

The Essence of Communication and its Operationalisation on Managerial Effectiveness

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Abstract

Effective communication can help an organisation to build solid foundation within its most important resources: human resources. This in turn can improve trust between management and employees, improve mutual respect and better understanding in the organisation, create an environment fertile for learning and development and achieve set goals as a team. This study therefore sets to explore the communication effectiveness in organisation. The study seeks to generate an understanding of the essence of communication. Effective communication is an essential ingredient to organisational success. Communication is a central feature of organisations. Traditionally, communication as a managerial function was seen as an important task for managers in their quest to achieve efficient and effective performance in organisations. Using the theoretical method of inquiry. The research will review the relevant literature in order to assess the essence of communication for organisation effectiveness.

Keywords- Effective communication, organisation success, organisation effectiveness, human resources, managerial functions

1. Introduction

Communication is a central feature of organisations. Traditionally, communication as a managerial function was seen as an important task for managers in their quest to achieve efficient and effective performance in organisations. In fact, every managerial function and activity in Henri Fayol's Theory of Classical Management – planning, organizing, leading and controlling – involves communication of some kind. Thus, managerial decisions are only effective if they are shared, and understood by those responsible in implementing them. The goal of organisational communication has progressed over time from approaches that instilled hierarchical top-down flow of information from management to employees, to later approaches that encapsulated feedback, conversation and upward communication which borrowed heavily from the Scientific School of Management and McGregors Theory X and has progressed to being seen as encapsulating feedback, through achievement of mutual understanding and through simultaneous encoding and decoding of messages. Managers have become increasingly aware that employee motivation and satisfaction rely on effective communication. Therefore, communication plays a vital role in building and maintaining workplace relationships (Borkowski 2009).

1.1 Research objective

Effective communication is an essential ingredient to organisational success. Yet there often exists a multiplicity of barriers of communication that collectively work to impede effective exchange of information and mutual understanding between parties of a communication exchange – managerial leadership and operational level employees, and indeed within each of the two groups above.

2. Organisational Communication (Theoretical research framework)

The concept of organisational communication is formed at the intersection of two separate concepts – organisation and communication – both ubiquitous in human existence. While a number of aspects of communication as a singular term has already been sketched in previous sections of this chapter, in particular definitions in section 2.3, and the communication process in section 2.4, these were largely made in a generic sense rather than specific focus on organisations. Organisations pervade human existence. Organisations can be defined as “a group of two or more people working together in a predetermined method to attain a set of goals” (Mukherjee and Basu, 2005:3). For Mukherjee and Basu (2005:3) the most important distinguishing feature of organisations is deliberate design and the achievement of specific goals. Miller (2012) identifies five critical distinguishing features of organisations namely: “the existence of a social collectivity, organisational and individual goals, coordinating activities, organisational structure and the embedding of the organisation within an environment of other organisations”.

2.1 External organisational communication

Organisations operate within the setting of an external environment comprised of clients, suppliers, competitors, general public, communities, government, and other organisations. Organisations communicate with these external stakeholders through the use of advertising, meetings, letters and public relations campaigns. Organisations in Southern Africa, for example, are striving to survive in an atmosphere of strikes, threats and violence, which is why external communication is very vital (Fielding, 2006). Communication are annual reports, forms, newsletters, public meetings, awareness campaigns, advertisements, bylaws amongst others.

2.2 Internal organisational communication

This involves communicating inside the organisation, with colleagues, supervisors and other departments. This study is located within internal communication function of organisational communication theory. Internal organisational communication can flow in either of the following directions:

2.2.1 Upward communication

When, within an organisation, information is given to superiors by their subordinates, it is known as upward communication. Employees across every organisation possess knowledge the organisation needs to execute its strategies and achieve results. It does not help the organisation if that knowledge is never shared and applied (Matha and Boehm, 2008). Upward communication can function as a rich wellspring of new thoughts and imaginative critical thinking, the reason being that workers in the lower sections of a hierarchy are nearer to particular issues and might be cognisant of practical solutions rather than people situated higher in the hierarchy (Eunson, 2007). Upward communication is formal and official in nature. Examples of upward communication are suggestions, complaints and feedback.

2.2.2 Downward communication

Mainly used to transfer messages from the prominent to the less prominent. Information flows from employees in higher levels of the organisation to those at lower levels (Eunson, 2007). This information includes the organisation's policies, procedures, manuals, work instructions and any kind of information needed to conduct work in an organisation. Downward communication occurs after upward communications have been successfully established.

2.2.3 Horizontal communication

Refers to communication between employees at identical levels of the organisational hierarchy (Eunson, 2007). It is a lateral or diagonal exchange of messages amongst between peers, equals or counterparts in an organisation. Horizontal communication usually involves the coordination of information, enabling co-operation and collaboration between employees with a similar ranking or level within the organisation.

2.2.4 Importance of horizontal communication

- Facilitates coordination between interrelated units.
- Supports collective problem solving.
- Promotes interdepartmental work teams.
- Enables the sharing of knowledge and experience.

2.2.5 Cross channel communication

Refers to the interchange of information between employees situated in varying work units or departments within the same organisation, who are neither subordinates, peers, nor superior to one another.

2.2.6 The importance of organisational communication

The ability to communicate effectively is essential to all organisations. Communication is crucial for the existence of organisations; similarly, collaborative employees who are well-motivated are vital to their organisation (Fielding, 2006). Significance of communication can be understood from the following points.

