

REVIEW

Assertive communication and human talent management to strengthen the digital organizational climate

Comunicación asertiva y gestión del talento humano para fortalecer el clima organizacional digital

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the digital transformation of organizations has redefined internal communication and leadership practices, requiring a reassessment of how assertive communication influences organizational climate. This study analyzes the relationship between assertive communication and organizational climate within digitally mediated work environments, emphasizing the strategic role of human talent management in this context.

Method: a critical literature review was conducted, focusing on empirical and theoretical contributions published between 2020 and 2024. The analysis prioritized 22 studies addressing communication practices, organizational climate, and leadership in organizations undergoing digital transformation.

Results: findings indicate that assertive communication positively influences organizational climate by promoting clarity, mutual respect, psychological safety, and effective collaboration—especially in remote and hybrid environments. Assertiveness, when exercised through inclusive and transparent leadership, helps reduce tensions, enhance role clarity, and strengthen team cohesion, even in geographically dispersed or culturally diverse contexts.

Conclusions: assertive communication emerges as a key relational competence that supports organizational adaptation to digital change. However, its full potential is often limited by hierarchical cultures and insufficient communication training. Integrating assertive communication into human talent development strategies can improve workplace well-being, increase employee satisfaction, and sustain collaborative climates under conditions of technological disruption.

Keywords: Assertive Communication; Organizational Climate; Human Talent Management; Digital Transformation; Leadership; Workplace Well-Being.

RESUMEN

Introducción: la transformación digital de las organizaciones ha redefinido las prácticas de comunicación interna y liderazgo, lo que exige una reevaluación de cómo la comunicación asertiva influye en el clima organizacional. Este estudio analiza la relación entre la comunicación asertiva y el clima organizacional en entornos laborales digitalizados, destacando el papel estratégico de la gestión del talento humano en este contexto.

Método: se realizó una revisión crítica de la literatura, centrándose en las contribuciones empíricas y teóricas publicadas entre 2020 y 2024. El análisis priorizó 22 estudios que abordan las prácticas de comunicación, el clima organizacional y el liderazgo en organizaciones en proceso de transformación digital.

Resultados: los hallazgos indican que la comunicación asertiva influye positivamente en el clima organizacional

al promover la claridad, el respeto mutuo, la seguridad psicológica y la colaboración efectiva, especialmente en entornos remotos e híbridos. La asertividad, ejercida mediante un liderazgo inclusivo y transparente, ayuda a reducir tensiones, mejorar la claridad de roles y fortalecer la cohesión del equipo, incluso en contextos geográficamente dispersos o culturalmente diversos.

Conclusiones: la comunicación asertiva surge como una competencia relacional clave que facilita la adaptación organizacional al cambio digital. Sin embargo, su potencial se ve limitado a menudo por culturas jerárquicas y una formación comunicativa insuficiente. Integrar la comunicación asertiva en las estrategias de desarrollo del talento humano puede mejorar el bienestar laboral, aumentar la satisfacción de los empleados y mantener un clima de colaboración en un contexto de disrupción tecnológica.

Palabras clave: Comunicación Asertiva; Clima Organizacional; Gestión del Talento Humano; Transformación Digital; Liderazgo; Bienestar Laboral.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has profoundly altered how organizations operate, structure, and interact. This phenomenon has forced a critical review of classic human talent management models and established internal communication schemes.⁽¹⁾ In a scenario marked by automated processes, hybrid workspaces, and increasingly distributed decision-making, communication is no longer a simple operational tool; instead, it has become a strategic element that directly influences the organizational climate.^(2,3,4)

In this context, assertive communication takes on relevance, not only as a desirable skill, but as an absolute necessity. It is understood as the ability to convey ideas, emotions, and guidelines with clarity, respect, and empathy, making it an indispensable skill for leaders and teams. Why? Because it allows for more effective dealing with the emotional tensions that emerge with digitalization. At the same time, it strengthens cohesion, collective commitment, and a sense of belonging, which are key aspects in any organization that aspires to sustain itself in changing times.^(5,6,7) However, there is a problem: although its importance is widely recognized, the actual practice of this form of communication often falls short, is poorly applied, or is ignored, especially in environments where technology advances faster than people.^(8,9)

For its part, the organizational climate—understood as the collective perception that employees have of their work environment—has also been affected by digitalization. And not in a minor way. Issues such as information overload, constant teleworking, daily management algorithms, and interactions' coldness are generating new forms of burnout. These psychosocial risks deteriorate the work experience and, in turn, impact mental health, motivation, and team results.^(10,11,12) In response, human talent management must update its tools by integrating communication approaches capable of rebuilding trust, fostering collaboration, and adapting to increasingly uncertain realities.

