Effectiveness of Organizational Communication in the Global Age

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Abstract

Communication is not a reaction to something, not an interaction with something but a transaction in which man invents and attributes meaning to realize his purpose. It should be stressed that meaning is something invented, assigned and given rather than something received. It is the production of meaning rather than the production of messages that identifies communication. Organizational communication is therefore the flow of materials, information, perceptions, and understanding among the various parts and members of an organization. In an organization, a lot of consideration is made on the lines of communications, strategies to be used, technological facilities provided and the communicator should know and understand the different ways with which to communicate with the people in and outside the organization to effectively achieve their goals. kazt and kahn (1966,p.12) found out that managers in an listed oral communication and listening as the most important skill for gaining employment and improve working relationship and even any kind of relationship requires open and accurate lines of communication and only when such lines exist will one feel free to voice out important feelings and thoughts. This paper focuses on how effective organizational communication is in this global economic age.

Introduction

Communication is a process of transforming thoughts, the sharing and imparting of information; the given of understandable information and receiving and understanding of the message; the transmitting of messages and the linking of people; the conveying of ideas, attitudes and feelings; the creating, exchanging of messages within a network of independent relationship, (James, Ode and Soola, 1990).

This definition portrayed communication well. It brought out the whole reason why an organization needs communication. Communication says Hybels and Weaver ii (2001, p .12) is any process in which people share information, ideas and feelings. It involves not only the spoken and written words but also body language personal mannerism and style' anything that adds meaning to a message. Communication is always changing.

Nwosu (1996) opines that communication is more or less a process of information, ideas and opinions, exchange within ,between or among individuals, groups, organizations or nations (usually made up of human beings) in a social or societal context. With this opinion, communication involves a kind of relationship brought about by sharing of ideas or establishment of commonness of ideas. Therefore it is described as a transaction or transactional phenomenon.

In the words of Sambe (2005) communication is the bedrock of modern society-a most critical component of modernity and civilization. It serves as an instrument or vehicle of social interaction. It

helps us understand ourselves, keep in touch with other people, understand them and be able to predict their response to situation.

Communication is a means by which power is acquired, exercised and sustained. It helps to orient 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 and improved. Thus, no organization can survive without communication.

Based on the above concepts, one would now see the reason MacBride, et al (1980) asserts that communication animates and maintains life and it is at the heart of all social intercourse.

Process of Communication

For an organization to function effectively, the process of communication as identified by James, Ode and Soola (1990, p.4) is needed and they are action, reaction and interaction.

Action: This means the initiative taken by a source or sender of information, observation or opinion with others. It is done through writing, speaking, drawing or gesturing.

Reaction: This refers to a response to action taken by the sender and this determines whether or not the receiver is willing to be a party to the communication encountered and sets the tone or atmosphere for it. Reaction in a communication process may come by way of reply, rejoinder, and answer, acknowledge, retort or defense.

Interaction: This is the spontaneous reciprocity of messages between a sender and a receiver. It is the stage of exchange of messages between two or more persons sharing common experiences, codes or symbols. This leads to the concept of field of experience which is the different words or experiences possessed and brought into a communication setting by a person.

Interaction is a situation where the source and the receiver are tuned to each other physically, mentally or psychologically and provide a basis to carry on the interaction meaningfully and successfully. With this process, a better working condition is achieved within or among the people in the organization.

Organization

Organizations are important to all of us. They play a dominant role in our daily lives, they influence our behavior, the behavior of our families and neighbors, our economy, our environment, our political system and relations with other countries. Organizations are all around us; they help bring us into the world, supply what we wear, eat, sleep on and in; help protect us, entertain us, educate us, transport us; take care of us when we are sick, take care of our money, drivers license, taxes and in the end help bury us. We live in an organizational society.

Organizations according to Lawrence and Lorsch (1969, p.3) are the coordination of different activities of individual contributors to carry out planned transaction with the environment.

