

Communication within the Work Place

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Effective Team Work and Communication
(BMSK4002_LON)
09 January 2019

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Introduction

Communication plays an integral part in any organisation whether this is a large multi-national organisation or a small business. From a simple perspective, communication can be defined as an exchange between two entities. However this notion can become more complex, when other factors come into place and affect the transmission medium.

From a work place perspective, communication amongst staff, or between staff and management are always open to a number of factors impacting how the information is communicated and how the information received is processed and whether the receiver is able to understand the information. Information can become distorted during the transmission phase for a number of reasons and both verbal and non-verbal cues also further add noise during the transmission process.

This brief report looks at a number of real life scenarios that have been observed in a work environment and what the outcome was for each example. The last part of the report looks at possible ways of improving the communication within the work place.

Communication in the Work Place

The following examples captured are based on real life examples that have been observed from within a real work environment. For each example, there is an example of the type of communication being used and then a brief description of the outcome of this type of communication and what the effect or outcome was.

The use of communication in the work place varies across different areas of the organisation, and different mediums are used to deliver these messages to the recipients. Communication channels are both official and unofficial. One such example, of unofficial communication, was during an internal restructuring exercise where information was being passed through word of mouth and discussed by staff. The rumour mill created unease and friction between staff and management, as the information received by the recipients were inaccurate. Once this information was brought to the attention of management, a meeting was held to discuss the restructuring and this was when staff were informed that the changes were not affecting them but rather it was the management team that was being restructured. This particular scenario highlights a number of points; inaccurate information can deeply impact staff morale, information can be distorted, noise can impact the content of the message being delivered and lastly no proper communication strategy was in place to disseminate the correct information.

Another example is during bi-annual staff performance review, staff find out about their performance over a given period of time. In this review discussion, some managers tend to focus on what isn't working and the faults and poor performance of the staff. For some staff, this results in negative feeling towards the feedback and the whole performance process. Rather than using the opportunity to work on their shortfall they feel they are

being attacked and make no effort to engage in the discussion. The perception staff then have of management is that there is a lack of support and they feel that it is unfair to penalise them for these mistakes or issues as they could have been identified prior to the performance review and addressed at that time. Generally there is opportunities for feedback however staff tend to not provide any feedback and accept the performance appraisal in order to get the whole process over and done with.

With the size of the organisation, the company uses emails to communicate with everyone, this provides a great way for information to be shared and passed throughout the organisation. Furthermore this has allowed for staff in different areas of the organisation to be kept in the loop of what is happening in different parts of the organisation. A monthly newsletter that is distributed to everyone provides the platform to highlight news worthy items inside the organisation

The type of business the organisation operates in, it encourages a no blame culture, whereby information and feedback can be passed back when there are breaches in safety practices in the organisation. Because safety is so paramount, this process allows users to remain anonymous when reporting this breaches or failure in compliance. The information captured is then used to address the problem and to identify the root cause then to meet with the staff or the team members to review the issue and then to identify ways of preventing the problem from recurring. This approach encourages 360 feedback and has had positive results in reducing safety infringements across the organisation.

Conclusion

To summarise on this report, there are ways that communication in a work place can be improved. Below is a list of points that have been identified and expanded on which I feel will help to improve communication in the work place.

Have in place regular feedback process to employees which should consistent throughout the year and should be both negative and constructive feedback. Employer can ensure that adequate resources are made available to the staff to allow them to make the necessary changes and to be able to improve themselves. This gives an individual a sense of empowerment and the

Be aware of the use of words and language between the employee and the employer. The employer needs to be able to adjust their words and language depending on the situation. For example if the staff is not performing, time should be set aside whereby the employee feels comfortable to be able to discuss their performance in a non-confrontational setting. Avoid public confrontation with the employee and belittling of the staff due to their mistakes. Consider using the I concept instead of the your statement, for example a staff member who has not submitted a report, so instead of saying "your report is late" the employer could rephrase by saying "I had hoped to get your report today, do you think the deadline can still be met?". This sort of approach removes the negativity

and conflict between parties. Using the I statement allows for further interaction between the two parties (HR 360, 2016).

Use of active listening, as highlighted earlier, where time is set aside for one on one discussion, the employer should engage in active listening. Generally in times of conflict, it is easy for the employer or the receiver to pass judgement on the person or situation. Griffiths & Dunham (2015) point out that active listening, the receiver listens to the perspective of the sender and refrains from making judgement. This highlights the idea of looking at the problem through the eyes of the sender before responding. By better understanding the perspective of the employee, this approach allows for both parties to understand the situation and then work together on addressing any problems or issues. Just as active listening is important that employer can also look other non-visual cues that the sender maybe displaying. Their posture, facial expression and body language can all help reinforce the message the sender is sending.

In the Shannon and Weaver Model (2015) reference is made to the idea of noise that can affect the delivery of the message, how the message is perceived or how the receiver will interpret the message. This concept although very basis does highlight a very important point, when information is exchanged between two or more individuals, there is a chance of interference affecting how the message is received. From the context of employment, sometimes an Employer may communicate to its employees, without checking to see of the content of the message is understood by all those receiving the message. Misunderstanding can be further deepened when there is some cultural difference. For example where English may not be the first language of some employees, the choice of words and the use of colloquialism can distort the message and affect how the receiver understands the message. In situations of one on one discussion or during performance reviews, the sender needs to take time to ensure that the receiver has understand the message and that there are no ambiguity in the content of the message. To avoid this, the sender can ask follow up questions or allow time for the receiver to ask questions or clarify parts of the information. This ultimately helps to breakdown the noise and ensure that the true content of the message is being understood by the receiver.

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