

I.O. Androshchuk, PhD in Economics, Assoc. Prof.
A.S. Muzychenko, Dr. in Economics, Prof.
B.B. Kramar, Assistant
Central Ukrainian National Technical University

Peculiarities of business communications in public activities: conceptual review

The modern sphere of public governance is focused on the principles of openness, transparency, responsibility and accountability, which are impossible without effective communication. The article substantiates the relevance of the study of business communications in public activity, emphasizing the lack of study of this issue in the context of the authorities, unlike the private sector. Scientific approaches of foreign and domestic researchers (K.Maistrenko, A.Michelle, D.McCuel, A.Toffler) on the role of communication in the formation of trust, partnership and public opinion are analyzed. The principles of effective business communication (transparency, honesty, neutrality, cooperation, etc.) and behavioral indicators that serve as criteria for evaluating its performance are defined. The classification of communications by the method of occurrence and transmission of information (formal, informal; vertical, horizontal) is proposed. Particular attention is paid to the segmentation of the target audience by the 5W method, the definition of socio-demographic and psychological characteristics, as well as the use of digital tools and social networks (including Facebook) to improve the efficiency of interaction. Communication strategies (response, proactive, media strategy, message box) and stages of development of the communication plan are considered. It is concluded that the introduction of modern digital communication practices will facilitate the adaptation of Ukrainian public governance to EU standards, and a promising direction is the study and implementation of foreign experience in the use of social networks in the activities of the authorities.

Keywords: public governance; business communication; target audience; communication strategy; digital tools.

Formulation of the problem. The modern sphere of public governance is pursued, first of all, openness, transparency, responsibility and accountability, the achievement of which is not impossible without effective communication in the process of activity of the whole apparatus.

As a result, the study of the features of business communications in public activity becomes surprisingly relevant and important, in the first place, in the prism of public governance, in view of the more widespread practice of studying this aspect for private economic entities.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In particular, certain aspects of the peculiarities of business communications in the field of public governance were investigated by both foreign and domestic scientists. For example, K.M Maistrenko. In his research, he states that the use of the communications system in public governance is an important component of the process of preparation and management decisions [1]. In addition, the author states that by managing communication and actively influencing its components, public authorities realize their strengths and neutralize the weak [1]. Michel A. 's scientific work points out that communication of power and society is a key element in shaping a society in which citizens and power feel their interconnection. Through communication, there is a trusting relationship between interested parties, the formation of the right expectations of the public and establishing partnerships between the subjects of communication, and public opinion is formed [5].

McQuail's D. research on the theory of mass communication is quite valuable, emphasizing the importance of the media as the main communication channel between the public and the authorities, and how changes in the media can affect social life, which, in turn, contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of information.

From the point of view of modern digital business communications tools, A.Toffler's research can serve as a basis for analyzing social changes due to technological revolutions, which are reflected in the development of public communication and new management approaches. Despite the date of research [6–7], the latter are quite relevant in the prism of public governance in view of the spread of new approaches to this area in Ukraine. At the same time, the analysis of domestic research shows an insufficient level of study of practical cases on the peculiarities of business communications in the field of public activity.

The purpose of the article is to study the features of business communications in public activity in the context of a conceptual review in the direct «scope» of public authorities.

Presentation of the main material. Communication is a process that shapes understanding, subordination, expectation and behavior of the target audience. The key task of communication is to build trust, to give information, and often to change stable ideas. Therefore, communication can be considered an effective management tool for developing and implementing the measures necessary to achieve goals. Therefore,

communicative activity should be strategically applied, considered well and properly monitored. At the same time, speaking about the specifics of the public sphere, it should be noted that the term «communication» in local self-government bodies is defined as the movement of information; a tool of dialogue between participants in the management process; a Component of the process of interaction of power and civil society. That is why it is appropriate to think that in the plane of communication approach, public governance bodies implement information, planning, discussion, propaganda and other actions that contribute to the achievement of the goals of national strategies, expand the possibilities of citizens' participation in making state management decisions, forming the relevant behavior, and social and social [2].