There are two points in this definition. One is that people in organizations are engaged in a number of different activities and the second point is that all these activities must be coordinated.

Schein (1964) sees organization as the rational coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common explicit goal or purpose, through the division of labour and function and through a hierarchy authorities and responsibility. From this definition also he deduced four (4)characteristics of organization –structure, goals, division of labour and chain of command.

1. Structure: Structure is the rational coordination of the activities of people. It means the orderly arrangement of all the organizational functions (rules, procedures, job definitions) so that the goals of the organization can be accomplished. The organizational structure or the coordinating mechanism is also the organizational chart or blueprint which is an abstract model showing the logical relationships between activities or functions of a department, division or operating unit.

2. Goal: This is the purpose of an organization. So when organizations discuss goals or purposes, they are generally dealing with providing orientation for the organization, establishing guidelines for organizational function and establishing a set of objective for measuring the success of the organization activities.

3. Division of Labour:- This is when the organizational effectiveness and efficiency can be improved by specialization. The greater the division of labour or specialization, the greater the need for methods of coordinating the efforts of various parts of the organization. By realizing the importance of coordination to division of labour, the role of communication is also recognized.

4. Chain of Command or Hierarchy of Authority and Responsibility :- This is when the organization needs to keep track of its people and their activities and its done through the coordinating mechanisms and the hiring of supervisors, managers or assistant managers. The organization builds upwards to solve the problems it has caused by building upward. The underlying principle of the authority-responsibility concept in the organization is twofolds: first, everyone should know to whom one is accountable to. Secondly, authority and responsibility should flow in a direct vertical line from the highest level to the lowest level. This is very crucial to a smooth running of an organization and also its productivity.
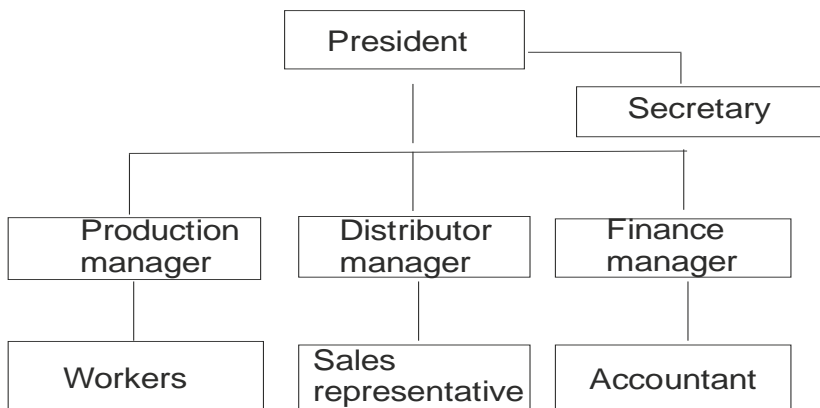
Organizational chart

Figure 1: *Organizational chart obtained in production industry at Otuocha (2012)*

The organization must be conceived of as an open system. A system is an organized whole consisting of component such as people, departments or activities and must be united through its mutual relationships or by some regular communication or interaction. It involves those aspects of the system that affects getting the work done. The organizational chart depicts the formal

arrangement while spontaneous interaction often establishes the informal arrangement. It is the relationship pattern, whether formal or informal or both that essentially ties the system together. The chart shows who is who in the industry and helps the communication line flow very well.

Organizational Communication

Communication is very necessary to the success of any organization. So it must be effectively handled to ensure the achievement of the organization's goals.

Vardaman and Halterman (1968, pp 3-4) define communication within the organization as the flow of materials, information, perceptions and understandings among the various parts and members of an organization… all the methods, means and the media of communication (communication technology), all the channels, networks and systems of communication (organizational structure), all the person – to – person interchange (interpersonal communication)… it includes all aspects of communication: up, down, lateral, speaking , writing, listening, reading, methods, modes, channels, networks, flow… This definition is comprehensive, because it suggests that there is so much going on in the organization.

