LEADERS COMMUNICATION SKILLS: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Abstract

The sentence, "You cannot not communicate," coined by the Austrian communication expert Paul Watzlawick, holds profound insight into the complexities of human communication. In the context of today's information-rich world, where various channels and mediums are constantly bombarding us with messages, it becomes increasingly essential to take a pause and ruminate on the potency and worthwhileness of communication.

When analyzing exit interviews conducted over two years, a recurring issue emerges: communication, particularly as it pertains to managers. Despite the plethora of communication channels, the prevalence of dissatisfaction and miscommunication remains high. This paradox raises important questions about the true nature of communication in the modern age.

In this era of information overload, individuals utilize platforms like media outlets, social networks, and news sources to convey their messages. However, the effectiveness of communication is not solely determined by the sender's efforts but also by how the audience receives, interprets, and understands these messages. Unfortunately, the abundance of communication channels has not necessarily translated into better mutual understanding. Instead, it has given rise to various forms of misinterpretation, miscommunication, and even conflicts, both online and offline.

The emergence of online platforms has facilitated the spread of information and opinions, often leading to disagreements,

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unfollowing, and conflicts among individuals. Paradoxically, some individuals who initially sought attention and recognition on these platforms find themselves overwhelmed by the consequences of their newfound fame, ultimately resorting to "social media detox" to regain control over their lives.

This prompts the question of what might be going wrong in our approach to communication. The situation becomes even more intriguing when considering instances where personal vendettas lead friends to betray one another by publicly sharing private photos or employees posting pictures of their managers on social media.

Clearly, there is a need to establish boundaries and ethical guidelines in the realm of communication. However, finding a straightforward answer to the challenges posed by modern communication remains elusive. While we may not fully unravel the mysteries of communication, it is worth our effort to strive for a better understanding of its complexities.

In conclusion, Paul Watzlawick's assertion that "You cannot communicate" serves as a reminder of the intricate nature of human communication, especially in today's information-saturated world. Despite the challenges, it is incumbent upon us to navigate these complexities and foster more meaningful and effective communication to bridge gaps, reduce conflicts, and enhance understanding in our interconnected society.

Keywords: Leaders Communication Skills, Positive Environment, Workplace, Positive Organizational Culture, Communication Strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

As per Oxford Dictionary, Communication is defined as the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

Effective communication, the process of exchanging thoughts and sentiments, involves at least one transmitter, a note, and a beneficiary. While this concept may seem straightforward, communication is a multifaceted and intricate issue of important concern.

The flow of a message from the transmitter to the beneficiary is susceptible to various influencing factors. These factors encompass our emotional states; cultural contexts, the communication medium employed, and even our physical locations. The intricacy of this process underscores why employers worldwide highly value proficient communication skills.

Achieving precise, impactful, and unequivocal communication is indeed a formidable challenge. Harrub, B., Thompson, B., & Miller, D. (2003). The origin of language and communication Journal of Creation, 17(3), 93-101.

The word communication has its origin from the Latin word 'Communis' which means to transfer or to let somebody in.

So ''to let somebody in'' and ''not to let somebody in'' make a difference in getting the message across. In an organization who may have the authority to decide when to let somebody know certain things and not to let somebody know? In most organisations, this primary task is left on the shoulders of the managers, with the basic thought that they would be fair and intelligent to make the right decision. Having said that managers sport a significant role in the organisation in the smooth information flow and which they take care through various communication channels available.

The importance of communication competence in the realm of management is widely acknowledged, both theoretically as a fundamental aspect of management and through empirical observations of managerial communication behaviors. However, there has been a scarcity of comprehensive studies examining the precise skills, abilities, or competencies related to communication among managers within organizational contexts. (Penley, L. E., Alexander, E. R., Jernigan, I. E., & Henwood, C. I. (1991))

Communication is an incredibly potent tool that, when wielded judiciously and effectively, can foster positive experiences among employees within an organization. Conversely, if communication is mishandled or abused, it can have detrimental effects on employees.

It's important to recognize that the responsibility for effective communication should not rest solely on the shoulders of managers. While immediate supervisors play a crucial role in communication, top management is equally integral to this process.

