

COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL TO ATTAINING, MAINTAINING AND SUSTAINING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN ORGANIZATIONAL SET UPS

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Abstract

Every organisation depends on communication network for the daily functioning. This means communication is indispensable at whatever level. The bigger an organisation is, the more complex the communication network becomes. Communication can also occur between/among officers at the same cadre or at different cadre. Thus, communication flows downwards, from board room, backwards and between departments. This paper will consider four types of communication, namely, written communication, oral communication, visual communication and multi-sensory communication. The paper will also discuss communication. It will equally discuss the relevance of communication in attaining, maintaining and sustaining efficiency and effectiveness in organizational set-ups. The paper is equally set out to explain that through communication, the organisation could interact with its environment. The paper will briefly consider the meaning of communication and organisation. Such a consideration is significant because the intention of the writer is not the discussion of the terms. The paper will also discuss only four types of communication because the types of communication are inexhaustible.

Introduction

Communication touches every part of human activity. It informs all of man's activities because it is occasioned by his need to interact with his fellow - man. It manifests itself in verbal and symbolic nature. Animals and plants with insects all communicate, but it is man's ability to create symbols, ascribe meanings and interpret messages that elevate him far above the status of the lower animals and gives character and form to his existence.

Communication is also a weapon of social interaction. It aids us to understand ourselves, to keep in touch with other people, to comprehend them and predict their reaction to circumstances. It is the means by which power is attained, exercised, maintained and sustained. It is the medium through which relationships are established, extended and maintained. It provides a means by which those in business, politics and professions act and interact; exchange information and ideas; develop plans, proposals and policies; make decisions and manage materials and men. In business and industry, communication assists in the orientation of workers to one another and to the goals of the organization and it is the means by which such goals can be pursued, attained; sustained, maintained and improved.

Communication *is* observed as the lubricant (oil) that keeps the machinery of the organization functioning, it is the means through which roles are identified and assigned; it is the life blood of an organization. The above snappy discussion on communication stresses its significance in human endeavour and interaction. Thus, no organization can survive and exist without communication.

The universal nature of communication has led to numerous definitions of the term. Dance and Larson (1960, P. 48) confirm that there is a list of 126 published definitions. Since the definition is inexhaustible, this paper will only consider a few of them.

Meaning of Communication

The meaning of communication could be traced to its origin which means 'to communicate'¹ which is derived from a Latin word which means talk together, discuss, confirm and consult, with other person or persons.

Eyre (1979:45) sees communication as "transferring of thought or a message to another party so that it can be understood and acted upon". Dalmer Fisher (1981:62) describes communication as "the process by which verbal and non - verbal symbols are exchanged with two persons". Sereno (1970:15) also views it as "the process by which senders and receivers of messages interact in a given social context". According to Collar's Encyclopaedia, (Pp. 73 - 81), communication is "the transfer of information from person to person, creature to creature, or point to point". Brenne (1963:17) describes business communication as "the whole process of interchanging messages which forms the underlying dynamics of modern business enterprise". In the opinion of Dunmott (1985:20), "Business communication is the exchange of messages that serve your reader's needs, that make your exact meaning, that enable readers to share information with you".

From these definitions, communication is not merely passing of information; it involves the release of comprehensible information and receiving and comprehending the message involved to the point that the receiver is able to react by the adequate action or inaction. Communication is therefore the medium whereby man exchanges and shares reality with each other/one another. The theory of communication also presupposes some central postulations. This suggests that communication is dynamic. That is, it is constantly changing and it is continuous. Secondly, communication is systemic. This means that the components of communication process are interdependent. That is, they interact and affect each other. An elimination of the basic components at the superficial level, that is source, message and channel, receiver and feedback, will render communication less effective, if not a total failure. Thirdly, it is transactional and interactional. This means that there is the exchanging of messages that occur among the people involved in the process of communication. It can be the continuous sharing of event. Fourthly, communication can be intentional or unintentional.

Ajibade (1994:3) reveals some possible situations in communication: source intends to send message which receiver wishes to receive; an intentional message to an intentional eavesdropper; an intended message received by an unintentional receiver; and an intentional message to an unintentional receiver (e.g. non - verbal communications).

What Is Organization?

Organization can be described as the coming together of people to attain certain goals. They constitute themselves in certain levels of authority. The work is divided according to their areas of specialization so that they could work together to attain the goals of the group. An organization is observed to begin as a small entity with one person, two or more.

Rogers and Rogers (1976:6) state that: an organization is a stable system of individuals who work together to achieve, through a hierarchy of ranks and division of labour, common goals.

The lines of authority which are set up enable workers in the organization to chart information and ideas through particular channels. Every organization therefore, can be seen as an information processing system in which messages of all sorts are imparted, stored, analysed and disseminated with a view to attaining, maintaining and sustaining certain pre - determined goals.

