



International Business Communications

Assessment 1

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Submission Date: 30.04.2023

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Unilever -presenting the business.....	2
3. Scope of the report.....	2
4. Application of the Theories of International and Intercultural communications.....	3
Hofstede Theory of Cultural Dimensions.....	3
Samovar's Theory of International and Intercultural communication.....	4
Jandt's Theory of Intercultural Communications.....	4
5. Evaluating the cultural sensitivity when doing business in UK.....	5
6. Communication barriers	6
7. Communication strategies and recommendations for Unilever	7
8. Conclusion.....	9
9. References.....	10

1. Introduction

In today's globalized world, effective communication skills are essential for success in the business world. In the United Kingdom, a diverse range of cultures and backgrounds make up the workforce, creating a rich tapestry of experiences and perspectives. As such, it is vital that businesses in the UK embrace inclusivity in their communications to ensure that all employees feel valued and heard.

In this report, we will explore the importance of inclusive communication in British business and provide recommendations for creating a positive and inclusive work environment. By embracing inclusivity in communication, businesses can improve productivity, employee satisfaction, and ultimately achieve greater success.

2. Unilever -presenting the business

Unilever is a British-Dutch global consumer goods company that produces and sells a wide range of products, including food, beverages, cleaning agents, and personal care products and is committed to making sustainable living commonplace. The company was formed in 1929 through the merger of British soap maker Lever Brothers and Dutch margarine producer Margarine Unie. Today, Unilever has a presence in over 190 countries and employs more than 155,000 people globally. The company's purpose is to make a positive impact on the world by creating products that improve the lives of people while reducing their environmental impact. Unilever is also recognized for its commitment to diversity and inclusivity, both in its workforce and in its marketing campaigns. Some of its well-known brands include Ben & Jerry's, Dove, Lipton, and Magnum. (Unilever, 2023)

3. Scope of the report

The scope of this paper is to create a report that will help Unilever create a positive environment for everyone working in their UK based operation. To achieve this, Unilever needs to cover the following points:

A positive work environment: the benefits of having a positive work environment and how it can improve productivity, employee morale, and retention rates.

Diversity and Inclusion: the importance of diversity and inclusion within the workplace and how it can foster a positive work environment and examples of best practices and strategies that Unilever can implement to promote diversity and inclusion.

Communication: the importance of effective communication in creating a positive work environment and communication breakdowns that can negatively impact morale and productivity.

Employee Wellness: the importance of employee wellness and how it can improve overall productivity and morale. Unilever can implement wellness programs and initiatives to improve employee wellness.

Recognition and Rewards: the importance of recognizing and rewarding employees for their achievements and contributions. Unilever can implement recognition and reward programs to promote a positive work environment.

By addressing these points, Unilever can create a positive work environment that fosters productivity, employee satisfaction, and retention.

Unilever is a multinational company that values diversity and inclusion in its workforce. In the UK, Unilever recognizes the importance of inclusive communication to create a positive work environment where every employee feels valued and respected. As such, Unilever has implemented initiatives that promote inclusive communication, such as training programs and employee resource groups that provide a platform for underrepresented groups to voice their opinions and ideas.

This report will explore the context of British business communications with a specific focus on Unilever's efforts towards inclusivity. We will discuss the importance of inclusive communication in the workplace, the benefits that it brings, and provide practical tips for Unilever to continue to cultivate a positive and inclusive work environment. By prioritizing inclusivity in their communication strategies, Unilever can strengthen their employee engagement, increase productivity, and foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture. (Unilever, 2023)

4. Application of the Theories of International and Intercultural communications

4.1 Hofstede Theory of Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede's theory of cultural dimensions can be applied to Unilever's international and intercultural communication practices. The theory identifies several cultural dimensions that influence communication behaviour, including power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term vs short-term orientation.

Regarding power distance, Unilever's communication may vary depending on the cultural context of the country it operates in. Countries with high power distance may require more formal communication and greater deference to authority figures. In contrast, countries with low power distance may prefer more informal communication and a flatter organizational structure. UK has a low power distance, which means that there is a relatively equal distribution of power among individuals in society. This is reflected in UK businesses, which tend to have flat organizational structures and encourage employee participation in decision-making processes.

