



Learn to use internal communication effectively

1 Introduction

The following case study describes the chosen company - its purpose, the structure of the organisation and its internal communications. The objective of the study is to focus on communication, analyse the attitude of the company and problems in the chosen area based on a questionnaire and then to create useful solutions and implement them effectively into the daily life of the company. The chosen solutions should be correctly used to effectively help in the chosen area.

The case study will also explore the theory of communication, to describe the difference between verbal and nonverbal communication and show three directions of communication. It also introduces all forms of communication and their tools.

1.1 The company

The case study focuses on a family company founded in the year 2004. It is an agency focusing on the production of various company events, team-building, outdoor programmes, a wide spectrum of sport and cultural events for adults or children, conferences and workshops, as well as catering services. These projects take place in the Czech Republic but also outside of the borders.

The firm also has its own establishments. Since 2006 it operates a multi-genre club as well as a restaurant. In addition to that, it has 10 other establishments including kiosks next to the river.

The company is headquartered in the region of Liberec. The projects organised by the company also take place in various locations across the whole of the Czech Republic. Everything depends on the demands of the customer.

This SME has 35 full-time employees and around 150 seasonal workers. The organisational structure is not easily available and is not clearly defined.

For public purposes the company is divided into 3 sections: Catering, Family and Agency. Catering includes restaurant Pod Rampou and catering services for single actions, balls or conferences. Family includes kiosks and all the other company's establishments, rental or accommodation. Agency concerns the production of events for clients.

The inner division is composed of Production and Direction. Production accepts demands and then creates a concrete supply for the client with all the requirements included. Direction means the management of the company.

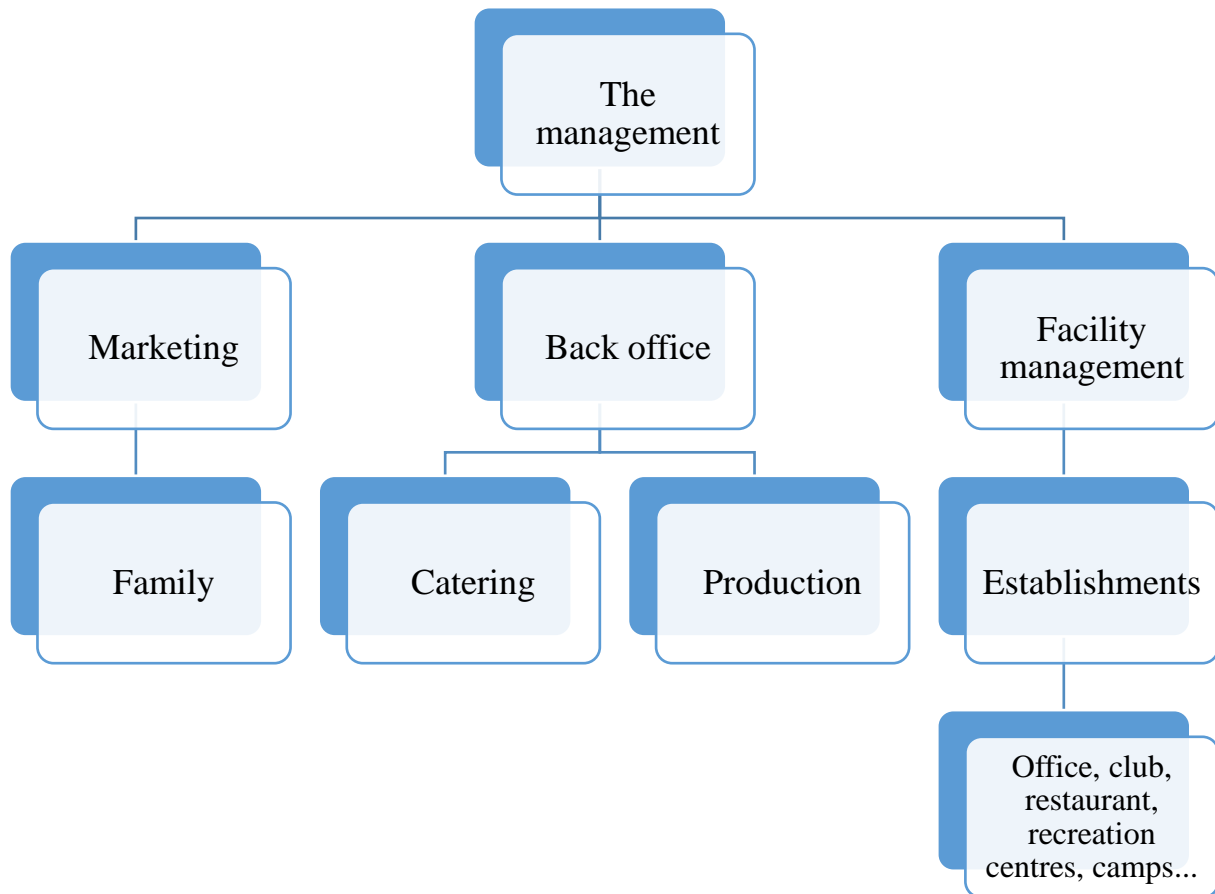


Figure 1: Organisational structure of the company

Source: Company internal sources

2 Communication

Communication is a transfer of information between two or more different subjects, the communicator and the recipient. Both communicator and the recipient have their own characteristic knowledge, position and communication ability that influences the communication process. Between them are culture, habits, communication rules and know-how meeting.

