

The Impact of Communication in Strategic Management of the Organizations

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Abstract

Communication is the process of sending information from one person to another so that we can receive them in any manner we want. The main objective of this study is to find out the relationship between effective communication and strategic management in different organizations. Although effective communication plays a very important role in organizational success, it basically depends on the channels, methods, effectiveness and how much receptive are the superiors to the subordinates in an organization. Based on the findings, the work recommends those factors which promote warmth and cordiality that should be imbibed and cultivated. For the easy flow of communication, a simple organizational structure should be designed and implemented. And it is also expected that, the manager should treat the subordinates with humane in order to get the best from them. The study concludes that effective communication is the 'Lifeline' of an organization and that efficient and effective communication is influenced by the positivity of our organizations in achieving strategic goals.

Key words: organization, communication, message, subordinates, weapon, motivation.

I. Introduction

Communication is a basic organizational developmental weapon. It permeates every facet of the organization. It is a vital instrument for social interaction and a medium through which all relationships are established and maintained. Communication is the transmission of messages through the use of signs and symbols. The term communication is derived from the Latin word 'Communis' or 'Communicare', which means 'to share'. Sharing denotatively focuses on 'partaking' and 'co-operating'. Although it is a social activity, but unless a common understanding results from the transmission of symbols (verbal or non-verbal), there is no communication, (Donnelly, Gibson and Ivancerich, 1984:34). Effective managerial communication is quite essential for organizational goal or achievement. Managers who are striving to become better communicators must accomplish two separate tasks; first, they must improve their ability of sending a message – the information they wish to transmit and second, they must improve their capacity of understanding of what people are trying to communicate to them; they must strive not only to be understood by others, but also to understand others. While an organization has its physical setting, objective and purpose, the members of the organization have their individual objectives also. All these interplay in organizational setting, creating what we refer to as organizational climate. However, ineffective communication in an organization may result in uncertainty, apprehension and dissatisfaction, and these results to poor productivity. It is therefore necessary for the managers to communicate effectively with the employees. The extent to which corporate goals are achieved by the manager, depend on his ability to communicate effectively (Herich, 2008). The fact remains that many executives till date does not understand the meaning of communication and its role in the success of an enterprise (Nnamseh, 2009:114). Effective communication helps in developing organizational relationship and minimizing strikes and lockouts. Sometimes, when communication is not effective organizational purposes and goals are defeated. By the quality and quantity of information flowing through its personnel, the success of an organization is recognized. In today's business world, information is expected to flow faster than ever before. A little delay might even cause a great loss. It so happens that in large organizations, it is essential for a professional, who plays a key role in the organization, to inform oneself about the smooth operation of the various departments and for performing excellently in the market. Due to gaps in communication, wastes and

costly mistakes have been made. From the above scenario, a critical assessment of the role of communication in strategic management of an organization is the need of the hour.

In an organizational performance, communication plays an important function. Getting the message across effectively and having it understood is prerequisite to progress. There is no point in moving forward if the basic message is lost, or there are barriers in the process. This quickly reminds us of the biblical story of the construction of the Tower of Babel, the execution of which was a total failure because the builders could not communicate among themselves. Business organizations exist for the purpose of achieving predetermined goals and objectives. Actualization of these objectives ultimately requires a manager working with and through people. In this context, communication plays a vital role in the attainment of these goals. Its failure could then be traceable to poor application of communication. Incidentally, some managers do not often realize that communication is the vehicle that drives all the managerial functions. Success or failure of managerial functions depends to a great extent on the role of communication in the organization.

II. Objectives of the Study:

To determine the role of communication in the strategic management of the organization is one of the major objectives of this study. Other specific objectives are:

- a) To assess the impact of communication, in order to achieve strategic goals of various organizations.
- b) To unmask the most suitable pattern of communication adopted by the organization.
- c) To point out the barriers to effective communication.

Definition of Communication and Strategic Management:

The word 'Communication' has been defined differently by various intellectuals in a very different way. It has been used in every aspect of life including domestic, business and social interactions.

In 'Human Behavior at Work', Keith Davis defines communication as, "The transfer of information and understanding from one person to another person". It is a medium through which we can connect others by facts, ideas, thoughts, and values. Communication forms a bridge of meanings amongst people so that their feelings can be shared and known. By using the bridge, the river of misunderstanding can be crossed by the person that sometimes separates the people.

Peter Little, in his book, 'Communication In Business', defines "Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and/or organizations so that an understanding response results." Similarly, Anugwom(2007) defines communication as, "the use of words, signs and symbols to interchange ideas, emotions, facts and information by two or more persons". Nwokeneme(2008) also defines communication as, "a process that involves the transmission of message or information through a channel from a sender to a receiver". Adams and Ebert (1985:536) defines it as a "continuous process of thinking through the current mission of the organization, thinking through the environmental conditions, and then combining these elements by setting forth a guide for tomorrow's decisions and results". In a wider sense, communication is a process by which information is passed through individual and organization by means of previously agreed symbols. Inyang and Esu, (2003) defines communication as the process of transmitting meaning from sender to receiver. Other scholars such as Dessler (2004:94-110), Adams (2006:16-24) and Smith (2008:42-51) agree that communication is an exchange and transmission of meaning. Similarly, according to Imaga (2003:75) strategic management, usually mean the strategic approach to organizing, staffing, directing, leading, controlling and coordinating the activities of organizations like the public enterprise and parastatals with a view to achieving the optimally designed goals with the minimum possible resources at the quickest possible time.

