Course Learning Outcomes for Unit V

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Explain why communication is important in organizations and the four influences on effective communication encoding and decoding.
2. Compare and contrast the advantages of and problems with electronic mail, other verbal communication media, and nonverbal communication.
3. Explain how social acceptance and media richness influence the preferred communication channel.
4. Determine effective communication strategies in organizational hierarchies and the role and relevance of the organizational grapevine.
5. Elaborate on the dependence model of power as well as the five sources of power in organizations.
6. Discuss the four contingencies of power.
7. Explain how people and work units gain power through social networks.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 9:
Communicating in Teams and Organizations

Chapter 10:
Power and Influence in the Workplace, pp. 288-301

Unit Lesson

Effective Communication

The interdependence of organizational departments or any organizational setup is highly dependent on communication. There are many influences on communication. Body language and eye contact are among the physical ones. With virtual teams, however, we have to consider other factors to accommodate for the unstated intent or feeling/tone of our message. Still other factors, such as integrity and care for ensuring the process is effective, are helpful to efficacy.

During this unit, we will discuss the advantages of email and social media, for instance, and ways it expedites communication that is transactional in nature. We will also uncover the value of non-electronic communication – simply put, the need for face-to-face communication. We will consider what is lost when we use electronic mail and other technologies. What is missing from these communications? While emoticons can help suggest emotion, there are countless facial expressions and other types of body language that add texture to the art of human communications that are simply lost when we do not talk to people in person. Also, culture and customs might not be respected with a lack of human contact or too much human contact. Social and business norms are also considerations when we consider the inherent and unavoidable communication break-downs in an organization.

Thus, improving communications of any type, whether verbal, face-to-face, media-supported, or nonverbal is every company’s quest. As we examine the ways communications are transmitted, we will also need to consider the role of social acceptance. Is it safe for a teacher or security guard to be texting while it is their duty to supervise or provide surveillance? Was the telephone, an auditory device, a better method because it did not take away their visual contact with their duty?
Organizations must determine effective communication strategies and, in doing so, consider many factors such as media richness, which is a theory that helps us to choose and assess proficient communication tools. We see barriers in many situations. For example, a person working in a busy call center might communicate better in a live chat because a verbal discussion would be interrupted by the background noise.

Depending on the organizational hierarchy or design, communication processes can be formal or informal. Management by walking around (MBWA) was coined by managers at Hewlett Packard who discovered that the live presence of communications with employees helped propel effective two-way communications among managers to subordinates. The organizational grapevine is known to be the fastest form of communications. It can lead to the rumor mill, or it can act as a conduit of factual organizational stories and values. There are benefits and limitations to the grapevine, but managers who understand it is motivated by the need of subordinates to bond, will not fear the grapevine, but instead allow it to be an opportunity to spread intended messages. Do you think the grapevine can be used purposefully? Consider the Debating Point on page 279 in the textbook.

Power is gained in the organization on many levels, including bridging issues via social networks and cliques (McShane & Von Glinow, 2013). Leadership and subordinates must have a shared understanding of power. While respect and trust are optimal, the process of relationship is subsequent to clear expectations of both the lines of authority and the power of the communication structures. Consider your current or past workplace. Who has the power?

Reference


Suggested Reading

Click here for the Chapter 9 Presentation in PowerPoint form. Click here to access a PDF version of the presentation.

Click here for the Chapter 10 Presentation in PowerPoint form. Click here to access a PDF version of the presentation.

Using the CSU Online Library, locate and read the following article. Look for this article using the Academic OneFile Database:


Learning Activities (Non-Graded)

Active Listening Exercise
(Adapted from McShane & VonGlinlow, 2013, p. 284)

This exercise is designed to help you understand the dynamics of active listening in conversations and to develop active listening skills.

For each of the two vignettes presented below, compose three statements that demonstrate active listening. One statement will indicate that you show empathy for the situation; the second will ask for clarification and detail in a nonjudgmental way; and the third statement will provide non-evaluative feedback to the speaker. Here are some details about each of these three types of responses:

- **Showing empathy: Acknowledge feelings.** Sometimes it sounds like a speaker wants you to agree with him or her, but in reality the speaker mainly wants you to understand how he or she feels. “Acknowledging feelings” involves taking in the speaker's statements while looking at the “whole
message," including body language, tone of voice, and level of arousal, and trying to determine what emotion the speaker is conveying. Then you let the speaker know that you realize what he or she is feeling by acknowledging it in a sentence.

- **Asking for clarification and detail while withholding judgment and opinions.** This step conveys that you are trying to understand and not just trying to push your opinions onto the speaker. To formulate a relevant question in asking for more clarification, you will have to listen carefully to what the speaker says. Frame your question as someone trying to understand in more detail; often asking for a specific example is useful. This also helps the speaker evaluate his or her own opinions and perspective.

- **Providing non-evaluative feedback: Feeding back the message you heard.** This will allow the speaker to determine if he or she has conveyed the message to you and will help prevent troublesome miscommunication. It will also help the speaker become more aware of how he or she is coming across to another person (self-evaluation). Just think about what the speaker is conveying; paraphrase it in your own words, and say it back to the speaker (without judging the correctness or merit of what was said), asking him or her if that is what was meant.

After you have prepared the three statements for each vignette, explain how these statements satisfy the active listening criteria.

**Vignette 1:** A colleague stops by your desk and says, “I am tired of the lack of leadership around here. The boss is so wishy-washy; he can't get tough with some of the slackers around here. They just keep milking the company, living off the rest of us. Why doesn't management do something about these guys? And you are always so supportive of the boss; he's not as good as you make him out to be.”

Develop three statements that respond to the speaker in this vignette by (a) showing empathy, (b) seeking clarification, and (c) providing non-evaluative feedback.

**Vignette 2:** Your subordinate comes into your office in a state of agitation, asking if she can talk to you. She is polite and sits down. She seems calm and does not have an angry look on her face. However, she says, “It seems like you consistently make up lousy schedules; you are unfair and unrealistic in the kinds of assignments you give certain people, me included. Everyone else is so intimidated they don't complain, but I think you need to know that this isn't right and it's got to change.”

Develop three statements that respond to the speaker in this vignette by (a) showing empathy, (b) seeking clarification, and (c) providing non-evaluative feedback.

Submit your answers in APA essay format with headings to separate each part of your response.

Non-graded Learning Activities are provided to aid students in their course of study. You do not have to submit them. If you have questions, contact your instructor for further guidance and information.