

**Relation between Modern Communication Practices and Employee Communication**

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**Abstract**

Excellent employee communication is must for any thriving organization. Effective internal communication is key to success of any organization. The need for communicating information to an organization's internal public — its employees — has become of utmost importance in the recent years. This research article studied internal / employee communication in terms of openness of communication and adequacy of information. The openness should be followed across the organization – between the employer and employee as well as amongst employees. Giving too little information as well as too much information to the concerned employee makes him/her confused; so, the importance of adequate information. The effectiveness of information studied on the basis of communication tools and practices used in the organization for the proper dissemination of communication.

**Key words**

Employee communication, effective internal communication, openness in communication, adequacy of information, communication tools and practices.

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**Introduction**

Effective employee communication is crucial for achieving success for any business organization. In the times of continues and complex changes happening in contemporary business world, the way managers communicate and the way the employees reciprocate play a vital role in smooth running of organization. Existing communication practices like Face-to-face, telephone, meetings, intranet/e-mail, company website and social media are playing an essential role in day to day employee communication.

In a survey conducted in US and UK, More than 80 percent of employees said that employee communication influences their desire to stay with or leave an organization and nearly a third said communication was a “big influence” on their decision (Burton, 2006).

A significant improvement in communication effectiveness in organizations was linked to a 29.5 percent rise in market value (Watson Wyatt, 2004)<sup>1</sup>

Internal communication also provides employees with important information about their jobs, organization, environment and each other. Communication can help motivate, build trust, create shared identity and spur engagement; it provides a way for individuals to express emotions, share hopes and ambitions and celebrate and remember accomplishments. Communication is the basis for individuals and groups to make sense of their organization, what it is and what it means.<sup>2</sup>

## **Literature Review**

### **Effectiveness of communication**

While explaining the communication effectiveness, Peter Vogt discussed the Watson Wyatt's key areas of communication effectiveness as

1. Providing employees with financial information and objectives
2. Giving people information on the value of their compensation programs
3. Engaging employees in the business
4. Bringing the voice of the employee into the business
5. Exhibiting strong leadership by management during organizational change
6. Educating employees about organizational culture and values
7. Explaining and promoting new programs and policies
8. Integrating new hires into the organization
9. Aligning employee actions with customer needs<sup>3</sup>

### **Modern communication practices enhance the effectiveness of communication.**

The need for communicating information to an organization's internal public — its employees — has become of utmost importance in the recent years. Effective communication is a lot more than just updating people with what is going to happen. It is managers have to sell the benefits of the change. Effective internal communication can ensure that all members of an organisation are working towards a common goal and assisting each other effectively.

The researcher studied the effectiveness of communication in terms of openness of communication and adequacy of information.

**Openness of communication**

One of the foremost researchers in this area is Jourard (1971) who suggested that "the tendency toward openness is probably one of the best indicants of healthy personality" (Jourard, 1964).<sup>4</sup>

This can be applicable to healthy organization too. This openness should be followed between across the organization – between the employer and employee as well as amongst employees. The volatile changes in industry - Corporate mergers, downsizing, and reengineering have left many employees feeling uncertain about their job security and hungry for information about the future of their companies. Consequently, today's employees have more questions about their roles within their organizations than ever before and have a need for more information from their employers than has traditionally been provided by these employers. (Andi Stein et.al)<sup>5</sup>.

**Adequacy of information**

Communicating too little creates a vacuum that causes distrust and speculation. However, too much information can result in information overload or the paradox of plenty in which an overabundance of information is ignored.

Effective internal communication strives for "information adequacy," which is a measure of the relationship between information needed and information received (Rosenfeld, Richman & May, 2004)<sup>6</sup>

**Communication Tools and Practices**

In the past, the employee publication in the form of a newsletter, newspaper, or magazine was the primary tool used by employers to communicate with their employees which was primarily one way communication practice. The continuously changing times and changing employee priorities create a need and compel employers to follow two-way communication involves both employers and employees as well. In Harriet Lawrence and Albert Wiswell words, the sharing of information can lead to several outcomes, helping both parties make decisions, follow directions, correct errors, and confirm beliefs about themselves and others<sup>7</sup>.

In the same time some authors concentrated on the tools and practices used by employers to communicate with their employees, and a number of different communication techniques are discussed. According to them, in the last few years, however, as the climate of the workplace has

changed and the availability of new technologies has provided employers with additional channels to use when communicating information to employees, other than employee publications.

#### **i. Face-to-face communication**

Face-to-face communication is the back bone of internal communication system. Communications consultant Carole Howard suggested that a strong face-to-face program can help managers develop an ongoing positive working relationship with their employees, as it offers the chance for enhanced two-way communication<sup>8</sup>. In her opinion,

*“Face-to-face sessions give people the opportunity to ask questions, offer opinions, and give and receive feedback — unique advantages over even the best print publications, video programs and e-mail messages. They give senior executives the opportunity to hear firsthand what is on their employees’ minds...”*

Face-to-face communication is the richest medium due to its personal approach into information distribution. It provides immediate feedback both verbally and non-verbally, and it expresses emotions behind the message. Face-to-face communication is also one of the most restricted, as it requires the message’s receivers – i.e. the target group – to be in the same place and at the same time as the sender. (Thill & Bovée 2001)<sup>9</sup>.

