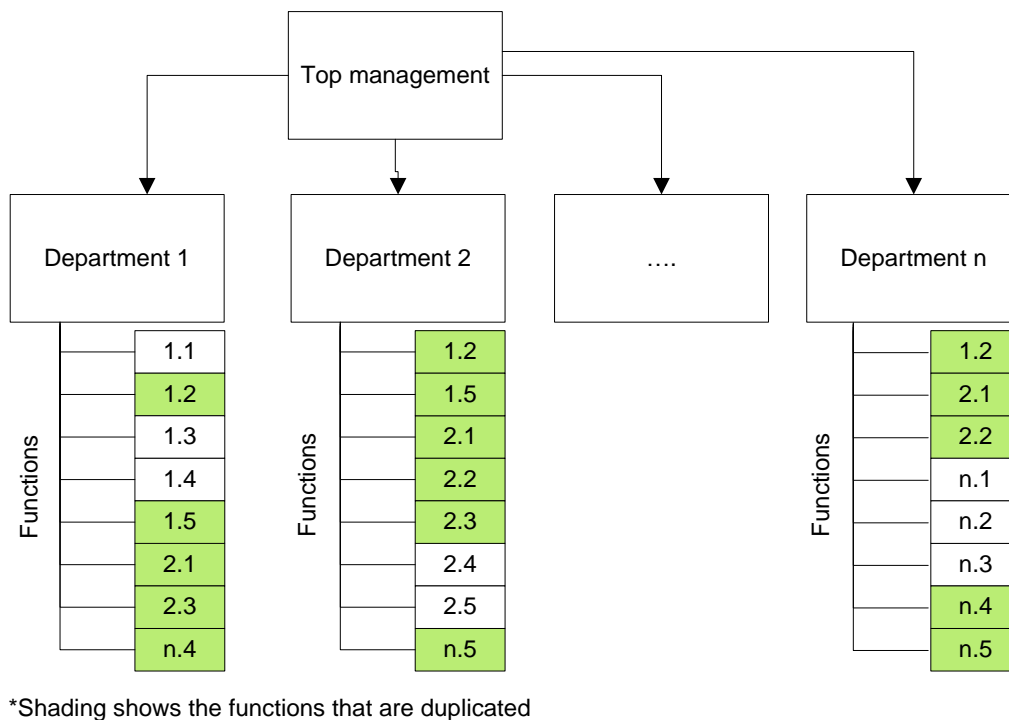


Fig. 2. The duplication of functions as one of the forms of manifestation of ineffective management of internal communications of the enterprise (hypothetical example)

First of all it should be noted that there is a minimum acceptable (necessary) number of duplicating functions (as a rule, they are of checking and controlling nature) at each enterprise. However, in situations when actually all functions, which according to the job descriptions, management instructions, project needs, etc., must be assigned to one person/one unit, are duplicated by several persons/units, it, above all, leads to an increase in the load on the employees, reduce of attention to the basic functions, possible performance degradation, loss of time on unnecessary functions performing, the lack of clear distribution of responsibility for the result of a specific person and a decrease in the effectiveness of the performed functions.

The emergence of communicative gaps in business processes is the next variant of the consequences of ineffective management of internal communications (Fig. 3). These gaps are formed under the influence of many factors, including the factors of social, organizational,

technological and informational nature (Table 1). Accordingly, the presence of such gaps leads to the distortion of the message content, to partial or complete loss of information as a result of the interruption of the communication process, which, in turn, leads to the delayed performance or failure to perform tasks (for example, unfulfilled orders, expired deadlines), loss of information relevance, inconsistency of the information to the situation at the enterprise, etc.

