Communication Problems in Management

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Abstract
Management can only thrive in the prevalence of communication. Indeed, the present paper is timely. A 2002 survey of 1,104 employees of organizations in the United States showed that, while managers spend 60 to 80 percent of their time on operational communication, only 17 percent said their managers communicated effectively. Thus, every possible constructive measure must be taken to disentangle areas that stand in the way of effective communication within a given business organization. Efforts must be exhausted to create a business environment in which managers and staff pay close attention to the conceptualization and dissemination of communication media and the messages they transmit. Since the desired purpose of transmitting information from sender to receiver is effective communication, the paper will review pertinent literature to ascertain harbors of problems that result in communication problems in management. To this end, the paper intends to examine attitudes of senders that generate poor and/or ineffective communication; investigate media choices that are inappropriate in certain communication instances; consider cultural/gender insensitive implications prevalent in management communication; as well as the importance of placing the receiver at the center when designing information or messages to be transmitted. In addition, the proposed paper intends to analyze management communication mistakes, such as making controversial announcements, lying [sic], ignoring the realities of power, underestimating the intelligence of the receiver or audience, using inappropriate media or channels of communication, and ignoring to admit mistakes. It is a truism that, 60 percent of corporate public relations effort is devoted to internal communication, which is a reflection that good communication is at the heart of every productive workplace. The paper’s objective is to produce a document that chronicles not only missteps in management communication, but also to advance ways of creating awareness and to forge management policies that foster good and effective communication in a business environment.

Keywords: Manager, leadership, communication, message, audience
1. Introduction

As much as humans may want to ignore the essence of communication, the concept remains just a distant elusion. This is typically the case in business where communication is the pivot around which the success or failure of a company or organization depends. Thus, it is not surprising Tara Duggan (www.chron.com) takes time to write under the headline, “Communication Problems in a Business,” asserting that communication problems most frequently stem from misunderstandings.

Incidentally, Duggan is project management professional specializing in business communication management with a 25-year experience. “These often result in hostility and accusations,” says Duggan. “Recognizing situations that are caused by communication issues solves problems in the workplace usually [also] involves helping employees solve problems without blaming others.” As a matter of fact, some problems are a direct result of ineffective communication techniques, which include poor listening skills, use of inappropriate medium, poor message conceptualization, and general lack of trust. It is the prevalence of ineffective communication in business also leads to poor communication. Duggan (www.chron.com) points to four barriers to communication. First, style, which arises when the sender of a message uses the wrong communication style or fails to express his/her thoughts adequately. This makes it difficult for the receiver of the message to understand the message, let alone interpret it. Confusion follows when the sender cannot anticipate possible cause(s) of the confusion.

Similarly, failing to give background information or sufficient details can lead to communication problems, including lack of perspective on how people may receive the message, especially when complex issues are being communicated. And choosing the wrong medium or channel such as e-mail, voicemail, letter, or conversation can complicate communication. Poorly organized or written documents that include typographical errors and mistakes are bound to create communication problems and subsequently brew misconceptions.

Second, there are undesirable effects. The company or organization experiences distrust and low morale among workers, and there is a clash of cultures when workers from different backgrounds fail to acknowledge and value differences in the workplace. Third, managers fail to assess their communication skills, which describes how assertive and expressive they are toward staff as they communicate. Fourth, managers are seemingly lackadaisical in making employees take responsibility for their own communication by promoting effective communication either through constructive feedback or planned workshop or training.

Chad Brooks (2012) is senior writer for Business News Daily. “What’s the Biggest Problem at Work? No one Communicates,” is the caption of Brooks’ article published on
April 27. “Employees want to be kept in the loop and feel appreciated,” contends Brooks. The writer argues that a company or organization can only be successful if its employees have the information and support they need to perform to their fullest. By the same token, employees can only perform to their fullest potential if there is a two-way communication environment.

In this regard, Brooks states five imperatives for managers, a) Here’s what happening – update employees on the company’s financial performance, department initiatives or group projects; keep staff informed about information that affects them and their responsibilities. Keeping employees in the dark will lead to tension and rumors, b) Do you have what you need? - Take the time to find out if team members have the right resources to work effectively, c) Thank you – Call attention to successes by recognizing staff members who go above their call of duty in meetings and copying immediate supervisors, d) What challenges are you facing? – Proactively ask staff members what’s going on and how you may help, and e) How can we improve the company? – Invite staff members to make suggestions to achieve organization’s objectives.