Every communication has a concrete context and is opened by a trigger. It always has an objective, which should be defined between starting the communication.

Verbal communication is done by words or letters. Nonverbal communication takes place at an unconscious level and is influenced by sight, eye and pupil movements, facial expressions, the attitude of the body, the tone and the strength of the voice or the distance from the person with whom they are speaking.

Communication in general is composed of three main directions:

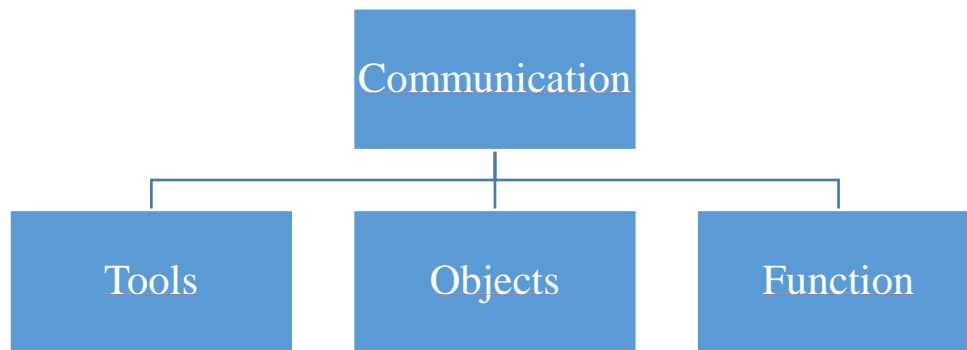


Figure 2: Three directions of communication

Source: Own elaboration (Holá, 2011)

Function of the communication is the reason why the communication started in the first place. It includes the objective or the goal of the whole connection.

Objects include the trigger and the issues related and discussed. Trigger is the information that needs to be passed next.

Tools are concrete ways in which two subjects are connected together. Tools help to reach and transfer information. These are divided into three forms – oral, written (printed) and electronic communication.

Oral communication means face-to-face. People communicating with one another are able to see and hear each other, except for calls, where they only hear each other. In this type of communication physical proximity is closer and more intimate. It is possible to share ideas and opinions, there is time to ask or reassure but also there is immediate feedback. However, oral communication lacks written documentation, so after the conversation has taken place, the two subjects can have different understandings about what was agreed. Also, there can be insufficient time to process new information when a decision needs to be agreed on straight away. The tools of oral communication include conferences, conversations, interviews, meetings, public speeches, birthday wishes, events, training courses, team-building activities, consultations, calls, and visits to the office.

Written (printed) communication is written in black and white to confirm if both sides understand each other. It can be used in collaboration with a notice-board to make it more attractive to interested people. Since the written documents might seem boring, it is very important to ensure that they are interesting and attractive. A disadvantage is that it cannot be changed after being printed and sent out. Another disadvantage is not enough feedback. The tools of written communication include magazines, publications, fliers, manuals, regulations, corporate newspapers, message boards, circulars, annual reports, posters, and notes.

Electronic communication is fast and easy. There is evidence of sending and receiving. In the same way as with printed documents, there is the inconvenience of insufficient feedback and an



inability to change the document after sending it. The tools of electronic communication include emailing, e-newsletters, social media, blogs or use of an intranet.

Internal communication includes every communication between workers, which defines important changes (Kovářiková, 2016).

Communication is there to help improve relations, to motivate, to inform or to appreciate.

