

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

EFFECTIVE TEAM WORKING & COMMUNICATION

BMSW4002

Group 1 ,Assessment Task1

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Introduction

One of the most important professional skills and personal competencies would be the communication skill sets. Communication skills involve one’s ability to interact effectively with others, through various platforms or channels. It is also an important academic skill set since one’s academic performance is dependent on his/her ability to express themselves effectively, convey properly what was learned, and complete written tasks with great knowledge of words. This reflective report reviews one of the in-class activities that I have taken part in, and I have explained how I have utilized my communication skills in that activity. I have identified the areas of improvement that I should consider.

In-class activity

The in-class activity that I would be referring to is a group presentation that we have taken part at recently. We were required to conduct a topic-based investigation on managing an enterprise in 21st century. My verbal communication skills, non-verbal communication skills and my written communication skills were put to test in this in-class activity. I had also got the opportunity to understand the practical implications of Shannon and weaver’s model of communication.

Shannon and Weaver's model of communication

Shannon and Weaver's model of communication is acclaimed as one of the most prominent communication models to date. This model integrates the concepts of the information source, the message, channel, noise, probability error, the destination of the information, channel capacity and information rate (Strain and Wysong, 1979). It also has huge implications in the field of education and organizational workplace.

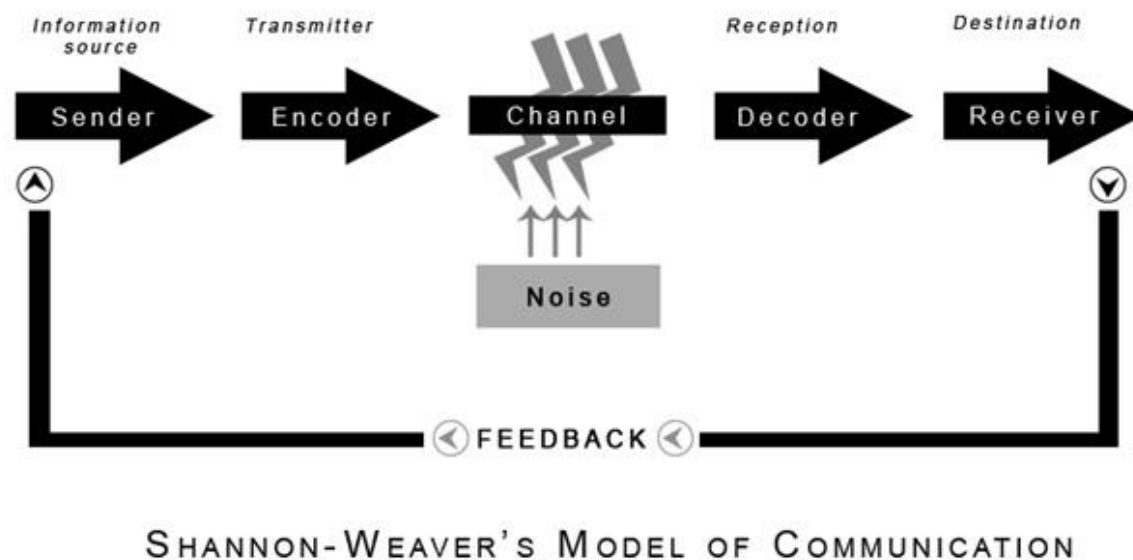


Figure: Shannon-Weaver's model of communication (Strain and Wysong, 1979)

The model starts with the sender sending the information through some transmitter (if it is a telephone or digital conversation), the channel through which the message passes, the recipient receiving the information and the receiver giving their feedbacks upon receiving the information (Weyn and Baker, 2002). When I was making my presentation in front of the class, my voice and the PowerPoint slides acted as transmitters of the communication (Strain and Wysong, 1979). My voice acts as the transmitter for verbal communication, whereas, the PowerPoint slides acted as the transmitter for the written messages. In face to face communication, the environment plays the role of the channel, and anything within the environment that affects the delivery of the message can be considered as the noise. Finally, the receiver receives the message and gives feedback to the sender. Although this model fails to capture the essence of communication more dynamically, it does provide some insights on the delivery of the message and the exchange of information

(Wright, 2007). I have referenced this model to explain my communication process in the group presentation because of the various concepts of message or information sharing that this takes into account.

Verbal communication skills

Verbal communication plays a major role in a team activity. While we were working on the group presentation related tasks, we held several group-meet-up and brainstorming sessions, and we also used messenger and skype apps to stay in contact when we were not in the class (Strain and Wysong, 1979). I have noticed that verbal communication skills play a major role in team dynamics. During the formation of the team, the effective exchange of messages helps clarify the group objectives, tasks, and the allocation of tasks. Usually, at this stage of group development, there is much noise in the discussions between the team members, which affect the exchange of information in general (Shadle and Meyer, 2011). This is what I have experienced as I worked on this group project. The impact of noise was minimum in our case, however, because we had a mutual understanding among ourselves as group members.

During the norming and storming stages, significant implications of our verbal communication skills were needed. Friendly, clarity, transparency, confidence, and proper listening skills were key elements of verbal communication in these stages. I was assigned the role of resource investigator as well as a team player (according to Belbin's team roles), and thus, I had to regularly exchange information collected from online sources with other group members. I have noticed that verbal communication skill is effective when there are mutual respect and mutual understanding between the group members. Otherwise, the interacting individuals interrupt when someone is speaking, and thus, the effect of noise in communication is observed critically. Lack of listening skills, lack of persuasiveness in the verbal exchange of information, lack of precision and clarity affects the progress of the team throughout the stages of group formation and group performance (Pinner and Pinner, 1998).

