Strategies to Improve Managerial Communication

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ABSTRACT

Effective Managerial Communication is a feat that should be achieved by organizations and it rests both on managers and the employees because the flow of information should be bidirectional and not unidirectional as we might think. Ineffective communication could pose a lot of serious problems in an organization and lead to a lack of productivity for such an organization. In an organizational setting, the importance of information sharing among managers and with employees cannot be overemphasized and it is the sharing of such information with the aim of achieving effective communication and understanding that we call 'Managerial Communication'.

Several studies have been done on identifying the importance and necessity of Managerial Communication in organizations, institutions, companies, and agencies. However, organizations still have challenges with achieving effective managerial communication and are not so clear on the best ways to achieve it. This paper will address some of the best strategies that should be adopted in improving managerial communication at all levels. The study will use literature reviews and theoretical concepts in building upon past research to proffer solutions as in strategies to improve Managerial Communication to create a positive vision on the organizational future.

Keywords (5-7): Managerial Communication, Best Strategies, Effective, Organisations, Information, Communication, Managers

1. INTRODUCTION

In the business world, successful employees are the driving force behind the success of the business. One of the most important components of Employee Success is the Manager and his skills to tackle the conflicts and crises among employees during the bad time of the business. However, for managers, communication is becoming a vital skill to shine among most leaders. There is a need for consistent and valuable communication between employees and managers.

According to David Gerrold, Effective Communication includes – Clarity, Accuracy, and Precision. You need not worry about the language but the meaning. Even the man behind the management invention, Peter Drucker, expressed, "the productivity of work is not the responsibility of the worker but the manager.

For managers, having strong communication skills is becoming an effective way for decision-making and resolving problems for increased productivity. Additionally, it ensures a smooth workflow and creating a positive influence on the company's operation. You need to be more focused and attentive while organizing with people around you. It ultimately grabs their attention towards you that helps to achieve your goals.

An impeccable statement by Abraham Lincoln that if he had six hours to cut down a tree, he would devote the first four hours in sharpening the axe. According to him, sharpening your axe means learning and developing yourself. Communication - Verbal or nonverbal, symbolic, intentional or unintentional, active or passive, is essential to our success. Effective communication in the business world is a skill that can be developed by managers and they can accomplish their goals through communication. And, this can be achieved through meticulous practice and the use of honest and simple techniques.

Research shows that there is indeed a relationship between an organization's communication, employees' performance, and overall productivity of the organization. Wilbert J. (2009) addresses the past research

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that has exhibited this relationship in - "organizational performance significantly improves when communication is allowed to flow uninterrupted and employees are empowered, provided incentives, and assumed the essential resources to perform at an optimal level." And as it is important to create such an environment where communication flows easily and effectively, the managers are the front leaders expected to design this work environment.

Past research has shown that most organizations and managers have difficulty with communication strategies and this in turn affects employees' productivity and the organization's success (Neely Jr. & Mosley, 2018). Research has done a lot in identifying what these communication problems are. However, there is a need to not only identify the problems but also proffer lasting and effective solutions.

2. Aims and Objectives

(1) To help managers address and effectively solve communication problems in their managerial jurisdiction.
(2) To address some of the best strategies that should be adopted in improving managerial communication at all levels.
(3) To proffer solutions in improving Managerial Communication to create a positive vision for organizations' future.

3. Research Methodology

Published data from various sources was compiled and analyzed extensively to produce the results of the study. A critical literature review of several secondary sources- including books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and case studies- was used to distill the postulates of this study. The resultant study produced through a combination of myriad second sources of data focuses on the Strategies to improve Managerial Communication

4. What is Managerial Communication?

As we have Business Communication, Organizational Communication, and Management Communication as independent communication fields, so also is Managerial Communication and it is important to research on this as an independent field of study which Bell and Roebuck (2015) also noted in their work.

Managerial Communication as an independent field for research, however, remains a little under-researched concerning proposed strategies for its effectiveness despite its importance in an organizational setting and human resources management as a field.