According to Wilson (2005) communication in organization refers to all the ways, strategies and tools which person within such organization employs in their official, Interpersonal, face-to-face or small group communication activities. The simplicity or complexity of the process is dependent on the simplicity or complexity of the organization. Sambe (2005, p.14) defines it as one that portends a flow of information in a social system to sustain its operation and to gear it towards achieving its predetermined goals.

Also Nwosu (1996, p.5) sees organizational communication as one which refers essentially to group and interpersonal communication within an organizational setting. Its emphasis is on how organizational structures affect communication among the individuals that makes up the organization and how those structures are in turn affected by communication. Communication in an organization is very vital and that is the reason Greenbaum (1974, p.14) contends that the purpose of organizational communication is to facilitate the achievement of organizational goals. It is also a way of reaching others with ideas, fact, thoughts and values. It is a bridge of meaning among people so that they can share what they feel and know, (Wilson 2005, p.64)

Types of Organizational Communication

Everyone in an organization is part of the organizational communication chain whether they are managing people, projects or their own activities. Here, there are three types of organizational communication. They are:

1. Downward communication: This is one flowing from a superior to a subordinate or to many subordinates. Communication down the line generally follows the organizational chat. It is one – way communication from the top management, where the employees are told what to do and they do not have much freedom to make contributions to the decision making process.

   Katz and Kahn (1966, p.252) suggest that downward communication is usually one of the followings:

   a. Communication dealing with specific task- activities in terms of instructions, orders, training sessions or job descriptions.

b. Communication dealing with the task and its relations to other tasks and departments in the organization, (how the work flow goes or how the job fits together).

c. Communication dealing with company policies, procedures, and practice.

d. Communication that essentially focuses on the subordinates performance

e. Communication attempting to indoctrinate the organizational members to believe and internalize the organizations way of life and goals.

Therefore downward communication is mostly ineffective and management is ill- adviced to depend on one way message campaign or to rely solely on the written message. Effectiveness in communication can be better achieved by carefully analyzing the subordinates receiving the message, by combining the oral and written form of communication, by carefully monitoring subordinate feedback and by continually desiring to communicate.

2. Upward communication: This follows the formal organizational chart and is best represented by subordinate to superior communication. Katz and Kahn (1966, p.252) identify four types of communication that might be found going up the organizational chart and they are:

a. What the subordinate may say about himself, his performance and his problems

b. What the subordinate might say about others and their problems.

c. What the subordinate might say about organizational procedure and policies

d. What the subordinate might say about what needs top be done and how it can be done.

All these may be going on within the subordinates mind without him or her getting somebody or the superiors to hear him or her. They are made to listen instead of someone listening to them. For this reason upward communication may be distorted through mistrust, downward distortion of communication or strong rivalries among employees. No wonder Gemmill (1970, p.110) says that managing upward communication in an organization involve building a relationship with subordinates in which disclosure is encouraged and rewarded. It must be a supportive relationship – one in which subordinates feel that the superior will not take advantage of them if they fully speak their minds. For full disclosure to occur, they must know that they can express their feelings, difficulties and opinions without fear of reprisal.

Horizontal /Diagonal Communication

Here, communication flows in all directions in an organization. Horizontal communication takes place at the same level in the organization either within a work group or between people from different work groups. While diagonal communication involves people who are not only at different levels but also in different work groups.

Horizontal / Diagonal Communication often represents the sharing of information, helping with instruction or joint problem solving.

In most cases, the activity is related to the task and there is no formal status or official power between the communicators since they came from different sections of the organization.

Channels of Organizational Communication

The success of any particular communication depends on its being sent to the right people, at the right time and by the right method. Channel is the right method of reaching the right person or people in an organization.