However, although there are many studies on how digital transformation improves efficiency or increases competitiveness, some aspects still do not receive sufficient attention. One of them is the impact of this process on the ways of communicating within organizations and, as a consequence, on the organizational climate. This gap is even more evident in Latin American contexts, where technological and cultural gaps are not insignificant.^(13,14,15) Furthermore, a broader view is needed, one that goes beyond the technical and considers the emotional, the human, and the relational aspects. Because those aspects are also changing.

This article, then, seeks to contribute in this regard. Its purpose is to analyze how assertive communication and organizational climate are related in the current context of digital transformation. Special emphasis is placed on human talent management's role as a connecting element between both aspects. The methodological strategy is based on a critical review of contemporary literature and theoretical frameworks. The aim is to offer a vision that helps build organizations that are more efficient, humane, adaptable, and sustainable. The text comprises five sections: theoretical review, methodology, results, discussion, and conclusions. Each section responds to key questions arising from the gap detected in the literature.

METHOD

Approach and type of study

This article was developed using an integrative literature review methodology with a qualitative approach,⁽¹⁶⁾ aimed at critically analyzing scientific output on the relationship between assertive communication, organizational climate, and digital transformation in the field of human talent management.^(17,18) The integrative review allows not only for the collection and synthesis of empirical and theoretical information, but also for the identification of conceptual gaps and the proposal of lines for future development.⁽¹⁹⁾

Search strategy

A systematic search of articles published between 2020 and 2024 was conducted in recognized academic

databases, including:

- Scopus
- Web of Science (WoS)
- EBSCOhost
- SciELO
- Redalyc
- Google Scholar (as exploratory support)

The keywords used (in English and Spanish) were combined using Boolean operators:

- “assertive communication” OR “comunicación asertiva”
- “organizational climate” OR “clima organizacional”
- “digital transformation” OR “digital transformation”
- “human talent management” OR “gestión del talento humano”
- “employee experience” AND “workplace communication”

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed academic articles.
- Studies published between 2020 and 2024.
- Publications in English and Spanish.
- Studies focusing on organizational contexts (business, educational, or institutional).
- Research focused on at least two of the three variables: assertive communication, organizational climate, digital transformation.

Exclusion criteria:

- Publications prior to 2015.
- Documents without access to the full text.
- Opinions, editorials, or essays not based on academic evidence.
- Studies focused exclusively on clinical, educational, or interpersonal communication outside the organizational context.

Selection procedure

The search yielded a total of 156 articles, of which, after applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 22 documents relevant to the analysis were selected. The screening process was carried out in three phases:

1. Review of title and abstract
2. Evaluation of the full text
3. Validation of thematic and methodological relevance

An analysis matrix was used to classify the studies according to type of research (theoretical or empirical), sector (business, education, health, etc.), methodological approach, and variables addressed.

Analysis of the information

The selected studies were analyzed using a hermeneutic-comparative approach, which allowed us to identify patterns, tensions, thematic gaps, and emerging trends. The findings were grouped into emerging analytical categories, such as:

- Assertive communication as an organizational competency
- Psychosocial factors in digital environments
- Strategic role of human talent in digital transformation
- Impact of communicational leadership on the work environment

Ethical considerations

This study did not involve human subjects or primary data collection, and therefore did not require approval from an ethics committee. However, the principles of intellectual property and good scientific practice were respected in the use of secondary sources.

RESULTS

Conceptualization and application of assertive communication in organizations undergoing digital transformation

Digital transformation has changed the tools used to communicate within organizations and the forms of interaction, leadership dynamics, and culture in general. It changed everything. In this new scenario, assertive

communication has taken center stage, establishing itself as a key skill for facilitating change, maintaining team cohesion, and adapting more quickly to work environments that are no longer what they used to be. Unlike older views, which reduced it to a matter of personal style or temperament, current research recognizes it as a contextual social skill, influenced by technology, culture, and organization.^(20,21)