One of the challenges that I have faced during the group presentation is that I often stutter during the presentations due to anxiety. This affects my delivery of information as I speak in front of the class (Pavord and Donnelly, 2015). To address this problem, I had practised with my friends to bring fluency in my speech. This helped me during the presentation and I was not stuttering at all when delivering the speech.

I have realized that precision and clarity are crucial elements of effective verbal communication skills. Precision and clarity of message help the audience grasp the key information from the message, and then s/he responds accordingly to the message. Studies show that the main reason for which communication fails among group members because they lack precision and clarity while communicating. For example, in the brainstorming sessions, we often used to bring up other topics in the discussion which affected our attention on the main issue of the brainstorming (Mawhinney, Lagonegro and Jordan, 2019). As a result, the information we exchanged relevant to our group presentation were not precise and clear enough for completing the tasks that we decided on. David Berlo's theory implies that the communication process is a four-element system that starts from the sender sending the message through a channel and the receiver receiving it (Hills and McLaren, 2019). In order for this process to be effective, the sender needs to provide precise and clear information, the channel needs to be effective for the communication, and the receiver should be able to note the actual message from this interaction (Hills and McLaren, 2019).

One of my teammates, for example, tended to overburden the communication process with unnecessary and excessive information, when we were discussing the tasks of the group presentation in the group meetings (Weyn and Baker, 2002). This affected my performance as well, because I could not get the proper information from him when needed, and as a result, misunderstandings were created between ourselves. Then I suggested him to only stay on the points, and I tried to catch the key points from his discussions every time we were discussing. I have applied the theory of selective attention, which suggests that individuals put attention to certain points, and avoids memorizing the unnecessary points. This did help me establish effective verbal communication with him, and thus, I demonstrated my ability in effective verbal communication.

Instructor's feedbacks

My verbal communication skill was praised by my instructor after I had completed the presentation. He did point out some points where I could improve further, but in general, he stated that I have done a good job in delivering a convincing and clear presentation speech in the group presentation.

Written communication skills

Application of effective written communication skills was evaluated in the group project as well (Pinner and Pinner, 1998). Here, my written communication skills were evaluated from the PowerPoint slides I presented and the final report I have submitted on the topic of managing an enterprise in the 21st century. As a student, my written communication skills are evaluated based on five elements- clarity, conciseness, tone, use of active voice, and use of grammar and punctuations (Shadle and Meyer, 2011). The quality of academic writing is evaluated using these standards. Written communication skills also include the giving precise information on the report, ability to write creatively, ability to paraphrase from sources when needed, and ability to write without copying from other sources (Strain and Wysong, 1979).

In written communication, the use of words and the arrangement of the sentences determine how well the receiver would be able to decode the message (Strain and Wysong, 1979). It is up to the receiver to encode a message or information using the written communication skills in a way that the receiver would be able to understand it clearly (Pinner and Pinner, 1998).

While working on the project, initially I faced some problems to put my ideas into writing properly. My part was in the group was to accumulate information on the challenges of doing business and investigate the opportunities. While I understood the information that I gathered from different sources, but putting them into my own words was challenging to me. Much of our academic scores come from the reports, assignments and presentations we submit (Pavord and Donnelly, 2015). Therefore, having effective written communication skills is crucial for us. Here in this project, I had to make persuasive presentation slides with proper information and precise arguments. I also had to deliver these slides and the report on time as we have previously agreed in the group.

The way I have approached the problem was that first I listed my goals before beginning to write. Rather than collecting a lot of information, I have only included the need to know details on my word file. I have gathered information from updated and reliable sources to give validity and reliability to my writing. I have kept my work professional by using a formal tone in writing. I have avoided the use of informal phrases. After finishing the writing, I have thoroughly reviewed the writings and edited them where needed (Mawhinney, Lagonegro and Jordan, 2019). Thus, I have utilized my written communication skills to deliver a comprehensive and effective report and PowerPoint slides.

I have also considered the design of the PowerPoint slides while doing my part of the project because oftentimes, the design makes the written words less visible or shifts the attention from the written message to the design itself. In these cases, the design of the slides acts as a “noise” factor which acts as a barrier to the delivery of the message. In order to avoid these problems, I have used very simple and professional layout and design to better deliver at the presentation.

Cross cultural communication

Another important communication skill set is the cross-cultural communication skills (Levy, 2019). When communicating with the audience in a formal exchange, it is important to approach the recipient in formal tone and avoid the use of any informal words or phrases or unnecessary non-verbal signs because these might be deemed offensive or inappropriate to someone from a different culture (Hills and McLaren, 2019). Therefore, a proper cross-cultural awareness is needed to exchange information with a recipient from a different background or culture. I have realized that even if someone does not intend to offend the recipient but still any sign or word or phrase might be taken differently when the receiver is decoding the message. The channel itself also may impose any negative meaning on the words if not used properly.

Since my group members were from different cultural backgrounds, this group project gave me the opportunity to improve my cross-cultural awareness in communication (Carter, 1995). I have learned the importance of using a formal tone and language to minimize the risks of my messages being decoded with negative meanings.

Conclusion

The report provides a detail reflective discussion on the implications and importance of effective communication skills in a group project that I have partaken recently. It is important that one develops their written and verbal communication skills in order to make good performance at the in-class activities, and to build a solid foundation of communication skills in the professional context. Communication can be considered as the most important aspect of academic, personal and professional activities. Therefore, a sound knowledge and a good grasp on the effective communication skills are vital to one’s success.

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