

Communication and Corporate -A Managerial Approach

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Communication is the process of transferring meanings. In a business setting this process sometimes accounts for the difference between success and failure and also profit and loss. This fact is now being recognized by both the corporate community and business schools. It is becoming clear to all the concerned parties that communication is critical to the effective functioning of modern business enterprises.

The Importance of Communication

Effective business communication is important both to the individual and to modern organization.

Helping You- Good communication skills often make the difference between being hired and fired. A well written resume and cover letter, and a convincing interview, can get you the job you want even though more qualified people had applied for it. And once you start working, you'll find that good verbal and nonverbal communication enables you to interact effectively with others and get work done efficiently. A good writing skill also draws attention to you and increases your chances of promotion. Good communication skills can help you in a variety of ways in your career: advance you socially (i.e. make useful contacts), build your self confidence, enable you to help and lead others.

Helping the Organization- By improving your communication skills you help not only yourself but the entire organization. That's because as an employee you form a link in the organization's information chain. Your ability to receive, evaluate, use, and pass on information gathered from inside and outside the organization affects your company's effectiveness. Managers rely on such information from their employees to take suitable and necessary action.

Communication per se can also help an organization by boosting employee morale. By keeping employees informed about what is going on, involving them in decision making, and getting feedback from them in decision making, and getting feedback from them regarding their opinions attitudes and suggestions, managers can raise employee morale. As a result, employees are more willing to assume responsibility and support management's effort.

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The Basic Forms of Communication

Communication is essential for the functioning of an organization. Every day a vast amount of information flows from managers to employees, employees to managers, and from employee to employee. Apart from this internal communication, a considerable amount of information is also carried in and out of the organization. This communication, internal and external, takes place in a nonverbal and verbal manner: through gestures, expressions, meetings, listening, speaking and writing.

NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The most basic form of communication is nonverbal communication: all the cues, gestures, vocal qualities, spatial relationships, and attitudes towards time that allow us to communicate without words. These nonverbal cues are used to express superiority, dependence, dislike, respect, love and a host of other feeling and attitudes. Non Verbal Communication is less structured, which makes it more difficult to study. It differs from verbal communication in terms of intent and spontaneity.

For e.g.- We generally plan our words, so when we say something we have a conscious purpose. However, when we communicate nonverbally, we sometimes do so unconsciously. We don't mean to raise an eyebrow or blush- those actions come naturally. Without our consent, our faces express our emotions.

Non Verbal cues are especially important for conveying feelings. Not surprisingly, we have more faith in nonverbal cues than we do in verbal messages.

For e.g.- If a personal says one thing but transmits a conflicting message nonverbally, we almost invariably believe the nonverbal signal. To a great degree, then, an individual's credibility as a communicator depends on nonverbal messages.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Verbal Communication consists of words arranged in meaningful patterns. To express a thought, words are arranged according to the rules of grammar, with the various parts of speech arranged in the proper sequence. The message composed is then transmitted in spoken or written form to the appropriate audience.

Speaking and Writing:

Business people tend to prefer oral communication channels to written ones. It is generally quicker and more convenient to talk to somebody than to write a memo or letter. Besides, when you are speaking or listening, you can pick up added meaning from nonverbal cues and benefit from immediate feedback.

On the other hand, relying too heavily on oral communication can cause problems in organizations. As organizations grow and the number of employees increases, keeping everyone adequately informed by word of mouth becomes difficult. Therefore for maximum impact, business people should use both written and spoken channels.

For e.g.- One company used multiple channels when it chose the multimedia approach to explain its new employee- benefits plan. Employees received a printout their benefits, a computer disk, brochures, and a take home video. They also attended special face to face training meetings and were even access to a hotline. With so many choices available, employees were able to use the media they felt most comfortable with.

Listening- Business people spend a considerable amount of time receiving information. Effective business communication thus depends not only on skill in receiving information. Unfortunately, most of us aren't very good listeners. Immediately after hearing a 10 minute speech, we typically remember only half of what was said. A few days later, we have forgotten most of the message. And, to make matters worse, we probably didn't even grasp the subtle, underlying meaning when we heard the speech. To some extent, our listening problems stem from our education, or lack of it.

Listening suffers from many barriers like

- Physiological Barriers, for example-hearing impairment and speaking- thinking rate.
- Environmental Barriers, for example- physical distortions, message overload.
- Attitudinal Barriers, for example- prejudices, preoccupation, a casual attitude, egocentrism.