Individualism vs collectivism can also influence communication practices. In individualistic cultures, Unilever may focus on individual achievement and recognition, whereas in collectivist cultures, they may emphasize teamwork and group accomplishments. UK is a highly individualistic society, where people are expected to take care of themselves and their immediate family members. This is reflected in UK businesses, which tend to value individual achievement and reward employees based on their performance.

Masculinity vs femininity can also affect communication practices. In masculine cultures, Unilever may emphasize assertiveness and competition, while in feminine cultures, they may focus on collaboration and nurturing relationships. UK is a relatively masculine society, where success is often defined in terms of material possessions and status. This is reflected in UK businesses, which often prioritize profit and growth over other values such as social responsibility or environmental sustainability.

Uncertainty avoidance can also influence communication practices. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, Unilever may prioritize clear and specific communication, while in low uncertainty avoidance cultures, they may be more comfortable with ambiguity and less structured communication. UK has a moderate level of uncertainty avoidance, which means that people are generally comfortable with ambiguity and change. This is reflected in UK businesses, which tend to be agile and adaptable to changing market conditions.

Finally, long-term vs short-term orientation can affect communication practices as well. In long-term oriented cultures, Unilever may emphasize sustainability and long-term planning, while in short-term oriented cultures, they may focus on immediate results and quick solutions. UK has a relatively short-term orientation, where people tend to focus on immediate results rather than long-term planning. This is reflected in UK businesses, which often prioritize short-term goals such as quarterly profits over long-term sustainability and growth. (Hofstede, 1984)

Overall, the application of Hofstede's theory to UK businesses suggests that they tend to prioritize individual achievement and profit over other values, but also encourage employee participation and adaptability to changing market conditions. Unilever must be cognizant of these cultural dimensions to effectively communicate with stakeholders in different countries and cultures.

4.2 Samovar's Theory of International and Intercultural communication

Samovar's theory of international and intercultural communication emphasizes the importance of context, culture, and communication in shaping individuals' perceptions and behaviours. It identifies several key factors that influence intercultural communication, including verbal and nonverbal communication, cultural norms and values, and perceptions of time and space. In the case of Unilever, the application of Samovar's theory can help the organization navigate intercultural communication challenges in its global operations as following:

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication: Unilever must be aware of the different languages and communication styles used in different countries. It must also pay attention to nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language, which may vary across cultures.

Cultural Norms and Values: Unilever must understand the cultural norms and values of the countries it operates in. This includes knowing how different cultures perceive time, space, and social hierarchy. For instance, in some cultures, punctuality is highly valued, while in others, it may be more acceptable to arrive late.

Perception of Time and Space: Unilever must also be mindful of the different perceptions of time and space in different cultures. For example, some cultures may have a more relaxed approach to time management, while others may prioritize punctuality. Similarly, some

cultures may value personal space, while others may have a more communal approach. (Samovar, et al., 2017)

By considering these factors, Unilever can develop effective communication strategies that consider the cultural context of each country it operates in. This can help the organization build stronger relationships with stakeholders, avoid misunderstandings, and promote cross-cultural understanding.

4.3 Jandt's Theory of Intercultural Communications

Jandt's theory of intercultural communication emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural differences and adapting communication styles to be effective when interacting with people from different cultures. Unilever is a multinational company that operates in many countries with diverse cultures. The following are some ways that Unilever could apply Jandt's theory of intercultural communication:

Awareness of cultural differences: Unilever could train its employees to be aware of the cultural differences in the countries where it operates. This would help them to avoid misunderstandings and communicate effectively with people from different cultures.

Adapting communication styles: Unilever could adapt its communication styles to suit the cultural norms in different countries. For example, in some cultures, it is important to use indirect communication styles, while in others, direct communication is preferred.

Avoiding stereotypes: Unilever could train its employees to avoid stereotypes and assumptions about people from different cultures. This would help them to approach communication with an open mind and avoid offending people from different cultures.

