

GR-TECHNOLOGIES FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN BUSINESS AREAS

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Abstract: In this paper, we consider the concept and practices of GR technologies, as well as the effectiveness of their use in resolving conflicts in the business sphere. For the complex study, the focus group method was applied, which helped to identify the spectrum of opinions on the problem under study. The effectiveness of focus groups is determined by the fact that most people feel comfortable if they are involved in the discussion as part of the group. In four cities of the Republic of Tatarstan, a project was implemented, the main objectives of which were: estimation of the quality of subjects / actors and the development of public institutions / mechanisms; public policy effectiveness estimation, dialogue with power, intersectoral social partnership in addressing socially significant problems; formation of appropriate recommendations for management. The project was implemented through a survey with the calculation of the corresponding consolidation index. At the public level, the public policy estimation index consisted of two elements: an index of the development of actors and actors and an index of the state of institutions and mechanisms. The consolidation criterion is determined by the numerical index: if the difference on the indicators between the surveyed groups is less than 0.1 - the opinions are consolidated, if more than 0.1 they are not consolidated, more than 0.2 - unconsolidated gap. The project involved three groups of respondents: government (representative bodies: municipal employees and deputies); business (owners and employees: small and medium business); non-profit-making organizations (managers and employees of the organizations (without volunteers)). Based on the results of this survey, focus groups interviews were held in all four cities with the participation of representatives of business, government and non-profit-making organizations. Representatives of the three groups, as direct participants in the interaction, interpreted the poll results from their point of view.

Keywords: GR technologies, focus group, business, power, non-profit-making organizations, consolidation

1 Introduction

The presence of conflicts in the business segment today is beyond doubt. The competitive nature of the relationship invariably entails a confrontation of business interests. The practice of studying and overcoming conflicts is sufficient in the economic, sociological, and political sciences. Public policy has a strong impact on business, so it is in the interest of business to stay informed and try to influence the adoption of government decisions and public policy (Villalobos Antúnez & Bozo, 2010). But, also as changes in power, they influence on interested groups that act as a weathervane to determine the location of power in society (Karpanina et al, 2018). However, it is obvious that the communication component should act as a tool for "treating" such conflicts, as successful communication in modern society underlies its conflict-free existence. From this point of view, the relevance of new directions in the development of communicative practices in the interaction of the state and GR civil structures from the perspective of their conflictology science. For example, in Europe the use of such GR technologies as strategic forums, advisory committees, expert groups, etc. led to the emergence of a new European lobbying system characterized by direct lobbying, transparency and trust (Vannoi, 2011).

The relevance of the topic is also conditioned by a number of circumstances: firstly, the appearance in the post-Soviet period of business structures, which, as they develop, increasingly need cooperation with state authorities, with the goal of harmonizing and institutionalizing their interaction. Secondly, the global financial and economic crisis made significant adjustments to the country's development prospects, affecting all areas of the Russian economy. In these conditions, the role of the state in providing them with the necessary financial and other types of assistance was required. Thirdly, in connection with the emergence of new forms of communication between the business community and government in Russia which are known in the world practice as Government Relations (GR). Fourth, the growing demand for GR in Russia is precisely the business community, which is the most vulnerable by nature to all types of risk. Fifth, the need for a more in-depth study of the essence and content of GR-activity, which is a combination of

technologies that allow achieving a pre-set goal, and compare them with such already known technologies in Russia as lobbying, public relations, etc (Kotiev, 2010).

The purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of GR technologies in resolving conflicts in the business sphere.

To achieve the stated goal, it will be necessary to solve the following tasks: to analyze GR concepts and practices as technologies in the world social and political thought and from the point of view of conflictology; to study the technologies and practices of individual sciences in the study of GR problems; to highlight the complex conflictological methodology for studying the applicability of GR technologies in the business sphere; conduct a case analysis of the situation of the crisis in the banking sector; and then identify GR technologies in resolving bank conflicts in the Republic of Tatarstan.

The theoretical basis of the study was the work of domestic and foreign economists, sociologists, political scientists and conflictologists devoted to the problems of interaction between the state and the business sphere, GR technologies and their implementation in various countries.

The methodological basis of the research is presented by an interdisciplinary, integrated approach that unites the provisions of dialectical, logical-historical and structural-functional analysis, allowing power and business to examine in the process of their interaction. In the study of GR, as technologies for resolving conflicts in the business sphere, the authors are based on the management and communication approaches to studying the links between business and public authorities.

The work is not only theoretical but also applied. The study was conducted using content analysis, analysis of secondary data and focus groups.

