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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION: THE BIG PICTURE: THE ESSENCE OF MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT

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Effective communication is the mutual exchange of understanding and is essential to all organizations, both externally and internally. Carried out in modern enterprises on several different levels and through many modes, each means of communication has its own strengths and weaknesses. Managers need to understand these features and take advantage of this knowledge in order to communicate effectively.

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Communication is neither the transmission of a message nor the message itself. Rather, it is the mutual exchange of understanding, originating with the recipient rather than the sender. Business communication is a very specialized form of communication. Whatever its mode, it is informed by the basic purpose of the organization. In the case of commercial enterprises, that purpose is to make money, and the profitability of the organization must be kept in mind as communication takes place. Management expert Peter F. Drucker asserts that the purpose of business is to create customers, and this means to communicate with them and to communicate with those involved in the enterprise [4; 5].

Profitability is not synonymous with exploitation, however, if the customer is to remain engaged with the business. Therefore, effective business communication is also informed by humanistic elements that are required to maintain organizational effectiveness over time. In the case of non-profit organizations, while profitability may not be a requirement, institutional sustainability requires use of analogous perceptions and approaches to those employed in the for-profit sector. Some non-profits, such as colleges and universities, need customers, that is, they need students, while others need a public that is disposed to accept their services. Thus, the essence of business is communication. Jay Conrad Levinson states in *Guerrilla Marketing* that marketing is every bit of contact a company has with anyone in the outside world [10].

External communication in business is multi-faceted and includes such diverse elements as marketing, advertising, brand management, consumer relations, community engagement, and event management. The means of communication available are extremely varied, including Internet, television, radio, telephone, print media, posters and billboards, ambient media, video, audio, twitter, blogs, in-person conferencing, various types of presentations, and even word-of-mouth. Effective business communication helps in building goodwill toward the organization from external constituencies [11].

Internal communication needs to be effective in business, because it is the essence of management. None of the basic functions of management can be performed well without effective communication. Business communication involves constant flow of information, and feedback is an integral part of the process. Contemporary organizations are often very large, involve many people, operate globally, and are organized on many levels of hierarchy. The greater the number of levels, the more difficult is the job of managing the organization.

Communication plays a very important role in process of directing and controlling people in an organization. Immediate feedback can be obtained and misunderstandings, if any, can be avoided. There should be effective communication between superiors and subordinates in an organization, between organizational sectors, and between the organization and society at large (for example between management and unions or governmental regulatory organizations). Communication is essential for success and growth



of an organization, and communication gaps cannot be allowed to occur in any organization. According to Patrick Lencioni, it is not finance, not strategy, not technology, but rather teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare [9]. This teamwork, according to Lencioni, relies on trust that can only be built through effective communication. That same goodwill required from external individuals and organizations must exist within the business and extend to all its employees.

Business Communication is goal oriented. The rules, regulations and policies of a company have to be communicated to people within and outside the organization. Business Communication is regulated by certain rules and norms. Formerly, business communication was limited to paperwork, telephone calls, and meetings. With the advent of technology, laptops, cell phones, i-pads, blackberries, video conferencing, e-mails, and satellite communication all are available to support business communication.

In general, Business Communication can be said to be of three types: oral communication, written communication, and nonverbal communication.

An oral communication can be formal or informal. Generally business communication is a formal means of communication, such as meetings, interviews, group discussion, and speeches. An example of Informal business communication would be the office “grapevine” or “rumor mill”.

Advantages of oral communication include transparency, flexibility, quick feedback, efficiency and lack of expense, effectiveness in resolving problems, building teamwork and organizational morale, and effectiveness in transmitting private or confidential information.

Disadvantages include the lack of formality often required in business, time wasted by long speeches, opportunities for misunderstanding, the requirement of great attentiveness by listeners or respondents, and lack of effectiveness as a legal record.

Written means of business communication include agendas, reports, manuals, memoranda, and the like. Written communication has great significance in today’s business world. It is an innovative activity of the mind. Effective written communication is essential for preparing worthy promotional materials for business development. Speech came before writing. But writing is more unique and formal than speech. Effective writing involves careful choice of words, their organization in correct order in sentence formation as well as cohesive composition of sentences. Also, writing is more valid and reliable than speech. But while speech is spontaneous, writing causes delay and takes time, as feedback is not immediate.