2.1 Communication in the chosen company

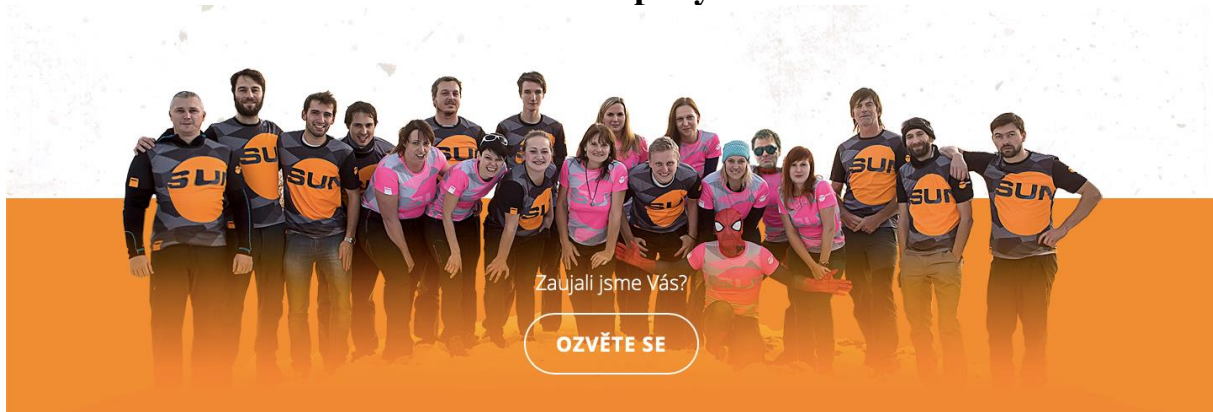


Figure 3: Company's team

Source: (Internal company sources, 2019)

When we began working with this company we decided to focus on an area of communication, mainly the internal communication between workers.

The company use face-to-face communication only during shifts and they talk to HR management only during pay day, when they come for their money (salaries are not paid directly into employees' bank accounts).

The tools that are used for internal communication is Facebook, company intranet, Google calendar, mailing, text messages and calling.

Facebook is used to ascertain people's availability for shifts via an internal group called "Brigády" (meaning "Shifts"). The HR manager has her own Facebook account on which she posts requests for people to go to work. She also posts important information and photos about interesting events happening in the company. The HR manager also uses Messenger to communicate directly with individual employees.

SDIS is the internal network of the company (intranet) and is used for filling-in the time availability of seasonal workers. Since November 2018, shifts are completed in the portal's time schedule one and a half weeks ahead. Before November 2018, the HR manager always created the schedules one month ahead. When a change needs to be made to the time schedule, the worker will be notified via an automatic e-mail from the intranet.



Friday 15th of February	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I can't	note: till 16 o'clock
Saturday 16th of February	<input type="checkbox"/> I can	<input type="checkbox"/>	note:
Sunday 17th of February	<input type="checkbox"/> I can	<input type="checkbox"/>	note:
Monday 18th of February	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I can't	note: 14-20
Tuesday 19th of February	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I can't	note: from 16
Wednesday 20th of February	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> I can't	note: from 16

Figure 4: Application for shifts on intranet

Source: Company internal sources (2019)



All the full-time employees use Google calendar. Each one of them can see the calendar of someone else, if they choose to. Google calendar is a suitable choice for companies. All the events are safely stored and backed up online. The calendar allows the creation, editing and sharing of multiple calendars and it is possible to connect it to other Google apps (e.g. Gmail, Google Drive etc.). It can be viewed on a PC but also via an app on a smart phone. The events are automatically synchronised from Gmail into the calendar.

Mailing is used usually once a month. Via e-mail the HR manager informs workers which dates they can go to the office to pick up their wages. Any other important information is usually numbered and clearly structured in the e-mail.

Text messages are either used one day before the shift to inform employees about their shift or are never used. Workers do not always get information about their shift in advance.

Calling is used when a person is needed for a shift at the last minute.

The HR manager of the company defines these problems:

- Shift assignments are unclear.
- There is poor communication.
- The company does not know how employees are feeling.



3 Questionnaire findings

The objective of the questionnaire was also to define the problems from the employees' point of view. The survey was focused on internal communication. The main topics in it are communication tools and use of them, awareness of shifts, solidarity between workers and feedback.

The survey is composed of 11 questions to identify the key communication-related problems and to find out how they can be effectively corrected. All questions of the questionnaire are listed below:

How often do you follow concrete communication channels?

	Daily ▼	At least once a week ▼	Once in 2 weeks ▼	At least once a month ▼	Never ▼
Posts in Facebook group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Incoming mails	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company's intranet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sort, what information tools do you prefer for reaching information. (first = the most, last = the least)

-  1. Facebook group
-  2. Company's intranet
-  3. Text message
-  4. Mailing
-  5. Other



Evaluate, how satisfied you are with ... (1 = the least, 10 = the most)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Timing of shift scheduling announcement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability of information for the next shift (where, when...	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informing about changes in shifts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback for my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowledge of how intranet works	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

How latest is acceptable for you to know DETAILS about the upcoming shift?

- One day in advance
- 2 days in advance
- 3 days in advance
- 4-7 days in advance



Rate, how much do you agree with listed statements.

	Absolutely agree ▼	I rather agree ▼	I can't say ▼	I rather disagree ▼	Absolutely disagree ▼
I would like to see improvement in the communication of SHIFT LEADER to employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see improvement in the communication of the MANAGEMENT to employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to see improvement in the communication of the between employees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was properly informed before my first shift	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am filling my time possibilities in intranet regularly every month	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't mind when the management calls me last minute (e.g. sickness), when they need me on shift	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I don't have to tell the shift leader to confirm my shift work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like my job is properly verbally evaluated	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am okay with knowing the schedule one week ahead	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



What do you appreciate about the communication in the company?