2. Literature Review

Although managers may subscribe to desirable communication imperatives, there is no manager who can be described as infallible. And no manager is free of error when communication is concerned. For instance, failure to read and re-read, check, and re-check a letter or e-mail (only to realize error(s) later) may not only prove embarrassing, but beseeches professionalism and competence. Truly, mistakes in communication can even have more serious consequences. They can tarnish the manager’s reputation, infuriate stake/share holders, or take a bite out of the “bread and butter” of the company or organization, hence loss in revenue.

To avert occurrence in any of the examples stated here, the manager must work diligently to avoid communication blunders and misunderstanding that can build confusion. www.mindtools.com has come up with ten common communication mistakes. These are not editing your work; delivering bad news by e-mail; avoiding difficult conversations; not being assertive; reacting, not responding; not preparing thoroughly; using a “one-size fits all” approach to communication; not keeping an open mind when meeting new people; assuming that your message has been understood; and accidentally violating others’ privacy.

It is a given, too, that communication problems are inevitable in workplace environments where humans interact with other humans. Personality differences, cultural backgrounds, ethical issues and their interpretations, goal setting and accountability, are only a few problem areas. The problem, though, is how these communication problems can be quickly identified and addressed so that employees can go to work in order to enhance the organization’s competitiveness and, above all, productivity.
It is largely for this reason that Nicole Selley admits communication problems often become apparent when consequences surface. “If a department suffers from high turnover, this can be a sign of poor communication between the supervisor and the team,” says Selley. “If the team doesn’t understand what is expected from them, receive unclear instructions . . . they feel dissatisfied, and this can result in employees leaving the business after a relatively short period.”

Another indicator of communication problems in management is low motivation, productivity, and business performance vis-à-vis competitors. Selley adds that, if employees do not believe they are appreciated, valued, and kept informed, they may not go the “extra mile” for their employer. To make the work environment worse, the employees might become frustrated seeing no point of their services, thus leading to poor performance. Open and regular disagreements between managers and the team, such as open conflict or rejected appraisals, are also indicators of the prevalence of communication problems.

While many communication channels are at the disposal of the sender of the message, it is also commonly accepted that interpersonal communication is the most effective channel. It gives the sender a unique opportunity for direct interaction, which includes body language, voice pitch, being personable, facial expression, body language, and to take advantage of immediate feedback. Conversely, there are many reasons why interpersonal communication may fail. And although a skilled communicator may utilize active listening, clarification, and reflection, he/she must be generally aware of barriers to communication.

www.skillsyouneed.com takes time to indicate common barriers to effective communication. These are use of jargon (which is over-complicated) and the use of unfamiliar and/or technical terms; emotion barriers and taboos, whereby some people may find it difficult to express their emotions and some topics may be completely “off limits” or taboo; and lack of attention, interest, distractions, or irrelevance to the receiver.

Furthermore, there are differences in perception and viewpoint; physical disabilities, such as hearing problems or speech difficulties; physical barriers to non-verbal communication – not being able to see the non-verbal cues, gestures, posture, and general body language can make communication less effective; language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents; expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping – people often hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions; and cultural differences – the norms of social interaction may vary greatly in different cultures, as do the ways in which emotions are expressed. For instance, the concept of personal space varies between cultures and between different social settings.
In order to categorize known barriers to communication, www.skillsyounneed.com underscores language barriers whereby langue and linguistic ability may impede communication. While sender and receiver may speak the same language, terminology used in a message may hamper full understanding.

The psychological state of the sender may also influence how the message is received. A typical example is when the receiver is preoccupied by personal concerns and is not quite receptive. In this case, stress management would be more appropriate than communication.

A physical barrier to communication is geographic distance between the sender and receiver(s); systematic barriers may exist in organizations or companies with inadequate or inefficient, and sometimes, inappropriate information systems and channels of communication; and attitudinal barriers prevent people from communicating effectively, leading to conflicts, resistance to change, poor management, and lack of motivation.