In general terms, assertive communication involves expressing what you think, feel, or need in the workplace clearly, respectfully, and frankly. Without imposing or letting yourself be walked over. It is about finding a middle ground between defending yourself and considering the other person.^(22,23) This form of communication draws on both interpersonal and organizational elements and has concrete effects: it reduces ambiguity, strengthens trust, and helps resolve conflicts. It also improves decision-making in complex and constantly changing environments, such as those imposed by digitalization.⁽²⁴⁾

However, when we talk about digital transformation, it is not just a matter of incorporating technology, but of strategically integrating it at all levels of the organization. This brings with it a series of communication challenges that are not insignificant: from asynchronous work and hybrid teams to the use of collaborative tools or the adoption of more horizontal structures.⁽²⁰⁾ In such environments, assertiveness is no longer expressed only face-to-face, but also through digital platforms: emails, video calls, and internal messaging. What changes is the mode, but not the need to be clear, respect deadlines, and provide helpful feedback.⁽²¹⁾

From a leadership perspective, several studies have shown that assertive communication is linked to transformational and digital styles. What does this mean? Leaders who adopt this type of communication tend to foster safe spaces where dialogue flows honestly, openness to new ideas, and transparent feedback are valued.^(23,25) In this sense, being assertive is a skill for better coexistence and a strategy for leading in the midst of change. It allows you to express doubts, negotiate new goals, and clarify roles when everything is in flux.⁽²¹⁾

Organizational culture also has much to do with how assertive communication is interpreted and practiced. In more digital environments, where experimentation, constant information exchange, and shared decision-making are encouraged, assertiveness is often seen as positive, even necessary. It promotes innovation, drives learning, and helps the organization adapt quickly.⁽²⁰⁾ However, this is not the case everywhere. In more hierarchical or traditional cultures, being assertive is sometimes misinterpreted as confrontational. This creates obstacles, distorts its value, and can even lead to its rejection without understanding what it contributes.⁽²⁴⁾

Concerning its practical application, there is evidence in sectors such as education, digital services, and electronic libraries, where assertive communication has contributed to improving service quality, optimizing teamwork, and facilitating the adoption of new tools.⁽²⁴⁾ Furthermore, from a human talent management perspective, there is an increasing emphasis on the need to develop training programs that help strengthen these skills. It is not just a matter of knowing how to speak or write well, but of learning to listen in asynchronous environments, resolve conflicts in virtual spaces, and assign tasks accurately through digital media.⁽²³⁾

Impact of assertive communication on the organizational climate in environments mediated by digital technologies

Several studies have shown that assertive communication is central to organizational climate shaping. This role is particularly evident in contexts where digitization has structurally changed traditional ways of relating, leading, and collaborating. In organizations already immersed in digital transformation processes, and where technologies set the pace of daily work—remote, hybrid, or distributed—the ability to communicate clearly and respectfully becomes essential. When used well, it is a tool that helps reduce tensions, build trust, and maintain a positive perception of the work environment.^(26,27,28)

Empirical data indicate that the quality of the organizational climate depends, to a large extent, on how leaders, middle management teams, and formal communication structures communicate. This is not a marginal issue. For example, Boyd et al.⁽²⁶⁾ draw attention to leadership micro-communities: spaces where daily interactions between leaders and collaborators create specific organizational climates. When these interactions occur consistently, with clarity and respect, the result is often a more cohesive environment, with a greater sense of belonging and more substantial alignment with institutional goals.

For their part, Obeng et al.⁽²⁷⁾ show how assertiveness in communication—in terms of clarity and timely feedback—acts as a kind of bridge between leadership and performance. This occurs through dynamics such as coaching or the relationship quality between the leader and collaborator. They find that when leaders express expectations firmly but respectfully, understanding of the role increases, and so does motivation and harmony, even in complex or changing environments.

From a more structural perspective, Roberge et al.⁽²⁸⁾ examine communication practices focused on inclusion and open participation, noting that these promote more equitable and collaborative climates. In particular, they highlight that aspects such as openness to dialogue, fair access to information, and valuing diversity align with assertive communication principles. This type of climate, when supported by collaborative technologies, helps maintain team commitment, even when the team is made up of people with very different profiles and who are geographically dispersed.

Concerning digitized work environments, the study by Suortti et al.⁽²⁹⁾ offers concrete evidence on how assertiveness helps manage everyday tensions in remote work. These tensions can be relational, task-related, or even operational. The authors conclude that structure, clarity, and respect—when present in digital communication—can prevent misunderstandings, reduce ambiguities, and keep collaboration alive, despite distance or technological means.

