

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AS AN INDISPENSABLE TOOL FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH: A SURVEY OF SELECTED MANUFACTURING FIRMS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Every activity in an organization requires human beings to interact, exchange information and co-ordinate other peoples' efforts. Such information becomes the basis for decisions affecting product lines, operation planning, marketing strategy, etc. Thus, almost everything managers do to facilitate the attainment of organizational objectives requires effective communication and without the means and capacity to communicate, every activity will fail. This study was conducted to examine, communication as an indispensable tool for organizational growth and development. To achieve this objective, the researchers developed and administered a questionnaire on sixty employees of five manufacturing companies in Delta State. Data analysis was made using frequency counts and simple percentage on tables. Among the findings were that significant relationship exists between effective communication, organizational operations and co-ordination of the various activities of people in order to achieve the objectives of an organization. The study concluded that effective organizational communication is necessary for managers and all members of an organization to increase efficiency, quality and innovation and gain competitive advantage. It therefore recommended improved downwards, upwards and horizontal communication for effective organizational communication.

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of communication is very central to the stability, well being, peace, progress and performance of organizations. The organization and groups depend on effective communication to perform all their functions including planning, directing, controlling, decision making and the execution of decisions and goals. Thus, leadership, management, operations and performance cannot take place or be achieved without communication between persons and units. Most interactions, mutual understanding and interpersonal relations take place via communication (Akanni, 2006). The effectiveness, openness and level of communication determine largely the level of morale, job satisfaction and motivation of staff. Where communication problems exist, there would be

gaps, and blackouts about the activities, problems, needs and expectations of employees and management. Thus, the task of group and organizational coordination and operations would be made difficult without a system of effective communication. Groups, organizations and people are linked together by communication and they are so co-ordinated and directed to achieve purposes. Effectiveness in purpose, execution of plans and the mobilization towards goal and plan achievement is done through communication. Communication is therefore very important to the management of organizations and groups. This study is therefore conducted to examine communication as an indispensable tool for organizational growth and development.

Sherlekar (2001) defines communication as the ongoing process by which people attempt to share meaning via transmission of messages. That communication provides a common thread for all management processes of planning, organizing, leading, controlling and proper coordination. The management of people through small groups and teams requires continuous communication. Cole (2002) views communication as the process of creating, transmitting and interpreting ideas, facts, opinions and feelings. It is a sharing process, that is, a mutual interchange between two or more persons. In organizations, communication is usually considered in terms of the followings: (a) The media of communication, e.g. reports, letters, among others, (b) The skill of communication, for instance, giving orders, presiding at meetings. (c) The organization of communication, for example, chain of command, committee and the like.

These three aspects represent the formal communication present within an organization which is different from the informal aspects of communication. Adeleke, Ogundele and Oyenuga (2004) define communication as the means through which the task and the resources needed to carryout an assignment, the roles and duties and the expected results are made known to the subordinates. That communication is the transfer of a message from one person to another. That effective communication is the transfer of message followed by feedback from receiver to the sender indicating understanding of the message.

According to Subba (2007), communication is important in the organization for the following reasons: (i) all the functions of management such as planning, organizing, leading and controlling involve the act of communication without which they cannot, be performed at all, (ii) managers devote a major portion of their time to the activity of communication, (iii) interpersonal relations and group relations are maintained and developed only through the system of communication, (iv) to keep employees informed of company's progress, (v) to make each employee interested in his respective job and in the work of the company as a whole, (vi) to reduce or prevent labour turnover, (vii) To increase the will to work by employees and the benefits

derived from their association with the company, and (viii) To instill each employee with personal pride of being a member of the company.