Alibec & Sirbuc (2019) explained the process of managerial communication thus: "Managerial communication explores what the managers do in business, meaning that managers use the communication system to plan, organize, direct and control activities and people".

This definition is detailed but limiting such that it sees this as a downward flow of communication from the managers down to the people working under the managers. There is a need to see communication as a two-way flow of information and not only a downward flow so that the effectiveness of communication can be achieved.

Studies have shown the importance of communication in the workplace and further studies show how important it is to have effective managerial communication in managing the employees, job responsibilities, conflict resolution, and the organization's productivity.

Just like Neely Jr. & Mosley (2018) said; communication strategies are very vital to the successful management of an organization in the business world and it also results in employees' job satisfaction which in turn makes them more productive.

Wilbert J. (2009) explained that effective communication in Managerial Communication is one important mechanism that helps managers in developing a great & productive work environment and achieving organizational goals and objectives.

Setting a communication process or approach for an organization is not an easy task considering the rapid changes organizations face in terms of organizational cultures, competitive strategies, personnel management, and the different cultural and social backgrounds of the employees (Gheorghe, Adrian Gardan, & Geangu Gardan, 2009).

More reason why this paper will focus on proposing effective and adequate strategies to implement for managerial communication in our business world and beyond.

4.1 Historical Background of Managerial Communication

The work of Neely Jr. & Mosley (2018) addressed and identified the causes of communication problems in management and the importance of employees' perception in the communication process. Their results go thus: "Most managers assume that they are effective in passing information to their employees. However, the reality is that, according to most employees, their managers are ineffective in passing information. Managers do not realize this since they lack a means of gauging the effectiveness of the communication process. The essence of communication systems put in place by most establishments doesn't measure the efficiency of the communication process."

Employee – Manager Communication today is quite different than earlier days. To understand these changes, we need to review the eras of management as listed in Table 1.1. In this table, the management communication strategies and techniques appropriate for that era are discussed sequentially.

Era	Characteristics	Communication
Ancient and medieval	Initial efforts to organize commerce	Written records
1900s Scientific management Administrative theory	Clearly defined job duties. time specifications for completing the task, and adherence to rules Emphasis on authority and discipline	One-way communication, heavy reliance on written job instructions and rules
1920s Human Relations	Relationship among managers and workers is important	Listening and interpersonal communication skills become important
1950s Behavioral	Complexity of organizational behavior and communication recognized	Development of communication theory, beginning to apply theory to organizational practice
1990s Empowerment	Distribution of power to everyone in the organization	Two-way communication; participation of employees
Today Contingency	Interdependence of jobs, organizations, and people	Communication strategy must be applied to the situation

Table 1.1 Eras of Management Communication Strategies

5. Effective Strategies For Managerial Communication

5.1 Computer-Mediated Communication

Most existing discussions of computers focus on the advantages of computer-mediated communication for work: fast and precise information exchange, increased participation in problem-solving and decision making, and helps to reduce the irrelevant status and prestige differences (Lancaster, 1978; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Martino, 1972). The rapid augmentation of computer technologies perplexes most individuals, rendering very few

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capable of comprehending the impact of their change producing capacities. This mechanized revolution is transforming work directives, operative environments as well as lives. Computer technology is spearheading this transformative era. Maintaining an eager or resistant front against this transformation will not have a lasting impact on the modifications introduced by computer technology. Scholars who have devoted their lives to the study of this augmenting technical curve believe that the organizational, social, and personal effects of computers will be deeply felt in our lives (De Sola Poole, 1977; Hiltz & Turoff, 1978; Kling, 1980).

