COMMUNICATION: BARRIERS AFFECTING COMMUNICATION IN CONTEMPORARY WORKPLACE IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

Maxwell Nwinye

Department on Management, Faculty of Management Sciences University of Port Harcourt

Abstract

Communication is the broadcast of information, ideas, emotions, skills, through the use of gestures, symbols, words, pictures, figures, body movement, and graphs, to ensure business sustainability. It is as a natural phenomenonthat contributes to the growth or failure of any business. If organization does not choose the right medium of communication to covey information or market its product, the firm may suffer low customer patronage and low profitability. Managers with communication skills are likely to protect the image of the company and improve productivity. Poor communication system may lead to mismanagement and low business output.This study disclosed that the progress of a firm comes from effective communication which is essential for the survival, profitability, and job satisfaction in the organization. Indeed, oorganizations should apply the appropriate channels of communication to transfer information to the receiver for the purpose of achieving organizational performance.

Keywords:

Communication, feedback, interpersonal sensitivity, filtering, encoding

Introduction

This flow of information is vigorous for managerial effectiveness and decision making which enables manager to have a contact or conversation with employees, trade union leaders, and various departments. Communication is an important management strategy that brings employees or people together to exchange ideas, knowledge, necessary in achieving the goals of an organization. It bridges the gap between individuals and groups through flow of

information and understanding among them. Accordingly, information is the most vital aspect for communication which is transmitted, interpreted, studied, analyzed, and stored irrespective size and nature of the organizations. Communication refers to the transmission of information and understanding through the common symbols such as verbal or non-verbal communication (Koontz & O'Donnell, 1984). Consequently, communication is the process of transferring information, ideas, set of symbols from the sender to the receiver for the purpose of achieving common objective (Goldhaber, 1974). Communication is recognized as a process of disseminating information or messages from one person to another. Whenever there is discussion and deliberation among people, communication has been established. A manager or public office holder uses the mutual meanings shared in communication to influence others. It is important for people to deliver their message in a manner that may have maximum effect in choosing the appropriate language to convey the correct information and elicit the desired response. Communication builds commitment among subordinates also facilitates the coordination between different units within an organization such as production, marketing, finance and human resources (Luthans, 2005). Managers and employees are happy when they are praised or celebrated in the public which eventually makes them to be heroes and encourages future service excellence. Most employees are involved in hoarding information from their perceived job opponent which affects productivity. Therefore, this paper examines the roles and barriers of communication in the workplace.

Literature Review

Communication is the exchange of ideas, feelings, and opinions among persons regarding their goals or values (Griffin, 2013). Communication is exchange of thoughts, opinions, and transmitting of information through gesture, speech, writing, or signs (Bovee & Thill, 2000). From all indications, communication is not merely sending or receiving message. It must include proper understanding of message, acceptance, and action on it. Therefore, communication is effective when the user or receiver has understood the message. The use of ambiguous words does not make sense in discussion. Corporate entities rely on communications to learn customers want, promote co-worker relationship, and adapt to changes in the environment. The concept of communication is interconnected with variables namely coordination, leadership, motivation, structure, and decision-making in organizations (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Moreover, communication allows managers to share goals with shareholders and promotes changes in employees and suppliers (McFarland, 1979). It helps managers to convince employees and unions to dissociate themselves from counterproductive practices.

Purposes of Communication

Promotes cooperation: The flow of information to employees wins the cooperation of other workers who in turn express acceptance of policies through receiving instructions or messages that were clearly stated and understood. Team work and effective communication effect change in the organization. Employees express displeasure when information is hoarded or certain group of workers are sidelined from receiving necessary information. Communication is power which is like a bloodstream to a person. It is essential that

information should be transferred to the employees so that workers could have cohesion to work towards achieving organizational goals. **Appraisal and promotion of employees:** It is a condition that before an organization promotes employees there must be a memo containing all the necessary requirements for the appraisal and promotion of the workers. Information relating to the employee's qualification, experience, additional skills, last promotion, and training ought to be communicated. The time and date for the submission of papers for assessment or promotion interview are disclosed to all the employees that are qualified for the promotion (Newman & Warren,1979). Furthermore, promotion committee needs information about the workers either by oral or written for their assessment.

Hierarchy of authority: Communication provides the hierarchy of authority which shows the formal guidelines that employees are required to follow in the organization. Either formal or informal communication controls the behaviour of workers even when is in written or oral form. It harnesses the flow of information from the top to lower-level management. Effective communication plays significant roles in the leadership which states clearly the duties of employees and the modalities of implementing an instruction (Newstorm& Keith, 1993). Although, this process secures possible participation in decision making which result in democratic phenomenon fortifying the morale of the workforce. Communication stipulates the staff rank and power differences in the organization which determines those who are managers or subordinates.

