

"Ups and Downs" and "Ins and Outs" of Organizational Communication

Marcel M. Robles

2019 President of Association for Business Communication (ABC), Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY, USA

Effective and efficient communication is of utmost importance for organizations to succeed. Communication is the process of creating; interpreting; and relaying ideas, facts, opinions, and feelings about work performance, organizational effectiveness, and efficiency (Markovic & Salamzedah, 2018). Effective verbal, nonverbal, and electronic communication is the exchange of meaning as it was intended and allows for the interchange of information to create a connected world.

Varying Communication Styles

Regardless if the communication is oral, written, or digital; the importance remains the same. Effective workplace communication among all stakeholders at all levels of the organization is essential for organizations to produce impactful outcomes (Ferrin, 2016; Jagadheeswari, Priya, & Gayathri, 2019; Leonard, 2019; Oñate, Cagiao, & Teixidó, 2019). Employees who demonstrate effective communication with employers, coworkers, and customers demonstrate a valuable skill and are seen as important assets within the organization (Michael Page, 2020). Successful companies know how to communicate internally and externally. They must understand the value of communication so that they can convey ideas to other companies, spread information about their products, and synchronize their own staff.

People have different communication styles. Vast and varied workplaces, with generational differences and ever changing technology, can create barriers for effective communication. For example, 31% of Millennials and 30% of Generation X use instant messaging at work every day, as opposed to 12% of Baby Boomers (Lewis, 2018; Plumberg, 2018). Further 47% of Baby Boomers never use social media; whereas, 53% of Millennials

use social media at least sometimes (Plumberg, 2018). This variation of communication preferences forces managers to adapt to the different generations who want to use the latest technology and those who do not readily embrace current technologies.

Ineffective Communication

Poor communication in today's workplace, with unclear instructions and responsibilities, meetings that serve no purpose, and other work stressors lead to larger issues with widespread impact on the organization (Lewis, 2018; Plumberg, 2018). The detriments of poor communication on an organization include overuse of resources, lower efficiency, lack of innovation (Oline, 2015), more errors, legal complications, recruitment issues, and adequate staffing problems (Buhler & Worden, 2013; Sherman, 2019). The possible monetary losses attributed to simple communication deficiencies are astounding. Grossman (2013) found an average loss per company of \$62.4 million per year because of inadequate communication with employees. Lam and Dale (1999) noted that even if suitable internal and external communication channels are in place, the lack of use of the communication channels leads to problems.

For example, forgetting to send important emails; shipment errors due to missed phone calls; or loss of sales due to miscommunication, or lack thereof, with customers and clients can have substantial negative impact on the organization's success (Oline, 2015). Even if the lack of communication is not because of the company's standard operating procedures, it is still the organization's responsibility to ensure that employees are obeying the requirements for strong communication. From not being told what to do, how to do it, or who is in charge of what, leads

to confused workers and managers who are unsure of their or company goals (Díaz-Soloaga, 2019).

The Economist Intelligent Unit found that 52% of workers indicated added stress because of poor communication, 44% noted that poor communication can slow or fail project completion, 31% indicated low morale, 25% said that performance goals are missed, and 18% said that ineffective communication can result in lost sales (Lewis, 2018; Plumberg, 2018). Lack of communication ranges from not answering emails to a lack of congruence in managers' conceptualization. One of these examples, the lack of using communication, is just one of many that can have damaging impacts on a company. Lack of communication creates distance and confusion among not only company-to-customer relations, but also company-to-employee relations. Without a strong requirement or standard of communication, ideas/information cannot be shared effectively or agreed upon.

Communication Strategies

According to Díaz-Soloaga (2019), implementation of specific communication strategies to transfer corporate identity successfully to team employees allows employees to coordinate meetings, broaden information, and develop managerial relationships. One solution to improve workplace communication is having a chosen medium to communicate. Since email is the most prevalent form of communication among the three dominant generations in the workplace (Plumberg, 2018), email is obviously the most effective form of communication within an organization.

Effectively communicating the mission, vision, values, and goals of the organization promotes understanding of procedures, timelines, and other criteria. Shareholders will then feel part of something larger; they will see the big picture, know their work is valued and respected, and see their investment flourish (Ferrin, 2016). Communication with employees, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders must be clear, concise, and correct. Managers must be able to communicate effectively for their organization to succeed (Morley, n.d.). One method to build effective communication among employees is to ensure that managers practice better planning techniques to clarify and understand their ideas and company goals before sharing with their employees. Managers should know exactly how the task is to be completed, what resources are needed, sequence of activities, and timeline to completion. Monitoring feedback and control procedures should also be followed (Adu-Oppong & Agyin-Birikorang, 2014). Keeping everyone involved and demonstrating active listening skills are critical aspects to en-

sure effective workplace communication.