Prior to the concurrent times, computer-mediated communication was entrenched in an aura of obscurity as its usage was solely confined to technical users. However, this era has long since ended. We currently live in a reality dominated by computer-mediated communication. The amplifying technology of computer networks is grounded in the use of computer-mediated communication. It is the cornerstone of such endeavors. Computer networks enable users to copy, broadcast, write, edit, store, and share any document. The boon of such a technology is hidden in the cost-efficient, instantaneous data transmission they facilitate. Data can be sent and received in a matter of seconds. Moreover, they allow multiple users to access the document, make alterations and revisions on the document, without having to physically meet or communicate with each other over a conference call or ask for and give assistance interactively (Hiltz & Turoff, 1978; Williams, 1977). These technological feats have heralded a new dawn for the modern world.

At this crucial historical juncture, remaining abreast with such technological advancements has emerged as an indispensable need. With the ever-expanding role of CMCs, we must take cognizance of their implemental brilliance. Access to and familiarity with these compulsory technological tools has emerged as a central issue in critical discussions on the potential role of CMC in language learning and language use within various educational settings (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000).

The two-way quickie channels for effective communication have been thoroughly analyzed in Mary Munter's Guide to managerial communication (1985). The strategy for transmitting a message to a carefully curated target audience base can be secured by exploiting the hidden potentials of the various digital communicative channels including Emails, Smartphones, Instant Messaging, and Text Messaging.

Technological advancements must be woven into the fabric of each modern enterprise. The current tech revolution must be embraced by all industries. Neely Jr. & Mosley's study (2018) suggests that these novel modalities of technologically enabled channels of communication can effectively ease and enhance communication between managers and employees. Emails can be cited as one of the most prominently used communicative channels -in the by-gone decade- that has simplified a number of communication hurdles in the workspace.

The pressure of work may often hinder managers from effectively and articulately communicating with their employees. Time constraints and a heavy workload may be responsible for the delivery of insufficient information to employees. This lack of adequate information can be fairly detrimental for projects. The expansive ingenuity of communication channels, like emails, becomes seminal on such occasions. Such technologies enable the conveyance of a more detailed and comprehensive set of instructions- that may have been abbreviated in the course of previous interactions- to employees.

5.2 Employing Emotional Intelligence for Managerial Communication

Emotional intelligence is defined by Srivastava K. (2013) in her work on Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Effectiveness as the ability to monitor one's own and other's emotions, to categorize the difference between both emotions which can be later labeled appropriately, and can utilize the emotional information to guide thinking and behavior.

Emotional intelligence allows managers to assess communication style easily, find the dynamics at play and find out ideal managerial communication methods ensuring that employees are able to attain the desired outcome. (Nguyen, White, & co. 2019). Emotional Intelligence is another strategic tool that should be adopted to ensure that communication is effective in an organization and this lies more on the managers than the employees.

Nguyen, White, & co. (2019) conducted research to study if and how important emotional intelligence is in managerial communication and its effects on it. The findings show that emotional intelligence and a consistent effort to improve on it also affect communication skills positively in creating a better work environment and productivity.

Just as the result of Nguyen, White, & co. (2019) shows; emotional intelligence is a skill managers should possess and continuously work on improving considering its enormous effect on managerial communication and managers who have good EI skills will easily and effectively communicate with employees regardless of the complexity of the organizational structure.

The basics of Emotional Intelligence are to essentially recognize, understand and use emotions positively to achieve goals and solve challenges; it also means being able to identify with other people's emotions and in this context, the employees' emotions. It is very vital that as a manager, you have empathy for your employees and be able to relate to their feelings.

5.3 Strategic Conflict and Crisis Management

Conflict and crisis are part of an organization system such that they cannot always be stopped from happening and in cases where conflict or crisis arise, the best approach is being able to solve it as effective and fast as possible.

Conflict and crisis can arise from individual differences concerning cultural backgrounds, race, ethnicity, religion, beliefs, principles, and ineffective communication (Bell and Roebuck, 2015). And communication is the key for managers to resolve such issues in the organization.

The focus will be more on conflict management seeing as it entails communication between managers and employees which is what we call 'Managerial Communication'.