Some of the channels are:

a. **Meetings:** Meetings provide a conducive atmosphere for discussion problem solving and sharing of experiences. Meetings includes annual general meetings (AGM), meeting of the departmental heads, sectional meetings, weekly sales meetings and meetings with worker's representatives. This channel keeps people informed of the organizational decisions, policies and procedures. It promotes creativity and exchange of ideas between people who represent different parts of the organization. It promotes coordination of information between departments that are highly interdependent. It exposes people to the problems and demands that other areas of the organization experience and must deal with. It also promotes better job performance by exposing people to the ideas, views, and experiences of other people. It improves morale by involving people in decisions that affect their jobs and also utilize the knowledge and experience of people throughout the organization.

b. **Reports:** Reports are documents prepared in organizations for specific purposes. Such purposes may include meetings, research findings, periodic operational activity, accounts, annual reports, duty tours, employment interviews, investigation into employee conducts, survey on competitors in the market place and many more activities in the organization, (Adamolekun, 2005, P.108). Reports are meant for internal use but are often handy when there is need to communicate the progress being made by the organization with external audiences particularly the stakeholders. Good reports must be readable, legible, stylish and the message well packaged. The language must be simple understandable and only important points should be reflected. Reports should be portable and must have little or no interferences and distortions.

c. **Memoranda:** This is in the form of internal memos usually circulated freely in most offices. They give information or instruction as part of the normal day-to-day administration. It is also when certain decisions are communicated upwards or downwards between departments or offices.

d. **Minutes:** These provide a written record of the business conducted which may be circulated to those who attended and others for information only.

e. **House journals:** These are publications which ensure free flow of information and facilitate intra and inter departmental communication on the operation. They keep the organizational objectives and policies in constant focus and reinforce the agreed messages and values from the management. They also document the activities of the organization. House journals are special information media created to share information and to secure the participation of all employees in the companies.

f. **Bulletins:** These are shorter version of the newsletter which carries few but special news. They are issued by some companies to their employees to keep them up-to-date and in touch with developments in the organizations.

g. **Correspondence:** These are the day-to-day flow of in-coming and out-going letters, They are the real life line of communication between the organization and its employees. They come inform of promotions, transfer, queries, congratulatory messages, and many more.

Technological Devices That Facilitate Communication In Organizations

Communication in an organization is used to establish and disseminate the goals of the enterprise, to develop, plan for their achievement, to lead, direct and motivate those working in it, to resolve

conflicts, difficulties and to control performance. For all these to be achieved, there is need for efficient modern communication devices. These include:

- ❖ **Computer:** The electronic computer is central to many of the advances in communication technology. computerized electronic switching system for the telephone industry, computerized information storage and retrieval systems, computerized words processing, miniaturization, the use of orbiting earth satellites and televised conferencing have rapidly changed the way individuals, business, organizations and people communicate with one another and have helped to promote explosive growth of what has come to be known as "knowledge" or "information industry". It covers all fields, (Vail, 1978, p.15)

- ❖ Computer technology is changing the creative aspects of business, production, product designs etc. it offers so many opportunities for productive innovations and communication that the concept of office as a set of connected rooms with people working in them may become out-modeled in the nearest future. Computer application in organization has increased the effectiveness of the business between trading partners. For example e-commerce, e-enterprise, e-economy, e-banking to mention but few. it is very useful in organizations as it enhances productivity, keeps records, stores and retrieves information. It performs jobs much faster and accurately. Computer is an all-rounder.

- ❖ **The Internet:** The internet is a worldwide network that connects hundreds of thousands of smaller networks linking computers at academic, scientific and commercial institutions. With it, millions of people around the world can share all types of information and services. The most wonderful thing about the internet is that there is no single person or group in charge. Anyone who wishes to connect to the internet simply agrees to pay for a communication link via internet service provider. The person or company is given a base address that allows other computers to identify users on the new computer.