Among the general principles of business communications are: transparency, honesty, responsibility, the availability of information provided, neutrality in politics, respect, cooperation, multifunctionality and self-improvement. Thus, compliance with the above principles is an important point in view of the need for confidence in public authorities. Moreover, in our opinion, in such circumstances, behavioral indicators serve as a kind of litmus to determine the effectiveness of communications of public institutions. Among these are the most common:

- Oral speech: supports bilateral communication, shows interest in comments about its work, listens carefully and responds during the conversation;
- Writing: uses the correct language constructions, writes briefly and clearly, structures messages, accurately formulates complex questions, selects vocabulary according to the purpose of the text;
- Persuasion: it substantiates its positions, seeks to convince on the basis of rational arguments;
- Presentation skills: clearly and accessible ideas, taking into account the interests of the target audience;
- Conflict management: recognizes conflicts, promotes compromise, takes into account long-term goals and attracts parties to the decision-making process;
- Prevention and resolution of conflicts: expresses position without provocations, constructively responds to resistance, accepts criticism, looks for points of understanding.

In general, in the modern management of public authorities, such types of communications are distinguished both in the way of information and the method of transmission (fig. 1).

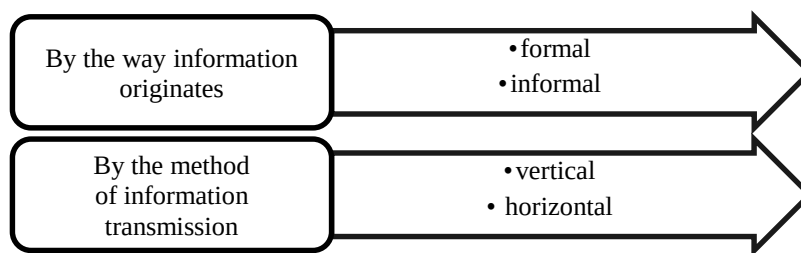


Fig. 1. Types of business communications

Formal communication is created (as a rule, within the competence of the institution) and is brought to the attention of all persons involved in it aimed at achieving the goals of the organization, while informal communication arises on the basis of personal relationships between employees within the institution.

Vertical communication involves informing and tasks in their subordinates, conducting instruction, delegating powers, informing about methods, tools, time and other tasks. Feedback is aimed at clarifying the task, coordinating it, evaluating possible risks and information about the implementation process and current changes in the field.

Horizontal communication is carried out between employees at one level and aimed at ensuring coordination and exchange of messages.

In general, according to scientific research, the role of business communications in the activities of private entities is interpreted as a very important area of activity and is a priority in the development of development strategies. At the same time, for public authorities in the present period, as evidenced by the analysis of their activity, the role of communications was underestimated, despite its significant role. For example, in the period of active territorial reform (the process of decentralization), the fact of a significant role of communication has become quite obvious to the newly created communities, in which active civil society played a major role in the creation and further functioning of a successful community.

Setting up communication processes in the community should solve such tasks as: motivation of residents to joint (partnership) implementation of the community development strategy; strengthening a sense of belonging to the community; encouragement to establish relationships between interested parties; stimulating creative participation in the development of the community; activation of different stages of joint activity; improvement of cooperation and interaction between all interested parties; spreading a positive image of a local self-government body through behavior and attitude to community problems.

The key means of communication are: conversations, press releases, information materials, articles, press conferences, press tours, excursions, Skype conferences and discussions, interviews, seminars and letters. In this case, each of the above tools has its own specificity and features. In terms of practical application and efficiency, in our opinion, it depends on the specific situation and the target audience. That is why, then, we consider it necessary to determine how the target audience can be determined.

In marketing, «Target Audience is a range of real and potential consumers who are ready to change their priorities for the benefit of a certain product or service under the influence of marketing». However, the target audience of public governance is often defined as a group of people who are identified as recipients of messages through functional institutions.

In order to best understand the needs and capabilities of a certain target audience, and effectively transmit the content of the range of services, you should use the Five Ws. It is a method of determining the target audience and psychological characteristics inherent in the potential buyer (in our case, the «buyer» of certain measures and changes in a particular community).

Segmentation is carried out using the following 5 questions (W): What? Who? Why? When? Where?

Understanding the target audience allows you to more accurately direct information influence.

The main characteristics of the target audience are: gender, place of residence, age, marital status, education, employment, financial status, social status, and specialized data.

The study of the target audience involves a comprehensive approach that combines socio-demographic analysis with the identification of behavioral and psychological characteristics of consumers. First of all, a socio-demographic portrait is formed, which covers gender, age category, level of income, social status, marital status and professional identity. These parameters make it possible to outline the basic boundaries of the target group.