#### **i. Telephone Communication**

Telephone systems play a very important role in the modern workplace. Telephone systems give individuals the ability to communicate and share information. In this modern workplace, there are many more functions that telephone systems are capable of. Multi-user calls, or conference calls, are now fairly standard. VOIP telephone service provides the cost saving solutions which are very helpful for making international calls at a much lower rate as compared to the other modes of communication.

#### **ii. Meetings**

Meetings provide an opportunity for brainstorming, coalition-building, and democratic decision-making for both employer and employee.

If handled in an effective and timely manner, meetings can become focal points for the strategic activities of the people within the organization. They can reduce the potential for misinformation. Management can effectively address any pressing issues concisely, informatively and without prejudices through a well-organized meeting.

They are, however, less appreciated these days due to the time used in planning, preparing and finally having the meeting. Large meetings also bear the risk of timing. Some people might not be able to attend the meeting and therefore they will be left out on the important information, and especially the meanings behind this information.

#### **iv. Intranet**

Juholin described Intranet as an organization's own information network, which utilizes the same technology as the internet. However, it is limited to be used only by the personnel of an organization, and it can contain any information for a company's processes, tools and other cooperation areas to be used in everyday work. Intranet is primarily a tool, but at the same time it creates an entirely new communication culture inside an organization. In his view, intranet can be seen as both an information channel and an environment in which to operate. According to him, the intranet's main functions are to distribute and to receive information. At the same time it creates electronic interaction. It enables the same information to be simultaneously available for all personnel, regardless of the organizational hierarchy or geographical location. Therefore the benefit of intranet is that everyone is able to access the same, up-to-date information. Mäentausta, Kirsi in his research article "*Utilization of Media in Internal Communication Case: Konecranes Heavy Lifting Ltd, Electrics Factory*" reiterates Pohjanoksa et al. (2007) words; As technology has developed, intranet has become more common and a significant part of internal communication. Intranet often functions as an information warehouse; a centre of preserving and distributing material. This is especially true in organizations where information is created in large quantities. Due to the vast scale of information available on the intranet, different search functions have been created for easier information recovery. These search functions have become an important tool on the intranet, where information is often divided into myriad of different categories<sup>10</sup>.

#### **v. e-mail:**

Here comes the use of electronic mail or "email" in employee communications programmes. Craig Ey, predicted that by the year 2000, email users would reach the 100 million mark worldwide. He also

reported that from an internal communications standpoint, email can be used to transmit information between management and employees in companies with multiple offices, saving both time and money as well as opening up the communication channels between workers in separate locations. He noted that "The business community has become more enamored with Email than any communications technology since the telephone."<sup>11</sup>

(According to <http://www.statista.com/statistics/273018/number-of-internet-users-worldwide/> information, the total number of worldwide email accounts in 2000 was 294 million and in 2014, the number was increased to 2.92 billion.)

#### vi. **Social Media**

Social Media is the websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media refer to new electronic and web-based communication channels such as blogs, podcasts, wikis, chat rooms, discussion forums, RSS feeds, web sites, social networks. New media increase the volume, speed and every-way flow of communication, connecting people, giving them a voice and stimulating discussions about topics of common interest (Smith, 2006).<sup>12</sup>

The different social media networks are Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube etc.

Over the past few years, social media has been drastically changing scenario of employee communication. According to Onah joheobe lovina, it is because of its major qualities, immediacy, ubiquity, and availability. The researcher combined the opinion of Rainie, Purcell, & Smith, 2011, Lenhart & Fox, 2009; Madden, 2010, Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010; Lenhart, 2009 and come in to conclusion as

**i. Immediacy:** social media facilitates instantaneous information sharing. .

**ii. Ubiquity:** There are literally hundreds of millions of individuals who use various social media platforms; (Facebook alone has over 500 million users with more joining every day - Zuckerberg, 2010). Because social media is practically everywhere, social media makes it very easy to spread information to a wide audience.

**iii. Availability:** Closely related to the previous two points, social media is available to anyone with an Internet connection, from homeless people, to company CEOs and everyone in between.<sup>13</sup>

Well, the debate on face-to-face vs. electronic communication is an ongoing discussion of employee communication practice. Each method has its advantages over disadvantages. In this connection, Denise Rupp have suggested that finding a balance between these two forms of communication is a more sensible approach to developing an effective employee communications program. She encouraged managers to try to integrate both technology and face-to-face communication into their employee communications programs and suggested that one way to determine the direction of an internal communications program is to ask employees how they prefer to receive their information.<sup>14</sup>

### **Research Methodology**

“Relation between Modern Communication Practices and Employee Communication” is a descriptive research. The data collected by using primary sources as well secondary sources.

Primary data was collected by designing a questionnaire and interviewed employees working in IT companies.