Communication extends far beyond day-to-day interactions; it is deeply rooted in the vision and mission of the organization. The organization's values manifest in how work is conducted and results are achieved. Additionally, employee rewards reinforce their behaviors. This intricate web of human interactions places managers, who have close proximity to daily

interactions with employees, at the center. They enable employees to decipher the organization's values, understand the expected behaviors, and adapt to the organizational culture.

Conversely, if managers do not take the initiative to drive employee engagement, other influences such as grapevine communication and internal politics can gradually shape employees' perceptions in a way that leads to disengagement. Disengaged employees, in turn, pose a more significant threat to the overall growth and well-being of the organization.(Pech, R., & Slade, B. (2006). Employee disengagement: is there evidence of a growing problem? Handbook of Business Strategy, 7(1), 21-25.)

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication is a vital and distinct element within the realm of organisation and various team in the organisation (Tkalac Vercic, Vercic & Sriramesh, 2012). communication serves two primary functions: the dissemination of data, facts or figures and the cultivation of a sagacity of one ness spirit within framework of the big picture of the establishment (Friedl & Vercic, 2011). The establishment and maintenance of relationships among an organization, supervisors, and employees are integral to fostering a sense of oneness through internal communication efforts.

In the professional lives of employees, two key relationships prevail: one which concerns the relationship as in with the organization as a whole and another concerning their immediate Manager (Sluss, Klimchak & Holmes, 2008). Consequently, this area of work concentrates on communiqué originating from both the macro part that is the establishment and the micro part concerning their immediate reporting line.

Within enterprise exploration, the core communication has been acknowledged as a fundamental driver of employee staunchness. Employee staunchness, circumscribed as a affirmative and satisfying professional mindset, yields a range of benefits including heightened productivity, reduced turnover, enhancement of an establishment's persona and standing, and progressive economic yields (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá & Bakker, 2002). Despite the observed gains prompting heightened managerial focus and resource allocation toward employee engagement, establishment published data have painted a rapid fall off in the number of staunch members in the establishment (Karanges, E., Johnston, K., Beatson, A., & Lings, I. (2015).

III. RESEARCH INTENSION

To study if communication is an effective tool in the hands of the leader to create a positive environment in the organisation whereby creating a wonderful employee experience.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our current study is based on exit interviews conducted for 200 ex-employees as commissioned to us by companies in various industry sectors.

V. RESEARCH FINDINGS

When new employees embark on their journey within an organization, they find themselves inundated with a deluge of information. From the company's grand vision and mission to its deeply ingrained values, from intricate strategies to well-defined policies, and from the labyrinth of dos and don'ts to the specifics of their job roles and career advancement pathways, the torrent of knowledge can be overwhelming. They are also introduced to essential training modules, encompassing aspects like security and safety, including IT protocols.

Amidst this information flood, employees may occasionally find themselves questioning the necessity of absorbing all this data. It is during such moments of uncertainty that the guidance and perspective provided by their Buddy Mentors and, most crucially, their Managers come into play.

In our interviews with employees, a significant finding emerged: approximately 72% of new hires indicated that within the first two weeks of joining the company, they reach a pivotal decision about whether they envision a long-term commitment to the organization. This underscores the pivotal role that managers play in shaping the trajectory of employee success.

Managers serve as navigators in the sea of information, helping employees make sense of it all. They contextualize the avalanche of data by connecting it to the employees' roles, objectives, and career aspirations. Managers become mentors, not just in terms of professional growth but also in aligning employees with the company's culture, values, and overarching mission.

During this crucial onboarding phase, managers become the bridge that connects the new hires with the organization's vision and their own personal goals. They offer clarity, reassurance, and a sense of purpose. Managers serve as a source of guidance, making the overwhelming information digestible and meaningful.

In essence, the first few weeks of an employee's journey are a critical window of opportunity. Managers who excel during this period set the stage for long-term engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment. Their role goes beyond being supervisors; they are the architects of an employee's initial experiences, which, in turn, profoundly influence their decision to stay and grow within the organization.

Therefore, it is clear that the soiree part of line executives in this early phase is not just significant; it is paramount for the overall success and retention of employees within the company.