2.1 Outcomes of Communication Problems

Interpersonal communication alone cannot stamp out management communication problems, and it would be naïve to suppose communication problems do not have undesired outcomes. They do. Alex Writing, under the headline, “The Effects of Poor Communication in Business,” confesses that poor communication takes place in any work environment. The manager might not have received an important e-mail from a subordinate, or an order might not have been shipped on time because of a missed phone call. Communication problems do bring about lower efficiency.

This includes vague e-mail messages that require certification, plus documents that must be rewritten due to errors. Employee morale is also affected given that a highly “communicative” and collaborative work environment promotes employee productivity, creativity, and inspiration.

The prevalence of communication problems in the work environment tends to demoralize employees as they sit through dull and boring presentations where they are provided with unclear instructions or projects, leading to confusion and monotony. Another casualty of poor communication is innovation.

The ability of the company to make advances is marginalized and rendered null in the absence of the company’s capacity to make positive contributions to society. This is critical since the capacity to innovate is proportional to the capacity to communicate directions and to generate exciting ideas and improvements.

2.2 Sampling Communication Mistakes Managers Make

Indeed, it is exciting ideas that form the foundation for the company’s growth. Yet the manager’s imperfection cannot be ignored. Yes, managers do make mistakes, sometimes

The first is making controversial announcements without the benefit of doing groundwork, particularly because decisions about change are the most charged and the departures of key employees almost certain. The second mistake is lying. Although certain lies are half-truths and are well intentioned, certain topics remain confidential while under discussion. However, some managers do lack the communication skills to adhere to “confidentiality.” So they “venture” into the “open” with company information in an incomplete or guarded manner. They cannot say, “I’m free to talk about that” or “I can’t answer that fully at this time.”

Thus, if employees know the manager lied, the less the trust of the employees to the detriment of the company or organization. The third mistake is ignoring the realities of power. The more power a manager has, the less he/she would hear about problems. Yet they exist.

Every manager up the chain of command wants to minimize the problem(s) so as to absolve him/herself of responsibility. Unfortunately, some managers do not inquire about bad news and the bad news only fester. The fourth mistake is underestimating your audience’s intelligence, as in glossing over issues because “people won’t understand.” The fifth mistake is confusing process with outcome. The sixth mistake is using inappropriate forms of communication, as in using e-mail for conveying information on emotional issues instead of using interpersonal communication. And the seventh mistake is ignoring acts of omission, as in omitting details or facts essential in the message. For instance, they fail to give praise, making employees believe they are not appreciated.

3. Methodology

The purpose of the paper is to develop an appreciation of everyday communication challenges that face managers and employees in the workplace and advance ways that communication problems in companies and organizations can be averted. Furthermore, the paper sets out to contribute to existing knowledge and literature in the field and to serve as reference to researchers, scholars, and companies and organizations.

Qualitative research method was used, which is encapsulated in the theory of symbolic interactionism. The theory assumes that people are constantly in a process of interpretation and definition as they move quickly through various situations with which they are more or less familiar.

In so doing, people develop shared perspectives through social interaction. It is this social reaction that determines the effectiveness or failure of communication in the workplace, depending upon whether or not the manager employs appropriate or good communication skills.
Moreover, qualitative research is designed to reveal a target audience’s range of behavior and the perceptions that drive it with reference to specific topics or issues. The descriptive results of the paper are consistent with qualitative research method.

To this end, a review of newspaper and journal articles was conducted to investigate the topic. Secondary sources included books and periodicals in library holdings, plus websites to explore contributions by online experts and organizations. These resources were used to complete a content analysis, as well as a thorough analysis and interpretation of the subject under investigation.

The paper attempted to address five topics. The first topic was to delineate or identify workforce communication problems. The second topic was to look at internal communications problems in management. The third topic examined favoritism from the point of view of breeding communication problems. The fourth topic reviewed leadership and communication problems. And topic five assessed ways by which a company or organization can minimize communication problems by embarking on creating a climate that fosters and nurtures open communication.

Topic one examined the root causes of communication in the workplace, which includes audience understanding and message conceptualization. Topic two looked at the importance of developing trust, understanding, collaboration and relationship building in a company or organization. Topic three studied the extent to which favoritism and nepotism contribute to organizational communication problems. Topic four considered styles of leadership and their impact on communication problems in companies or organizations. And topic five examined ways to lay the foundation to minimize communication problems.