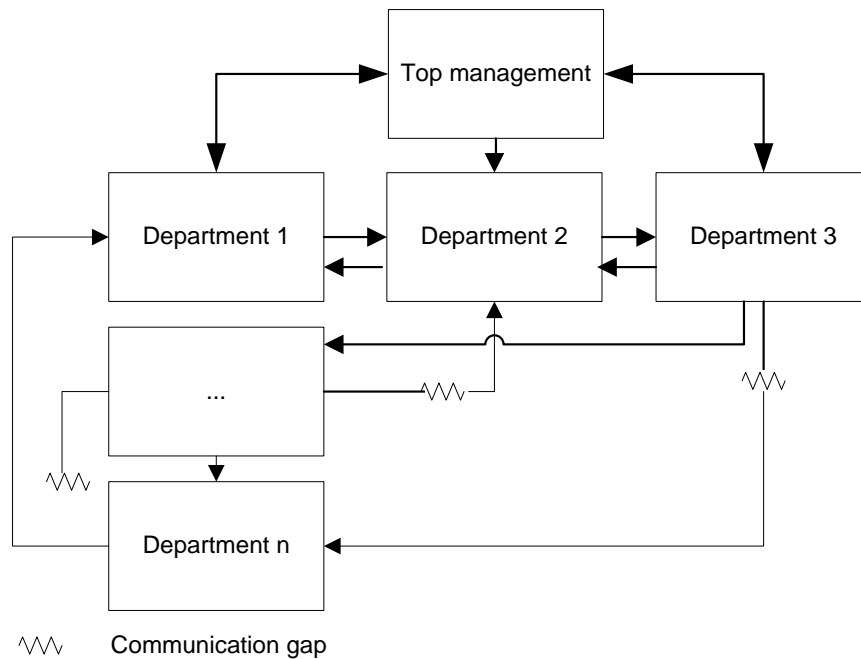


Fig. 3. Communication gaps in communication process (hypothetical example)

Providing of unnecessary information (Fig. 4) from one department/person to other departments/persons is also one of the forms of manifestation of ineffective management of internal communications.

The problem is that the existing practice of enterprises to do mass, rather than purposeful dispatch of information messages leads to the receiving of unnecessary, superfluous information by the functional units of the enterprise. The results are:

- loss of time for analysis of received information;
- reducing the degree of responsibility of the person who must perform the tasks;
- loss of well-established feedback;
- reduction in the degree of controllability of the collective;
- duplicating of functions;
- emergence of additional communication channels, etc.

All this causes the complication of communication system at the enterprise and increases the duration of business processes.

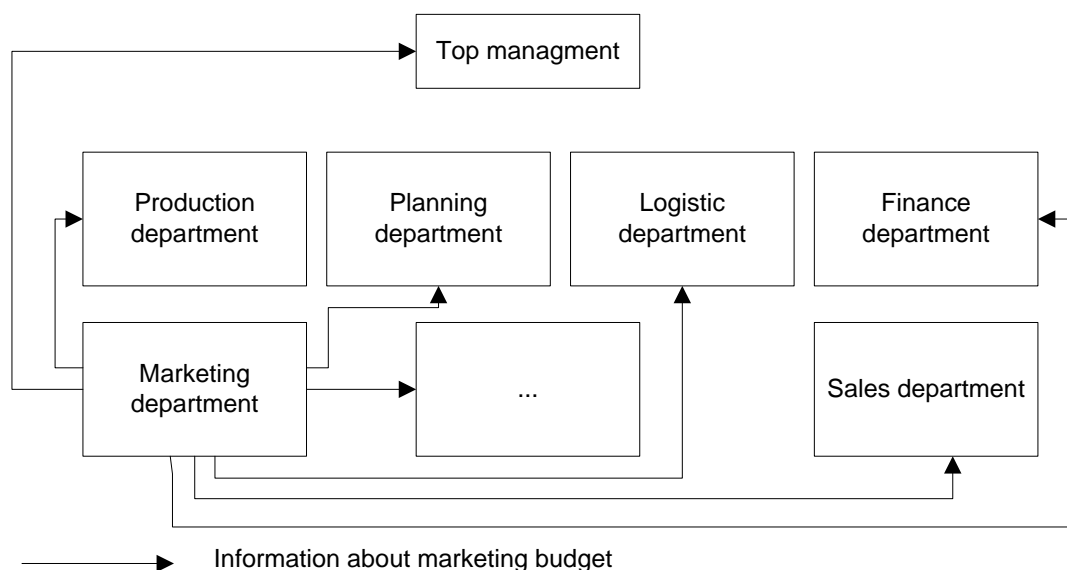


Fig. 4. Providing of unnecessary information as one of the forms of manifestation of ineffective management of internal communications (hypothetical example)

Unclear wording of goal (tasks) (Fig. 5) provides, accordingly, different understanding of the goals (tasks) by different units /individuals and as a result - the use of various methods and means to achieve them. The process of actions coordination on achieving the result is complicated. The essence of result everyone understands in his own way. All this leads to a shortage of the planned results within the set period and in certain volumes.