The importance of communication in any organization cannot be over emphasized. Lack of information will surely bring chaos and organizational goals will become unattainable. The fact is that effective communication is not given free flow in most organizations. Several systems of communication have been operated in organizations which have impaired productivity level because the appropriate system is not used at the right time to the right person. Communication problems are more complex in larger organizations. Managers face difficulty in maintaining effective communication to pass messages accurately without distortion to their subordinates. The purpose of this study is to examine communication as an indispensable tool for organizational growth and development and to proffer solutions to problems militating against effective communication in organizations. Consequently, the following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. Does effective communication influence the operational performance of your organization?
- ii. Does effective communication integrate and co-ordinate the various activities in your organization?

The following null hypotheses were tested in this study.

- i. There is no significant relationship between effective communication and the operational performance of an organization.
- ii. There is no significant relationship between effective communication and the integration and co-ordination of various activities in an organization.

CLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNICATION

Communication can be classified according to their direction (Okoh, 2004). When communication takes place between persons in organizations, they are of three types; downward, upward and lateral/crosswise. Downward communication emanates from the top and flows downwards to the lower levels. In organizations, top hierarchy officials pass directives and information to lower levels in the hierarchy. This is usually in the form of speeches, orders, directives, instructions and meetings. The channels are the hierarchical chain of command, bulletins, posters, periodicals, letters, pamphlets, reports, and so many others. There are usually problems of delays and distortions in downward communication.

Upward communication is that which emanates from the lower hierarchy or subordinates to superior officers. It enables management to know about the thinking, problems, grievances and complaints as well as the output and performance of subordinate officials. Such communication is usually

informative rather than directive. It thrives only in environments which encourage subordinate participation and contributions. It is the duty of managers and leaders to keep open channels for upward communication. The channels usually include; suggestions, appeals and complaint system, the open door policy, interviews, meetings, labour unions, informal informant, and so on.

Horizontal or lateral communication takes place between colleagues and workers either on same hierarchical levels or outside the chain of command. Thus, there can be intra-management communication to enhance understanding and co-ordination or enhancing of information flow. Sharma (2007) notes that communication in organizations can take a variety of forms, but the most popular media are (a) written communication (b) oral communication (c) non-verbal communication. Written communication is more common in organizations. Reports, notes, letters, memos and organizational handbooks are the most common forms of written communication. Managers prefer written communication because it provides a record of what has been transmitted and it can be re-read if first reading was not clear. The problems with written communication are that (i) many managers are not good at drafting, they prefer verbal medium, (ii) superiors often refuse to read written reports of any substantial length.

Face to face verbal orders, telephone discussions, speeches and discussions at meetings are forms of oral communication because it is faster and provides for immediate feed-back. Face-to-face communication is not always possible in dealing with large groups. When a message is passed in the form of gestures or signals, the communication is said to be non-verbal. Non-verbal communication could be expressed by facial expression, movement of the eyes, the use of the hands, arms or fingers. According to Subba (2007), some of the causes of break down in effective communication in organizations are:

Downward Communication: (from superiors to subordinates) may break down because of poor organization, confusion about the messages being transmitted, or for personal reasons. If the channels of communication are inefficient or insufficient, the organization is at fault (there is technical noise). Poor personal relations between superior and subordinate will cause a break-down in communications because of mutual suspicion, or because their differing backgrounds or differing senses of values make it impossible for them to talk to each other properly or understand what the other is trying to do or say.

Upward Communication: (from subordinates to superior) may break down for the same reasons as applicable in downward communication. An additional consideration is that the subordinate, because he wants to hide his errors or the errors of a fellow worker, or because he does not want to bother his boss with a problem he thinks he can handle himself, may give incorrect information for his superior to act on.

Horizontal communication: (between people on the same hierarchical level, or perhaps in different departments) may break down because departments are geographically separated with inadequate communication links, there is no formal organization for the cross fertilization of ideas and opinions between departments, the organization is too centralized and insists on all such negotiations being made at top management level, and/or because there is a poor informal communication structure.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument used for the collection of data for this study is mainly questionnaire which was structured into two sections: section A solicits personal information from the respondents with respect to their sex, date of their engagement, name of the organization, designation, rank/position/designation in the organization while section B sought information regarding organizational communication. The population of the study consists of all manufacturing organizations operating in Delta State. The study made use of 60 employees randomly selected from five manufacturing organizations from four towns in Delta State, namely: Warri, Sapele, Ughelli and Aladja.