Training and development: In conferences, workshops, seminar, and training, resource person transfers adequate information to the participants that guides their actions and work behaviour. The ideas or skills received from the training trigger motivation of employees and improved standard of living. Besides, the medium of communication guides the training process which eventually controls performance.

Communication Process

This is the standard method by which information flows through a selected channel between the sender and receiver. The steps in communication or communication process comprises seven factors such as sender, encoding, message, channel, decoding, receiver, and feedback.

Sender: The person who forms the message, initiates ideas, transfers the message to another person. Sender is called the source or communicator who commences the communication process. He is the origin of the communication process. The trustworthiness of an information depends on the nature of the source or sender. Griffin(2006) noted that acceptance of message from the sender may be influenced by adducing logical arguments and playing on the emotions of the receiver.

Encoding: This denotes translating the content of the message into an understandable language so that the receiver may understand. Other methods of encoding include the use of words, symbols or signs, gestures, and intonation that could be understood by both sender and the receiver. In encoding, the sender transmits the information in a form that the message appears useful to the receiver. However, there are some conditions that affect encoding. For

example, if the sender does not have reasoning skills, reading, speaks fluently or listens carefully the message may be insensitive to the receiver. The attitude of the sender determines how the receiver will perceive the message.

Message: A message is a raw facts or characteristics of persons, objects, and physical products that the sender transmits to the receiver. Message symbolizes encoded information from the sender to receiver. The message comprises the content or thoughts and emotional feelings of the sender or source. Indeed, the content of the message takes the form of words, ideas, and symbols. The emotional feelings contain behaviour and force. Writing, speech, body language, gossips, and painting are conceptual components of message.

Channel: Channel is the observable means which facilitates the movement of information (Hussaini, 2021).Channel refers to the oral or written medium by which the information is disseminated to the receiver.The channel is the vehicle that carries message from one person to another. It is also a device used in transferring message to the receiver. When the channel of communication is defective the communication becomes ineffective. Nevertheless, communication where the voice of the sender is used as the channel is called oral communication. For example, telephone, radio, television, seminars, lectures, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The channel of communication that involves writing is called written communication. For example, books, journals, reports, memos, minutes of meetings, company policy manuals, newspapers, Billboard advertisement, E-mail, and magazines.

Decoding: This signifies a process by which the receiver interprets the message and translates it in a manner he could understand. Ordinarily, decoding of message is affected by personal status, experience of the receiver and the symbols used. Before decoding the sender must perceive the message in the same vein interpret it.

Receiver: The person to whom the message is addressed to or the receiver of information. Receiver accepts the motions and feelings of another person. If a man receives call from the telephone, he becomes the receiver. There are many receivers when a memo is addressed to various departments in the organization. For example, a memo stating the conditions for promotion of staff could be directed to departments. Similarly, if the message does not reach the receiver, then communication is inoperative and ineffective where the receiver did not understand the message.

Feedback: The operational activity where the receiver returns the reply to the sender (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). Feedback is the final link in the communication process which moves in the opposite direction. It is basically known as the response from the receiver to the sender. Ordinarily, when the sender gives attention to the feedback and interprets it correctly, the feedback may assist the sender to determine if the original communication was decoded accurately. The absence of feedback could lead to one-way communication that occurs between managers and their workers which eventually causes dispute among the workforce.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Filtering

The tendency of the sender to alter or manipulate the information so that the receiver may accept it. (Manmohan,1998). Information is filtered to hide some relevant aspects of the message that create problem or perceived as unfavourable to certain persons. Filtering entails hoarding of information to achieve personal needs. It comprises deleting or delaying negative message presenting the information in a manner that appears interesting to the receiver. Information is altered when the workers or managers intend to create a good impression about themselves at the instance of the superiors. The rationale behind this action is to build support for a program or policy that originated from personal ideas or to instigate people to rise against what they dislike. Apparently, manipulation of information is visible because organizations are basically political entities where information is used as a source of power to control resources and behaviours. Filtering becomes necessary where organizations reward employees who disseminate positive information and punish those who transfer bad news. Nevertheless, most individuals express annoyance when they receive information that is against their will and like to be part of discussion or meeting where oppression, victimization, and marginalization are neglected. In an attempt to alter a message, the original information is omitted that could provide solutions. For example, a head of department that keeps malice as part of his lifestyle may deny talented subordinates' promotion and other related opportunities particularly those who are not loyal to him. The autocratic leadership style of the head of department contributed to conflicts and disunity that degenerated to series of queries or petitions against the workers (Stoner et al., 2007). In order to have peaceful co-existent among the employees the head of department directed his secretary to issue notice of meeting and he deliberately omitted conflict from the agenda. He knows that the workers will mention his weakness and poor leadership style.