- Feedback of my job
- The way of how information is transmitted
- The availability of information
- Timeliness of information
- Specificity of information
- Individual attitude for each employee
- None of the above
- Other – fill in



Choose 1-5 statements, which defines the problems in the company.

- Information is not available enough
- I get information too late
- Information is not concise enough
- Information is often useless or unnecessary
- The used language is too complicated
- I get too much information
- The management hides important information
- The management doesn't know how employees are feeling.
- I can't express freely my opinions.
- My opinions are not important for the management.
- I don't get enough feedback, if I am doing my work right.
- I feel like the intern communication is without a problem.
- Other – fill in

At the end of the part that analyses the company it states: *“If you would like to recommend something else in the area of communication, please write it down here”*. This provided participants with the opportunity to expand on what they like or dislike. The last five questions focused on the personal information of the participant, i.e. their age, gender, education or role in the company. These questions were designed to improve the internal communication in different target groups of the company.



The survey posted on the company's Facebook page on 28th February 2019 and on 19th March a reminder was sent out via a mailing. The survey expired on 30th April 2019. Problems were also shared by some workers with the researchers via face-to-face communication during shifts.

3.1 Key findings

The total number of incoming respondents was 46.

The results of the questionnaire revealed that 21 respondents check posts in the Facebook group at least once a week and other 15 respondents check these posts every day. Regarding incoming e-mails, they are checked by 25 respondents every day and at least once a week by 17 respondents. Information on the company's server SDIS is checked by the vast majority at least once a week.

The employees prefer SMS and mailing as a tool for receiving information. Other preferable tools are calls or Messenger (app for sending messages through Facebook). One respondent commented: "Relatively late report on the upcoming shifts".

"Relatively late report on the upcoming shifts."

3 respondents were unsatisfied with the time of their scheduled shift announcement, whereas the others were mainly rather satisfied.

"Usually it takes long time to see the schedule and it can happen that the person knows about the shift last minute."

Most of the respondents were satisfied with availability of information. 9 respondents were 'rather unsatisfied'.

"If there is a change happening, the information is not usually shared."

"When I am contacting the shift leaders, they don't answer."

17 employees were not satisfied with the feedback for their work, 23 employees were 'rather satisfied'. In the next question workers confirmed that they rarely receive feedback, or when they do, it is always negative.



Workers are also 'rather satisfied' with the knowledge of how the internal server works. No one informed them at the beginning, but they present it as a very simple system, in which is easy to orientate.

"The time scheduled in the intranet very often doesn't match the reality and on Thursday I receive SMS saying, that I need to come 2 hours before the time in the intranet."

19 respondents indicated that to know the details for their upcoming shift 2 days ahead is acceptable, for 3 respondents acceptable notice is 3 days ahead and 4-7 days ahead is acceptable for 9 respondents.

23 workers would like to see an improvement in the communication of the **shift leader**. 25 workers would like to see an improvement in communication from the **management**. 21 workers would like to see an improvement in communication between workers.

"Communication at the workplace between workers or with the shift leader is alright. The management is not really communicating with us."

20 workers claim that before their first shift they were informed enough, 23 claim the opposite. 38 respondents write their time possibilities into the system regularly every month.

"I am filling in my time possibilities in time but hardly ever it is worth it and I have just a little shifts."

Most of employees do not mind if the management calls them last minute if they are needed on a shift.

"When the management calls me last minute and I take the shift instead of someone else, I would expect the management's same behaviour even when I am sick. Not that I would have to go to work with fever, because -simply no one else could go-."



"I don't mind if they call me in my free time to take a shift, but of course I am not going to cancel my personal plans every time."

23 workers feel that their work is not properly verbally evaluated, 15 workers are satisfied with the verbal evaluation.

"I think, that our company doesn't motivate to work enough. In 9 of 10 cases we deal with what someone has done wrong, but when there is something right, there is no feedback."

"The verbal evaluation is never happening, because at 4 in the morning no one is in the mood. Not even for a praise for a good work. We all know that we work they way we should. I would think more about the financial evaluation."