Educational institutions, hospitals, industries, public and private corporations are examples of organizations. Within each of these roles of persons and groups are clear - cut responsibilities. This means there is a hierarchy of responsibility in which each group is responsible to someone above for efficient performance of its task which could be attained through communication.

Types of Communication

The types of communication include: written, oral, intra - personal, inter - personal, external, visual and non - verbal but this paper will only consider a few of them as spelt out in the abstract. The discussion will also be based on the view of David Berlo (1960:23), who categorizes types of communication into: Verbal and Non - Verbal Communications but this paper will consider only the verbal.

Written Communication

Berlo (1960:24) describes written communication as the translation of oral messages into alphabetic symbols. These symbols are usually organized together to convey ideas, messages or information between those who participate in the communication encounter.

Berlo (1960:26) also identifies the following situations: for personal and business letters; inquiries (normally used to discipline erring staff); in reports; for circulars and memos; in essays, compositions and

all forms of creative writings; for questionnaire and forms designed for collecting information; and in telegrams and telex.

Other situations identified by this present writer include: Internet which is now widely used all over the world. The following is also identified: cablegrams, telephone, handset and radio message.

From this categorization, this type of communication is the most common way of communicating in organisations, the business world and so on. It is also noticed that 95% of the organizational communication takes the written form.

Written form is a significant part of organisation because it generates a wide range of people within and outside the organisation. Also, more profitably, written communication may take the form of applications, notices, communication gadgets and so on,

Ajibade (1994:18 - 20) also identifies cables, facsimile, telegraphy, telewriting in the category of written form of communication. She views letters playing a prominent role in written external communication either as original narration or to confirm something that has been discussed verbally. According to her, there are two objectives involved: to provide a channel for communication and to provide a permanent record of the communication.

Oral Communication

Berlo (1960, P, 29) sees oral communication as the use of words. This means it may take an oral form in which human speech organs are used to produce sounds or a written form in which human muscles are used to produce symbols (letters or alphabets and words). He also identifies the oral communication used in the interpersonal and intra - personal and group communication situations.

Berlo (1960:33), describes the intra - personal communication as the process of information transfer which goes within an individual. This is so because ideas and thoughts are not transmitted immediately they are generated in an individual. Rather, each idea or thought, that develops is first considered, tossed here and there, then there is the decision of how best to put it forward. This process is expedient to ensure effective and adequate construction of messages.

In some situations, during the process of tossing ideas up and down in the individual's mind, he consciously verbalizes it (say it aloud) what is going on within him. In such circumstances no specific reader or listener is intended. But if somebody happens to be around when he is wrestling with his thoughts and he hears him muttering he might accuse him of talking to himself.

Huseman and Lahif (1976:48-50), describe inter - personal communication as a process usually referred to as "face - to - face communication". It is the exchange of ideas and information because two people, you and your friend, you and your boss in the office or you and your Secretary, you and your Clerk or any other person. In this situation, you do not keep your idea to yourself. You share them directly with someone else, face - to - face or by telephone or any other gadgets of communication. Signs of the exchange (e.g. dialogue, discussion) could be noticed. Inter - personal communication dominates activities in the home, in the club, in the market, in the office, in organizational set ups, and almost all spheres of life. In business, industry and similar organisations, in the church, mosque, inter-personal communication assists to break the barrier of formal relationships, generates warmth and creates harmony essential for increased productivity. It is therefore a very important form of communication.

Its effectiveness depends solely on the needs of the person, the objectives, and making sure that the message is adequately worded to suit the situation. This is so because it has the advantage of immediate reaction which may provide a signal for the source to modify the subsequent message/s.

Group Communication

Berlo (1960:34) describes it as a group formed when three or more persons come together, accidentally or by design, to work towards a specific goal. Group communication, therefore involves the exchange of ideas and information among members of a group. Groups exist in several areas of the life of man - at home, in the office, in the Church (Christian gatherings) etc.

Groups include workers in various sections in an organisation - Marketing, production, personnel, engineering section, administrative and registry section, accounts and bursary section, people who work in the same department, members of a class, or a social organisation, and people who belong to the same political party etc. Groups vary in size and composition. In modern day business, each stratum establishes

small groups for purposes of production, target setting, problem identification and resolution as well as decision making.

Members within a giving group are noticed to share ideas and information with one another, and this enhances them to attain, maintain and sustain the tasks in which the organisation is been set up. As a member of any of the groups in the organisation you must take part in the communication process. The group decides collectively who must lead, how to raise money, what tasks to undertake and how to carry out the tasks undertaken. In this circumstance, the medium of communication is specific to the group and essential to its survival. The various union groups, social groups and political parties are good examples here.

Ajibade (1994:14-16) groups oral communication into public speaking meetings, discussion, debate and interview.