Today, every business organization is laying high emphasis on communication. They desire that their employees should be effective in communication skills and competent enough to face the internal and external environment with confidence, knowledge and a better approach. Effective communication is not just about talking and listening. In an organization its largely about building team oriented relationships marked by co-operation, honesty and mutual respect. After all, no man works alone in the workplace. He has to work with others. And his success in the workplace depends largely on how well he communicates with them as a group. These skills are often referred to as "**people skills**" or "**interpersonal skills**" determine the quality of his relationship.

The ability to work well with others is no longer merely an additional asset for a manager in organization. It is one of those vital abilities that sometimes make the difference between success and failure.

Acc. To Lee Iacocca- *"There's one phrase I hate to see on any executive's evaluation, no matter how talented he may be, and that's the line .He has trouble getting along with other people. To me that's the kiss of death. The quality of the personal relationships in an organization determines the communication climate is a positive one."*

Psychologist Jack Gibb provides a list of ways to promote positive relationships.

- **Use Descriptive ‘I’ Language.**

For e.g.- You never come to office on time.

You Language verbally accuses the receiver.

Now look at this sentence.

Since you’ve been coming in late, I’ve had to make a lot of excuses whenever the Director asks for you. I’m uncomfortable with that. Here too the speaker is pointing out to someone that he is coming in late and that this is not acceptable.

- **Focus on Solving Problems, not Controlling Others.**

Look at these two sentences-

- 1) If you continue to come late to work I will have to sack you.
- 2) Let’s try to figure out why you have difficulty coming to the office on time and see what we can do about it.

The first sentence shows little regard for the other person’s needs, while the second recognizes that there is a problem and suggests that it can be solved through joint effort.

- **Be Open: Don’t try to deceive.**

Being open in communication is likely to generate less defensiveness. Even though others may not always like what you say, they will eventually grow to respect your candor.

- **Show Empathy.**

Lack of understanding, interest or concern always creates defensiveness. Imagine yourself in the shoes of the secretary whose boss tells her:

I don’t care what your problems are, get this job done by the end of the day.

Wouldn’t this kind of a message make you feel that you were being treated as an object rather than as a person with real feelings? By contrast, when you empathize with your listener, you show concern for his opinions and assure him that he is valued.

Now look at the same message rephrase: “I hope it will not be too difficult for you to complete this job today.”

- **Don’t Put on an Air of Superiority:**

The supervisor who tells his subordinate, Do it this way because, I’m the boss and I say so, is likely to antagonize his staff. The supervisor who says, How do you think we should handle this problem, is likely to get greater support from his staff.

- **Listen with an Open mind:**

It’s always a good idea to hear out what others have to say with an open mind.

For e.g.- You discuss the report with your supervisor, and before you’ve finished your first sentence, the supervisor says, “Moving the plant would be a stupid idea.”

Wouldn’t you feel that the supervisor is a “ know it all”

Who is probably more interested in trying to assert his superiority than in looking at the facts?

On the other hand, if the supervisor says, I have already seen two reports on why the plant shouldn't be shifted, but may be your arguments will help us to look at the matter in a different perspective, you feel more comfortable, and because you are sure the supervisor will at least give your ideas a fair hearing.

- **Giving praise-** Praise, when used skillfully and when it is sincere, can go a long way toward establishing an enduring culture of motivation in an organization.
- **Make Praise Specific-** Praise becomes more meaningful when you spell out exactly what you appreciate.

For e.g.- Telling your sales officer, "You showed great ingenuity in dealing with that irate customer without losing your cool," tells him what exactly you appreciate about the way he handled the complaint.

- **Praise Progress, Not Just Perfection-** Don't wait for a person to turn in an outstanding piece of work before you praise him. Chances are, you may never get a chance to do so. Instead, focus on the progress the person makes.
- **Be Sincere-** Praise that is not sincere can be highly counterproductive.

In the words of BOB Nelson, founder of Nelson Motivation Inc, "Words alone can fall flat if you are not sincere in why you are praising someone. You need to praise because you are truly appreciative and excited about the other person's success. Otherwise, it may come across as a manipulative tactic- something you are doing only when you want an employee to work late.

- **Doesn't Overdo Praise-** Like all other good things, *praise* too can become inefficient if it is overdone? Constant praise becomes meaningless, as it sounds sincere.
- **Get The Timing Right-** Praise given as soon as an achievement is complete, or the desired behavior is displayed, is always more effective.

Another aspect of Communication Skill required in Corporate Houses, is to have good Negotiation Skills. When the parties involved in a conflict want to work toward an amicable resolution, they must engage in a communication process to decide what kind of a deal would be acceptable to both. In other words they must negotiate to reach an agreement. Here what is important is that all the parties concerned must put up or encourage proposals, not hold on to whatever grievances they have or whatever arguments they deem right. Arguments cannot be negotiated, only proposals Can. This demands that emotions be kept under control. Negotiating is a delicate process and a lot of thinking must go into it, both before it actually gets underway, and while it is going on.

