A Study on The Importance of Effective Communication Skills And How It Can Make Or Mar An Organisation

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Abstract:

Communication is key skill that can lead to the success or deterrent of any organisation. Effective communication skills will go a long way in determining the longevity of the organisation. Whether it be vertical, horizontal or lateral, communication is a key ingredient in keeping the organisation intact. The management while communicating with their employees or at a peer level the way in which employees communicate among themselves offer clarity to the ethos of organisation. An organisation perceived to be clear in their mode of communication offer clarity in objectives. It is also perceived that an employer who communicates well with their employees also have a very transparent relation with them. Our study focuses on understanding what it is that makes communication effective and how organisations can effectively mould themselves to be better communicators

Keywords: Strategy, Communication, objectives, skills

Introduction:

Communication from Latin *communicare*, meaning "to share" is the act of conveying meanings from one entity or group to another through the use of mutually understood signs, symbols, and semiotic rules. Levels of Strategies – There are basically three levels of strategies

Nonverbal communication describes the processes of conveying a type of information in the form of non-linguistic representations. Examples of nonverbal communication include haptic communication, chronemic communication, gestures, body language, facial expressions, eye contact, and how one dresses.

Verbal communication is the spoken or written conveyance of a message. Human language can be defined as a system of symbols (sometimes known as lexemes) and the grammars (rules) by which the symbols are manipulated. The word "language" also refers to common properties of languages. Language learning normally occurs most intensively during human childhood.

The progression of written communication can be divided into three "information communication revolutions"

1. Written communication first emerged through the use of pictographs. The pictograms were made in stone, hence written communication was not yet mobile. Pictograms began to develop standardized and simplified forms.
2. The next step occurred when writing began to appear on paper, papyrus, clay, wax, and other media with commonly shared writing systems, leading to adaptable alphabets. Communication became mobile.
3. The final stage is characterized by the transfer of information through controlled waves of electromagnetic radiation (i.e., radio, microwave, infrared) and other electronic signals.

Objectives of the study:
- ✓ A study on the effective communication strategies
- ✓ How can companies adopt successful communication strategies

Research Methodology:

Research Type: Descriptive Research Type of Data/Data Source used: Secondary Data/Data source. The present study is based on secondary data. Basically, the required information has been derived from

- ✓ Various books.
- ✓ Articles from Newspapers, Magazines and Journals
- ✓ Various related web-sites which deal directly or indirectly with the topics related to communication and its effectiveness

Limitations:

- ✓ The study is based on published data and information. No primary data is being collected.
- ✓ Every care has been taken to entice qualitative and correct data; still secondary data have collected for the purposes other than problem at hand.
- ✓ The objectives, nature and methods used to collect secondary data may not be appropriate to the present situation.
- ✓ Secondary data may be lacking in accuracy, or they may not be completely current or dependable.

Effective Communication Strategies

An ever-increasing number of companies are recognising the reputational risks and opportunities that corporate responsibility brings, and for these companies aligning corporate behaviour with stakeholder expectations is an ongoing business priority. Communication, however, often remains the missing link in the practice of corporate responsibility. The information requirements of a range of opinion leader and mass stakeholder audiences are not currently being satisfied by many companies, so they are not getting full credit for their responsible corporate behaviour. Of course, there are specific challenges in communicating corporate responsibility – including scepticism towards company messages and potentially hostile reactions from the media, campaign groups and others. The diverse information requirements of different stakeholder groups also present special communication challenges, and these requirements are examined in turn.

Internal communication programs can be daunting for some organizations, especially when looking to revamp or upgrade their efforts. In other words, it's the key to running a profitable business. According to a Bambu data report, 80% of employees want their employer to keep them updated about company news—77% said it would help them at their job and 66% said it helps them build better relationships with their colleagues. Additionally, 63% said that it would help them become an advocate for the business and tell others about their company. There is tremendous opportunity for employers to capitalize on the potential impact a successful internal communications strategy can have on their reputation—both internally with employees, and externally with their audience.

Strategies for effective communication

- The first step in developing communication strategy is setting the specific tone. It is important to select the direction for the strategy. What specific interests one will pursue and what language will be selected in order to achieve these interests. When developing a communication strategy, it is important to remember that professional terminology is acceptable in specific reports.

- The second step is stating the purpose. The company should understand why communication is important and why this specific strategy should be applied

- Effective communication strategy is impossible without assessing its current situation and its place in the business world. The assessment of the company situation may be done in several techniques. PEST (Political, Economic, Social and Technological), SWOT Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), and competitor analyses are the best variants for understanding the place of the company in the modern business world.

- Having received the information after analyses, the corporation should set organizational and communication objectives.

- The assessment of the key communication methods will help on defining the company actions..

- The final stage of communication strategy is success evaluation. It is important to make sure that the communication strategy works effectively.

- When developing a corporate communication strategy, one has to understand its importance and main need. Communication strategy helps the organization to share its messages inside and outside the company. People involved in the communication are the company employees, its providers, clients and the public at general. Effective communication strategy is aimed at improving company image and position the organization from a better side. Miscommunication may lead to serious problems. However, in case effective communication strategies are implemented, the company can successfully implement its services.

Types of Communication

Communication can be characterized as vertical, horizontal, or diagonal. Initially greater emphasis was directed at vertical organizational communication as compared to lateral communication but that is no longer the case. Diagonal communication is an even more recent emphasis in the organizational communication literature.

