

## **Improving Organisational Communication in the Era of Globalisation**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The formation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the year 1995 with around 127 signatories and subsequent developments have intensified competition among countries and the business organisations all over the world. This development is accompanied by increased financial flow and opportunities for all. Survival of the fittest has, therefore, become the mantra in the new global world trade scenario. These developments have received a further boost from the use of information technologies (ICTs) in business operations. With growing competition, the concern for employee involvement has also been growing in business organisations. It is being realised that in a fiercely competitive world market, human resources play a very crucial role in giving an organisation an edge over its competitors. Efforts are therefore being made by organisations to increase communication with employees in the hope that this will increase their involvement in the organisation, thus helping the organisation to have a competitive advantage over its rivals. Communication matters because failures on this front can prove costly. They can lead to misinformation, which can then lead to disruption or stoppage of work. They can also upset the whole rhythm of production, lessening cooperation between employees and their supervisors and creating ill-feeling that causes a disruption in productivity. No organisation can afford this.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the new global world trade order, organisational communication has been attracting attention. Communication, particularly internal communication within an organisation, has always been considered important for increasing the

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involvement of employees in the affairs of an organisation, and the questions always asked were, what to communicate and how much to communicate.

However, things are changing now, more so, after the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 and the subsequent increase in competition worldwide for the expanding world market. Business establishments world over have now realised that to take advantage of the increasing opportunities and to get a competitive advantage over competitors, increased involvement of the employees through increased communication is essential.

Business organisations are established for making profit. In fact, profit is the predominant objective of a business organization and is essential for its survival. However, in the fast changing world trade scenario, business organisations have to strive harder by initiating organisational changes in various directions including the technical, financial, structural, cultural etc. Improving communication, particularly internal communication, has been found to be crucial for gaining the willing cooperation of employees and is instrumental in increasing their productivity and giving a competitive advantage to the organisation over its rivals.

### **COMMUNICATION MATTERS**

Communication, particularly, internal communication i.e. communication with employees at all levels, is very crucial. A failure on this front can prove very costly. It can lead to misinformation, which can

lead to disruption or stoppage of work, upsetting the whole rhythm of production. It can also lessen cooperation between employees and supervisors, creating ill-feeling between them in the process that can in turn lead to reduced productivity. Adequate communication leads to increased productivity through more effective work performance among employees through greater cooperation with supervisors and management.

To get willing cooperation from employees, it is also essential to communicate to them what the organisation thinks of them and what their prospects are within the organisation.

To get greater cooperation and involvement from employees, it is necessary to tell them:

- Why they are doing the job
- What they are expected to do and why
- How they are performing against the targets set

### **WHAT TO COMMUNICATE?**

In former times it was said: "Tell your subordinates what you think will interest them; skip all the boring stuff." However this does not sound like good advice now, as by following it, the communicator may miss many things which subordinates need to understand. Also, he may tell them many things, which, though interesting, may be of little relevance.

The primary message that needs to be communicated to employees include:

- Everything that will enable them to better perform their jobs
- Everything that concerns their rewards related to the job
- In a group, people benefit from hearing answers to the questions of others
- Timid people who are too shy to ask questions benefit from the questions asked by others

It is in the interest of the organisation that such matters are communicated in time to employees.

### COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

Communication with employees can be effected in the following ways:

- Face to face communication
- Discussion with staff representatives
- In-house journals and notice-boards

It is important to decide on the method to be used and to be aware of what can be communicated through it. This, naturally, will depend on the matter to be communicated and the number of employees to whom it is to be communicated. It has been observed that communication often breaks down because managers and supervisors either use wrong methods or try to communicate the wrong type of information through a particular method.

All methods of communication have their advantages and disadvantages, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. However, of the three methods, face-to-face communication seems to be vital and more beneficial as:

- Explanations to a small group is more fruitful and less time consuming

However, in a large organisation, a judicious combination of all the three methods is essential.

### WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written communication plays a very important role in the larger communication network of an organisation. Official written communication includes memos, letters, D.O. letters, notices etc. All of these have different purposes.

Managers and those in positions of authority at different levels have to shoulder this responsibility. It is important that they are careful in communicating through this mode and give sufficient thought before sending out messages. Before using this mode, they should ask themselves questions such as:

- Who will receive the communication?
- How will he/she react?
- Will it serve the intended purpose?
- Can it do any harm, if the message is not conveyed correctly or misunderstood?

To ensure that the intended purpose is served, the communicator has to master

the art of giving clear and precise orders, so worded that no one could possibly misunderstand, misinterpret or distort them. A good communication can help the employee act with greater precision and success. However, if what a communicator writes is not clear, the reader will not know what the communicator wants of him. Also, if the orders are confusing, the reader will waste time figuring out what the communicator means, or he will have to send the orders back to the communicator for clarification. A written communication is the expression of thought. It is not simply an act of writing; it has to be preceded by careful thinking.