### 2.3 Communication Problems Impede Effective Leadership

It is a truism that styles of leadership determine the effectiveness of management communication. Writing about leadership in the publication, *Harvard Business Review*, Lou Solomon (2015) highlights complaints by employees levied against their managers as a result of communication problems. The writer cautions the kind of boss who fails to make genuine connections with direct reports.

Referring to the online Interact/Harris Poll in which 1,000 workers were questioned, 91 percent of employees say communication can drag executives down. In the survey, employees pointed out the kind of management offenses that show a striking lack of emotional intelligence among business leaders, including micromanaging, bullying, narcissism, and indecisiveness.

Ranked in order, the communication problems that stand in the way of effective leadership are, a) not recognizing employee achievements, b) not giving clear directions, c) not having time to meet with employees, d) refusing to talk to subordinates, e) taking credit for others’
ideas, f) not offering constructive criticism, g) not knowing employees’ names, i) refusing to talk to people on the phone or in person, and j) not asking about employee’s lives outside work.

Truly, business is about people. Too often, businesses fall short, not because leaders do not understand the business, but because they do not understand the needs of the people who work for them in order to bring their best attitude and conduct to work. Lou Solomon notes, “Much of a team’s success lies in the pattern of connection a leader has with direct reports, and the way he/she empowers them to extend that pattern to his/her direct reports.”

2.4 Two Questions in Every Communication Process

There is no question that adhering to reporting levels within the organization enhances effective communication given that lines of communication are more direct and pleasantly personable. This is crucial in that no manager is error-free. Translated, it is very important for the manager to grasp the core of the communication process. Two questions are paramount in this regard.

Wayne Turmel (2015), writing under the caption, “The two big communication questions,” cautions against over relying on technology. Turmel makes the point that communication is more than merely data transfer, and continues, “It is a “two-way process with moving parts.” The writer urges managers to take into account two important questions: they respond to the manager’s role in conceptualizing and sending the massage.

The first question is, “Why am I communicating,” and the second question is, “What do I want the outcome to be?” If the manager is unclear about these two questions, says the Turmel, the tools used and the brilliance of the manager would be naught.

In the first question, the manager must consider the following: get the information needed for action; pass on important information to others; get “buy-in” from others; persuade others to do something; and learn what others are thinking.

In the second question, the manager should invoke the following: what action do I want them to take? Do I want “buy-in” or simply compliance? What are the implications to my relationship with the other party (ies)? Am I giving them enough information or too darned much? “When you know what you’re trying to do, and that you want the outcome to be, you can make wiser decisions about the way you craft a communication and the tools you use,” concludes Turmel.

4. Findings

4.1 Delineating Workplace Communication Problems

To know and conceptualize the manager’s message does not eliminate sender-receiver perceptions. It is only obvious that communication problems are apt to occur in the workplace
where there is social interaction among managers, employees, and stakeholders or shareholders.

Above all, what is of prime importance is to delineate communication that tends to hinder or stall or downgrade productivity. Laurie Reeves, using the headline, “Top Ten Communication Problems in the Workplace,” emphasizes the importance of the manager to pay attention to the audience’s body language when delivering a message.

A long-time proponent of identifying communication problems in management, Reeves remarks that, communication problems take root in a workplace devoid of audience understanding and method channel of communication best suited for a particular audience.

Mistaken or confusing information is another cause for communication problems in management. Therefore, says the author, when the information communicated is unclear, confusing or simply incorrect, the message sent will equally be wrong.

Meanwhile, too much, too little, or too late information creates major communication problems. This applies to instances in which there is too much to be assimilated and acted upon, and instances when the information is communicated after-the-fact.

Misinterpretation or application is often the result of vagueness, and even ambiguity, in communicating information. In the absence of clarity and precision, says Reeves, the audience is left with no solid facts, which leads to misapplication in carrying out assigned duties.

It is also commonplace for workers (through the chain of command) to sometimes pay lip service to the art of listening skills, which includes asking questions and getting feedback. Communication problems abound when the sender of the message does not have the full attention of the audience or when, during face-to-face meetings, sender(s) or receiver(s) engage in distractions, such “doing things” on their mobile phones and having “chats” with their others. Asking questions randomly equally creates communication problems in management.

4.2 Internal Communication Problems in Management

It is not entirely improbable for managers to reflect on their experience with workplace communication. It can also be stated that internal communication is not rocket science. While this is true, others can argue that it is much harder because even rocket science can use effective internal communication to accomplish tasks and enhance productivity.