Corporate has to frequently conduct interviews. Interviews can be conducted effectively only when there will be good communication between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is a goal-oriented, interpersonal communication between an interviewer and a respondent. It is primarily undertaken to accomplish a specific purpose, perhaps to obtain or provide information, to solve a problem, or to persuade someone to undertake some action. The style and structure of an interview depends on its purpose and on the relationship between the two parties involved. Business interviews may be Employment Interviews, Performance Appraisal Interviews, Counseling Interviews, Disciplinary Interviews and Persuasive Interviews.

The interviewer has to effectively plan the process of the interview so that the purpose of the interview should be fulfilled. While interviewing, the interviewer has to decide that what sort of information he wants from the respondent. Questions may be factual opinion based, primary and secondary questions, direct and indirect questions or analytical and hypothetical. The structure of the interview may be followed by the close-ended questions. Even the physical setting in which the interview takes place have a great deal of influence on the results.

The process of Communication has grown its root deeper and deeper in the every small and big organization. Good Communication skill is also required for writing business letters, reports, office memorandums, presentations, etc as it all has become the part of our daily job profile.

BARRIERS IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Every process deals with the cause and effect relationship. Communication in Corporate houses also suffers some barriers. Let us discuss them in short.

1). Problems Caused by the Sender- The sender is the individual who encodes the message. A number of barriers can prevent this individual from properly handling a communication task.

- First barrier is the amount of knowledge or information an individual has about the subject of the message.
- Second barrier is the sender by having excessive knowledge of the subject may detail and complex that is confusing.
- A third barrier is the indecision regarding selection of information, i.e. what should be included? What should be left out?
- A fourth barrier is the order of presentation, i.e. what should be presented first? What should come next?
- A fifth barrier is a lack of familiarity with the audience.
- A sixth barrier is a lack of experience in writing or speaking.

2). Problems in Message Transmission- Communication can also break down because of problems in transmission. One major problem is the number of transmission links. When a verbal message is transmitted through three or four different people before reaching its final destination, the message will most likely be

altered or changed through the stages in communication. This distortion of message occurs often in upward and communication.

Another major problem is the transmission of unclear or conflicting parts, the receiver may have trouble dealing with the communication.

3). Problems in Reception- Sometimes there are communication problems in reception. Communication scholars use the term '**noise**' to refer to factors that interfere with the exchange of messages.

Physical Noise- external sounds that distract communicators- falls into this category, but there are other types of external noise that don't involve sound.

A second kind of interference is caused by physiological noise. Hearing disorders fall into this category, as do illness and disabilities that make it difficult to receive messages.

The third type of interference is **psychological noise**, consisting of forces within the receiver that interfere with understanding. Egotism, defensiveness, hostility, preoccupation, fears all these and more constitute psychological noise.

4). Problems in Receiver Comprehension- There are a number of reasons for this. One is that he may not understand some of the words being used. This is a common problem when a company or industry uses technical terms that have special meaning for them.

Another problem arises from the involvement of personal interests.

DEALING WITH COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

The discussion done above, analyzed different communication situations, but they deal with communication situations, but they all have one common focus: how to deal with communication barriers. Although each communication situation is unique, there are some basic methods for dealing with communication barriers.

1). Know your Subject- Identify the topic you are going to discuss and find all you need to know about it. In particular, find out all the important, specific details, because without details it is not possible to guide or instruct anyone clearly.

2). Focus on the Purpose- To determine the type and amount of information you should include in your document (or presentation), you should know the purpose of your message. If you are writing a report on the consumer market for sports equipment but you don't know the purpose of report, it would be hard to determine what to include or exclude from the report. What sort of sports equipment should you cover?, etc.

3). Know your Audience- To convey your purpose effectively, you must know about and understand your audience. You need to know something about the biases, education, age, and status of your receiver to create an effective message.

4). Be Organized- Knowledge of the subject, purpose, and audience will also help you to organize your material in such a way that it conveys your message effectively.

For. E.g- If the receiver is not familiar with the subject you might have to first give some background information to accept a decision or take a certain course of action, you may first have to explain the rationale for your recommendation to convince the receiver and prevent an emotional response from him.

Thus, with the numerous examples and guidelines discussed, we can conclude that communication is the breath of the corporate industry. Communication can make or break the business. Communication help us to know and understand the feedback i.e. response which strongly builds positive and empathetical relationships. Therefore, the success doesn't lie today on just performing your tasks but how can you make a mark with your performance, knowledge, presentation and above all the most vital is to be an effective communicator.

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