Recent research done by Wobodo, Orianzi & Oko-Jaja (2020) shows that conflict is a phenomenon that cannot be disregarded as it is part of human nature, existence, and the environment and negatively affect the organization.

Wobodo & co (2020) further explain the bit of difference between conflict and crisis saying, "While conflict may arise from personality differences and goal incompatibility, crisis occurs as a result of both natural and human action."

In the organizational setting, conflict can either be functional or dysfunctional; functional conflicts usually happen within a team or group in the organization and it is seen as constructive such that it promotes creativity, innovation, team building, and critical thinking while dysfunctional conflict is the complete opposite and should be prevented as it leads to destruction, damage and inability to achieve the organization's goals (Wobodo & co, 2020).

Dysfunctional conflicts are one of the important reasons why an organization should have a structure for managing these situations. Majorly, managing conflict is all about resolving problems and ensuring peace between/among the parties involved. It can be about reaching a compromise or drawing a line between the parties' differences. All these and much more are important in ensuring that

conflicts do not harm the organization, the goals, and productivity.

Wobodo & co (2020) postulate in adopting a strategy/strategies for solving conflict or crisis, the chosen strategy should be determined by how complex the situation is, the people involved, and their capacity variation. Also, the goal should be about solving the differences and maintaining peace.

Some of these strategies as suggested by Wobodo & co (2020) are compromise, force, and collaboration. So, depending on the situation, a manager can decide to use either compromise, force, or collaboration in solving conflicts within the organization.

5.4 Grapevine Communication

Although this type of communication has both its good and bad sides, managers need to recognize that it always exists in the organization and there is a better way of handling it to avoid communication problems and crises.

Wudie (2018) defined Grapevine Communication as "the informal communication network found in every organization".

In achieving effective communication in the organization, managers need not adopt only the formal mode of communicating but can also use the concept of Grapevine Communication to make communication and interactions better.

Myers, M T and Myers, GM (1982) emphasize on the modalities of grapevine in management, especially as a field of informal communication. Grapevine has been lauded for demonstrating amplified accuracy and efficacy in its operations as well as predictability in its course, direction, and membership. This thesis is grounded in field research and laboratory experiments. P D Chaturvedi; Mukesh Chaturvedi (2008, 2006) state that the distinctive feature of all grapevine communications is the conspicuous absence of an operational description of how the task is expected to be performed. Rather such

communicative tools emphasize information about people, attitudes, relationships, interpretation, prediction, values, norms, and needs.

A review of grapevine communication by Wudie (2018) shows that it is a form of communication that exists in all organizations and employees mostly resort to it when formal modes of communication are closed.

Furthermore, employees can resort to grapevine communication not only when formal communication is closed but also in situations where formal communication is too strict for them to handle. And these are cases where grapevine communication could become negative and harmful to organizational management.

The best thing is for managers to have a good handling of both formal and informal communications within the organization. The Hawthorne effect studies done by researcher Henry A. Landsberger in the 1950s show that employees' performance depends greatly on job satisfaction and social issues. Looking at this result with Grapevine Communication, managers are encouraged to use this informal mode of communication to interact and socialize with employees as it boosts their job performance.

5.5 Strengthen Your Communication Skills

Communication skills have assumed paramount significance and for the same reason, various academic institutions and companies offer to better your communication skills. Companies are very particular with regards to the same and therefore time and again invest in organizing various seminars and workshops to hone the skills of their employees in the field of communication. This can include situations that arise in the day to day life like dealing with the customers, managing people at the subordinate level, and getting along with colleagues. These are the essential ingredients that are required to make any company successful.

For managers, in particular, these skills are something that can absolutely not be

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compromised upon. A few ways by which perfect communication can be achieved are:

5.5.1 Honest Assessment

It is very important for all leaders and managers to realize that the first action you need to take towards better communication is an honest assessment as to where you stand. Assess yourself daily where communicative situations arise and how well are you able to handle them. Be honest with yourself and try understanding where you're going wrong and what your strengths are. This exercise will prove very helpful later on when you're trying to perfect your skills as it will save time and already provide you with areas that need serious work.