The next step is to determine the environment in which representatives of this audience spend their time – both in physical and digital space, which allows you to understand where and how effective contact can be established with them.

An important analytical aspect is the identification of problems or needs that the product or service can solve for a potential consumer. In addition to rational benefits, emotional influence is investigated: what feelings the brand causes, what images or associations it is associated with in the audience's minds.

After all, a list of factors that can motivate people to choose this product or service is formed: from practical benefits to psychological attractiveness and compliance with the consumer's values.

After the portrait is formed, it is advisable to «put yourself in the place of the target audience», to feel what they live through and are interested in, and to communicate with them, using their language, insults that are interesting to these people with information. The portrait of the target audience is very useful when placing advertisements on the Internet, where there is a tool such as targeting – the ability to show ads only a selected group of people with certain characteristics.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that modern communication is, first and foremost, digital, and therefore occurs in an online environment using digital technologies. Under digital technologies, we mean ways to place information-sites, blog platforms, social networks, groups in messengers, channels in corporate communication programs, as well as how it is spreading-cloud services, aggregators, analytical programs using artificial intelligence.

New technologies and approaches are very important in communication. As a rule, to obtain feedback from citizens, they resort to the use of traditional tools: written interviews, techniques, meetings, etc. But is this enough to find out everyone's thoughts and ideas. The answer to the question of the modern world is unambiguous – no. Based on the above, given that it is about modern digital communications in public governance bodies, it is important to pay attention to the social portrait of citizens whose attention to non-Ukrainian authorities is lost, in particular:

- millennial. Youth, students, graduates. Who is better than the younger generation sees the path of the future of their city? The sooner they will be able to participate in public events, the better. They can only be communicated with digital tools, they quickly absorb information, but they need to be interested in participating in public life;
- busy people. Busy housewives, mothers, businessmen, managers. These are citizens who are interested in social life and have something to say, but do not have enough time to devote themselves to participation in community life. They do not have time to go to the public assembly or listen to the reports of local authorities. Online communication allows such citizens to participate in decision-making at any time of day and night;
- skeptics. Middle-age people who follow social life but are disappointed in the opportunity to influence it or traditionally do not believe it. There is a fairly large gap, so citizens and local authorities should find mechanisms for restoring their social activity. Communication with them about new projects through the Internet is an attempt to restore trust.

Based on the above, we come to the general conclusion that social networks are the most effective tool of modern business communications, in particular among the most famous, it is worth distinguishing Facebook, the features of which are given in the form of table 1.

Table 1

Advantages and disadvantages of Facebook

Page		Group		Profile	
advantages	disadvantages	advantages	disadvantages	advantages	disadvantages
For business and official organization communication	Low organic and feed views	High organic	No advertising	High yield and organic	No ads or statistics
Has full statistics		Close contact		Personality brand	Business communications prohibited
Can advertise		Minimal statistics	Difficult to moderate		
Post options are similar to a personal profile		Narrow audience			
		Better impressions			

Source: author's development based on [3]

As you can see from table 1, the Facebook page has several advantages over other types, in particular: the page for sole speech and on behalf of the organization, is suitable for organizations that tell themselves, there is a cover (free advertising banner) and avatar (fig. 2).