Oral communication also takes two forms to communicate, just as the written form needs a reader, so does also a speaker require a listener. While considering the types of communication, speaking is very significant. For an effective oral communication, it is also significant to understand the different communication backgrounds.

Visual Communication

Ajibade (1994:17) views visuals not as a universal language. It is however the use of relevant pictures when it is effectively used and most often for easy comprehension because it reflects life. This is identified as a very effective method of communication.

Below are practical visual aids which aid comprehension and memory, thus making communication much more interesting.

Chalk Board or Black Board (Now Marker Board) - This is a very common visual aid specifically in educational institutions. It helps to stress headings, and significant words. It gives opportunity for diagrams and line drawings. It is effective for the teacher/lecturer to stop talking while writing on the blackboard so that the listeners/students will not miss part of the words. The writing should be large enough for visibility at the back. The hand writing should be generally legible. Graphic works can be prepared on (be board before the arrival of the audience. The user of the board has to know there is a wide range of colours of chalk or marker for each occasion.

Pictures or Diagrams - This can be drawn clearly on cards and pinned on flannel boards or around the classroom. It can be used to illustrate complex machines, unfamiliar objects etc.

Overhead Projector - This is another popular visual aid. It is a versatile instrument with a popular light source with portable models as well. It uses transparencies for projection written or drawn by hand with spirit felt - tipped pen or wax pencils. It is free of dirt.

Others include flip pad, flannel board used for sticking images, the 35mm projector - used to show 2m x 2m slides, film strips, video recorders, closed circuit, television, video recorders, tape recorders, Compact Disc and Video Compact Disc recorders.

Multi - Sensory Communication

It is noticed that people receive experiences through all the five human sense organs of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. The blind for example make use of touching while the deaf and dumb who are not blind make use of sight. The more senses are appealed to at a time, the more likely is for the message to be comprehended. This makes for effective communication.

Recommendations

The following recommendations if considered and employed will greatly assist in the attaining, maintaining and sustaining efficient and effective communication for an organisation to attain its goals.

There is the need to select the appropriate type of communication that conforms with the

circumstance; the status and level of the audience and receiver must be considered and the method employed must be as a result of assessing the requirements of the communication and the attributes of each available method.

Six factors should be considered while selecting the type of communication: the speed; the accuracy. The communication should be in clear and legible hand writing; typing or print must be accurate. Verbal communication is important in clarifying doubts on the spot. The purpose and circumstance of the communication must be considered.

The importance of security in a particular communication must be considered. The confidentiality of a message in communication is significant. The expenses to be incurred is essential - the prime cost of materials used and the time spent in dictating the typing for example.

Thus, the type of communication to be chosen depends on the message, the purpose, the people, the occasion, the available resources, and the available skills. However, it should not be forgotten that clear thoughts which are clearly expressed are expedient, whatever type of transmission is employed. The right type/s and tool/s that will make the subject to be communicated must be clear to the audience and must be carefully selected. This will also make it interesting and economical in terms of time, space and money.

The best method for the oral communication is to speak fluently with the natural accent and internalized method of pronunciation. For an organisation to attain its objectives in the written method, the following factors are to be considered; use simple language and avoid complexity; make sure your points are arranged effectively; go straight to the point you intended to make; avoid shipside thinking; and gather facts to back - up arguments. To ensure effective communication in organisations, each thought or idea that develops must first be weighed, tossed here and there, before deciding whether to say it or not.

Conclusion

So far, this paper has discussed the verbal form of communication: the written, the three oral communication: intra-personal, inter personal and the group, visual and multi - sensory communication. These forms are what man engages in during the course of his daily activities in lectures, interviews and meetings. Oral communication can therefore be described as concentric in nature. Man begins with his own internal dialogues, moving on to share thoughts with someone else, then with the group. At the end certain recommendations which could be of great assistance in attaining, maintaining and sustaining efficiency and effectiveness in an organizational set up were proffered.

From the discussion also, all activities, enterprise, social and business interactions are dependent on effective communication for success. Whatever form the communication takes, it must be easily comprehensible to the receiver. Therefore, the originator of the communication should have a clear objective in his mind. He equally needs to have clear thoughts which he will convey by precise expression of understanding. On the other hand, the recipient of the communication must be willing to understand the message. To show that he is a willing participant in the process of communication, the participant must make some response.

To get the recipient willing and to put him in a position for easy and effective reception, the source must use language that is understandable to the receiver, it must not be above or below his level. Not only this, the effectiveness of communication can be reduced by wrong timing. The time of the day and the time of convenience must be carefully selected. Also, the medium and method of communication must be appropriate. Besides, the attitude of the communicator can colour the emotion and also the attitude of the receiver. The communicator should equally make use of the logic at his hand for clarity of his points. Some recipients could probably be illogical in their thinking, therefore the communicator must greatly consider the psychological aspects of communication and he could possibly become subjective especially when he becomes enthusiastic about his subject.

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