For the first time on the basis of the conducted research, the position on the role and effectiveness of GR as technologies for resolving conflicts in the business sphere as a whole was put forward and justified. For the first time, the interaction between business and government is studied within the framework of research in the Republic of Tatarstan.

2 Methodology

In the work, three main methods were used: content analysis, analysis of secondary data and focus groups. Thanks to the first two methods, it was possible to identify the theoretical and methodological features of GR technologies. Analysis of various interpretations of the term "GR" allowed its content to determine: the formation of mutual trust between business and state authorities for obtaining both a mutually beneficial and socially useful result.

The third method made it possible to determine the effectiveness of using GR technologies in the practice of resolving conflicts in the business sphere, what can contribute to setting up effective communications between the authorities and business community and increasing the level of trust to each other.

3 Results

In the course of the study, it was revealed that all business estimations were nested in non-profit-making organization estimations, and non-profit-making organization estimations were nested in government estimations. It happens because the business is more critical, realistic and estranged. Today, the task is to raise the level of confidence among entrepreneurs. Accordingly, this can be done with the help of technologies such as GR; they help to set up effective communications between the authorities and business and increase the level of trust. Estimations for non-profit-making organization are closer to the authorities' estimations, perhaps because they depend more on it than on business. As in the Russian Federation in general, and in

particular in the region, non-profit-making organizations have not yet taken root. The initiative in terms of their budgeting is shown to a greater extent by the state, since there is an item of expenditure allocated to non-profit-making organizations in the budget. We can conclude that such a GR-technology as a focus group worked perfectly, it allowed into an open dialogue with representatives of business, authorities and non-profit-making organizations to enter and to find solutions to certain problems.

It is interesting that the participants in focus groups were surprised at the bulk of survey results: their opinions differed from the opinion of the respondents. The majority expressed doubts about the quality of the quantitative study. This doubt can be considered in two ways: 1) a group of researchers did not work qualitatively; 2) different target groups were interviewed. Most likely, this is due to the fact that the community is differentiated, that is, participants in the focus group can act both in the interests of the authorities, and purely in their personal interests.

4 Summary

To compare the results, to find the deviations of results of this study from previous works is not possible, since such a study was conducted in the Republic of Tatarstan for the first time. Based on it, the statement on the role and effectiveness of GR as technologies for resolving conflicts in the business sphere as a whole was put forward and justified.

Practical significance consists in applicability of the developed analysis mechanisms to practice in any region of the Russian Federation, and in transformation of the results of this work into the component part of the master's course "Corporate Conflict Management".

5 Conclusion

Modernization of business structures, transformation of government bodies, and development of public representative institutions - all these factors determine the improvement of communication mechanisms between these social groups. In the modern world, new technologies, for example, GR, lobbying, etc., come to replace the ways of the last century which were used for promoting somebody's interests. They differ significantly from the methods used in the 90s of the 20th century, for which criminal and corrupt connections between power and business were typical. The distinctive features of modern methods are publicity in the conduct of a dialogue between government and business, the wide involvement of business and public non-profit-making organizations in the formulation of state policy in various spheres, the reduction of the role of direct contacts (the so-called "corridor lobbying"), the use of indirect technologies of influence (working with public opinion, lobbying, grass-roots, communication with the media community), etc. These transformations have served as the reason for the creation and institutionalization of a new structure responsible for the interaction between business and state - Government Relations (GR) (Kinyakin & Matveenkov, 2009).

The main stages and technologies of GR-activity were determined. The history of creation, its development and gradual expansion, together with coverage in the media, is one of the necessary aspects of GR, due to which it is possible to achieve greater effect than with "encounters in the corridor" that have been committed to the moment (Achkasova, 2015).

Analysis of various interpretations of the term "GR" allowed its content to determine: the formation of mutual trust between business community and government authorities to obtain both a mutually beneficial and socially useful result (Chernoskutova, 2016). It was revealed that the concepts of lobbying and GR are similar, but not identical. B. Woolp believes that "the significant difference between internal GR specialists and contracted professionals (lobbyists) is that employees of a corporation receive salaries and represent only one organization which is their employer. A corporate GR specialist often climbs the

corporate ladder: the marketing department, the sales department, the head office, and contract lobbyists push their way within the authorities" (Wolpe & Levine, 1996)

Subjects (corporations, non-profit-making organizations, business associations, professional agencies, etc.), stages (monitoring, strategy and tactics, control of implementation), and GR-activity technologies (impact on decision-makers through expert community, media-relations, technology implementation of corporate social responsibility programs, support for political activities, political fundraising, etc.) have been determined also (Achkasova, 2015).