Kevin Ruck (2014) bemoans the fact that humans can send a spacecraft to Mars, but they lag behind in putting in place effective internal communication within companies or organizations here on Planet Earth “Let’s not pretend internal communication is easy when we know it is not,” writes Ruck in “Embracing IC Complexity,” on September 7. “Internal
communication is complex. It involves trust, understanding, collaboration and relationship building.”

To make internal communication more complicated than it really is, Ruck adds, there is a culture of politics deployed to gallop alongside organization strategy and change. Furthermore, internal communication engulfs a company or organization in issues of employee engagement. The latter is a term that many managers think is best avoided because it is “tricky.”

Internal communication problems find fertile breeding territory owing to its complex nature of the will to address challenges amid odds. It demands research, thoughtful analysis, creative problem solving, empathy, and acceptance that understanding and effective communication are based on dialogue.

It should also be pointed out that workplace communication often chooses monologue that is easier, as in writing some “messages” and pushing them down the “channels.” In these circumstances, employee engagement tends to remain low or static or corrosive.

To employees, downgrading internal communication to a simple message-channel-audience level is tantamount to disrespect of employees. This does not only imply that almost anyone can engage in internal communication as long as he/she can write some basic copy, but also creates impediments to the company or organization’s growth and competitiveness.

Ana Asuero (2013) comments as she writes, “The main problems resulting from poor internal communication in companies.” Asuero echoes that the majority of internal problems in organizations are directly related to poor internal communication management.

“Not solving them in time ends up affecting other areas of the organization and can result in bad feeling and weak relationships among employees,” says Asuero. The writer states the most frequent internal communication problems areas, a) confusion, when the company does not communicate properly and discourse is lost and strategic lines are unclear, b) culture based on distrust, if no one is certain about the reality, thus creating a climate of distrust and lack of credibility, c) demotivation in the workplace, when employees are not informed and they believe their opinions do not matter, and d) deterioration in the work climate, when employees are not let to speak and when no one listen when they speak, leaving ample room for negativity, skepticism, and gossip.

4.3 Favouritism Breeds Communication Problems

The lack of openness and ability to communicate ideas and receive feedback only breeds discord. The condition is made worse when unfairness at the workplace is in play. What ever happened to fairness? Is it replaced with favoritism? Well, a synonym of fairness is “evenhandedness” or “impartiality” or “justice.” It does not warrant research or tough thinking to accept that employees want to be treated with fairness or any of the stated synonyms.
Problems creep in, however, when favoritism becomes a normalcy. Favoritism can be defined as “the practice of giving unfair preferential treatment to one person or group at the expense of another.”

Synonyms can easily be likened to such terms as “partiality” or “inequality” or “discrimination,” and none of which reflects positivity. Marie McIntyre (2008), an acclaimed expert on identifying and rectifying workplace communication problems, adds meaning to the discourse with her contribution, “Favoritism in the Workplace: Real Life Drama,” published on August 20.

Yes, it is real drama when an employee who comes to work, knowing very well that he/she is unlikely to be rewarded or appreciated because “someone” will. It cuts deeper in feeling when the employee knows he/she is more qualified or more deserving.

4.3.1 Here is a question posed to McIntyre

“I work with someone who is the boss’s pet. She talks on the phone with him all the time, and he allows her to work extra hours, even though I could also use the overtime [money]. This co-worker reviews all orders and is also responsible for updating the computer records. Whenever a problem arises, the boss calls her to discuss it. There are only two of us here, but he won’t cross-train me on her duties. How should I handle this unfairness?” Certainly, this question comes from the “unflavored one.”

4.3.2 Here is McIntyre’s answer

“Your colleague apparently has been given the lead role in your office, even though no one has officially said so. If your boss were smart, he would formally define duties and clarify roles, but many office managers fail to do this. Having a peer elevated above you without explanation is annoying, so your resentment is normal.

However, it’s also a complete waste of emotional energy. Instead, focus on furthering your own career. And speaking of furthering career, many employees who face favoritism leave to work elsewhere, leaving behind a low morale and less productive workplace.