In turn, Balabanova et al.⁽³⁰⁾ address a recurring problem in hybrid contexts: information overload and poor information distribution. What they find is that when internal communication is clear, direct, and well-structured—that is, when it is assertive—levels of well-being and performance tend to improve. Organizations that apply assertive communication strategies in digital environments not only optimize processes but also manage to create more positive work experiences.

There are also contributions in sectors with high territorial dispersion, such as oil, manufacturing, and technology. In these environments, where digital transformation has changed traditional interaction channels, assertive communication between hierarchical levels is essential to reduce operational or cultural friction.^(31,32) It is not just a matter of improving information flows, but also of preserving a sense of organizational presence, ensuring clarity in tasks, and maintaining the ability to respond to incidents or unforeseen events.⁽³³⁾

Finally, in a recent systematic review, Fadilah et al.⁽³⁴⁾ highlight that the communication climate—the overall perception of communication quality within the organization—is directly related to employee satisfaction with how things are communicated. This link becomes even stronger when communication practices reflect consistency, transparency, and respect. All of these elements essentially form the basis of assertive communication.

The link between assertive communication and human talent management

Digital transformation poses complex challenges for organizations, not only in terms of technology, but also in people management, culture, and communication. In this context, recent literature emphasizes that assertive communication is a critical mechanism for articulating human talent management (HTM) with the sustainability of a favorable organizational climate.^(35,36)

First, assertive communication, understood as the ability to express ideas and needs clearly, directly, and respectfully, is key to creating collaborative environments, minimizing ambiguities, and facilitating alignment between organizational objectives and individual expectations.⁽³⁷⁾ This communication skill catalyzes the change processes associated with digitalization by reducing resistance, fostering inter-hierarchical trust, and sustaining staff commitment.⁽³⁶⁾

From the GTH perspective, various strategies emerge from empirical evidence to integrate assertive communication as a cross-cutting component. These include developing communication skills in leaders and teams, designing formal feedback structures, and aligning talent policies with digital channels that ensure transparency and fairness in information.^(35,38)

The proposed CAIGTT-TD model (Assertive Communication Driving Talent Management in Digital Transformation) synthesizes this integration into an operational framework considering five complementary dimensions:

- Communication skills: continuous training in assertive communication, empathetic leadership, and conflict resolution enables leaders and employees to adequately manage the uncertainty and changes inherent in digitalization.
- Structural alignment: incorporating assertiveness into all TMG processes—from induction to performance evaluation—creates a coherent environment where feedback is bidirectional and management is transparent.⁽³⁶⁾
- Transformation governance: Communication planning that defines key messages, roles, and timelines, supported by change leaders and digital tools, facilitates organizational coordination and reduces friction.⁽³⁹⁾
- Climate monitoring: measuring the organizational climate periodically allows gaps to be detected and talent and communication practices to be adjusted to maximize the positive impact of the transformation.⁽⁴⁰⁾
- Workplace well-being as a cross-cutting theme: promoting the physical and psychological well-being of human talent—through mental health, work-life balance, and emotional support programs—reinforces the positive effects of effective communication in highly demanding environments.⁽⁴¹⁾

DISCUSSION

The findings reviewed throughout this paper allow us to understand that assertive communication, in addition to being a valuable interpersonal skill, is positioned as a key factor in the organizational climate, especially in scenarios marked by digital transformation. In general, studies agree that the quality of the work environment—and, by extension, operational efficiency—is primarily conditioned by the forms and styles of communication deployed in digitized organizations.^(26,27,28)

One of the clearest points of convergence is the role of leadership in shaping the communication climate. Boyd et al.⁽²⁶⁾ and Obeng et al.⁽²⁷⁾ show that assertive leadership generates more cohesive environments, where motivation and clarity of roles are strengthened. Leaders' daily micro-communication, far from being anecdotal, directly influences how employees interpret their work environment. This aspect takes on greater weight when interactions occur in hybrid or technology-mediated environments.

Roberge et al.⁽²⁸⁾, for their part, offer a perspective that links assertive communication with values such as inclusion, participation, and equity. From this perspective, the idea that assertiveness is not limited to individual expression but also functions as an organizational framework to promote collaborative environments open to dialogue and respectful of diversity is reinforced. This connects with the findings of Kocak et al.⁽²⁰⁾, who point out that assertiveness is associated with innovation and continuous adaptation in more horizontal digital cultures.

