

EFFECTIVE TEAM WORKING & COMMUNICATION

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Module BMSW4002_Lon

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Introduction

The aim of this assignment is to gain a better understanding about effective team work and communication within a workplace through critically looking at a real-life situation. The report will be considering Walmart in the UK, primarily functioning through Asda, as it faces major communication issues with most of its employees. The report will focus concepts and principles of effective communication and critically look at theories such as interactional model and Shannon-Weaver model that relate to proper communication at a workplace. The discourse will also align these findings with the current state at the chosen entity and recommend a proper communication strategy at the very end.

Overview of the Selected Firm

The chosen entity is Walmart, which has acquired Asda in 1999 in order to extend its market to the UK (Walmart, 2020). For the most part, this strategy has been successful for the company as it has diversified its store to different formats such as supercentres, superstores, supermarkets and living. Therefore, with such extensive extension throughout the UK, Walmart has managed to employ more than 145,000 individuals at their retail stores, making them one of the largest private employers of the country (Walmart, 2020). The overall relationship between this vast workforce and the employers are positive in nature, mainly because the entity has policies regarding interactive communication and mental wellness (Fisher, 2018). Such practices point toward Walmart being a socially responsible business entity.

Communication Vulnerabilities/Problems Faced by the Organisation

Walmart has faced communication vulnerabilities throughout its international activities. According to Li and Liu (2018), the internal communication between the employees are not very efficient, leading to lack of knowledge sharing. Such practices usually lead to disconnection between different groups of employees. Theoretically Walmart utilises downward, upward and horizontal communication channels to maintain interconnectivity between employees, but their practical implementation has not been efficient in nature (Garcia and Red, 2018). There is also

lack of communication between the managerial individuals and the employees, which contributes to the company's current vulnerabilities (Caraway, 2018).

Main Discussion

Concepts and Principles Related to Effective Communication

Effective communication usually refers to a process where exchange of ideas, knowledge, information and thoughts, are achieved through best possible methods possible. Effective communication usually has certain characteristics such as clarity, completeness, reliability etc. (Manisaligil and Bilimoria, 2016). These characteristics or principles are elaborated below.

- **Clarity:** The purpose of the communication should be clear from the very start. After developing the objectives, forming the message would be much easier in nature
- **Arrangement:** The arrangement of the message should be organised and systematic. There has to be a beginning (introduction) and end (conclusion). The more appealing the arrangement is, the more effective the communication would be.
- **Suitability:** The sender needs to consider the various characteristics of the message during the encoding process. The implementation of language and other less tangible elements such as visual elements should be aligned with the understanding capability of the receiver.
- **Proper Communication Channel:** The choice of communication channel is also necessary in this scenario, and it depends on the sensibility of the senders. For example, formal messages should be sent through established communication channels such as email. While less formal but more immediate messages should be sent through relevant messaging app.
- **Asking for Feedback or Response:** The sender has to ask for any response or feedback in order to determine if their message has been decoded effectively (Schäfer *et al.* 2017).

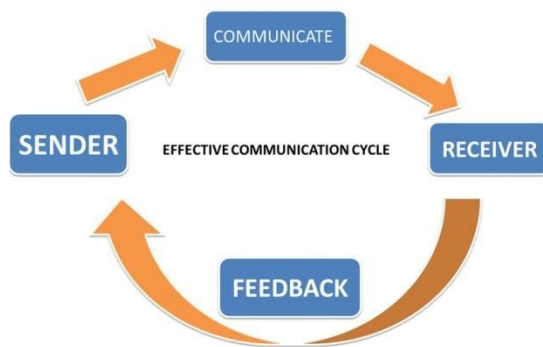


Figure 1: Effective Communication

(Source: Schäferet *al.* 2017)

How Effective Communication Works Productively Over Ineffective One

In order to understand the effectiveness of effective communication, it is necessary to understand how it is more productive than ineffective communication. For starter, ineffective communication does not have any established or well thought out objective. It reduces the clarity of the communication and also eliminates the need to have any communication in the first place. Furthermore, ineffective communication develops a barrier between the relevant parties. If the receiver of the message does not understand the message, they will not be able to respond, leading to both miscommunication and disconnection between the receiver and the sender (Demuyakor, 2018). Such a situation can lead to conflict and ultimately decrease the productivity of a business entity. Furthermore, talking about viewpoints and ideas does not always lead to communication; rather it can lead to more confusion. Individuals who can arrange these thoughts and viewpoints in a more objective manner has better chance of effective communication than other individuals, positively contributing to knowledge and information sharing. Ineffective communication also has the possibility of utilising unsuitable communication methods, which might lead to more contradictory messages. There can also be other barriers such as attitudes, emotional, cultural, linguistic, all of which makes it problematic to maintain an effective communication. However, overcoming these barriers would make an organisation all that more efficient in nature (Rani, 2016).