To ensure that the instrument achieve the intended result, copies of the questionnaire were given to some of our colleagues who are lecturers at the Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro for vetting. Contributions from these people were duly incorporated into the instrument. To get the reliability of the instrument, ten copies of the questionnaire, two each were administered to staff of the five manufacturing organizations under study that completed same and returned to the researchers. After one week interval, the same staff were presented with the same questionnaire for completion. The aim was to ascertain the consistency and trustworthiness of staff in completing the questionnaire. When the two sets of responses were compared, it was evidenced that their responses were similar as the respondents maintained similar stand points in both cases. The methods of data analysis include frequency counts and simple percentage on tables. The tables presented below contain the analytical details relating to the findings of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Manufacturing organizations studied with number of respondents in Delta State

Organizations	Frequency of Respondents
Industrial Gas Ltd, Warri	20
Eternit Nigeria Plc, Sapele	14
Beta Glass Plc, Ughelli	15
Delta Steel Complex, Aladja	6
Vita Foam Plc, Sapele	5
Total	60

Source: Survey, 2011.

Table 2: Effective communication and operational performance of organizations

Responses	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
Yes	55	91.67
No	5	8.33
Total	60	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2011.

Table 3: Effective communication and integration and co-ordination of various activities in organizations

Responses	Frequency of Occurrence	Percentage
Yes	57	95
No	3	5
Total	60	100

Source: Field work, 2011.

Table 2 above shows that almost all the respondents are of the view that effective communication influences the operational performance of the manufacturing organizations under study. Similar case is observed on table 3. The respondents are of the view that effective communication integrates and co-ordinates various activities in the manufacturing organizations under study. Majority of the respondents stood for “Yes” as against “No”. In essence, there is significant relationship between effective communication and operational performance in the organizations under study. It indicates therefore, Effective organizational communication enables the workers to understand their job responsibilities and relate to the company's objectives and plans. This results in effective implementation of the company's plans.

Also, there is significant relationship between effective communication and the integration and co-ordination of various activities in the organizations under study. Communication is essential to integrate and co-ordinate the activities of the people in the organization. In the absence of communication, no individual worker can appreciate the overall objectives of an organization and there is the possibility that people in the same organization will work towards different goals instead of a common goal.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of this study provides a basis for effective management of communication problems in organizations. Ineffective communication in the work place could be curtailed if recommendations proffered for this study are strictly implemented. This study would enable management to be sensitive to communication problems in the organization. The study examined communication as an indispensable tool for organizational growth and

development: A survey of selected manufacturing firms in Delta State. Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that for organizations to function successful, effective communication is indispensable. Effective communication is necessary for managers and all members of an organization to increase efficiency, quality, responsiveness to customers, innovation and thus gain competitive advantage for the organization. This study therefore advance the following recommendations for effective organizational communication:

- i Management can develop upward communication by encouraging better listening, building trust, and responding to messages that are received promptly. Various practices may also be used to improve upward communication. Counseling, grievance systems, consultative supervision, meetings, suggestion systems and job satisfaction surveys.
- ii Managers must consider the following three elements to make downward communication distortion free (i) They must specify an objective for communicating (ii) They should make sure that the content of their communication contains qualities like accuracy, specificity and no hidden meanings (iii) They should employ the best communication technique to get the message across to the receivers.
- iii Horizontal communications would be improved by more formal meetings or interdepartmental committees. The problem of rivalry can be overcome through taskforces composed of employees from all the departments in the organisation working on common problem areas for viable solution. When employees are working toward common goals, they are more likely to be co-operative.

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