2.3 Communication models

Earlier in this chapter communication was described communication as a transaction. This definition implies that both the sender and the receiver must collaborate to create and discern meaning. The sender does not simply hand meaning over to the receiver as it would be the case when a presenting a gift to be unwrapped. Researchers in the field of communication have thus developed models to consult when analysing the key elements of the communication process. This chapter will utilise two communication models: the first model being linear and the second model being convergence.

2.3.1 The linear model

The linear model assists in the analysis of the key elements in the process of communication. This model illustrates a systematic perspective of communication. The system incorporates a set of interrelated and interdependent elements which work collaboratively for a unique purpose.

2.4. Ineffective communication

Refers to an interference or failure within the communication process and can lead to:

2.4.1 Workplace conflict

If not settle in a timely manner, differences in opinions and disagreements can heighten to grave conflict within the work environment. Workplace conflict often happens in situations where communication is evaded with the expectation that unresolved issues will simply disappear, however, avoidance worsens the situation. Communication enables the resolution of misunderstandings the settlement of issues. Parties involved often blow the situation out of proportion in their minds.

2.4.2 Decreased morale

Similar to all people, employees require and discover channels to express their thoughts and emotions. Managers should not hold the assumption that a lack of employee complaints signifies a positive circumstance. Employees might express themselves through alternative channels; for example, gatherings with fellow workers, meetings with representatives from trade unions; or through passive-aggressive conduct, for example, go-slows, carelessness, lateness, absenteeism, and disregard. These can be indications that workers feel alternative methods for cooperation are inaccessible to them (Brennan, 1974). The greatest aftermath of inadequate workplace communication is the gradual decrease in employee morale to an extent where their care for the organisation diminishes. Employees will continue to carry out their work duties, however, they will only aim to achieve the minimum requirement. Employees will display a lack of enthusiasm and withhold additional efforts ultimately decreasing their productivity. Should this attitude spread across the entire organisation, the problem will become incurable.

2.4.3 Decreased innovation

Inadequate communication abilities result into deficient management of crucial projects; this can hinder an organisation's ability to innovate as well as the capability to contribute positively to society. Innovative ability corresponds with to the ability to impart direction as well as the ability to convey new and invigorating improvements and concepts. It is crucial to note that the phenomenon of innovation is not a naturally-occurring one. Similar to a plant, innovation demands appropriate nutrients so as to flourish, this includes effective techniques and systems that promote unique levels of reasoning. Organisations can motivate their staff and sustain innovative work environments by advocating an open manner for employees to transfer ideas with other employees at all organisational levels.

2.4.4. Poor decision-making

Poor decision-making, at times, is a consequence of insufficient details required to make rational and sound decisions. Decision-making is a process which requires a concise envisioning of an organisation's values, mission and goals so as to precisely identify:

2.4.5 Increased stress

Stress is considered as coercion from a domain rather than internal individual strain. The widely acclaimed definition in modern times is a definition which relates to the manner in which individuals interact with situations. Stress refers to the psycho-physical state that occurs when an individual's resources are insufficient to adapt to the requests and pressures of their circumstance. Subsequently, stress is situational and individual phenomenon probable in particular circumstances than others and in particular people than others. Stress can impede the accomplishment of objectives, for individuals as well as organisations (Michie, 2002). Stress is a typical reaction to everyday occasions in the work environment. However, inadequate communication lead to increased stress levels due to superfluous concern and worry over genuine or perceived issues of the workplace. The inability to foresee future outcomes due to a lack of communication can result into increased stress levels.

2.4.6 Mistakes

Most employee errors originate from lack of comprehension, as opposed to the act of consciously making mistakes. Insufficient understanding arises from inadequate communication. When an employee does not comprehend instructions, they are likely to perform their task inaccurately even when they have been given logical, clear and concise instruction. Instead of being too petrified to ask, employees should be motivated to pose questions to their supervisors in cases where they do not comprehend something. Asking questions opens up paths of communication and aid in preventing misunderstandings of expected duties. Similarly, employees lacking effective communication skills are less likely to request for assistance and clarification. Inadequate communication leads to misconceptions often leading to mistakes.

2.5 Causes of ineffective communication (Barriers)

Barriers to communication can arise at all the stages of the communication process (comprised of sender, receiver, encoding, message, decoding, channel and feedback). Communication barriers have the capacity to create confusion and misunderstanding.

3-Conclusion and Recommendations

During the study it was established that certain areas provide opportunities for further research:

Due to the important role external stakeholders' play in determining service delivery successes in organisations and related companies, it is proposed that a study be undertaken on eMIS system, to understand the benefits and dis-benefits that the system has for the organisations and for the community they are servicing. It is recommended that a study be undertaken to investigate policies on employee motivation with an aim to improve performance and productivity. The language used in existing policies to be reviewed as well, to ensure common understanding by all.

Conclusion

The study found that, there are several barriers to communication in organisations and related companies. This paper revealed that employees of the same level share similar challenges however on the other hand challenges on each level differ. Employees are also not fully aware of what the other levels are experiencing due to different working environments they are exposed to. Therefore,

Stakeholders (internal and external) play a significant role to determine if communication is effective or not. Also, it was noticed that, there are always challenges in organisations but employees are not aware that their challenges are results of gaps in communication.

3. Reference

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