5.5.2 Practice

As is usually said, practice makes a man perfect and this statement reflects upon the truth. A very huge reason for a lack in communicative skills is lacking the requisite experience for the same. You shy away from potential conversations and therefore the experience is never gained. Your true skills will come out only when you are ready to put them at test, there is a huge possibility that you're ineffective in your speech but sooner or later you will improve. Mamta Bhatnagar and Nitin Bhatnagar also elucidate that someone who has written ten reports will be better than the one who has written only two because the

most important lessons are learned through your own experience.

5.5.3 Increase your vocabulary

Communication skills are something that needs to be worked upon for a long period of time before you learn how to master them. But a good way to begin is to increase your vocabulary. This way you will have an array of words to choose from and the fear of the unknown will substantially decrease.

5.5.4 Standardized Evaluation

It is important to time and again evaluate yourself based on some standardized tests. Look at certain things that can act as catalysts in your communication and those things that are hindering it as well. Rate yourself on a scale on questions like do you attentively listen to what the other person is saying and if you don't understand, do you ask for clarification. Be sure to objectively do this evaluation and do not lie to yourself as it will get you nowhere.

Janis Fisher Chan in his 'Communication skills for managers' stated that before improving skills, rate yourself on the below points as shown in Figure 1.1

Seldom 1 2 3 4 5 Most of the time
1. I listen attentively when other people are speaking.
2. I understand what other people say to me.
3. I ask for clarification when I don't understand what someone is saying.
4. I listen with an open mind even if I don't agree or I already know what a person is going to say
5. I do not interrupt when people are speaking.
6. I let people know that I have heard and understood their message
7. I am able to express my ideas and feelings dearly.
8. I make sure that people have understood my message.
9. I know how to deliver unwelcome news.
10. I am comfortable discussing other people's feelings.
11. I make eye contact with other people when I am listening or speaking to them.
12. I am able to get my ideas across in meetings.
13. I am able to give people helpful feedback and criticism.
14. I am able to ask questions that help people think something through.
15. I am able to ask questions to chat useful information.
16. When facilitating a meeting. I am able to ask questions that encourage participation.

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Volume 6, Issue 1; ISSN 2456-3684
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17. I am able to use communication skills to help people learn.
18. I am able to give a successful presentation to a small group of people I know.
19. I am able to give a successful presentation to any group.
20. I am able to communicate clearly. Confidently, and successfully in writing.

Figure 1.1

5.6 Feedback and Measures of Effectiveness

As per the research of Neely Jr. & Mosley (2018), in a communication process, we cannot say the communication is effective enough when there is no feedback. 'Feedback' is an important tool and should be adopted by managers in measuring how effective communication within the organization is. This is an effective tool that should be adopted by managers for managerial communication.

To evaluate yourself is extremely important but perhaps something that holds even greater significance is taking feedback. Do not shy away from the prospect of asking others if they understood correctly what you were trying to highlight. Try taking it from people who wouldn't sugar-coat you and instead provide you with a true picture. This will help you understand which direction you are moving in. As Mary Munter (1985) stated, integral to strategic management communication approaches are feedback and measures of effectiveness.

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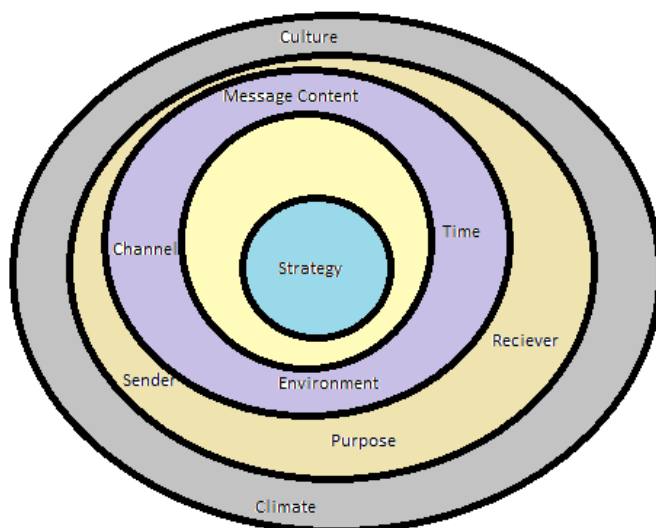