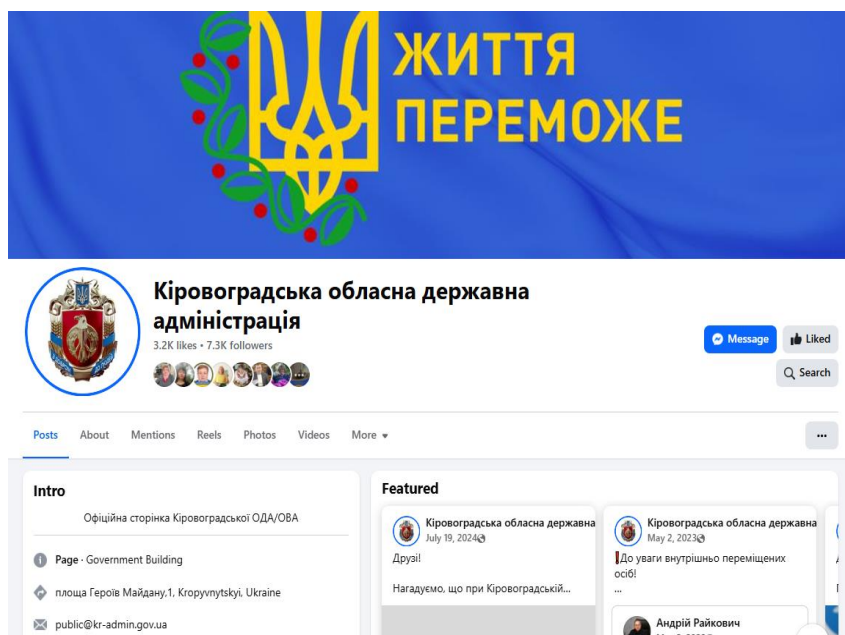


Fig. 2. Facebook page

That is, a fan page is easy to brand; the page is a public space. Subscribers come themselves and can sign without asking for it; is indexed by search engines; you can adjust the geomics to make customers find as an additional way of promotion; posts have the ability to set up blocks with contact information and reviews; the public page has statistics and personal messages; there is an opportunity to create advertising; to set up targeted advertising and to give subscribers to public; all subscribers' publications can only appear on the wall with the approval of the administrator and after moderation.

Other species, such as Facebook profile (fig. 3) or Facebook group (fig. 4) have relatively more disadvantages than the Facebook profile.

Further, we consider it advisable, in more detail, to consider key communication strategies, in particular the response strategy, proactive strategy, media strategy and message box.

The response strategy is the responsibility of any democratic authority and is an instrument of power.

The proactive strategy is designed to improve image, strengthen confidence, and prevent crises. In order to gain public confidence, a proactive strategy must be used as the target audience is usually focused on their own needs.

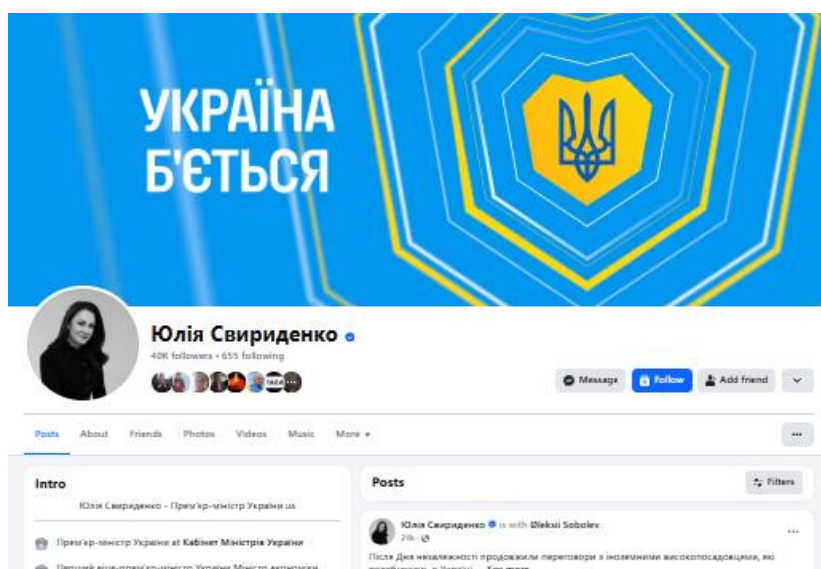


Fig. 3. Facebook profile

The media strategy or strategy of interaction with the media is aimed at supporting priorities, trust, informing the public and the press, raising the level of security, providing answers to requests, clarifying information and providing community support.