  With the internet, organizations share information faster than before, the role of information transfer is not centered in one location anymore but spread throughout the network, information are made available to everyone despite where one may come from, multimedia services are provided and access and assess reports in an organization's computers has become possible and easy.

- ❖ **WWW (worldwide website):** This is an interconnected system of computers all over the world that store information in a multi-media form. Organizations use the web to provide information in more than one way.

  The web uses hypertext transfer protocol to transport files from one place to another. The web is very unique because it presents colours, image, sounds and video to your computer and it is easy to use. Organizations need not to spend time, money or follow a hierarchical path from one piece of information to another, for it to function.

- ❖ **Cellular Phone:** This is an advanced mobile phone service. It is one of the fastest growing types of wireless data use. It operates by using a series of radio transmitters with limited coverage. A person making a cell automatically connects with the closest transmitter that is connected to landlines. A computer switching system transfers calls from transmitter to another automatically. Organization uses it to keep in touch, report events immediately, and it has become a life-line with which to do business. It is cheap and so convenient to carry about.

- ❖ **Video – Conferencing:** This is the use of video transmission systems to communicate between sites using video and voice. It is also the use of television, video and sound technology as well as computers to enable people in different locations to see, hear and

talk with one another. People in the organization may go to conference rooms or booths with specially equipped television cameras and capture the person speaking. It is an effective and powerful communication tool that provides today's business with the advantage of face to face communication. It helps to improve productivity and reduce the expense to travel. It bridges service appeal to business that wants a comprehensive solution as well as those that need only occasional access to specific features.

❖ **Multi – media:** This is a form of media that presents information in more than one medium such as text, pictures, video sound and animation in a single integrated communication. It is one of the fastest growing and most exciting areas in the information communications technology. Business organizations use multimedia presentations to attract and hold the attentions of their customers. It is used in training employee's orientation and marketing. Multimedia messages give immediate reports on things happening around, such as meetings, conferences, seminars, formal gatherings, etc. multimedia allows one to illustrate and explain products and accessories, to demonstrate the workings of technology and nature. It is super.

❖ **E – mail (electronic mail):** This provides a fast, economical and convenient way to send message to colleagues, friends, family or organization. Mail does not only means personal message but anything that can be stored in a text file can be mailed, picture, computer games, announcement, documents, and many more. It is an application available to business organization today employed for internal communication services such as account statement delivery can be offered to customers via e-mail. Banking industry makes use of the e-mail very well.

❖ **Photocopiers:** This offers the opportunity of producing many copies of document. Documents like minutes of the meeting, memos, and letters are quickly and cheaply prepared for meetings, seminar or conferences. Conclusively, using all the modern communication facilities in an organization will help encourage, create, and improve productivity. They will help the management of an organization to identify the strengths and gaps in it manpower resource help cultivate and sustain good relationship with both the internal and external environments. People need information for communication in every thought of interest.

Effective Communication in an Organization

Communication is meant to achieve a definite purpose. It is sent out to secure results. Circulars, memos, letters, and notices, are meant to get the target recipient to perform specific tasks, to aid such organizations to meet predetermined goals. For these predetermined goals to be met, communication must be effective.

Effective communication is a two-way activity in which both the sender and the receiver must know what is required of them, what each message is meant and how the information is used, (Bel-molokwu 2004, P.22)

According to Adamolekum (2005, p.104) the following six (6) attributes have proved useful over time and are recommended. They could be useful to the manager in the organization

    a.   Posses basic education with reasonable spoken and writing skills
    b.   Cultivate good listening habit
    c.   Develop an enquiring mind
    d.   Seek clarifications when in doubt

e.   Speak confidently, clearly and convincingly

f.   Write or make short and correct sentence.