#### **ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF WRITTEN COMMUNICATION**

- It is permanent
- It is available for reference
- The writer can choose words carefully when dealing with complex and sensitive matters
- It provides evidence of information/instructions/advice given
- It is convenient and can be circulated quickly among many people

However, there are certain disadvantages of written communication. These are:

- The communicator is likely to forget or ignore the needs of the reader when he is writing out

the message as his reader is not physically present beside him

If a letter, memo or a report is misleading or confusing, the communicator is not with the reader to explain or clarify things. The reader may take action on the basis of the written word. If the action in this case is inappropriate, it would be too late for the communicator to do anything about it as the damage would have been done by then.

#### **WAYS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION – THEORETICAL INSIGHT**

Chester Barnard (1938) has emphasised that communication is the main task of managers and executives. Today, industry leaders emphasise the need for improvement in communication within an organisation. Further, Dr. Dan B. Curtis, Jerry L. Winsor and Ron Stephens (1985-86) have concluded on the basis of a study that effective communication skills are tantamount to the success of an organisation.

The responsibility in any organisation for improving communication within the body rests primarily with those in leadership positions because subordinates take cues on how to communicate from those in authority over them.

To improve communication in an organization, therefore, leaders and managers need to provide a good working climate, as the prevailing organisational climate has profound influence on communication in an organisation.

Of the three basic climates discussed in literature (Kline, 2011) viz. dehumanised,

over-humanised and situational, where the situational can be said to lie somewhere between the first two, appears to be the most appropriate for improving communication and productivity in an organisation. The observation is based on my own and others' experience, and my own experience as Controller of Examinations at S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India.

The dehumanised climate is based on the basic assumptions that subordinates:

- Are lazy
- Will not take responsibility
- Lack desire to achieve significant results
- Demonstrate inability to direct their own behaviour
- Show indifference to organisational needs
- Prefer to be led by others and avoid making decisions whenever possible

Leaders believing in this approach tend to:

- Withhold information from subordinates as confidential information is considered to be unsafe in their hands
- Tell subordinates not only what to do, but how to do it
- Do all the upward and lateral communication themselves
- Talk individually with subordinates to keep each person competing for their favour

The over-humanised climate at the other extreme is based on the basic assumptions that:

- Human relations are more important than organisational objectives
- Conflicts and tensions should be reduced at all costs
- Motivation of subordinates should be almost totally intrinsic and self-directed
- Participative decision making is always superior to decisions made by one or a few -Kline A. John (2011)

The situational climate lies somewhere between the two extremes and is based on the belief that organisational goals and individual goals need not be at odds with each other. It advocates seeking an "appropriate" climate based on the situation under consideration Kline A. John (2011).

The approach is based on three basic assumptions:

- A flexible climate that can adapt to the complex and changing nature of the needs of individual employees and those of the organisation is superior to a fixed climate
- Individuals are not naturally passive or resistant to organisational needs or reluctant to assuming responsibility
- Since individuals are not basically lazy, work can be structured to bring the goals of individual

employees and those of the organisation in line with each other

A situational climate can then lead to:

- Increase in feelings of self-worth and respect for others on the part of subordinates
- Increase in productivity because of the perception that the goals of individual employees and those of the organisation are similar
- Increase, in turn, in the amount of intrinsic motivation and a greater sense of responsibility Kline A. John(2011)

Of the three approaches, based on my experience as an administrator, as Controller of Examinations at S.N.D.T. Women's University, assessing situational climate is the most appropriate to achieve the goals of an organisation.

Finally, to achieve success, a leader must communicate one-on-one with key personnel as they are the ones who can help him communicate his ideas and policies to subordinates. Therefore, industry leaders should:

1. Show genuine interest and concern; this can be achieved through appropriate facial expressions, head nods, gestures and bodily posture which reflect openness and positive reinforcement

2. Put the other person at ease by appearing relaxed and breaking down barriers with friendliness
3. Be natural because genuineness and sincerity are foundations for effective communication
4. Not assume a superior manner or pretend to be what he is not
5. Respond to a conversation as it develops with spontaneous comments rather than forge ahead with "prepared" comments or arguments
6. Respect the other person's point of view
7. Seek to understand what the other person really means and not necessarily what is said
8. Reduce his own defensiveness
9. Not dominate the conversation to the point where the other person is shut out.
10. Listen attentively to what the other person is saying instead of planning what he is going to say next

This observation coincides with my own experience as an administrator, as Controller of Examinations at S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mumbai, India.

## CONCLUSION

Communication in an organisation, whether upward or downward, or verbal or written, needs to be effected carefully, and the right words and language must be chosen. The proper mode of communication with the proper use of words can boost the morale of workers, leading to increased productivity, which is essential in order to get optimum results and have a competitive edge over competitors in a globalised, liberalised scenario.

This paper attempts to bring together the practical experience of the author over a long period of administrative responsibilities he shouldered in government and college and university administration and the theoretical insight from literature on the subject. It should not be out of place here to mention that that NAAC team that visited the University and awarded it Five Stars specifically praised the efforts of the author as Controller of Examinations as “A living example of Participatory Management.”

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