Actually, Andreea Hrab comments in, “Favoritism and Nepotism: Dealing with Unfair Treatment in the Office.” Hrab agrees explains favoritism is favoring someone, not because he/she is doing a good job, but for reasons outside job performance.

“For instance, a manager consistently offers an employee the best and most highly-regarded projects, even though that employee does not perform well to deserve them,” declares the author. In other instances, Hrab declares that an employee is offered a promotion over someone else who has been at the company longer and has more experience.

According to Hrab, nepotism is another form of favoritism. From the Italian word, “nipote,” nepotism is showing favor to family members. For example, in the workplace family members may be hired, promoted, or otherwise unfairly favored over candidates or
employees simply because they are part of the family that owns the company. The results of favoritism or nepotism are usually negative.

They include, a) lower morale, as employees understand that no matter what you do, their efforts will not be rewarded because they are not favored, b) resentment may develop toward the manager and the favored employee, c) desertion may cause the company or organization to lose potentially excellent employees who refuse to stay when they are not appreciated, d) overlooked potential, as the manager fails to use the talents and skills of qualified and trained workers, e) stunted growth, as there will be a decline in morale and loss of workers who may be of exceptional value, and f) legal implications since the manager’s favoritism may end up costing the company a lot of money in attorney’s fees and possibly astounding damages resulting from discrimination or hostile work environment lawsuits.

4.4 Leadership and Communication Problems

Indeed, a sure way to roll fast into declining productivity is for the manager to exercise favoritism and nepotism. It is not surprising that there is an array of leadership styles. 

www.referenceforbusiness.com puts forth “leadership styles and bases of power.” Generally, leadership style can be defined as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. David Knights and Darren McCabe (1999), in the article, “Are there no Limits to Authority,” take time to explain that “Power should be understood to be a condition of social relations. Thus, it is erroneous to ask who has power.”

Instead, it is necessary to explore how power is exercised.” In simpler terms, power (authority) should serve as a “facilitator” and to “grease” the “engine” that propels the productivity of the company or organization. Indeed, the manager is akin to a user-friendly device where headaches are uncommon.

www.communicationtheory.org does distinguish between leadership styles. The provided reference believes leadership is not simply accepting to be a manager. It means accepting responsibility, that is, adapting to change; decision-making; maintaining open lines of communication; and leading others in completing goals.

Indeed, leadership is not necessarily the approach which managers adopt and manifest in their roles. Rather, it is the way in which authority is used. In this regard, the amount of authority retained, and the decisions made, play a vital role in determining the leadership style.

In the meantime, types of leadership can be classified according to the way authority is used as follows: dictatorial style, authoritarian style, consultative style, and participative [sic] style. The amount of authority shared between the top management and the workforce determines the type of leadership style used in a company or organization. In the dictatorial
style, the manager holds all decision-making power within him/herself, using excessive disciplinary actions against workers failing to carry out their work.

In the authoritarian style, the leader is also known to be autocratic, and rarely lets workers take part in decision-making. The leader regards his/her views as most accurate; he/she rarely commends others on their performance; and takes credit when others do the work.

In the consultative style, the manager takes the role of mentor, accepts others’ ideas, and stimulates creativity and innovation. Participative leadership style is said to be the most effective. It enables the talents of workers and their potential skills to kindle and thrive, be recognized and rewarded, and to flourish without inhibition. Although the final decision is made by the manager, the “participatory” climate gives workers reason to contribute to the decision(s).

4.5 Improving Communication Problems in Management

Participatory leadership is disposed to bring about productivity and high morale among workers because no company or organization wants a workplace replete with conflict, rumor, confusion, and misunderstanding. And no company or organization looks enticingly at the prospect of closing its doors, even if it means temporarily. Consequently, certain measures must be taken to forestall impending calamity, which is often associated with communication problems. Joelle Jay (2012) is president of Pillar Consulting dedicated to helping managers assess their communication, identify problems therein, and then design strategies to repair the unworkable or unproductive.

“One of the biggest challenges managers face is communication,” writes Jay under the caption, “Communicate Well: Five Strategies to Enhance Your Managerial Communication Skills.” In the article, the author reinvigorates that communication is one of most important aspects of leadership, without which managers are doomed to fail in gaining employees’ support, fail to achieve goals, and fail to develop rapport with team workers. “They can fail as leaders, no matter how good their intentions may be,” Jay emphasizes.