Building relationships: Unilever could focus on building relationships with people from different cultures to improve intercultural communication. This could involve cultural exchange programs, cross-cultural training, and other initiatives that encourage interaction and understanding between different cultures. (Jandt, 2016)

Overall, applying Jandt's theory of intercultural communication would help Unilever to improve its communication with people from different cultures, which would enhance its global business operations.

5. Evaluating the cultural sensitivity when doing business in UK

When doing business in the UK, cultural sensitivity is essential to build and maintain successful relationships with customers, partners, and employees. One example of a company that has successfully implemented cultural sensitivity in its business practices is Unilever. Unilever is a multinational consumer goods company with a diverse workforce from various backgrounds, including ethnicity, gender, and age. (Roberson, 2019)

One aspect of cultural sensitivity that Unilever has incorporated into its business practices is the recognition and celebration of cultural diversity. The company has made a concerted effort

to embrace the diversity of its workforce and customer base through various initiatives, such as promoting cultural awareness and offering flexible working arrangements to accommodate religious and cultural holidays. (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2012)

For example, Unilever celebrates cultural diversity through its "Diversity and Inclusion" program, which aims to create an inclusive work environment where employees feel valued and respected. The program includes initiatives such as "Unilever Mosaic," which celebrates the cultural diversity of the company's employees and provides a platform for employees to share their experiences and cultures with their colleagues. (Unilever, 2023)

Another example of Unilever's cultural sensitivity is its approach to marketing and advertising. The company has recognized that cultural differences can affect the success of its marketing campaigns and has therefore taken steps to ensure that its campaigns are culturally sensitive and relevant. For instance, Unilever has developed targeted marketing campaigns for its products that are tailored to specific cultural groups.

In conclusion, Unilever's success in the UK market can be attributed, in part, to its commitment to cultural sensitivity. The company's efforts to embrace and celebrate cultural diversity have helped to create a more inclusive work environment and have enabled them to better understand and connect with their diverse customer base.

6. Communication barriers

Effective communication is crucial in creating a positive work environment as it helps to build trust, enhance relationships, promote teamwork, and increase employee engagement. When communication is clear and open, employees feel valued, heard, and respected, which leads to increased job satisfaction and productivity.

On the other hand, communication breakdowns can negatively impact morale and productivity. When communication is unclear, incomplete, or inconsistent, it can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and errors. For example, if an employee receives incomplete instructions from their supervisor, they may not understand what is expected of them, which can lead to frustration, mistakes, and missed deadlines.

Moreover, poor communication can create a culture of mistrust, where employees feel disconnected and disengaged from the organization. In a diverse workforce in the UK, there are several communication barriers that can arise. These barriers can be related to language, cultural differences, social values, and even technological differences. (Noor & Yusoff, 2019) Here are some examples:

1. **Language barriers:** In a diverse workforce, employees may speak different languages, which can lead to communication breakdowns. Unilever employs people from over 190 countries, so language barriers could be a significant issue (Adair, 2009). For example, a team of employees working on a project may include people who speak English as a second language, which could lead to misunderstandings and confusion.

2. Cultural differences: Cultural differences can also create communication barriers in a diverse workforce. As a global company, Unilever has a diverse workforce with different cultural backgrounds. For example, employees from countries such as Japan or South Korea may have different communication styles and expectations compared to employees from the UK or the US. (Herring, 2009)
3. Social values: Social values can also create communication barriers in a diverse workforce. For example, employees from different backgrounds may have different attitudes towards work, authority, and hierarchy. This can result in miscommunication and conflicts. In Unilever, employees from countries such as India or Saudi Arabia may have different attitudes towards gender or diversity compared to employees in the UK.
4. Technological differences: In a diverse workforce, employees may have different levels of technological proficiency, which can create communication barriers. For example, employees who are not familiar with technology may struggle to communicate effectively through digital platforms. Unilever uses a wide range of digital tools and platforms to facilitate communication between employees. However, not all employees may be equally proficient in using these tools, which could lead to communication breakdowns. (Becker & Reinecke, 2017)

Overall, these communication barriers can result in decreased productivity, reduced morale, and even legal or financial implications.