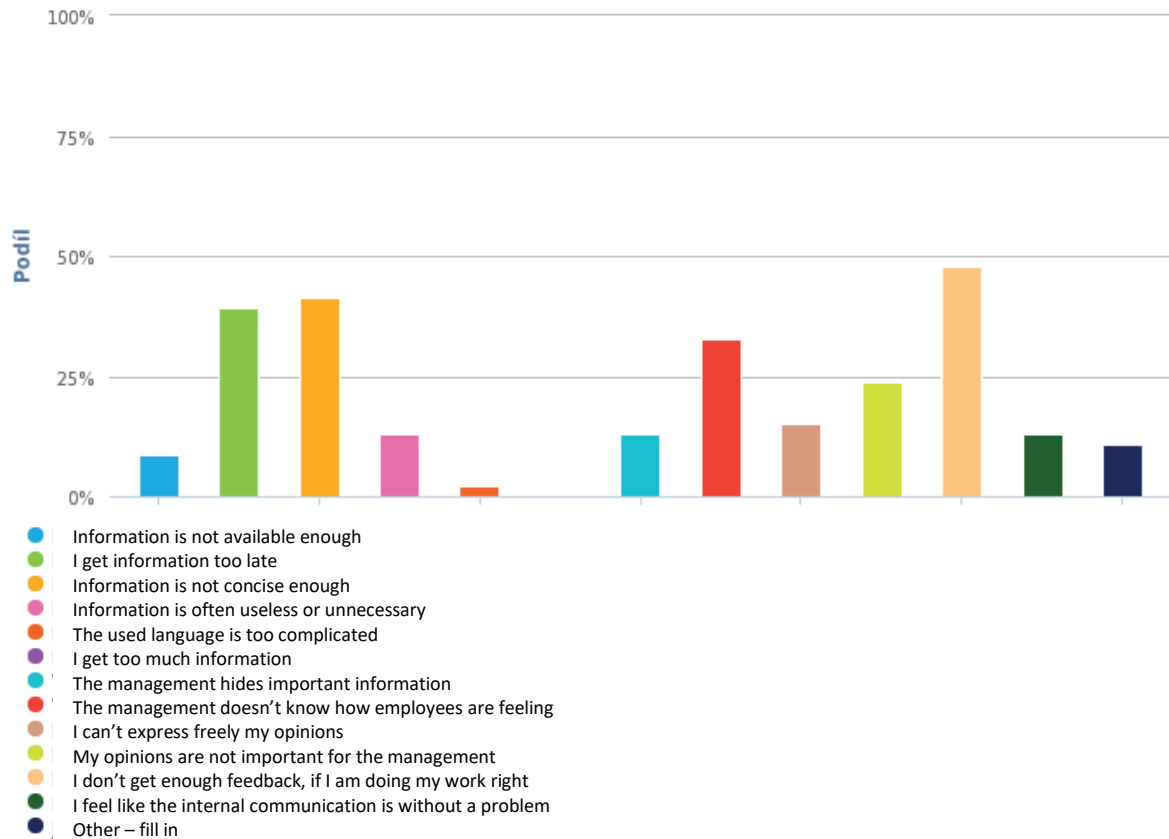
The vast majority – 39 respondents – agree with scheduling for a week ahead.

"The schedule should be known at least 2 weeks ahead."

"I don't like the schedules for a week ahead, because I can't plan anything according to it. Ideal would be a month ahead, it is better for planning."

45.7% like the communication methods used, 37% appreciate the availability of information, 34.8% like the individual attitude toward every worker and 26.1% positively evaluated the timeliness of information.

Choose 1-5 statements, which according to you define the problems in the internal communication.



Employees defined feedback as the main problem - it was brought up by 47.8%. Other frequent answers were *'Information is not concise enough'* and *'I get the information too late'*. Pictured below are notes against the category *'Other'*.

"I get the info too late. E.g. tutorial how to act when bistro control has appeared after the problem."

"Financial evaluation is the same for both hard-workers or slackers. That is why capable people are running away."

The last question stated: *"If you would like to recommend anything else in the area of communication, please write it down here."* The responses are pictured below.



"I would like to receive the money on bank account."

"I like the intern system."

"In informational e-mails about time changes of the schedule, I would appreciate to see what is the change."

"During the winter is the info usually sufficient. During the season there is usually too few information and we get it very late."

"Some shift leaders and also employees could be more accommodating."

Key problems that the survey revealed are:

- Late information and details for upcoming shift;
- not enough information;
- not enough information when new to the company;
- not enough feedback;
- not enough communication of the management with the employees.

4 Solutions for improving the communication

Possible solutions for improving the situation in the company are listed below. These solutions were chosen based on an evaluation of the questionnaire and its key findings. The following lines will describe and justify each solution individually. The process and method of implementation into the company will also be defined.