In addition to the formal information and training that new employees receive, they inevitably become exposed to the less structured aspects of organizational culture, including grapevines, rumors, and informal information networks. These informal channels often carry information that may or may not be accurate, and navigating through this dynamic landscape can be challenging for new hires.

This is where the guidance and support of Managers become even more crucial. Managers play a pivotal role in helping employees interpret and contextualize the informal information they encounter. Here's how:

1. **Separating Fact from Fiction:** Grapevines and rumors can sometimes spread false or misleading information. Managers can provide a grounded perspective, helping employees distinguish between accurate information and hearsay. By addressing misconceptions and providing factual insights, managers ensure that employees have a more accurate understanding of the organization's dynamics.

2. **Providing Context:** Managers are well-versed in the organizational culture and can offer context to explain why certain rumours or informal information may exist. They can shed light on historical events, industry trends, or internal changes that might be contributing to the information circulating.

3. **Reinforcing Company Values:** Managers can use these moments as opportunities to reiterate the organization's core values and principles. When addressing rumors or informal information, they can emphasize the importance of trust, transparency, and open communication within the company.

4. **Encouraging Open Dialogue:** Effective managers create an environment where employees feel comfortable discussing their concerns, questions, or observations. By fostering open dialogue, they ensure that employees have a channel to seek clarification and express any anxieties or uncertainties.

5. **Addressing Employee Concerns:** Sometimes, informal information may point to underlying employee concerns or issues. Managers can use this feedback to proactively address these concerns and work toward solutions that enhance employee satisfaction and engagement.

6. **Building Trust:** By actively engaging with employees on these informal topics, managers build trust and rapport. Employees appreciate managers who are approachable and willing to discuss both formal and informal aspects of the workplace.

In essence, Managers serve as not only navigators of official information but also as guides through the maze of informal communication. They help employees make sense of the informal grapevine, reassuring them, and ensuring that they feel informed and connected to the organization. This role in addressing the unstructured aspects of organizational culture contributes significantly to employee engagement, job satisfaction, and overall success within the company.

The B&B model gives a fair understanding of the information flow and the culture of the organisation.

B&B Model of Organization information and culture model
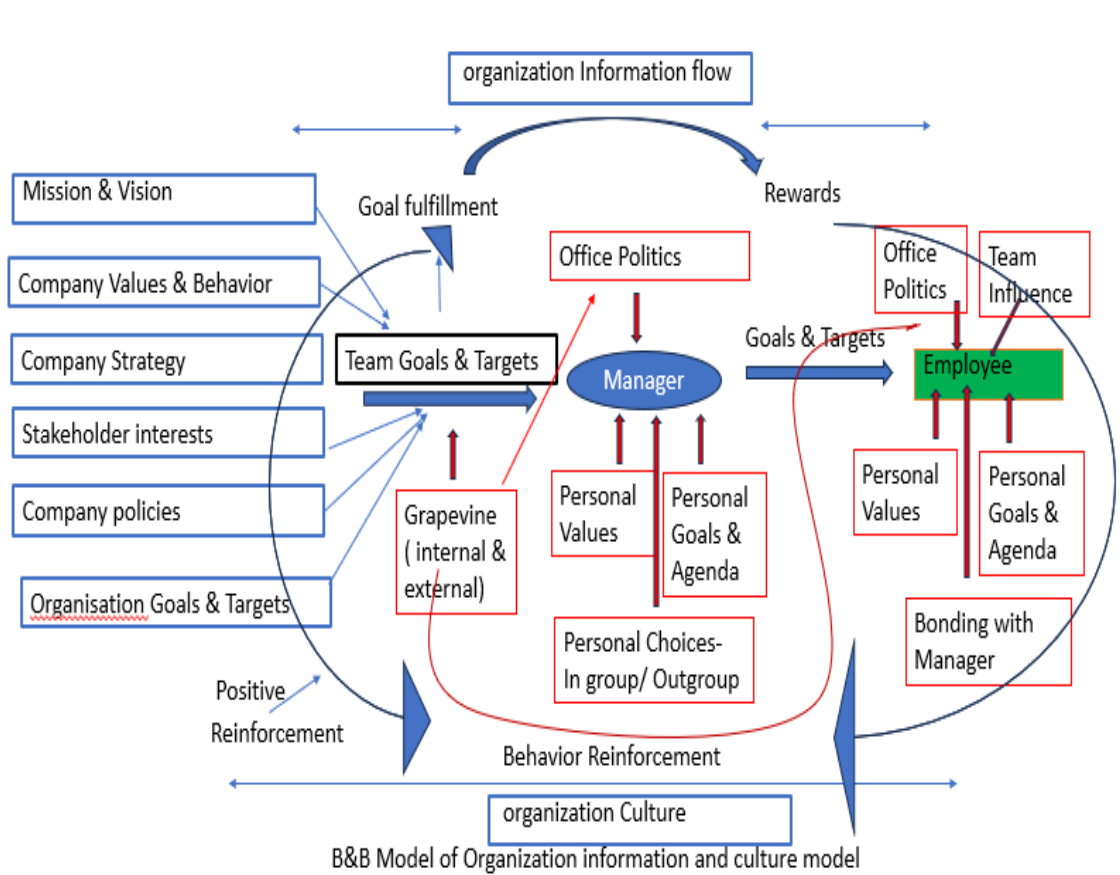
The B&B model, (short form of Banerjee and Banerjee, designed by Sonali Banerjee and Dr Sweta Banerjee) illustrates a fundamental concept in organizational psychology and communication. This model highlights how employees receive, perceive, and respond to information in the organization, which, in turn, influences their behaviors and beliefs within the organization.

