



Communication at Work Place

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ABSTRACT

We live in a world filled with other people. We live together, work together, and play together. In our personal lives, we need each other for security, comfort, friendship, and love. In our working environment, we need each other in order to achieve our goals and objectives. None of these goals can be achieved without communication. Communication is the basic thread that ties us together. Through communication we make known our needs, our wants, our ideas, and our feelings. The better we are at communication, the more effective we are at achieving our hopes and dreams (Alessandra, Hunsaker, 1993).

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the glue that holds a society together. The ability to communicate enables people to form and maintain personal relationships. And the quality of such relationships depends on the caliber of communication between the parties (Brennan, 1974). Communication is the process of sharing ideas, information, and messages with others in a particular time and place. Communication includes writing and talking, as well as nonverbal communication (such as facial expressions, body language, or gestures), visual communication (the use of images or pictures, such as painting, photography, video or film) and electronic communication (telephone calls, electronic mail, cable television, or satellite broadcasts). Communication is a vital part of personal life and is also important in business, education, and any other situations where people encounter each other (Encarta, 1998).

When there is an internal communication gap within an organization there is usually a breakdown in the way information is sent from the sender to the receiver. This is precedent in organizations that have a top down hierarchy. In this type of hierarchy it can be difficult for bottom level employees to obtain information regarding changes within the organization

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In every society, humans have developed spoken and written language as a means of sharing messages and meanings. The most common form of daily communication is interpersonal- that is, face-to-face, at the same time and in the same place (Encarta, 2005). Communication barriers can pop-up at every stage of the communication process (which consists of sender, message, channel, receiver, feedback and context) and have the potential to create misunderstanding and confusion. To be an effective communicator and to get your point across without misunderstanding and confusion, your goal should be to lessen the frequency of these barriers at each stage of this process with clear, concise, accurate, well planned communications (Fowler & Manktelow, 2005). Communication, the heart of business, is the most important of all entrepreneurial skills. The destiny of the business depends on the quality of your relationships. Your ability to transmit information helps both clients and employees feel they can communicate with and ultimately trust you (Black Enterprise, Charles, 1998, pg 116). Internal communication is more important today than in previous years partly because the business and market conditions are more complex. There is a lot of information in the marketplace and it's crucial that employees understand it. The development of a strategic internal communication strategy and its implementation can provide a number of benefits to organizations, such as keeping employees motivated and engaged, and sharing clear, consistent messages with employees in a timely manner (Black Enterprise, Clemons, pg 46). Internal communications do not need to be extensive to be useful. The important factor appears to be a continuous flow of information, even if all the answers are not in yet-simply report progress. Think of your employees as public speakers for the business, because they are. Whether they are talking with customers or their neighbor at home, they

are conveying a picture of the company and how it is doing. The more they are informed, the better they can represent the company in the broader community.(Phelps, 2000).

Personal relationship is what organizations are all about - or should be. An organization, whatever its size, mission, or motive is merely a collection of people assembled to pursue a common objective. An organization functions through its people, who in turn function through communication (Brennan, 1974).

Employees have their own sources, their own information system, separate from the management channels. These usually carry the news ahead of communications from management. Not that the employee network is flawless. That system transmits information indiscriminately. Fragments. Rumors. Gossip. It may not always operate in the best interests of the organization, but it does provide a check-point when management fantasies are disguised as information. Furthermore, it enables employees to participate in the communication process, and it fills their need for information which at least seems to come from a credible source: another employee (Brennan, 1974). Employees, like all people, require outlets for their thoughts and feelings. And they find them. So don't arbitrarily assume that the relative absence of employee complaints is a positive sign. Employees may be expressing themselves through other channels: meetings with fellow employees, union representatives, government agents; or through passive-aggressive behavior such as work slowdowns, carelessness, tardiness, absenteeism, and apathy. These can be symptoms that employees feel other means of participation are unavailable to them (Brennan, 1974).

The skill of listening becomes extremely important when we talk about "upward communication." There are many avenues through which management can send messages downward through a business organization, but there are few avenues for movement of information in the upward direction (Nichols & Stevens, 1999).