Vertical Communication: Vertical communication occurs between hierarchically positioned persons and can involve both downward and upward communication flows. Downward communication is more prevalent than upward communication. Larkin and Larkin (1994) suggest that downward communication is most effective if top managers communicate directlywith immediate supervisors and immediate supervisors communicate with their staff. A wealth of evidence shows that increasing the power of immediate supervisors increases both satisfaction and performance among employees. This was first discovered by Donald Pelz (1952) and is commonly referred to as the Pelz effect. Pelz was attempting to find out what types of leadership styles led to employee satisfaction (informal/formal, autocratic/participative, management oriented/front line-oriented). He found that what matters most is not the supervisor's leadership style but whether the supervisor has power. One way to give supervisors power is to communicate directly with them and to have them provide input to decisions. Ensuring that supervisors are informed about organizational issues/changes before staff in general, and then allowing them to communicate these issues/changes to their staff, helps reinforce their position of power. When the supervisor is perceived as having power, employees have greater trust in the supervisor, greater desire for communication with the supervisor, and are more likely to believe that the information coming from the supervisor is accurate (Roberts and O'Reilly 1974). Jablin (1980), after reviewing almost 30 years of research, pronounced the Pelz effect to be "one of the most widely accepted propositions about organizational communication."

Downward Communication: is more than passing on information to subordinates. It may involve effectively managing the tone of the message, as well as showing skill in delegation to ensure the job is done effectively by the right person. Although the content priorities of downward communication have not been definitively demonstrated, there is some level of certainty with respect to the best approach to downward communication (Jablin 1980), i.e.,

- Top managers should communicate directly with immediate supervisors
- Immediate supervisors should communicate with their direct reports
- On issues of importance, top managers should then follow-up by communicating with employees directly

Perhaps the most tried and true rule of effective downward communication is to: Communicate orally, then follow up in writing (Gibson and Hodgetts 1991).

Upward Communication: Even less is known about upward communication. One consistent finding is that employee satisfaction with upward communication tends to be lower than their satisfaction with downward communication (Gibson 1985; Gibson and Hodgetts 1991:221-22). Larkin and Larkin (1994) found low levels of satisfaction with all the strategies commonly used to enhance upward communication, including

employee surveys, suggestion programs, employee grievance programs, and employee participation programs such as quality circles and team meetings. Gibson and Hodgetts (1991:268-69) note several management-based reasons for this lack of satisfaction, particularly that these strategies often do not involve two-way communication, are not packaged well, are poorly timed, and are apt to trigger defensiveness on the part of managers. In addition, McCelland (1988) found a number of employee-based reasons why upward communication tends to be poor, including:

- Fear of reprisal – people are afraid to speak their minds
- Filters – employees feel their ideas/concerns are modified as they get transmitted upward
- Time – managers give the impression that they don't have the time to listen to employees

Lateral Communication: Lateral communication involves communication among persons who do not stand in hierarchical relation to one another. While recent trends to flatten organizations have enhanced the importance of lateral communications, studies on lateral communication still lag behind those on vertical communication. One fairly limited study found rather high levels of satisfaction (85 percent) with lateral communication among human resource managers (Frank1984), but lateral communication across managers of dissimilar functional divisions, while often cited as a major source of organization dysfunction, has not been subject to much empirical research. It has been assumed that lateral communication at the worker level is less problematic, at least within a functional area. However, with the greater importance of teams, more attention is now being directed at communication between team members. Lateral communications between workers in different functional areas is also becoming a bigger concern as greater attention is being directed at increasing the speed of production through simultaneous, as opposed to sequential, work processes. And there is greater emphasis on communication across distributed workers and geographically separated work groups doing similar kinds of work in an attempt to promote learning and the sharing of expertise, best practices, and lessons learned.

Diagonal Communication: Diagonal communication refers to communication between managers and workers located in different functional divisions (Wilson 1992). Although both vertical and horizontal communication continue to be important, these terms no longer adequately capture communication needs and flows in most modern organizations. The concept of diagonal communication was introduced to capture the new communication challenges associated with new organizational forms, such as matrix and project-based organizations.

Conclusion

Employee commitment is one of the most important measures of leader success. Worker commitment reaps benefits far beyond improved organizational performance. (High levels of employee loyalty have been linked to an estimated 11% boost in productivity [Mayfield, 2000]). Commitment also explains more than 34% of employee turnover. And this outcome can cost organizations an estimated 100% to 150% of the departing worker's annual salary (Cascio, 1998). Furthermore, loyal workers enhance an organization's reputation in the job market; and this elevated status helps to recruit better employees (Goman, 1991). These valuable benefits of employee loyalty can only be achieved through high levels of effective leader communication. Research strongly suggests that worker performance, job satisfaction, and retention are all influenced by relations with his/her immediate supervisor (Goman, 1991; Graen & UhlBien, 1995; Robbins, 2001). Such positive relations depend largely on competent leadership skills, many of which are firmly grounded in communication abilities including listening/feedback, coaching, and information-sharing (Goleman, 1998; Goleman, 2000; Robbins, 2001). Fortunately, these skills can be learned. Research also shows that leader communication abilities can be improved as a result of training, and this improvement positively effects the performance of direct reports (Goleman, 1998; Scandura and Graen, 1984).

 Moreover, communication is a powerful catalyst for establishing and sustaining trust, the emotional state that is shared by highly committed workers and leaders. Leader communication is the bridge that transmits behavioral intent to employees, thus creating the foundation for trust. In their recent book, Trust and Betrayal in the Workplace, noted organizational development experts, Dennis and Michele Reina, define trust as a "relationship of mutual confidence in contractual performance, honest communication, expected competence, and a capacity for unguarded interaction" (Reina & Reina, 1999, p.10).

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