Here's an overview of how the B&B model works:

- **Information Reception**
  - ➢ Employees receive information from various sources within the organization, including formal channels like company policies, memos, and training sessions, as well as informal channels like conversations, grapevines, and rumors.
  - ➢ Information can come from superiors (managers and leaders), peers, subordinates, and external sources.

- **Information Perception**
  - ➢ Once employees receive information, they interpret and perceive it through their individual lenses. Their perception can be influenced by their background, experiences, values, and attitudes.
  - ➢ Perception determines how employees make sense of the information they receive. They may see it as relevant, irrelevant, trustworthy, or dubious.

- **Behaviours**
  - ➢ The perception of information, organisation the reward system shapes employees' behaviors within the organization.
  - ➢ If employees perceive the information as clear, relevant, and aligned with their goals and values, they are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors. These behaviors may include adherence to company policies, active engagement in their work, and alignment with organizational goals.
  - ➢ Conversely, if employees perceive the information as unclear, irrelevant, or conflicting with their values, it can lead to negative behaviors, such as disengagement, resistance to change, or even rumors and gossip.

- **Beliefs**
  - ➢ Employees' behaviors, in turn, reinforce their beliefs and attitudes about the organization.
  - ➢ Positive experiences and alignment with organizational values can strengthen positive beliefs. Employees may believe in the company's mission, trust its leadership, and feel a sense of belonging.
  - ➢ Negative experiences or misalignment with values can lead to negative beliefs, such as scepticism about leadership, cynicism about company policies, or a feeling of detachment.

- **Feedback Loop**
  - ➢ The B&B model operates in a continuous feedback loop. Employees' behaviors and beliefs can, in turn, influence their reception and perception of future information.
  - ➢ For example, an employee who has positive beliefs about the company is more likely to positively interpret and engage with future information, creating a cycle of positivity.

In summary, the B&B model illustrates the dynamic interplay between information reception, perception, behaviors, and beliefs within an organization. It emphasizes the importance of communication, as well as the role of leaders and managers in shaping employees' perceptions and ultimately their behaviors and beliefs. Understanding this model can help organizations create a positive and productive workplace culture by fostering open communication, trust, and alignment with core values.

The feedback from exit interviews provides valuable insights into employees' experiences within the organization, particularly in relation to their interactions with managers. It's evident that there's room for improvement in how managers engage with employees, and there are notable contrasts between what employees expected or liked about their managers and the actual experiences they encountered.

Here's a breakdown of the feedback:

- **Areas of Improvement**
  - ➢ **Engagement Gap:** The fact that 83% of employees mentioned that managers could have done better in engaging them highlights a significant engagement gap. This suggests that employees often felt disconnected or disengaged from their managers, leading to unspoken concerns and challenges.