III. Communication works as an important tool for the achievement of Strategic Goals in an Organization:

Strategic management plays a very vital role in an organization, which helps in determining how it will seek to achieve the long term objectives spelled out in its mission statement. Thus a strategic plan, which can later be developed into a complete and comprehensive business plan, is a design for action (Ezeh, 1999:91). For an organizational success, a strategic plan is utmost necessary. The dynamic element of management helps the company to achieve its result in the competitive world over the long run. The strategic dimension of

management has grown its importance over the last few years, due to the increasing complexity of modern business organization. Ohmae (1982) has criticized that, “what business strategy is all about, in a word... ‘Competitive advantage’. Without competitors, there would be no need for strategy, for the sole purpose of strategic planning is to enable the company to gain, as efficiently as possible, a sustainable edge over its competitors.” As Imaga (2001:62) rightly puts it, “it is not how much a manager says, but what he says that matters.” That is why Nnamseh (2009:116) sees communication as, “the means through which members of an organization relate with one another by interchanging ideals, facts and feeling through the use of words, letters, memorandum, symbols and bulletins”. Against this backdrop, communication and achievement in business sectors are said to be two sides of the same coin. In order to attain organizational objectives, the manager must transmit ideals, attitude, information, and feelings through the process of communication.

From the various discussions, it could be found out that, communication includes a lot more than exchange of ideas with people of various sectors. It must be marked that, for making communication meaningful and complete, the element of feedback is quite important. Feedback helps the sender to know whether the manner the message has been received is the same with that it has been sent and correctly interpreted to fulfill the objective it was intended. Managers are very effective up to the extent that they can transmit instructions feelings, and ideals within and outside organization through communication. Skills and knowledge are being transferred by management for the execution of strategic tasks through communication only. According to Lawson,(2006:67), ‘he posits that the actual word used in communication conveys 7 percent of the meaning, the tone 38 percent, while the body language conveys 55 percent of the meaning.’ Therefore, the most vital part of effective communication is not what you say, but the way how you say it and the attitude you adopt when you deliver it.

In attempting to justify the role of communication that plays in the achievement of strategic goals of the organization, Nwachukwu (1999) pointed out two key managerial skills facilitated by communication; namely, the provision of a vehicle by which a plan of action can be motivated and the provision of a means through which one can motivate the members of the organization to execute corporate plans willingly and enthusiastically. Therefore it follows that, the issue of orders and the response for participation, totally depends on communication. He then identified four major functions of communication in management, and they are as follows:

- Information function: Communication helps in providing data needed for making decisions.
- Motivational function: Communication helps in expressing feelings and satisfying social goals.
- Communication serves as the life line of an organization, because by this, employees understand their roles and responsibilities in a system.
- Effective control of organizational activities may be instituted by using this weapon. It could be concluded from the above that, organizational functions and operations, which are usually performed by the employees of various organizations are achieved using the effective use of communication as an indispensable part.

IV. Types of Communication:

There are two basic types of communication namely: verbal and non-verbal communication

- **Verbal Communication:** It stands both for oral as well as written word that is being used for the communication process.
 - **Oral Communication:** When there is a face-to-face interaction between the receiver and the sender that is known as an oral communication. For instance: making of presentations, delivering speech, gossiping with somebody, participating in a group discussion are some of the examples of oral communication.
 - **Written Communication:** When the sender sends the message by using a written mode for the transmission of messages that is known as written communication. For instance: writing letters, e-mails, reports, proposals, journals, books, etc. are some of the examples of written communication.

In other words, oral messages, when translated into alphabetic symbols, words, and sentences, become written messages.

- **Non-verbal Communication:** When the message is transferred from the sender to the receiver without using a word, is known as a non-verbal communication. It is again categorized into body language and paralinguistic features.
 - **Body Language:** As far as body language is concerned, it involves personal appearance, posture, gesture, eye contact, facial expression and space distancing.
 - **Kinesics:** The branch related to speech is known as kinesics.
 - **Oculesics:** The branch related to eye behavior is known as oculesics.
 - **Proxemics:** The branch related to space is known as promexics.
 - **Chronemics:** the branch related to the use of time, which includes the waiting time, punctuality, etc., is known as chronemics.
 - **Olfactics:** The perception of smell and scent is known as olfactics.
 - **Paralinguistic Features:** It includes voice modulation, pitch, volume, rate, pauses, etc.