Importance of Maintaining an Effective Communication in the Workplace

According to Nwabueze and Mileski (2018), effective communication in today's environment can easily lead to competitive advantage for any business entity. The reason for this can be associated with effective interconnection between different parts of an organisation. If the communicated message is understood well by the receiver and works accordingly, the business procedures can become more efficient and time-saving. Increased efficiency and productivity will naturally lead to better service and products, which will help the business entity at gaining competitive advantage. Furthermore, effective communication can be understood as the most important factor for maintaining the relationship between the employer and the employees. Communication can be used as tool of information, supervision, collaboration etc. Effective communication would motivate employees to participate more at the workplace, provide innovative ideas and maintain organisational relationships.

Practical application of theories/models/frameworks of effective communication

Communication Models refer to a systematic representation of the process that helps in interpreting how communication works needs to be done. As a result of it, a productive and effective outcome could be achieved. For example, normative models of communication, such as organizational or transparent communication, act as a crucial practice of a firm towards its employees as it could lead the firm to a positive employee-outcome (Lee and Li, 2020). Similar concept can be applied to the concerned firm, as there has also been going on some communication vulnerabilities. Therefore, application of effective communication models could lead this firm and its employees availing some positive employee-outcomes. The most suitable communication models/frameworks as per the communication vulnerabilities in the concerned firm are provided below:

Shannon-weaver communication model: This model has been recognized as the “Mother of All Models” (Wang and Li, 2017). This model has been designed for developing effective communication between the sender and its respective recipient (receiver), and it also works on identifying the factors affecting the communication process, Noise is one of those factors. Illustration of this model is provided below:

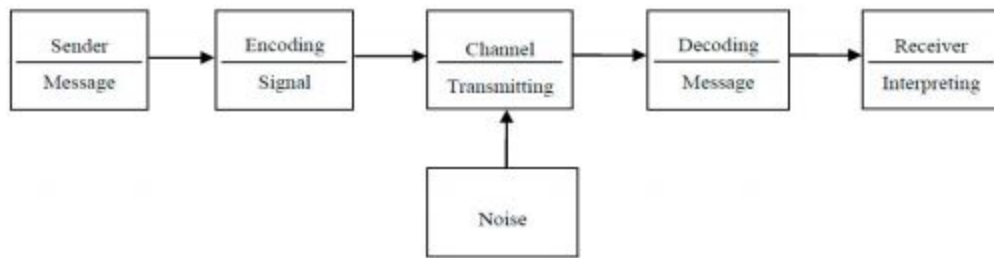


Figure 2: Shannon-Weaver Model

(Source: Wang and Li, 2017)

This model could interpret different obstacles leading Walmart in UK, as Asda facing communication vulnerabilities. Applying this model leads Walmart to be effective in communication, as their sender, message, and receiver need to act accordingly:

Sender: The employee of Walmart holding this end needs to select only the desire, important, and productive message rather vague, unimportant, or unproductive one, to be sent via different manners such as efficient/acceptable body-language, written, or orally.

Encoder: Encoder also known as Transmitter converts the message into signals, thus, the sender needs to highly be selective and proficient in selecting the message to send it to the receiver.

Decoder: As the concerned firm utilizes horizontal, upward, and downward communication channels for maintaining interconnectivity between the employees, hence, the reception-place of the signal converting the signals into message might not interpret the interconnectivity between the employees. Thus, channels used need to have an efficient practical implication, thus only, decoder could interpret the signals and convert it into that message to be conveyed to the recipient.

Receiver: The recipient or the destination, at which the message is to be conveyed. As per the findings reflecting the communication vulnerabilities faced by Walmart, UK, it is assumed that its receiver does not have focus and attention skill to grasp what the sender conveys to them.

Interaction Model of Communication: This model provides an insight of interactional perspective that attempts for capturing more of the complexities along with two-way influence between the receiver and sender (Ruben and Gigliotti, 2017). This perspective recognizes that communication cannot be a one-way process rather it always needs to be a two-way (multi-directional) process. While considering the concepts of this model, it is identified that the communication vulnerabilities occurred in Walmart, UK because of their wrong perception about communication.