1. The advantages of written communication are as follows: Written communication helps in laying down apparent principles, policies and rules for running of an organization. It provides a permanent record, specifies delegated responsibility, is explicit and precise, strengthens institutional image, and can provide a permanent, legally valid record.

Disadvantages of written communication include its expense, if on paper, in terms of materials, and in labor time to write, type, and distribute. Responses may be delayed due to time of preparation, processing, and distance. Feedback is consequently slowed. To perform effectively, producers of written communication require considerable skill in language and in writing, though oral communication also may involve considerable preparation. Guy Kawasaki suggests that making an effective presentation may require as much as twenty years’ practice [7].

Nonverbal communication includes gestures, facial expression, logos, brands, appearance, and can be more powerful than words. One need only think of the shape of the Coca-Cola bottle or the Nike “swish” as marketing tools. Guy Kawasaki cautions new entrepreneurs never to make a presentation dressed less formally than members of the audience, as this telegraphs disrespect [7]. Smiles may make an audience more receptive, while eye contact and controlled hand gestures and movement on a stage or around a conference table are important tools to enhance positive responses and attentiveness.

The main advantage of non-verbal communication is its ability to trigger strong emotional responses that may be subconscious. Familiarity with brands builds comfort that can support consumption. Appropriate non-verbal communication can also stimulate greater



attentiveness. As American film actress Rosalind Russell once famously put it, “acting is standing up naked and turning around very slowly.”

Disadvantages of non-verbal communication include the possibility of misinterpretation, since by definition it is dependent on visual cues that may not be obvious to everyone. One person’s smile may appear to another as a grimace. Branding may also be difficult to sustain. Famous brands often become generic labels, such as the plaid pattern on a “Scotch” cellophane tape dispenser or the term “Kleenex” for paper tissue, undermining their effectiveness.

According to Karen Friedman in *Shut Up and Say Something: Business Communication Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Influence Listeners*, good communication is not about talking. Rather, it is about connection [6]. Communication is a process of exchanging verbal and non-verbal messages. It is a continuous process. A prerequisite of communication is a message. This message must be conveyed through some medium to the recipient. It is essential that the recipient understand the message in the same terms as intended by the sender. The recipient must then respond within a time frame. Thus, communication is a two-way process and is incomplete without a feedback from the recipient to the sender on how well the message is understood.

The main components of the communication process are as follows:

1. **Context** – Communication is affected by the context in which it takes place. This context may be physical, social, chronological or cultural. Every communication proceeds with context. The sender chooses the message to communicate within a context;

2. **Sender** – The Sender is a person who sends the message. A sender makes use of symbols (words or graphic or visual aids) to convey the message and produce the required response. The sender may be an individual or a group or an organization. The views, background, approach, skills, competencies, and knowledge of the sender have a great impact on the message. The verbal and non-verbal symbols chosen are essential in ascertaining interpretation of the message by the recipient in the same terms as intended by the sender;

3. **Message** – Message is a key idea that the sender wants to communicate. It is a sign that elicits the response of the recipient. Communication process begins with deciding about the message to be conveyed. It must be ensured that the main objective of the message is clear;

4. **Medium** – Medium is a means used to transmit the message. The sender must choose an appropriate medium for transmitting the message else the message might not be conveyed to the desired recipients. The choice of appropriate medium of communication is essential for making the message effective and correctly interpreted by the recipient. This choice of communication medium varies depending upon the features of communication. For instance a written medium is chosen when a message has to be conveyed to a small group of people, while an oral medium is chosen when spontaneous feedback is required from the recipient as misunderstandings can be cleared up immediately;

5. **Recipient** – The Recipient is a person for whom the message is intended. The degree to which the decoder understands the message is dependent upon various factors such as knowledge of the recipient, their responsiveness to the message, and the confidence of the sender on the ability of the recipient;

6. **Feedback** – Feedback is the main component of communication process as it permits the sender to analyze the efficacy of the message. It helps the sender in confirming the correct interpretation of message by the decoder. Feedback may be verbal (through words) or non-verbal (in form of smiles, sighs, movement, gestures, etc.). It may also take written form in memos, reports, or e-mails [8].

There are several barriers that affect the flow of communication in an organization. These barriers interrupt the flow of communication from the sender to the receiver, thus making communication ineffective. It is essential for managers to overcome these barriers. The main barriers of communication are summarized below.