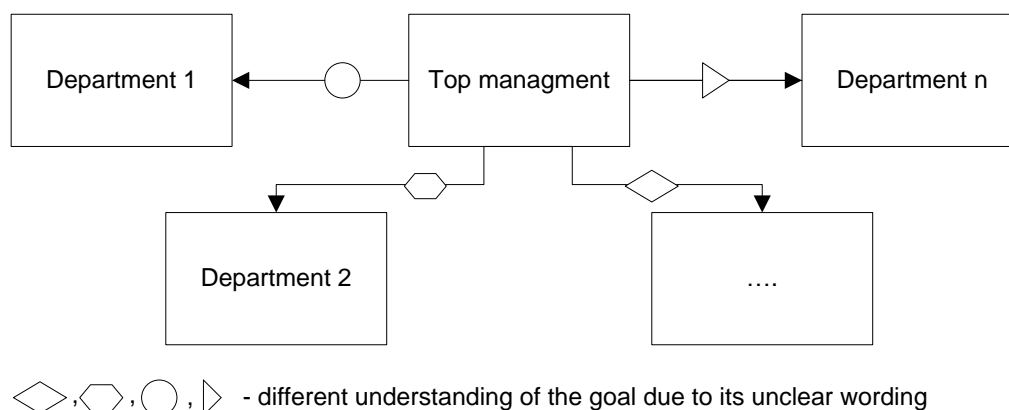


Fig. 5. Scheme of unclear setting of goal by management (hypothetical example)

In general, the researchers identify a large number of problems with narrowed directions: only social, psychological and other types of obstacles are taken into account. There is no integrated approach that allows an enterprise to systematize the existing barriers with purpose to carry out thorough analysis (availability, preconditions and degree of occurrence probability) and to make appropriate management decisions to minimize the impact of barriers or eliminate them completely. Obstacles are not distinguished by the elements of the communication system, although the problems of unsatisfactory information exchange named by different authors are well integrated into the proposed concept of the determining of technological, socio-psychological, organizational and information subsystem. At the same time, we suggest to distinguish the economic direction of the causes of ineffectiveness of internal communications and separation of the barrier types discussed above by determined directions (Fig. 6). We also consider it appropriate to determine the consequences caused by inefficient communications under the impact of organizational, socio-psychological, technological, information, economic groups of communication obstacles and possible solutions in case of necessity (Fig. 7-8).