Figure 1.2. The Complete Model

Feedback may be taken to decide if the strategy was effective albeit it may be too late to change it. Unfortunately, many managers may evade this feedback because they think

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nothing can be done with it. For example, an advertising agency submits a proposal for an ad campaign. If the contract is agreed with another agency, the tendency is not to assess the effectiveness of the proposal on paper. In the end, nothing can be done about it now. But, this is the opportunity to carefully assess all facets of the proposal, including such items as an analysis of the receiver, writing style, and timing. Things learned should apply to the next proposal.

Obtaining feedback and measuring effectiveness may be extremely difficult for organizations. For example, a regional insurance manager is upset in sales. She may start writing various letters, makes phone calls, and individually meets with her independent sales agents to motivate them, yet sales continue to slide. She contracts a management consultant to figure out how she can develop her motivational strategies. Though, it can't be determined if poor sales were the outcome of communication with the sales agents or the insurance products themselves. Managerial communication is consequently related to other factors that it is regularly hard to determine effectiveness.

5.7 Commitment to Ethical Communication

Ethics play an important role in almost everything and communication is no exception. When you indulge yourself in ethical communication you are being trustworthy, fair, and impartial and you are respecting the rights of others while understanding the impact that your communication can have on an individual. Venkata Chalamaiah, an Ex- Supreme Court Justice, defined ethics as - "knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is the right thing to do". Words carry value so use them carefully. When you are using ethical communication you are being truthful and sincere and that can never go wrong in life.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ Implementing Managerial communication effectively helps in employee satisfaction and increased productivity.

➢ Simple and honest communication helps to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization.

➢ Good Emotional Intelligence skills help managers to easily and effectively communicate with employees regardless of the complexity of the organizational structure.

➢ Grapevine Communication helps to make communication and interactions better and also to avoid conflicts and crises in the organization.

➢ Ethical communication for honesty and selflessness at the same time keeping the comfort of the organization in mind.

➢ For effective and efficient transfer of information, improve verbal as well as written communication with better techniques.

➢ Most importantly, as a manager, the most important factors to keep in mind while communicating with your employees include: understand and respect your audience, understand why you are communicating, understand what you want to say, pay attention, and keep an open mind

➢ As mentioned earlier, it is also important to employ computer-mediated communication for many reasons. Some of the benefits of employing them for your communication are:

1. Easy for your audience to respond to you quickly (even if they are involved in another activity or meeting).
2. Allow you to target your audience specifically (unlike the public internet channels);
3. Allow you to bypass gatekeepers and directly reach someone you would not be likely to contact face-to-face.
4. Good for communicating across time zones.
5. Better for reaching multiple audiences simultaneously (with carbon copies or via "blast email").
6. Encourage an immediate response.

➢ It is highly recommended that managers should not rely only on computer-mediated communication but adopt it as one of the many ways of communicating with their employees. This is recommended because, in the same way, we have advantages of computer-mediated communication, and we also have disadvantages that can come up if managers rely on that only. Adopting only computer-mediated communication could lead to the following:

1. It can be irritating to others when overused or used for social purposes during meetings.
2. It cannot see the reader's emotions, so may be evading what should be face-to-face, such as bad news.
3. It can never be shredded or erased, becomes the property of the company, may even be subpoenaed.
4. It can be read by your company (an advantage for the company, perhaps).
5. It can be sent to the wrong person by mistake and irretrievably / forwarded without your permission
6. It can be unfortunately uninhibited or irresponsible, or at worst, destructive.

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