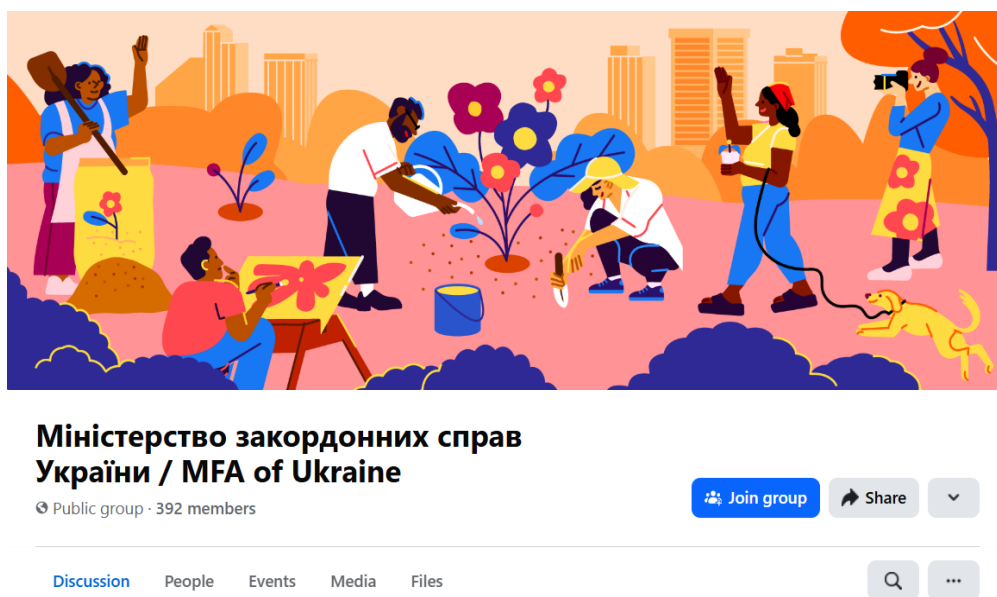


Fig. 4. Facebook group

The message box is a communication tool for transmitting clearly defined ideas and suggestions for their dissemination in the media space; a means of transmitting basic key messages; a thematic set of pre-prepared key messages used during the information campaign and updated in its process; set of key messaging templates for answers to key questions and publications in the media.

The message box is a very important communication tool that can successfully coordinate messages. Proper preparation and application of a set of key messages will make the communication process much more effective.

In our opinion, the formation of an effective message box is worth:

- identify the main purpose of communication: whether to talk about problems, about yourself how to solve the problem, about the needs of people who will be satisfied in the event of a problem;
- identify the needs of the audience: what the audience wants to hear – however, what decisions are made, or how the decisions made affect life in the respective territory;
- determine what the audience should hear and remember after the speech: not just reports on achievements, but what people want to understand. What will happen in their lives tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, in a month and a year;

– determine what the audience should remember after the presentation / appeal: numbers, facts, emotions, reservations, new information, management.

In general, three things are important in communication:

1. Well thought-out logical arguments;
2. The speaker's personality and his / her trust in the audience;
3. The attitude, bias, knowledge, and emotions of the audience.

The main principle of persuasion of the audience is: a convincing argument, a charismatic and / or authoritative communicator, a deep understanding of the needs of the audience, and the absence of barriers or prejudice to perceive the message.

As a result, an effective message should: be clear; short, formulated for the audience; cause positive emotions and contain appropriate facts.

In order to achieve the final goal of any communication, it is quite important to have an appropriate communication plan, which is one of the key tools for achieving the desired result. In general, the development of any communication plan involves such stages as:

1. Involve stakeholders.

Any communication plan begins with the identification and active involvement of key stakeholders. It is not only about representatives of the authorities or the organization, but also the public, business partners, media and other groups of influence. Their early involvement provides trust, reduces resistance and creates conditions for partner interaction. As an example, when implementing a local community development strategy, it involves youth organizations, business associations and educational institutions to take into account different interests;

2. Determining the target audience.

This stage includes the segmentation of the audiences by demographic, socio-economic and psychological characteristics. The use of the 5w technique («Who? Why? Why? Where? When?») allows you to form a socio-demographic portrait and understand the behavioral features of groups. As an example, social networks can be a key channel for young people, while for the older generation-printed publications and direct meetings;

3. Developing a key message for each target audience.

Each audience needs its format, adapted to its expectations, language and needs. The message should be clear, laconic and confident. In this case, it is important to consider both rational arguments (facts, numbers) and emotional aspects (values, images, examples from life). As an example, the message may sound like «a new support program stimulates entrepreneurship», and for citizens – «it creates jobs in your community»;

4. Choosing the optimal communication channel with each target audience to transmit key messages.

The correct selection of channels determines how effectively the information will be conveyed. These can be traditional tools (press releases, meetings, public speaking) or digital (social networks, messengers, official sites, video streams). In today's context, the focus is on digital platforms and social networks that provide interactivity and feedback. As an example, the use of Facebook Fan Page allows you to quickly disseminate information and target it to the desired audience;

