

COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS

Brindusa Maria POPA

Regional Department of Defense Resources Management Studies,
Brasov, Romania

Organizational communication, both internal and external, affects organizational efficiency and effectiveness and consequently, the objectives of the organization. Communication is one the elements of the organizational life which is taken for granted and most of the times overlooked. It is pervasive and inherent in all activities thus, it cannot be analyzed in isolation, but in an organizational context. A well structured communication system will impact the performance of the organization through the quantity, but mostly the quality of the information it transports. Information should be clear, concise, specific, open, multi-directional.

Key words: communication, organization, control, effectiveness, efficiency, strategies, goals, objectives.

1. ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY AND COMMUNICATION

Effectiveness and efficiency are two basic management concepts, which determine the analysis of what and how needs to be done by the organization in order to attain the desired objectives. Now, a question arises: Why some organizations seem to be more effective than others and attain performance quicker? The answer could be an appropriate organizational system composed of multiple elements working smoothly together and all connected through good communication.

Summing up and simplifying definitions, communication appears to be a process in which a sender will send a message to a receiver through a communication channel. The message will be decoded, analyzed and then acted upon in accordance with the information received and understood from it. Therefore, the way the information is encoded by the

sender, transmitted and then decoded by the receiver will influence the results of the action it triggers.

There has been done a lot of research work in the field of organizational communication aiming to discover and develop methods to use this process to improve performance.

The interest in communication is not a new thing, but it has remained of interest ever since the second half of the 20th century when it became more of interest. In 1973 Mintzberg in his work "The Nature of Managerial Work" [1] analyzed the presence of interpersonal communication in the managerial activity. Other recent studies state that organizational efficiency involves the usage of communication instruments in order to create sense, develop loyalty, explain vision and build a common purpose.

Organizational communication, both internal and external affects

the organizational efficiency and effectiveness and consequently, the objectives of the organization. Communication is one of the elements of the organizational life which, unfortunately, is taken for granted and most of the times overlooked. It is pervasive and inherent in all activities thus, it cannot be analyzed as an isolated sub-system of a larger system, but in an organizational context. It runs through every department and it feeds the activity inside the organization. William Scott provides one of the most comprehensive definitions which says that “*organizational communication is a process which involves the transmission and accurate replication of ideas ensured by feedback for the purpose of eliciting actions which will accomplish organizational goals.*” [2]

Organizational communication shares information as well as organizes relations among the speakers, it is an exchange of information with the internal and external environment thus influencing the functioning of the organization.

Every organization has its specific style of communication which is shaped by the domain and scale of activity and mostly, by the specifics of their organizational culture. However, there are common communication elements among the organizations, but results are always influenced by the specific elements, i.e. certain conduct rules that must be respected in a Japanese organization as opposed to those from an American or middle-eastern

one. Multinational organizations are a specific case, combining the elements of the founders and those pertaining to the nations constituting the staff, all of them adapted to the local characteristics.

A well structured communication system will impact the performance of the organization through the quantity, but mostly the quality of the information it transports therefore, information should be clear, concise, specific, open, multi-directional.

We can break down organizational communication into two main elements: operational communication which includes every message that is used to communicate about work related aspects in order to comply with work procedures and to achieve organizational objectives (what helps the entire organization operate) and personal communication which comprises discussions among the individuals which are not related to the achievement of organizational goals.

Operational communication covers: orders and instructions, dialogues about work-related aspects; work documents. It is the central part of the organizational communication since the work activity is based on the information it carries.

Communication is more than an exchange of information, it is one of the most efficient and refined tools for controlling and channeling the work environment towards the right direction. Rules and regulations just establish the general framework, but the fine tuning requires more subtle keys. However, for the purpose of imposing certain direction, transparency and lack of ambiguity

are not always the purpose of organizational communication.

Communication used for controlling implies that there are also some secondary objectives which are not always stated openly. These hidden agendas surface whenever there is a personal or less officially stated gain targeted. Therefore, communication is not always objective and fair play, its principles are not obeyed as long as this approach suits the individual purpose best.

Modern management relies a lot on communication and openness. According to Luthans and Larsen managers spend between 60 and 80% of their time communicating [3] which represents a very big amount of time devoted to communication-based activities. It can be concluded that *“the purpose of managerial communication in any organization is to achieve correct and effective information, both vertically and horizontally, in order to accomplish in good conditions the internal and external requests according to the managerial and organizational objectives”* [4].

2. COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Professional communicators build their messages taking into account their effectiveness. Communication effectiveness signifies that the message delivered is understood exactly the way it was meant, without any alteration, trying to overcome all the barriers and filters that could hinder it.

Ricky W. Griffin touches this issue and he defines effective communication as *“the process of sending a message in such a way that the message received is as close in meaning as possible to the message intended”* [5]. According to Terry and Franklin, *“effective communication involves the most accurate sending and receiving of information, full comprehension of the message by both parties and appropriate action taken upon completion of the information exchange.”*

Unfortunately, sometimes effective communication is considered time consuming and it is replaced by an efficient style of communication. Well, what might look like a gain for the short term, but in many cases it proves to be more of a loss on the long term.

Efficient communication represents the fast delivery of the message with the purpose of being decoded and acted upon the way it was intended. So, efficient communication offers only the necessary information in the shortest period of time while effective communication maintains all the details of the message.

This communication form might not transmit the message comprehensively and the way it was meant. The receiver might need more information for the task of the message to be performed effectively.

Effective communication takes time because it takes into consideration the receiver. It is a two-way process, it allows time for understanding and clarification of information. Its purpose is to

motivate the receiver to act as good as possible. Communication efficiency is not always the best approach. Not allowing time for clarification and validation leads to confusions and reluctance to act.

Organizational performance depends on an effective communication system. Performing management functions and attributions efficiently and coordinating these functions with one another requires communication. Thus, communication is link between all the elements needed to obtain organizational success. Efficiency in an organization does not imply efficiency in communication.

There are several factors that could affect success in an organization from the point of view of communication:

- poor intra and interdepartmental communication which can lead to shortcuts or erred results in the work process. Therefore, a good information flow would improve the activity. Proper action requires enough and relevant information from the main people involved in the activity and through official channels. Both the quantity and quality of the information matter;

- scarcity of information about the activities which are conducted in the organization under the guise of not being relevant for the entire staff. Such mentality is also damaging since it can induce the sensation of worthlessness from the part of those who are not participant in the sharing of information;

- mentality is also another issue when dealing with poor

communication. Traditionally, it is considered that a superior should not provide clarifications, detailed information to a subordinate. Well, it can be true if we see this from the point of view on “need to know basis”, but we should never assume that our interlocutor can read minds. Sufficient and detailed information is necessary for the good accomplishment of tasks;

- insufficient feedback vertically and horizontally is another problem. It is never enough to say something went wrong, there should always be provided an argumentation for the point of view and, as much as possible, attempts should be made to identify the causes and solutions to the problem together with the people involved in the matter.

The individuals involved in the communication process must be interested and sensitive enough to recognize the constraints of the situation and adapt their message and manner of conveyance to the specificity of the situation. Such a requirement is necessary to render the intended meaning otherwise, some of the messages appear ambiguous.

Strategic ambiguity is a common form of strategic control. Strategic ambiguity describes the ways people deliberately communicate ambiguously to accomplish their goals under certain circumstances.

Strategic ambiguity is used when contrary goals are targeted and reaching them openly is not easy or advisable. The notion of strategic ambiguity was first mentioned by James G. March and Johan P. Olsen

and later elaborated by Eric M. Eisenberg. Strategic ambiguity is defined as a “*strategy for suspending rational imperatives toward consistency [that helps organization] explore alternative ideas of possible purposes and alternative concepts of behavioural consistency*” [7].

Strategic ambiguity is used when contrary goals are targeted and reaching them openly is not easy or advisable. But then, strategic ambiguity is questionable because the same words may mean different things to different people under the same circumstances or their meaning can be easily reversed when the need appears.

Although its usage can be justified for higher organizational purposes from our point of view, it is not advisable except for very specific and highly sensitive situations. Such uncertain manner of communication leads to distrust, confusions even conflict. Clarity of purpose and clarity of communication will always bring better results for the long run, strategic ambiguity might produce the desired result for the moment, but it should never be seen as a permanent communication strategy.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Communication satisfies three main functions within an organization: transmitting information, controlling activities, and exposing emotions and creating loyalty towards the organization. All these functions are necessary for a successful organization. Information flow is vital for the individuals working there to perform their activities as

well as possible to accomplish their objectives. Controlling the activity provides people the right direction and feed back for their work. Exposing emotions give people a sense of unity and loyalty both for good and bad moments. All these three aspects are characteristics of effective communication, efficient communication will reduce the amount of time and apparently speed things up, but it will never create a positive work environment for the long-run.

No great organization can perform well without a good communication system. Communication unites the individuals and makes success possible, but effective communication is the only way to achieve stable and long term performance.

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