Perceptual and Language Differences: Perception is generally how individuals interpret the world around them. All people generally want to receive messages that are significant to them, but any message that is against their values is not accepted. Different individuals may perceive a particular event differently. Linguistic differences also lead to communication breakdown. The same word may have different meaning to different individuals or dialect groups. The case of false cognates in different languages is particularly likely to cause confusion.

Information Overload: Managers are surrounded with a vast pool of information. It is essential to control this information flow or else the information is likely to be misinterpreted, forgotten or overlooked. As a result, communication is less effective.

Inattention: At times we just do not listen, but only hear. For example a traveler may pay attention to one "NO PARKING" sign, but if such a sign is put everywhere in a city, it is no longer obeyed. Thus, repetitive messages should be avoided for effective communication. Similarly, if a superior is engrossed in paper work while a subordinate explains a problem, the superior may not process what is said and this failed communication may lead to disappointment, frustration, or even hostility on the part of the subordinate.

Time Pressures: Often organizational targets have to be achieved within a specified time period, and failure has adverse consequences. In the haste to meet deadlines, the formal channels of communication may be shortened, messages may be only partially given or not completely transferred, and insufficient time may be allowed for necessary feedback. Sufficient time must be given for effective communication to take place.

Distraction/Noise: Communication is greatly affected by noise or distractions. Physical distractions include poor lightning, uncomfortable seating, and unhygienic or unattractive space. Use of microphones, loud speakers, and other technology also may interfere with communication. Noise may also refer to a great deal of unnecessary verbiage or messages that detract from receipt of important information. It may even refer to the volume of communication that can obscure vital messages.

Emotions: Emotional state at a particular point in time also affects communication. If the receivers feel that the communicator is angry they may interpret that the information being sent is very bad or it may be rejected. Communication that engenders hostility or distrust on the part of an audience is by definition ineffective and counterproductive.

Complexity in Organizational Structure: The larger the number of managerial levels within an organization, the greater is the chance of communication failing or being ineffective. Only the people at the top level can see the overall picture, while the people at lower levels have knowledge only about their own area and little knowledge about other areas. Span of control may be an issue in some organizations, where supervisors are expected to manage so many employees that effective communication becomes difficult. According to Edward De Bono, in *Six Thinking Hats*, the biggest enemy of thinking is complexity, for that can lead to confusion [3].

Inappropriate medium: The proper medium of communication must be chosen for any communication to be effective. A lengthy power-point presentation in a warm and darkened auditorium is likely to put much of an audience to sleep or at least to make them drowsy and inattentive. Ken Kawasaki's standard is a ten-slide presentation in thirty-point type lasting twenty minutes. E-mails may be easily ignored, deleted, or even end up in a spam filter; memoranda may be discarded or buried in a pile of paper [1].

Poor retention: Human memory cannot function beyond a limit. One can't always retain what is being told, especially if the information is complex, its importance is not immediately apparent, or the recipient is distracted. This leads to communication breakdown.

Transparency: All organizations have secrets. Confidentiality and protection of proprietary information are essential to all businesses, but they are also enemies of organizational trust and may inhibit effective communication if information essential to operation of a business is held too closely. Managers must balance protection of vital information against the need to keep employees and the public at large informed and as effective participants in



communication. As Jan Carlzon, CEO of Scandinavian Airlines suggests in *Moments of Truth*, an individual without information cannot take responsibility; an individual who is given information cannot help but take responsibility [2].

Thus there are many communication barriers faced these days by all organizations. If a receiver does not understand the message intended by a sender in the same terms and sense, then communication breakdown occurs. It is essential to deal with these communication barriers so as to ensure smooth and effective communication.

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ДЕЛОВАЯ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ: БОЛЬШАЯ КАРТИНА: СУТЬ МАРКЕТИНГА И МЕНЕДЖМЕНТА

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Эффективная коммуникация предполагает взаимопонимание, существенное для внутреннего и внешнего функционирования организации. Каждое средство коммуникации, применяемое в современных предприятиях на различных уровнях и в различных формах, имеет свои преимущества и недостатки. Менеджеры должны понимать эти особенности и, используя эти знания, стремиться к эффективной коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: внешняя коммуникация, внутренняя коммуникация, перцептивные различия, информационная перегрузка, масштаб контроля, прозрачность, невербальная коммуникация.