Another common element among the studies is the link between assertive communication and managing emerging tensions or frictions, particularly in virtual contexts. Suortti et al.⁽²⁹⁾ explain that structural clarity in digital interactions helps to contain misunderstandings, while Balabanova et al.⁽³⁰⁾ observe that assertive practices can counteract the adverse effects of information overload. Both cases emphasize that technology alone does not solve communication problems: intentionality and how communication is carried out remain decisive factors.

Studies in geographically dispersed sectors^(31,32) complement this perspective by showing that assertive communication promotes organizational integration in fragmented contexts. Preserving a sense of institutional presence, effectively coordinating tasks, and preventing operational errors depend largely on clear and respectful communication that overcomes technological or cultural limitations. This is where the strategic nature of assertiveness becomes evident, beyond its interpersonal dimension.

Likewise, Fadilah et al.⁽³⁴⁾ provide systematic evidence supporting the relationship between communication climate and job satisfaction. Although this link has been explored previously, its analysis in environments mediated by digital technologies allows us to understand that communication practices remain at the core of work perceptions.^(42,43) In this sense, when consistent, transparent, and respectful messages are communicated—as proposed by assertive approaches—organizations can maintain higher levels of well-being, even amid rapid change.^(44,45)

Thus, the review suggests that assertive communication cannot continue to be treated as an optional or marginal competency within digital transformation processes. Instead, it is presented as an enabling condition for the healthy functioning of organizations: it articulates leadership, strengthens culture, facilitates inclusion, and allows organizations to face the communication challenges of the digital age. Although some contextual limitations persist—for example, hierarchical cultures where assertiveness is still interpreted as confrontation—,⁽²⁴⁾ its application's benefits appear consistent across various sectors and organizational levels.

Practical implications

At the organizational level, the findings support a series of concrete actions:

- Ongoing training in assertive communication skills for leaders and employees.
- Development of formal and transparent digital channels, with feedback protocols.
- Periodic measurement of the organizational climate as a diagnostic and adjustment tool.
- Design of talent policies integrated with the digital transformation strategy.
- Implementation of workplace wellness programs to sustain motivation and commitment.

These practices optimize the implementation of technological innovations, strengthening retention, performance, and organizational resilience in an environment marked by uncertainty and digital disruption.

Limitations of the study

Despite its contributions, this research has certain limitations. First, much of the evidence comes from studies conducted in specific sectoral contexts (health, education, manufacturing), so transfer to other sectors must consider organizational and cultural particularities. Second, the CAIGTT-TD model is based on conceptual integration and has not been empirically validated, requiring future testing in real-world settings to assess its applicability and effectiveness.

Furthermore, although recent studies (2020-2024) were collected, there may be availability bias or exclusion of relevant literature in languages other than English and Spanish, or in non-indexed databases.

Recommendations for future research

Several future lines of research are identified:

- Empirical validation of the CAIGTT-TD model through case studies, longitudinal analyses, or quasi-experimental designs.

- Exploration of assertive communication in underrepresented sectors (e.g., NGOs, creative industries, digital agriculture).
- Analysis of the impact of assertiveness on measurable organizational outcomes (performance, innovation, retention).
- Cross-cultural studies examining how the perception and effectiveness of assertive communication varies across organizational and national cultures.
- Development of diagnostic tools to assess communicative competence in digital environments, including indicators of contextualized assertiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis allows us to affirm a close relationship between assertive communication and organizational climate, particularly in contexts where digital transformation has changed traditional work dynamics. By promoting transparent, respectful, and empathetic interactions, assertiveness facilitates sustaining cohesive and emotionally safe work environments. In this scenario, communicative leadership—when exercised with clarity and openness—contributes significantly to building more positive and resilient organizational climates aligned with digitalization's challenges.

The studies reviewed agree that assertive communication improves relational processes among team members and directly affects the overall perception of the organizational environment. In particular, when communication practices incorporate timely feedback, recognition of diversity, and transparency, the sense of belonging is strengthened and ambiguity in tasks is reduced. This is crucial in technologically mediated environments, where psychosocial risks, work fragmentation, and information overload are increasingly common.

Despite its benefits, the practical application of assertive communication continues to face challenges, partly due to traditional leadership styles or organizational cultures that still associate frankness with confrontation. This highlights the need to promote a cultural change, recognizing assertiveness as a strategic organizational competency. This requires sustained efforts from human talent management through training programs, inclusive communication structures, and internal policies that promote a more transparent and humane communication climate.

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