To improve communication in a company or organization, Jay advances a few key strategies to determine what, when, and how to communicate. Listening is important because, in extreme emotions, resentment and excitement warrant attention from a personal to a business standpoint.

Managers who ignore tend to cultivate a distance between them and their employees, thereby eroding the relationship and ultimately the work environment. In facilitating communication, a manager should hear what is said, integrate it into the topic at hand, and say something to move the conversation forward.

It is important for a manager to acquaint himself/herself with “a short primer on questioning,” as in when to use closed questions, open questions, and personal questions.
Discretion should be used, as in the case of confidential consideration when an employee is having a direct conflict with another employee; when an employee is concerned about another employee’s conduct; when an employee’s performance has dropped dramatically; or when an employee has a personal health problem.

Directing should be used very sparingly. While certain managers “direct” to get things done, employees accomplish tasks more efficaciously when they are talked to and their questions answered in a cordial atmosphere.

Moreover, Bacal & Associates (www.work911.com) brings to light the manager’s role in improving communication in a company or organization. First, all players must have the appropriate skills and understanding to communicate well. Second, effective interpersonal communication requires a climate or culture that supports effective communication, specifically, trust, openness, reinforcement of good communication practices and a shared responsibility for making communication effective. Third, effective communication requires attention. Fourth, ensure that the manager and employees have the skills and knowledge necessary to communicate effectively. And to be mindful that the manager’s critical role is to foster and nurture a climate characterized by open communication, otherwise whatever skills are instilled in the employees will culminate in futility.

5. Conclusion

That communication problems are omnipresent in companies or organizations is simply an understatement. Omnipresence does underscore the fact that communication is the center of all activity, from top down the chain of command, and vice versa.

What is of the essence is to delineate communication that tends to hinder or stall or downgrade productivity. Laurie Reeves, with the headline, “Top Ten Communication Problems in the Workplace,” emphasizes the importance of the manager to pay attention to the audience’s body language when delivering a message.

Communication problems will persist in the absence of research, thoughtful analysis, creative problem solving, empathy, and an understanding that effective communication is based on dialogue. To the contrary, workplace communication often chooses monologue that is easier, as in writing some “messages” and pushing them down the “channels.”

Problems do creep in, however, when favoritism becomes a normalcy. Favoritism can be defined as “the practice of giving unfair preferential treatment to one person or group at the expense of another.” Synonyms can be viewed as “partiality” or “inequality” or “discrimination,” none of which reflects positivity.

To provide clarity, Marie McIntyre (2008), an expert on identifying and rectifying workplace communication problems, adds meaning to the discourse with her contribution, “Favoritism in the Workplace: Real Life Drama,” published on August 20.
According to Hrab, nepotism is a form of favoritism. The Italian word, “nipote,” nepotism is showing favor to family members.

Hence, family members may be hired in the workplace, promoted, or otherwise unfairly favored over candidates or employees.

David Knights and Darren McCabe (1999), in their article, “Are there no Limits to Authority,” explain that, “Power should be understood to be a condition of social relations. Thus, it is erroneous to ask who has power. Instead, it is necessary to explore how power is exercised.”

In the dictatorial style, the manager holds all decision-making power within him/herself. To the contrary, power (authority) should serve as a “facilitator” and to “grease” the “engine” that propels the productivity of the company or organization.

To be successful, managers should maintain open lines of communication that lead others in completing goals. It means accepting responsibility that is, adapting to change and decision-making. So, wielding authority is not necessarily the approach managers should adopt and be prepared to flaunt disciplinary actions against workers.

In the authoritarian style, the leader is also known to be autocratic, and rarely lets workers take part in decision-making, regards his/her views are most accurate, seldom commends others on their performance, and takes credit when others do the work. In the consultative style, the manager takes the role of mentor, accepts other ideas, and stimulates creativity and innovation.

Participative leadership style is said to be the most effective as its lets the talents of workers and their potential skills to kindle, be recognized and rewarded, and to flourish without inhabitation.

Second, effective interpersonal communication requires a climate or culture that supports effective communication, specifically, trust, openness, reinforcement of good communication practices, and a shared responsibility for making communication effective.

In the final analysis, the manager’s critical role is to foster and nurture a climate characterized by open communication, otherwise whatever skills are instilled in the employees will come culminate in futility.

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