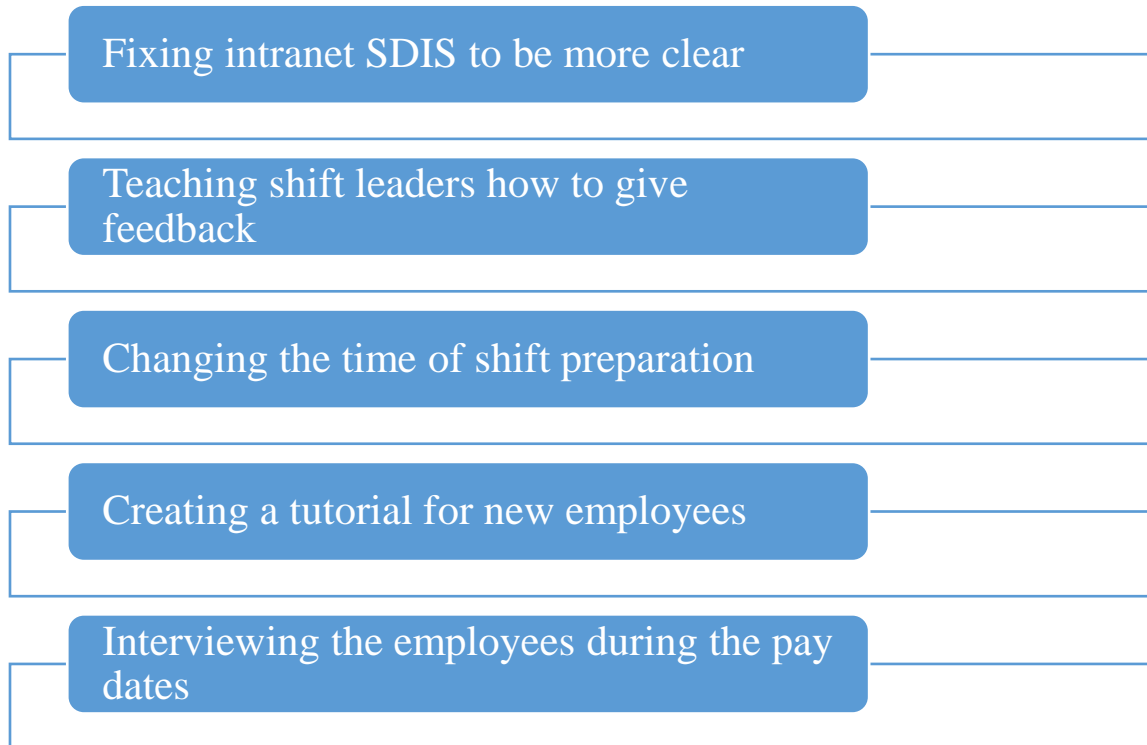


Figure 5: Suggested solutions for communication improvement in chosen company

Source: Own elaboration



- **Fixing intranet SDIS to be more clear**

Intranet SDIS should not be sending automatic e-mails once a change has been made because otherwise it leads to over-mailing workers (when the HR manager changes her mind and makes the shifts differently immediately).