70 organizations were randomly selected from STPI (Software Technology Park India) list for survey purpose. Further from each company about 6 employees were selected for interview purpose. Out of these, total 367 respondents participated and gave information.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To study communication practices in IT organization
2. To study the effectiveness of communication in terms of openness and adequacy of information.

### **Hypothesis: Modern communication practices enhance the effectiveness of communication**

**Purpose 1:** To study if there is any relation between modern communication practices & openness in communication.

Statistical Test: Bivariate correlation

### **Variables and measurements**

Respondents were presented with 6 common communication practices.

- a. Face – to – face Communication
- b. Telephone Communication
- c. Intranet/e-mail
- d. Company website

- e. Meetings
- f. Social media

Each practice was measured using 5 point scale (1= Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

Openness in communication was measured using 10 item scale.

1. Employee can tell his immediate supervisor when things go wrong
2. Employee is free to disagree with my immediate supervisor
3. Employee has a say in decisions that affect my job
4. Employee receives adequate information regarding how well he/she doing the job
5. employee receives adequate information regarding how organizational decisions are made that affect his/her job
6. employee receives adequate information regarding the long-term strategies of the organization
7. the immediate supervisor listens to the employee
8. the immediate supervisor is sincere in his/her efforts to communicate with team-members
9. Employee feels connected to his/her peers
10. Employee feels connected to his/her organization

The 10 item scale of 'Openness in Communication' was converted into single item scale to make it convenient for bivariate analysis using the "Transform – compute" command in SPSS.

H<sub>0</sub> = There is no relationship between openness in communication and modern practices of communication.

Hypothesis = There is significant relation between openness in communication and modern practices of communication.

Level of Significance:  $\alpha = 0.05$



**Table.1. Relationship between Modern Communication practices and Openness in Communication**

Pair	R Value	P value	Result	Conclusion
Openness in Communication and Face – to face	0.205**	0.000	Null Rejected	Supported
Openness in Communication and Telephone communication	0.016	0.769	Null Accepted	Not Supported
Openness in Communication and Intranet/e-mail	0.163**	0.002	Null Rejected	Supported
Openness in Communication and Company website	0.306**	0.000	Null Rejected	Supported
Openness in Communication and Meetings	0.080	0.163	Null Accepted	Not Supported
Openness in Communication and Social Media	0.134**	0.029	Null Rejected	Supported

Note:

\* P<0.05

\*\* P<0.01

\*\*\*P<0.001

Based on the results of bivariate correlation it can be concluded that Openness in Communication has positive relationship with, face to face method of communication, intranet, company website and social media. However Openness in communication showed no relationship with telephonic communication and meetings. Thus it is concluded that face to face, intranet, company website and social media enhance openness in communication.

**Purpose 2:** To study if there is any relation between modern communication & adequacy of information.

**Statistical Test:** Bivariate correlation

**Variables and measurements**

Modern practices of communication was measured using following 6 practices

- a. Face – to – face Communication
- b. Telephone Communication
- c. Intranet/e-mail
- d. Company website
- e. Meetings
- f. Social media

Each practice was measured using 5 point scale (1= Never, 2 = Seldom, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

Adequacy of information was measured using 8 item scale.

1. The directives that come from top-management are clear and consistent
2. Most of the information employee receives on a daily basis is detailed and accurate
3. Most of the information employee receives from his/her manager is detailed and accurate.
4. Most of the information employee receives from his/her co-workers is detailed and accurate
5. Communication from other departments is typically detailed and accurate and reliable
6. Employee and his co-workers generally receive reliable information from their manager
7. Employee receives the information he/she needs to perform the job in a timely manner
8. The organization releases company news in a timely manner

The 8 item scale of adequacy of information was converted in to single item scale to make it convenient for bivariate analysis using the Transform – compute command in SPSS.

H0 = There is no relationship between adequacy of information and modern practices of communication.

H1 = There is significant relation between adequacy of information and modern practices of communication.

**Table.2. Relationship between Modern Communication practices and Adequacy in information.**

Pair	R Value	P value	Result	Conclusion
Adequacy of Information and Face – face and communication	.254*	0.000	Null Rejected	Supported
Adequacy of Information and Telephone communication	-.057	0.291	Null Accepted	Not Supported

Adequacy of Information and Intranet/e-mail	.078	0.002	Null Rejected	Supported
Adequacy of Information and Company website	.324**	0.000	Null Rejected	Supported
Adequacy of Information and Meetings	.089	0.118	Null Accepted	Not Supported
Adequacy of Information and Social Media.	.127	0.039	Null Rejected	Supported

Note:

\* P<0.05

\*\* P<0.01

\*\*\*P<0.001

Based on the results of bivariate correlation it can be concluded that adequacy of information has positive relationship with, face to face method of communication, intranet, company website and social media. However adequacy of information has no positive relationship with telephonic communication and meetings.

Thus face to face, intranet, company website and social media enhance adequacy of information.

### Conclusion

Since modern communication practices facilitates openness in communication (4 out of 6 relationships are supported), and adequacy of communication (4 out of 6 relationships are supported). It can be concluded that modern communication practices influence effectiveness of communication. Hence it is proved that Modern communication practices have an impact on effectiveness of communication.

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