To overcome these communication barriers, Unilever could provide language training or cultural awareness training to its employees. The company could also invest in technology that is easy to use and accessible to all employees. Additionally, Unilever could encourage open communication and dialogue between employees, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

7. Communication strategies and recommendations for Unilever

To improve communication within the workplace, it is essential to establish clear and open channels of communication. This can be achieved by encouraging regular feedback, providing training and resources on effective communication, and promoting a culture of transparency and accountability.

For example, holding regular team meetings, providing constructive feedback, and promoting active listening can help to foster a culture of open communication. Additionally, using technology tools such as instant messaging, video conferencing, and collaborative software can help to improve communication and collaboration among team members, especially in remote or virtual work environments. (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2019)

These are several steps that Unilever could revise and implement in their organisation so that the wellbeing of its employees is achieved:

5. Encourage open communication: Encourage open communication between employees, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Create an

environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas, and where feedback is welcomed.

6. Provide language training: Provide language training for employees who speak English as a second language or for employees who speak different languages. This will help to reduce language barriers and improve communication between employees.
7. Offer cultural awareness training: Offer cultural awareness training to employees to help them understand and respect different cultural norms and values. This will help to reduce misunderstandings and conflicts between employees.
8. Use a variety of communication channels: Use a variety of communication channels to reach all employees, such as email, video conferencing, and instant messaging. This will help employees to communicate more effectively, regardless of their location or time zone.
9. Regularly evaluate and improve communication: Regularly evaluate and improve the effectiveness of communication within the organisation. This can be done through surveys or focus groups to identify areas for improvement.
10. Promote diversity and inclusion: Promote diversity and inclusion within the organisation by creating a culture that values and respects all employees. This will help to create a positive environment where everyone can succeed.
11. Celebrate diversity: Celebrate the diversity of the organisation through events and initiatives that showcase different cultures and traditions. This will help to create a sense of belonging for all employees
12. Establish clear communication protocols: Establish clear communication protocols to provide guidance on how communication should take place within the organization. This will help to ensure that communication is consistent and effective, regardless of the situation. (Cox, 1994)
13. Use technology to facilitate communication: Use technology to facilitate communication between employees, such as video conferencing tools or project management software. This will help to overcome technological differences and improve collaboration between employees in different locations. (Riggio, 2017)
14. Foster a culture of respect: Foster a culture of respect within the organization by promoting respectful communication and behaviour. This will help to reduce conflicts and create a positive work environment for all employees. (O'Connel, 2018)

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, effective communication is essential in creating a positive work environment, and breakdowns in communication can have significant negative impacts on morale and productivity. By establishing clear communication channels, promoting a culture of transparency and accountability, and providing training and resources on effective communication, employers can create a workplace where employees feel heard, valued, and engaged.

In addition to these strategies, Unilever can also promote employee wellness by providing initiatives such as mental health support, fitness programs, and healthy food options. The company can also recognize and reward employees for their achievements and contributions through programs such as employee of the month or bonuses for meeting targets.

Finally, Unilever can continue to apply theories of international and intercultural communication to improve communication with stakeholders in different countries and cultures. This can help the company to build stronger relationships with customers, partners, and employees, avoid misunderstandings, and promote cross-cultural understanding.

In summary, Unilever can create a positive work environment in the UK by prioritizing inclusivity in their communication strategies, promoting diversity and inclusion, focusing on employee wellness, recognizing, and rewarding employees, and applying theories of international and intercultural communication. By doing so, Unilever can strengthen employee engagement, increase productivity, and foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

By implementing these communication strategies and recommendations, the organisation can create a positive environment for everyone to succeed. This will lead to increased productivity, improved morale, and a more inclusive workplace culture.

Overall, Unilever is a company that values diversity and inclusivity in its workforce and marketing campaigns. In the UK, Unilever has implemented initiatives that promote inclusive communication, such as training programs and employee resource groups that provide a platform for underrepresented groups to voice their opinions and ideas.

Our recommendation is that Unilever continues to cultivate a positive and inclusive work environment, with focus on promoting diversity and inclusion, offering language and cultural awareness training, using a variety of communication channels, regularly evaluating, and improving communication strategies, celebrating diversity, and encouraging open communication between employees. By prioritizing inclusivity in communication, Unilever can strengthen their employee engagement, increase productivity, and foster a more diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

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