5. Monitoring the implementation of the plan.

Effective communication requires systematic assessment. For this purpose, indicators (quantitative and qualitative) are developed, which reflect the performance that can cover the audience, the level of involvement, the number of reviews, and the change in the attitude of the target groups. Monitoring makes it possible to adjust messages, channels or even a strategy in the implementation process. As an example, analyzing social networks or online surveys help you understand whether key messages have been properly reported;

6. Development of several situational response scenarios.

The communication plan should be flexible and provide crisis scenarios, which include the preparation of response options to negative reviews, crisis events or information attacks. The script planning can avoid chaotic decisions at critical moments and maintain the audience's trust. As an example, in the case of misinformation, the authorities have a pre-prepared mess-box with facts to quickly refute rumors.

Thus, the development of a communication plan is not just a list of actions, but a system process that combines analysis, planning, adaptation and control, providing openness, transparency and trust, which is critical for both business and public government.

Conclusions and prospects for further research. As a result, we believe that communications are an important aspect of the activity of public governance in terms of achieving the requirements and standards of the European Union, which fully meet the state's strategic course. At the same time, it is established that modern public authorities do not fully use this tool, and therefore, it is appropriate, first and foremost, to clearly form a portrait of the target audience, identify its problems and form a communication plan directly.

In addition, it is appropriate not to forget that modern communications are, first of all, digital, and therefore social messengers as tools are quite effective. That is why, a promising area of further research can be the study of foreign experience in the use of social networks in the activities of public governance and its adaptation in Ukrainian realities.

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Androshchuk Ilona Oleksandrivna – PhD in Economics, Associate Professor of Central Ukrainian National Technical University.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2232-8061>.

Scientific interests:

- modern approaches to public management and administration, electronic governance and democracy;
- change management in digitalization conditions;
- peculiarities of business communications in professional activity, as well as trends in the development of the new economy.

Muzychenko Anatolii Stepanovych – Dr. in Economics, Professor of Central Ukrainian National Technical University.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5824-7933>.

Scientific interests:

- modern approaches to the new trend of management and administration.

Kramar Bohdan Borysovych – Assistant of Central Ukrainian National Technical University.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9967-4687>.

Scientific interests:

- modern approaches to business communications in public activity;
- effective tools for increasing the financial and economic security of economic entities.

Андрощук І.О., Музиченко А.С., Крамар Б.Б.

Особливості бізнес-комунікації в публічній діяльності: концептуальний огляд

Сучасна сфера публічного врядування орієнтується на принципи відкритості, прозорості, відповідальності та підзвітності, досягнення яких неможливе без ефективної комунікації. У статті обґрунтовано актуальність дослідження бізнес-комунікацій у публічній діяльності, підкреслено недостатню вивченість цього питання у контексті органів влади на відміну від приватного сектору. Проаналізовано наукові підходи зарубіжних та вітчизняних дослідників (К.Майстренко, А.Мішель, Д.Маккуейл, А.Тоффлер) щодо ролі комунікації у формуванні довіри, партнерства та суспільної думки. Визначено принципи ефективної бізнес-комунікації (прозорість, чесність, нейтральність, співробітництво тощо) та поведінкові індикатори, що слугують критеріями оцінки її результативності. Запропоновано класифікацію комунікацій за способом виникнення та передавання інформації (формальні, неформальні; вертикальні, горизонтальні). Особливу увагу приділено сегментації цільової аудиторії методикою 5W, визначенню соціально-демографічних та психологічних характеристик, а також використанню цифрових інструментів і соціальних мереж (зокрема Facebook) для підвищення ефективності взаємодії. Розглянуто комунікаційні стратегії (реактивна, проактивна, медіастратегія, меседж-бокс) та етапи розробки комунікаційного плану. Зроблено висновок, що впровадження сучасних цифрових комунікаційних практик сприятиме адаптації українського публічного врядування до стандартів ЄС, а перспективним напрямом є вивчення і впровадження зарубіжного досвіду використання соціальних мереж у діяльності органів влади.

Ключові слова: публічне врядування; бізнес-комунікації; цільова аудиторія; комунікаційна стратегія; цифрові інструменти.

The article was sent to the editorial board on 14.08.2025.