V. Barriers and Problems for managing Effective Communication in an Organization:

Now when a question arises, 'why does communication breakdown?' the answer is comparatively easy. Adirika, Ebue and Nnolim (1996:91) have focused on various elements of communication as the sender, encoding, message, media, decoding, receiver, response and feedback. If noise takes place in these elements in any way, it affects the clarity of the meaning. To Inyang et al (2003), communication is considered effective "when the message is transmitted and received in an atmosphere of excellent interpersonal relations, mutual trust, and safety and the messages are unhindered and understood as contracted by the sender."

From the above, it therefore follows that, anything short in any case implies ineffective communication or that there's a barrier. There are several barriers to communication and they are as follows:

1. Physical Barriers:

a) Noise

b) Information overload

2. Semantic and Language Barriers

3. Socio-psychological Barriers

a) Resistance to change

b) Closed mind

c) Poor communication skills

d) Status block

e) Filtering

f) Defensiveness

g) Selective perception

h) Self- image

4. Organizational Barriers

5. Cross-cultural Barriers

a) Language values and norms of behavior

b) Concepts of space

c) Non-verbal communication

d) Thinking process

VI. Overcoming the Barriers to Effective Communication:

It is the duty of all the managers to minimize the barriers to communication as much as possible. Communication, as far as an organization is concerned may flow in any direction, i.e., bottom to top (upward communication), top to bottom (downward communication), same level (horizontal), and (diagonal communication), that flows in all the directions. It may also flow in all directions informally, i.e., grapevine communication. 'At each level of management, there is lateral or horizontal communication.' (Unamka and Ewurum, 1995:70). To overcome barriers to effective communication, various opinions are suggested by Hambagda (2000), Hybels and Weaver (1992). They include:

I. Information overload should not be entertained. The quantity of message transmitted should be the same with that of the quantity the recipient can decode and interpret.

II. In order to prevent misunderstanding, messages should be repeated. Lawson, 2006:30) advised that, 'problems should always be communicated quickly; because a delay costs money.'

III. In order to transmit information, an appropriate channel of communication needs to be selected. Choosing of different channels is the function of the nature of the message that is to be transmitted.

IV. After giving feedback of a message, communication can be considered to be complete. It should be encouraged in order to make a successful communication.

VII. Importance of Strategic Management towards Business and Why Strategic Management Fails:

Research findings in different parts of Europe and America shows that, those firms, who strategically plan are said to be more exact in predicting the outcome of major strategic action and outperformed non planners as against different financial criteria. Against this backdrop, we identified certain major benefits of strategic management towards a business organization, and they are as follows:

- Strategic management in an organization helps it to remain focused.
- It helps them in moving a direction amidst changes and distractions in order to achieve a clear goal and objectives.
- Strategic management also helps the business organizations continuously in order to help their target market.
- Further, strategic management plays a major role in involving all the departments and parts of an organization. It is both systematic as well as holistic in nature. Consequently, it gives assurance that different parts and segments leads towards the same direction.
- It is believed that strategic management plays a very vital role in implanting the process itself and it also explicit the output of that process.
- Further, strategic management is a golden opportunity to involve different pillars of management in the process. It not only encourages commitment towards the participating managers, it also minimizes the resistance to change.
- Lastly, strategic management is comparatively more systematic and careful approach towards a change. When objectives of the organization is stated, the next phase in the formation of the strategy is to find out the ways how the objectives can be found out, as a result Ezigbo, (2011:352) identified major reasons in order to find out , why strategic management fails, and they are:
 - Failure to understand the customers
 - Inability to predict environmental reaction
 - Over-estimation of resource competence
 - Failure to coordinate
 - Failure to obtain senior management commitment
 - Failure to obtain employee commitment
 - Failure to manage change
 - Failure to focus
 - Poor communication

VIII. Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations:

Findings

The study brought to light that every organization, irrespective of its structure and size is built on the foundation on effective communication: survey result also implies that there is a unanimous acceptance on the consequence of communication in attaining corporate readiness. Also, in the organization, it was observed that basically, three patterns of communication were used (upward, downward and horizontal), but the downward communication pattern was given more emphasis than the other two. The study also says that a hindrance to communication may be created between superiors and subordinates, since status is being maintained between them.

Conclusions

Realistically, one of the most essential weapons for the strategic management of different organization is an effective communication. No doubt about the fact that, poor and ineffective communication results in loss of customers, low productivity, low turnover, absenteeism, and conflict. This concludes that effective communication is the skeleton of an organization and also the tipping point, in which the wheel of an

organization moves. It is a medium by which the behavior of a person is modified, this affects the performance and the objective is also achieved by it, which at last helps in the growth of the organization.

Recommendations

After certain consideration of the research findings and conclusions, the work recommends that, a simple organizational structure should be mapped out and practiced for easy flow of communication. The three types of communication, i.e., upward, downward, and horizontal flow of information are comparatively better and easier in an organization. Managers are always advised to spend much time with the subordinates, when necessary, in communicating with them verbally because it enhances proper understanding of the message. In addition to this, it is the duty of managers to use feedback while communicating with their subordinates; since that will help out to understand whether the message that was received as intended, which will at last help them a lot for the growth of the organization. Finally, for communication, it is always advised to both the sender and the receiver to use very common and familiar words or languages. And this will definitely minimize different barriers to communication.

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