   Wilson quoting Wagne and Dauwalder (1994, P.50) made the following as one of the best ways of communicating with others. A sender of message in an organization must:

a.   Understand as fully as possible how the receivers will react.

b.   Use clear, understandable and appropriate languages.

c.   Recognize appropriate non-verbal behavior.

d.   Control the environment for effective communication.

e.   Determine the best ways to communicate a messages.

f.   Use good organization skill and proper format

g.   Be complete, clear, concise, considerate and correct.

h.   Use appropriate feedback

   A Message Receiver Must:

1.   Use appropriate feedback , and

2.   Practice good listening skills

   Wilson continues that for these strategies to be highly effective there are behavioral preconditions such as the attitude of the communicator and the communicatee, as well as timing. Also in the words of Sambe (2005, p.4) four factors influence effective communication in an organization and they are:

1.   Communication skill: A source must have a good command of the language he chooses to communicate in that he must be able to pronounce or write words or segment correctly

2.   Knowledge level: The source must have a good knowledge of the message he is putting across his message to the recipient. This enable the source to states unequivocally and understandably

3.   Socio- cultural context: The socio-cultural context in which communication takes place determines to a large extent the disposition of the source towards the message and towards the receiver. Social context like friend/friend context, son/father context. Etc. A good communicator in the organization must realize that situation changes in different environments and that regards must be given to age, status, seniority, class distinction and several others.

4.   Attitude: The attitude of the source in an organization is often measured by his communication behavior, which may be positive or negative. His attitude serves as a reflection of his personality. Sambe reflected the source levels of attitude as:

a.   Attitude towards self: This means self concept. The source of the message must have a positive self concept and this helps him in building confidence and no inferiority complex is found.

b.   Attitude message: The source must make his messages positive.

c.   Attitude towards the receiver: For any meaningful communication to take place, the source must have a positive attitude towards the receiver. This will help create a conductive environment for business to thrive.

   Therefore for organizational communication to be effective, it must be simple, clear, concise, correct, candid, considerate, and cohere as well as have unity.

Barriers to Effective Organizational Communication

Some barriers have been identified as the affect the effectiveness of organizational communication. These include:

1. Lack of clarity: Failure to use simple language and straight forward   expressions will obstruct clarity. Simple languages should always be used.
2. Lack of adequate equipment: Lack of necessary communication facilities can greatly obstruct the proper functioning of a business environment organizational communication is effective when all the necessary facilities are put in place and the personnel trained.
3. Lack of proper coordination: Failure to coordinate the overall activities of all the departments in the organization often results in poor communication, duplication of effort and frequent irritation and frustration for the managers affected. Proper channel of communication has to be followed for this will help improve productivity.
4. Improper designation of functions: Undefined and unrestricted designation of functions often leads to misuse of functional authority. Functional authority should be delegated to a properly designated manager based on the organizational policy. The manager must be educated, trained and with experience, his level of integrity must be high and honest and must be ethical in his dealing with everyone.

   Wilson (2005, PP.80-81) brought out the following as barrier to effective communication.

1. Clothes
2. Physical setting of office
3. Timing of the message
4. Lack of rapport between the sender and receiver
5. Non-payment of salaries
6. Lack of motivation

   As it is with all human activities, organization cannot thrive well without effective communication. For any organization to realise its set objective there must be clear and free flow of communication, effective communication will be achieved also if these barriers are met and face-to-face interaction is the most beneficial to the worker in the organization than the written documents. Face-to-face has the advantage of speech, instant feedback and provide the opportunity of interpreting the message more correctly in this global economic age.

Recommendation

To overcome these barriers and improve the working condition of the both the internal and the external publics of the organization, the following recommendations are made:

1. The communicator in an organization must carefully choose his or her words.
2. Communication in organizational relationships should serve to help others solve problems, facilitate job performance, reduce anxiety and uncertainty and involve others more or fully in organizational function.
3. Personnel should be well trained to manage the communication facilities at their disposal for effective communication.
4. The communicator in an organization should always be considerate remembering the socio-cultural context of the society.
5. The communicator should always check on his attitude while passing his or her message to the workers in the organization.

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