Interpersonal Sensitivity

The time, tone, language the sender employed in conveying the message may be difficult for the receiver to understand the information. When people fail to send clear and accurate messages the response becomes ineffective hence the message does not encourage the receiver to give adequate feedback. Those persons who have pride may claim to have understood the message meanwhile their thinking is far from the ideal message which eventually makes it difficult for the receivers to make corrections in the defective areas. Minutes of meeting that contains errors with short notice distributed to the employees to review may be impossible for the employees who have several responsibilities to respond because of limited time. The mistakes of poor grammar or unclear words attached in the minutes could be repeated at the floor of the meeting which affect effective communication.

Information overload

Information overload occurs when the volume of information received by the receiver exceeds his capacity to understand or interpret the message (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Workers

have a certain information processing capacitythey can process at a particular time. When there is information overload, information processing capacity may be increased through overtime. Information overload also represents excess information where communication is not planned or organized. Consequently, if an employee receives excess messages or instructions from the manager, he may forget the vital information needed to enhance productivity. Indiscriminate instructions do not yield good results instead it constitutes hardship and fear among the subordinates which influence communication (Weihrich& Koontz, 2005).Excessive information could lead to customers complain, low output, and inefficiency. Ordinarily, employees are expected to receive information that could be utilized and give appropriate feedback. Employees should not be exposed to unnecessary information that can cause distraction on their job. The receiver of message may be confused and misled with information overload. Human ear is not a computer even the computer breaks down, let alone the ability to receive information can as well truncate the interpretation where the receiver is overloaded with too much information. Work pressure arises from excessive information that triggers stress which is likely to affect the effectiveness of the purpose of communication.

Semantic Barriers – When communicating with the other persons, no matter what kind of communication means is utilized, whether it is formal or informal, it is vital to make use of appropriate words, vocabulary and language; all kinds of communication should reflect decency. Language and vocabulary that is used in communication should be understandable to the persons; if a person speaks only English and a word is used in Spanish then he may or may not understand the word, for instance, if a person speaks only English, then it could be a possibility that he might have studied other languages such as Spanish or French. Two or more persons when they are communicating with each other should use a common language, so that everyone can understand it well.

Distraction

Distraction refers to unnecessary behaviours that interrupt satisfaction. It is the disturbances that influence communication in a given environment. Distractions occur in every society or organization which is noticeable in written communication and oral communication. For example, if a document is inadequately typed with wrong spellings, poor sentence case, lack of page number, and no spacing, it forms distraction that results in the receiver lacking interest to read or use the document. Furthermore, distraction relates to distortion of information where ideas, speech, and messages are misrepresented through noise. The instruments that cause distractions in communication include phone or radio speaker, malfunctioning computer, low quality projector, poor physical appearance, and offensive odor. Similarly, when a man appears like a mad person in the wedding his clothes create distraction and diversion of attention that could prevent people from receiving adequate information.

Language

The wrong choice of words, inadequate sentences, and unclear statements are major source of ineffective communication (Markaki et al.,2013). The sender must use language that the receiver can understand. There are different people that came from various tribes who speak different languages in the organization. The command of English from the educated persons is quite different from those who are not educated but the basic thing is that the language must be understood by both parties to ensure that communication is effective. Communication gap occurs when the sender transfers unreadable and equivocal language to the receiver. Communication is incomplete where the sender uses confusing words with distorts intent to interact with people ((Davis, 1971). Indeed, it is important to use simple, direct, and declarative language that the listener will understand. Language ambiguity poses a barrier to communication which made corporate managers to rely on vague language to avoid creating undesirable emotions. Different words are used to create meanings in the minds of people. However, most persons react negatively when unnecessary language is used which also compel them to convey non-verbal communication.

Conclusion

Communication is an integral part of human existence. People have to use communication to transfer messages or information to one another. Communication is a continuing and thinking process that involves the transmission and interchange with understanding of ideas. For example, a child cries to convey its hunger,a dog barks to warn the owner of the arrival of a visitor,and organizations use management information system (MIS), to run businesses successfully.There isaexcess of languages used in the world. Even within the same language, people have different conceptions about the same word. Although, verbal communication allows for the most immediate feedback and clarification of words. However, inspite of the mode, type, channel, and style of communication, the important thing is for a message to be disseminated appropriately, through an acceptable channel and for it to be decoded and understood correctly. The paper reveals that communication is effective when the sender's intended meaning has been correctly decoded by the receiver and the expected kind of feedback given. Organizations should apply the appropriate channels of communication to transfer information to the receiver for the purpose of achieving organizational performance.

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