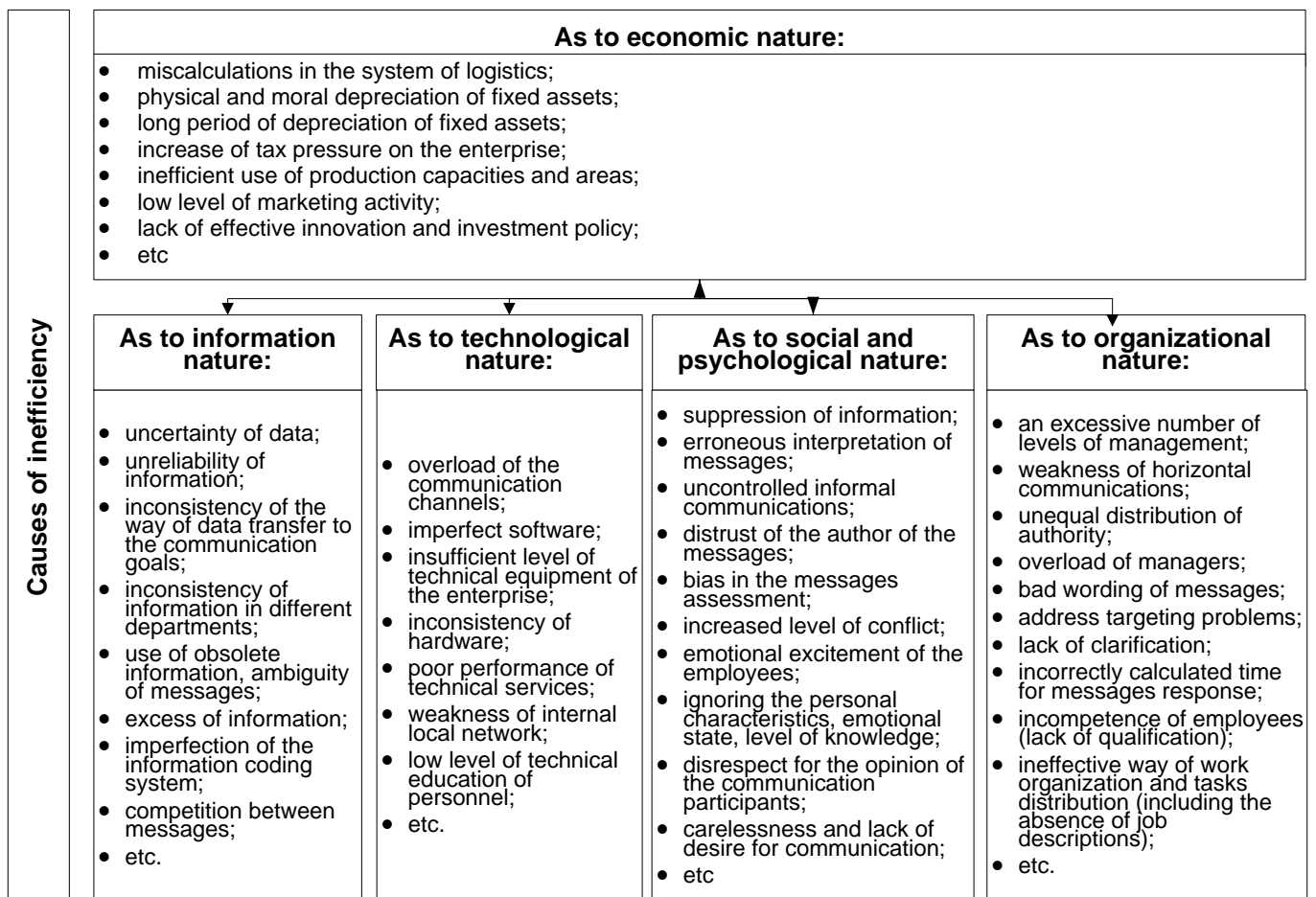


Fig. 6. Types of causes of internal communications inefficiency

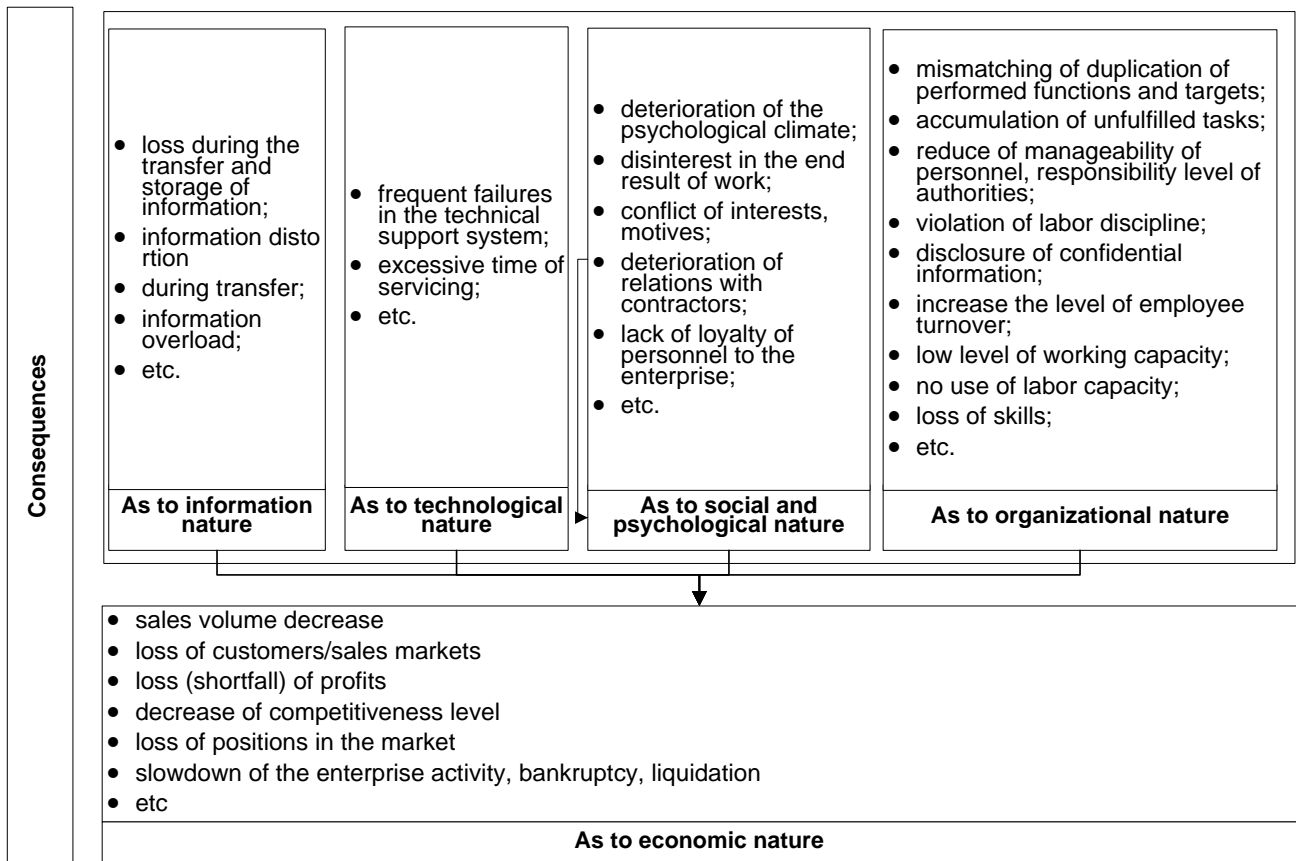


Fig. 7. Consequences of internal communications inefficiency

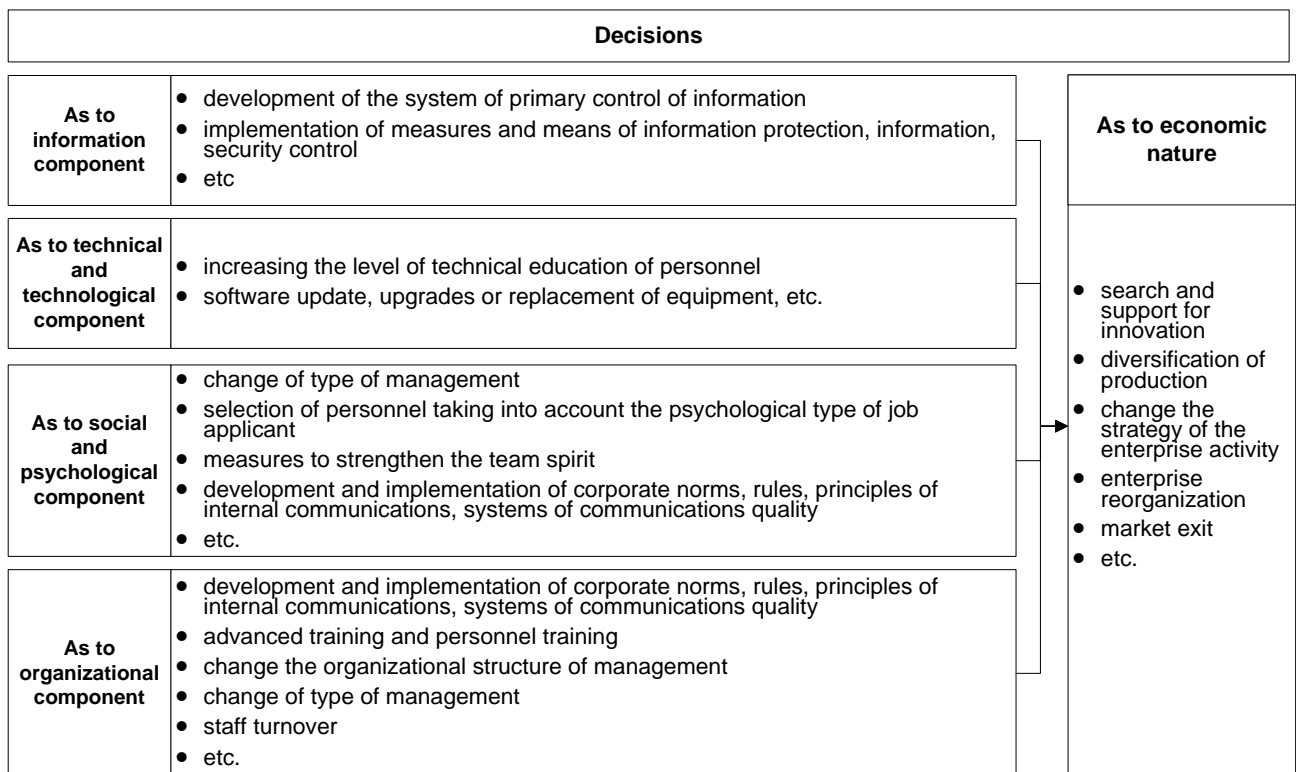


Fig. 8. Possible variants of managerial decisions depending on the types of causes of the internal communications inefficiency and their consequences

It should be noted that most of the solutions presented in Fig. 8, carry the fundamental changes and are accompanied by considerable time and money losses. To prevent them, it is necessary, first of all, to build a mechanism for assessing the negative impact of factors of the internal and external environment on the communication process, with an emphasis on the analysis of the preconditions for occurrence and the likelihood of communication obstacles. It is also appropriate to implement the measures on prevention or minimization of the risk level of communication obstacles occurrence.

The effectiveness of any communications depends on several elements, in particular: the source of the message; the essence of the message; audience (level of preparedness, quality (self-respect, dogmatism, authoritarianism); channels and means of communication (verbal and non-verbal).