Further benefits of effective communication include increased morale, decreased turnover, improved productivity, better team building, stronger corporate culture (CLIMB Professional Development and Training, 2019; Ferrin, 2016; LaMarco, 2018), and improved customer service (Marx, 2015). It is easier for stakeholders to support the success of the organization if they know what the company is currently doing, planning for the future, and aspiring to do. Companies with employees who are able to communicate effectively have positive outcomes (Brink & Costigan, 2015). With clear communication, employees have a better understanding of what is expected of them (Emerson, 2018), which increases performance rates (Brink & Costigan, 2015; Darling & Dannels, 2003; Sherman, 2019). Ultimately, effective communication can lead the organization to success and longevity (Buhler & Worden, 2013).

References

- Adu-Oppong, A. A., & Agyin-Birikorang, E. (2014). Communication in the workplace: Guidelines for improving effectiveness. *Global Journal of Commerce and Management Perspective*, 3(5), 208-213.
- Brink, K. E., & Costigan, R. D. (2015). Oral communication skills: Are the priorities of the workplace and AACSB-accredited business programs aligned? *The Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 14(2), 205-221.
- Buhler, P. M., & Worden, J. D. (2013). *Up, down, and sideways: High-impact verbal communication for HR professionals*. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.
- CLIMB Professional Development and Training. (2019, July 09). The 7 benefits of effective communication in personal and professional settings. Retrieved from <https://climb.pcc.edu/blog/the-7-benefits-of-effective-communication-in-personal-and-professional-settings>
- Darling, A. L., & Dannels, D. P. (2003). Practicing engineers talk about the importance of talk: A report on the role of oral communication in the workplace. *Communication Education*, 52(1), 1-16.
- Díaz-Soloaga, P. (2019). The role of communication in organizational culture: Is there a pattern in Spanish fashion companies? *El Profesional de La Información*, 28(5), 1-10.
- Emerson, T. (2018, May 27). 4 ways to communicate effectively. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/triciaemerson/2018/05/27/4-ways-to-communicate-effectively/#62ab37407590>
- Ferrin, S. D. (2016). Effective workplace communication: Promoting success through a culture of trust and belief. Retrieved

- from <http://www.wchra.org/resources/Pictures/WCHRA%20MMP%20Presentations/March%20MMP%20Effective%20Workplace%20Comm%20WCHRA%20032217.pdf>
- Grossman, D. (2013). The cost of poor communications: A business rationale for the communications competency. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/behavioral-competencies/communication/pages/the-cost-of-poor-communications.aspx>
- Jagadheeswari, R., Priya, V. V., & Gayathri, R. (2019). Awareness on influence of communication skills in career. *Drug Invention Today*, 11(8), 1933-1937.
- Lam, N. W. W., & Dale, B. G. (1999). Customer complaints handling system: Key issues and concerns. *Total Quality Management*, 10(6), 843-851.
- LaMarco, N. (2018, November 05). What are the benefits of business communication? *Chron*. Retrieved from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/benefits-business-communication-3194.html>
- Leonard, K. (2019, January 31). Types of business communications. *Chron*. Retrieved from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/types-business-communications-697.html>
- Lewis, D. (2018, July 17). How poor communication impacts the workplace. Retrieved from <https://www.coursehero.com/file/50738026/How-Poor-Communication-Impacts-the-Workplacedocx/>
- Markovic, M. R., & Salamzadeh, A. (2018, October). *The importance of communication in business management*. Paper presented at the 7th International Scientific Conference on Employment, Education and Entrepreneurship, At Belgrade, Serbia.
- Marx, W. (2015, October 13). The new rules of corporate communications: The communications challenges companies face these days are growing: Here's how to keep up. *Fast Company*. Retrieved from <http://www.fastcompany.com/3051881/the-new-rules-of-corporate-communications>
- Michael Page. (2020). The importance of good communication in the workplace. Retrieved from <https://www.michaelpage.co.uk/advice/management-advice/development-and-retention/importance-good-communication-workplace>
- Morley, M. (n.d.). The importance of communication in business management. *Chron*. Retrieved from <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-communication-business-management-20923.html>
- Odine, M. (2015). Communication problems in management. *Journal of Emerging Issues in Economics, Finance and Banking*, 4(2), 1615-1630.
- Oñate, C. G., Cagiao, P. V., & Teixidó, E. F. (2019). Effective communication models in advertising campaigns. A strategic analysis in the search for effectiveness. *Communication & Society*, 32(4), 109-124.
- Plumberg, K. (2018, March 26). Communication barriers in the modern workplace. *The Economist: Intelligence Unit*. Retrieved from <https://eiuperspectives.economist.com/strategy-leadership/communication-barriers-modern-workplace>
- Sherman, F. (2019, March 07). What are the benefits of effective communication in the workplace? *Chron*. Retrieved from <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/benefits-effective-communication-workplace-20198.html>

Marcel M. Robles

School of Business, College of Business & Technology,
Eastern Kentucky University
521 Lancaster Avenue, BTC 011, Richmond, KY 40475, USA
Tel: +1-859-622-1117, E-mail: marcel.robles@eku.edu