Interested groups rely on a wide range of tactics to influence public policy. They can unite with other like-minded people, use institutional centers at several levels of management, various types of arguments and information. GR-activities include many tactics or actions that serve together to specific political purposes (Binderkrantz, 2005).

One can confidently say that the consistent alignment of effective communication with state authorities differs from backstage lobbying primarily in its openness. The creation of history, its development and gradual expansion, together with coverage in the media, is one of the necessary aspects of GR, thanks to which it is possible to achieve greater effect than with "encounters in the corridor" that have been committed to the moment.

Since the emergence of business community as an independent actor in the political field of the country, the issue of its interaction with the authorities is most often considered in conflict discourse. Throughout all modern Russian history, during the period of transit from one political-economic system to another, the relations between power and business have always been characterized by a significant level of tension and a repeated shift of the balance of power in one direction or the other (Ivanovich, 2013). Today, like the entire society, Russian entrepreneurship faces a choice between comprehensive modernization through market mechanisms and adaptation to the realities of the emerging authoritarian-bureaucratic system. Therefore, the task of studying the conflicts of interests between business community and power as a process that plays an essential role in the socio-political reality of modern Russia is now being actualized. Considering the relationship between business community and government as a conflict of interests is also necessary because in the process of interaction the parties demonstrate differences in value orientations and attitudes, goals and methods for achieving them, express political preferences and state claims of an imperious nature. It is precisely the analysis of the relationship between the power and business community structures as a conflict of interests taking place within the framework of existing institutions that allows us to assess the possibility of moving to civilized conflict with the building of interaction in the consultation mode, using mediation and arbitration, and GR technologies. It was revealed that GR technologies are universal methods, as they can be used in conflict prevention, regulation, and resolution. At each stage, certain GR technologies are applied, and all of them, with the exception of unethical ones, contribute to the normalization of relations and the adjustment of effective communications.

Proceeding from the GR multidimensionality, its interrelation with various branches of science is obvious, as well as the term 'representation of interests' which also has no restriction on specific areas. At the same time, based on the branch of science, from the perspective of which GR is studied, the vision of not only its separate aspects, but also the idea of the phenomenon as a whole depends.

Direct connection of GR with such branches as: politics, economics, management, communication, media, law and others, allows us to explore GR from alternative positions. In contrast to the developed countries (USA, Canada, EU), which has formed a complete system of interaction between government and business, relationship between business and

government in Russia is at an early stage of formation. Effective formation is hampered by many factors and, above all, by the fact that in Russia this sphere of activity is not legally consolidated. Negative attitude of Russian society towards lobbying (with its identification by analogy with such methods as blackmail, pressure and corruption) negatively affects the attitude to GR- activity. Therefore, not only the state authorities need to recognize the inevitability of lobbying and GR technologies in the country, but society, too.

It is necessary to collect information not by mass survey, but by focus groups for a comprehensive study of the applicability of GR technologies in the business sphere. Focus groups contribute to the identification of a range of opinions on the problem under study. The focus group method as a form of group interview allows interests, values, conscious and unconscious attitudes of various groups to reveal. A focus group can be viewed not only as a method of research and information gathering, but also as GR technology, thanks to which representatives of government structures and business sphere can meet one another at one site, where they can enter into a dialogue, identify common problems and develop methods from permission.

The project was implemented in four cities of the Republic of Tatarstan: Naberezhnye Chelny, Nizhnekamsk, Almetyevsk, and Kazan, by conducting a survey, with the calculation of the corresponding consolidation index. Based on the results of the survey, focus groups were held in the same cities with the participation of representatives of business, government and non-profit-making organizations. Representatives of the three groups, as being direct participants in the interaction, interpreted the poll results from their point of view. It is interesting that the bulk of survey results surprised participants in focus groups: their opinions differed from the opinion of the respondents. Common to all cities was that all business estimations are nested in non-profit-making organization estimations, and non-profit-making organization estimates are nested in government estimations. It happens because the business is more critical, realistic and estranged. Today, the task is to raise the level of confidence among entrepreneurs. Accordingly, this can be done with the help of technologies such as GR, they help to set up effective communications between the authorities and business and increase the level of trust. Non-profit-making organization estimates are closer to the authorities' estimates, perhaps because they depend more on it than on business. As in the Russian Federation in general, and in particular in the region, non-profit-making organizations have not yet taken root. The initiative in terms of their budgeting is shown to a greater extent by the state, since there is an item of expenditures allocated to non-profit-making organizations in the state or regional budgets. We can conclude that such a GR-technology as a focus group worked perfectly, it allowed into an open dialogue to enter with representatives of business, authorities and non-profit-making organizations and find solutions to certain problems.

Acknowledgments

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

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