Skilled communicators are able to build rapport with coworkers and business associates, which can help move projects along more efficiently. They know whose expertise to tap when they need assistance and are adept at resolving conflicts and building consensus among team members (USA Today, 2002). One's effectiveness in employing the attributes of leadership and the strengths of a company is enhanced by one's aptitude for communication. When leaders and managers are better understood and appreciated, they are followed. and supported (Daedalus, 1 996).

Many popular theories on workplace communication focus on the differences between men and women, suggesting that the sexual divide causes communication to break down. Women are seen as being more empathetic and oblique than men. Other variables that cause people to mix their messages include differences in age, culture, and socioeconomic background. Some tips to help managers bridge any communication gap were (Fortune 1994):

1. Listen actively for the subtext of people's words.
2. Persuade rather than command.
3. Target your words to your audience.
4. React to content, not to people's manner of expressing themselves.
5. Let people know that criticism is welcome.
6. Make your intentions clear before acting.
7. Assume that people take responsibility for what they say.

Unclear communication not only results in errors and missed deadlines, but also lies at the root of many other serious workplace issues, such as low employee morale and poor job performance. Managers should invest the necessary time to ensure that project goals and instructions are free of ambiguity and foster an environment that encourages the open exchange of ideas (USA TODAY, 1999).

By successfully getting your message across, you convey your thoughts and ideas effectively. When not successful, the thoughts and ideas that you convey do not necessarily reflect your own, causing a communications breakdown and creating roadblocks that stand in the way of your goals-both personally and professionally (Fowler & Mankelov, 2005).

Getting your message across is paramount to progressing. To do this, you must understand what your message is, what audience you are sending it to and how it will be perceived. You must also weigh-in the circumstances surrounding your communications, such as situational and cultural context (Fowler & Mankelov, 2005).

Consistent inattention to communication, its functions and malfunctions, hampers the efficiency and profitability of our organizations and stifles the development of those who inhabit them. As long as we ignore, rationalize, or deny our failures as communicators, for that long will we shrink from responsibility rather than grow toward our intellectual, emotional and contributive potential. (Brennan, 1974). In the workplace, supervisors and their employees have opportunities to develop non-threatening, mutually rewarding relationships. These can be quite conducive to individual and corporate health. They are akin to what in our personal life we call meaningful relationships. Supervisors who attain such relationships with employees are said to practice "positive human relations." True. But it's done through communication. (Brennan, 1974)

CONCLUSIONS

Communication is very important in every aspect of our lives. In order for any relationship to work properly we have to learn to communicate effectively with each other. The importance of communication hasn't changed from the time in which John Brennan wrote *The Conscious Communicator* in 1974 to the time Shel Holtz wrote *Corporate Conversations* in 2004. The fact still remains that in order for any business whether entrepreneur, partnerships or corporate offices to succeed we have. To communicate with someone to voice our ideas and/or concerns.

The literature review addressed the importance of internal communication.

It provided the researcher with background information on the different ways and the different styles of communication. Needless to say, face-to-face communication seemed to remain the number one style of communicating within organizations. Research has also found that a lack of communication within an organization can decrease productivity, lower moral and be the cause of other serious workplace issues.

The researcher found that the outcome of the survey was the complete opposite to what was overheard in previous conversations. Based upon the answers given on the survey, more people were neutral and/or thought that the communication was satisfactory within the organization. Majority of the participants also felt that their supervisor communication skills were very good. Although they agreed that the supervisors communicated effectively, more customer service representatives and/or unit leaders admitted to hearing most of their information through the grapevine. As the number of years increased in experience within the organization, it appears as though this particular group had a negative view of internal communication. The participants were consistent in saying that they wanted more information about the policy changes and/or procedures, the contracts and they wanted adequate training for the different computer programs.

Some of the employees vent about a lack of communication when they feel as though their voice is not been heard. Also, when they continue to find out about information through the grapevine versus from their supervisor.

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