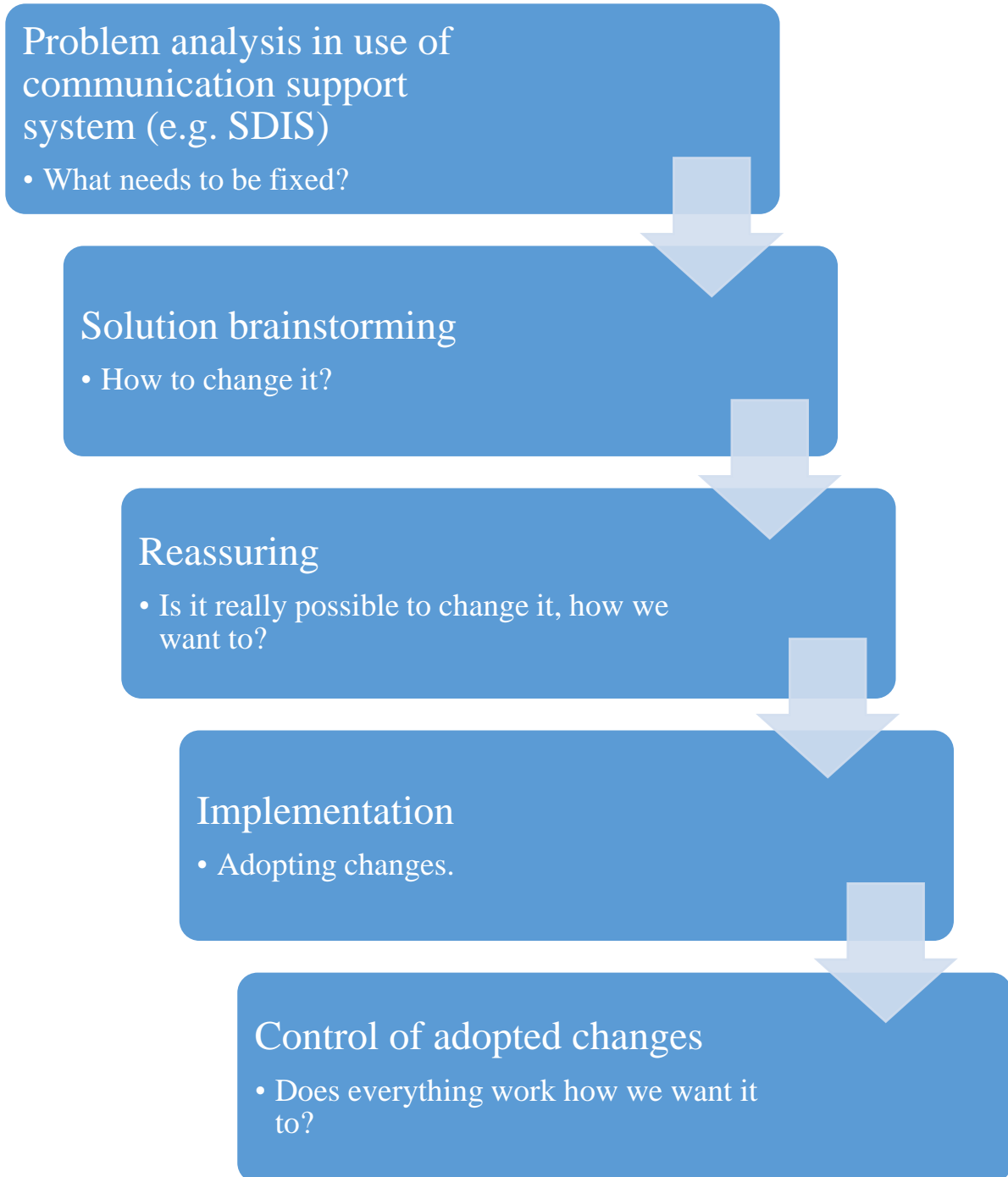


Figure 6: Specific steps of the process fixing the internal system

Source: Own elaboration



Firstly, it is necessary to analyse the whole problem that the system reports. It is important to define what needs to be fixed and why it is a problem. Next, solutions need to be found, which involves thinking about different ways to solve the concrete flawed areas.

The process includes contacting the developer of the original intranet in the third step to communicate what can be changed to make the whole system better structured and for easier use. So that the company can be sure that what it wants to change, really can change.

The following step is implementation, so directly adopting all concrete changes into the intranet SDIS.

Once the changes are adopted, it is very important to control them every once in a while. The firm needs to know if everything works just the way they imagined, and the changes have not caused other problems.

- **Teaching shift leaders how to give feedback**

Every shift leader should be taught the right way to give feedback. If it is related to negative feedback, it needs to be conducted on a one-to-one basis only and the worker must be given time to correct his/her behaviour. Everything should be done calmly and objectively. The feedback needs to be reasonable, avoiding words like “always” or “never”.

Positive feedback is very important too, it motivates the workers to work harder and better and it improves the relationship between worker and shift leader.

Both negative and positive feedback builds trust between people, and shift leaders should think about it when they lead their shift.

A good way to talk about this issue would be via a course for all the shift leaders in the company, so everyone can also contribute. It can be done in the friendly area of the restaurant Pod Rampou, because it is commonly known by all workers. There can be also a psychologist included to talk about the feedback and how it influences the human brain and behaviour.

- **Changing the time of shift preparation**

The shifts were originally prepared a whole month ahead, but since November 2018 this has changed. The HR manager now prepares the shifts every Friday for the week after the following one. The survey showed that workers are not satisfied with this decision. The preparation should be simply be changed back to a month ahead.

- **Creating an adaptation guide for new employees**

New employees are not properly informed before their first shift. When signing an agreement and inputting an employee’s e-mail address into the SDIS intranet, it will automatically send a tutorial, which would help the new employees with their induction into the company.

The tutorial will show which shift includes what, what the worker should be prepared for, what clothes to bring, if there are any “unwritten rules” they should be aware of. The tutorial could



also include a map of all the important establishments, key staff names and a brief description of the firm.