  - ➢ **Complex Organizational Information:** Navigating through the complex web of organizational information was a common challenge. This implies that employees may have struggled to understand and contextualize the information they received, emphasizing the need for managers to simplify and provide guidance.

- **Employee Expectations and Likes**
  - ➢ **Open Door Policy:** Employees value an open-door policy, indicating a desire for approachable managers who are accessible and willing to listen to their concerns. This aligns with the need for active listening and two-way communication. (O'Reilly, C. A., & Pfeffer, J. (2000). Hidden Value: How Great Companies Achieve Extraordinary Results with Ordinary People. Harvard Business Review Press.)

  - ➢ **Body Language of Accessibility:** The perception of accessibility, as conveyed through managers' body language, is important. Non-verbal cues play a significant role in creating an open and welcoming environment.
    (Mehrabian, A., & Ferris, S. R. (1967). Inference of attitudes from nonverbal communication in two channels. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 31(3), 248-252)

  - ➢ **Encouragement to Ask Questions:** Encouraging employees to ask questions fosters a culture of curiosity and learning. It suggests that employees appreciate managers who promote dialogue and seek to address their queries (Edmondson, A. C. (2002). The local and variegated nature of learning in organizations: A group-level perspective. Organization Science, 13(2), 128-146.)

  - ➢ **Recognition and Credit:** Employees expect recognition and credit for their achievements. Acknowledging their efforts and contributions is a powerful motivator and enhances job satisfaction.
    (Pink, D. H. (2009). Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us. Riverhead Books)

  - ➢ **No Threat Perception:** The absence of a threat perception is crucial for creating a psychologically safe workplace. When employees feel safe expressing their opinions and concerns, it facilitates open communication.
    (Edmondson, A. C. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behaviour in work teams. Administrative Science Quarterly, 44(2), 350-383)

- ➢ **Active Listening:** Active listening is a key behaviour that employees value. It involves not only hearing but also understanding and responding empathetically to what employees have to say.
  (Rogers, C. R., & Farson, R. E. (1957). Active listening. Industrial Relations Center, University of Chicago.)

- ➢ **Teambuilding:** Team-building efforts contribute to a sense of unity and collaboration among employees. Managers who facilitate team-building activities create a more cohesive work environment.
  (Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S. I., Kraiger, K., & Smith-Jentsch, K. A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 13(2), 74-101)

- ➢ **Creating a Fun Atmosphere:** Fostering a fun atmosphere at work can enhance employee morale and engagement. It reflects the importance of a positive workplace culture.(Salas, E., Tannenbaum, S. I., Kraiger, K., & Smith-Jentsch, K. A. (2012). The science of training and development in organizations: What matters in practice. Psychological Science in the Public Interest, 13(2), 74-101) (Covey, S. R. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change. Free Press.

Incorporating these expectations and preferences into managerial behaviors can lead to improved employee engagement and satisfaction. Managers who prioritize open communication, active listening, recognition, and a supportive atmosphere are more likely to bridge the engagement gap mentioned in exit interviews. This feedback serves as a roadmap for managers to enhance their leadership skills and create a more positive and engaging workplace for their teams.

VI. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the effectiveness of communication within an organization cannot be overstated. If information is considered king, then the heart of this kingdom lies in relinquishing the veracious tidings to the veracious audience at the veracious time. When these fundamental elements of communication work in harmony, the organization functions smoothly, and many issues can be avoided.

However, when communication falters or fails to meet these criteria, it can lead to a range of problems, with one of the most visible symptoms being employee disengagement, which often results in attrition. Managers hold a central position in this communication ecosystem. They are the linchpin that connects organizational messages with individual employees. When managers excel in their communication roles, they can foster engagement, alignment, and a positive organizational culture.

Conversely, when managers fall short in their communication responsibilities, it can trigger a chain reaction of people-related issues within the organization. These issues, if left unaddressed, can become deeply embedded in the organizational culture, creating a vicious cycle that may ultimately undermine the organization's long-term success.

Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to recognize the critical role that effective communication and competent managerial practices play in ensuring a healthy and thriving workplace. By investing in communication strategies that prioritize clarity, openness, and engagement, organizations can break the cycle of misinformation, disengagement, and attrition, ultimately paving the way for a more prosperous future

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