If the degree of development of the current communication system is insufficient to ensure the operation of the enterprise, then it is necessary to identify the weaknesses of the system and to formulate the measures on communications improving. The conducted researches prove that the communication is hampered by the causes connected with imperfection of separate components of the communication system.

Accordingly, to minimize the impact or overcome each of these barriers, there are certain measures, the application of which should be comprehensive and take into account the specifics of all participants in this communication process:

- 1) implementation, replacement or modernization of the enterprise management information system or its individual elements;
- 2) improvement and modernization of the technical infrastructure of communications and software;
- 3) improvement of informational support of the enterprise activity;
- 4) development or improvement of external and internal communication strategy;
- 5) increase of the communicative literacy of employees;
- 6) improvement of the organizational structure of enterprise management and ensuring its communication flexibility;
- 7) compliance with the principles of forming the system of internal communications at the enterprise.

Therefore, in order to increase the effectiveness of communications, it is necessary to explain clearly the messages, demonstrate the understanding, openness in conversation, watch the behavior and the respondent's response; coordinate the information flows of the organization, simplify the information exchange schemes, pay attention to the intonation of message and its unambiguous interpretation, use modern technologies for accurate and fast data exchange, use various IC tools with taking into account the different aspects of perception by the target groups. But, first of all, the effective construction of a communication system should be based on the principle of feedback. Only in such case, the main goal of using the formation will be achieved by increasing the level of loyalty and motivation of the personnel of a healthy corporative culture that supports the business development strategy and helps to achieve the enterprise's goal.

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