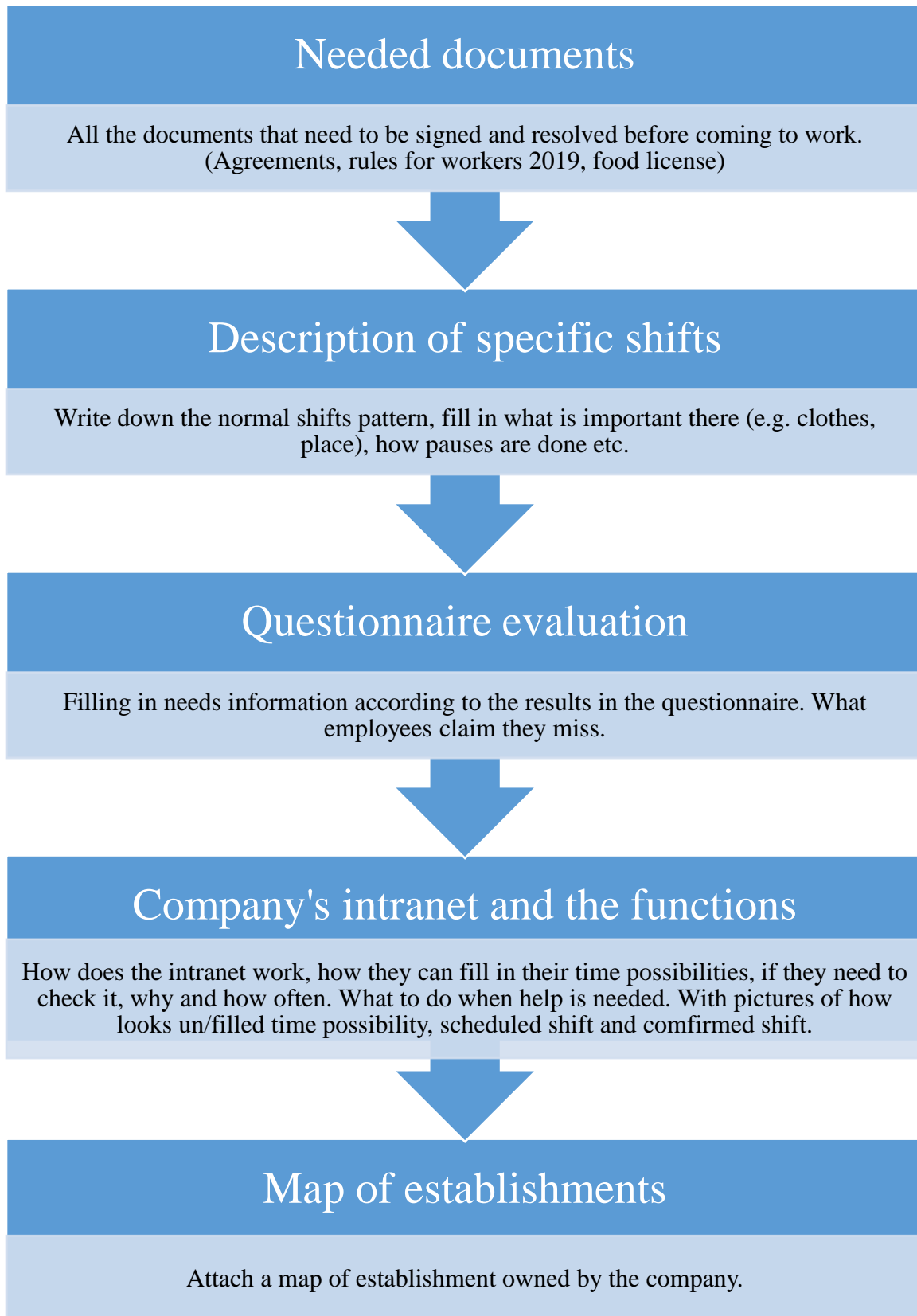


Figure 7: Specific steps for the process of creating an adaptation guide for new employees

Source: Own elaboration



- **Interviewing the employees during the pay dates**

The chosen company does not send the money directly to the bank account of the employee, the employee needs to come personally to the office for the money. There are always two or three specific dates – “pay dates” – for coming to the office, when the money is ready. This time is a very good opportunity to talk directly face-to-face with every employee and ask about their opinion and feelings. The HR manager gives the money to the employee and sees all the shifts they have attended, so she can ask them how they felt about the whole month, maybe ask about specific shifts, or whether they are satisfied with the feedback and the communication, what they miss and just have a conversation to understand the employees more.

Conclusion

The case study showed that effective internal communication is important for the satisfaction of employees in the work area and for the right setting of this work area. For the case study a questionnaire was conducted with the objective of finding out how workers perceive the company’s internal communication. Based on the results of this questionnaire, specific tools for how to deal with undesirable situations in the area of internal communication were suggested.



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Attachment

Illustration of mail company communication

Hello,

1) who wants to work in November, **fill in SDIS**. The schedule is done every week – that means: I will be doing the first November week-end schedule already this Friday.

2) **food license** – each one of you needs to have it – the work during summer is in gastro for 95 %. Who doesn't have it, please fix it and bring it to me when you come for the money.

3) agreements – new ones, who don't have the agreement signed, come to me during below listed pay dates and we'll write it.

4) **corporate clothing** – who hasn't returned the corporate clothing, so please when you come for the money, so we have everything in

5) **pay dates** for the month September are following:

FRIDAY 19.10. Time: 13:00 - 16:00

THURSDAY 25.10. Time: 13:00 - 16:00

FRIDAY 26.10. Time: 9:00 - 11:00 and 13:00 - 16:00

6) **invitation** for FESTIVAL OF OUTDOOR FILMS – for all workers is the entrance free

Collectively sent e-mail to workers on 17th of November 2018

Source: Internal company sources