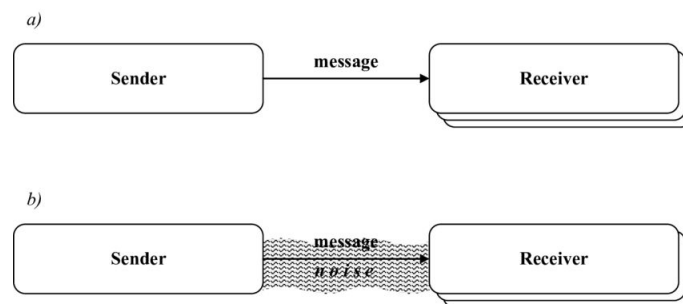


Figure 3: Transactional Model of communication

(Source: Ruben and Gigliotti, 2017)

This model suggests by expanding the focus to a more complex two-way interchange between the senders and receivers, wherein, senders communicate with the respective receiver, who is responding reciprocally and sometimes even simultaneously with the sender. Thus, in the context of Walmart, UK, this model is found to be useful enough in such sense, where, this model could help in explaining the progression from the linear model to an effective system model.

Justification of the theories in this firm's context

Both the above-stated models are relevant enough in the context of “Walmart UK”. *Shannon-Weaver model* is the suitable one because it directs the employees and management including the leaders about how to a specific message needs to be transmitted to avoid conflict, confusion or unclearness. For example, in any construction environment, information (communication) is sent to every stakeholder/participant receiving the information, and there lies

only a way via which the information could be redeemed if all the stakeholders perceive the information distributed, and be able for giving feedback (Zita, 2020).

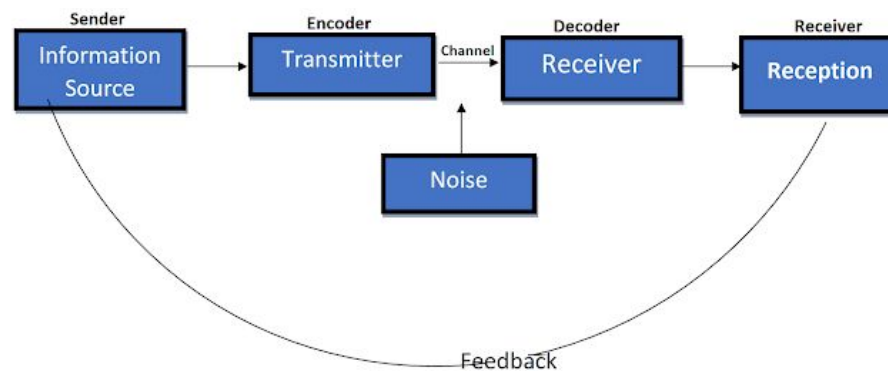


Figure 4: Feedback, a feature of Shannon-Weaver Model

(Source: Zita, 2020)

However, the revised version of Shannon & Weaver model gets the highest level of applicability into the context of Walmart UK. It is due to that as feedback is a key part of the communication, which takes place between the receiver (employees) and sender (management), thus, employees and management need to possess specific attributes, which could enhance their communication and performance effectiveness. Those attributes largely depend on the behaviour, skills, and knowledge, which both management and employees of this firm possess.

Interactional Model of Communication is also suitable enough in this organization because this model also incorporates feedback that makes communication a two-way and more interactive process. Feedback to be suggested to both the ends of communication includes message being sent by an employee in response to other messages delivered by the management, for instance, management asks for delivering a presentation, an employee delivers the same.

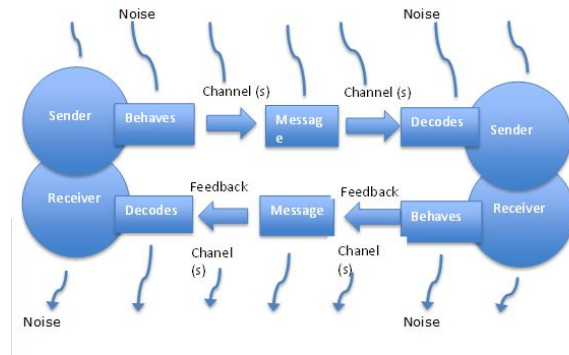


Figure 5: Reason for “Interactional Model”

(Source: Ruben and Gigliotti, 2017)

The inclusion of a feedback loop leads to a more complex however understanding of the roles of each ends in this communication encounter. This model involving two sender-receivers instead of one sender or receiver, who exchange messages, enhances the interest-level, as both the ends alternate their roles for keeping a communication encounter going-on.

Recommendation on effective communication strategy

After considering the current communication problems facing the workforce of Walmart UK, it is recommended to this firm to implement an effective communication strategy, and that is related to implementation of *IC (Internal Communication) practices*. IC is considered as an underlying effect of employee-engagement, which is defined as an important and independent function within the PR and Corporate Communication Scholarships (Karanges *et al.* 2015). Implementing IC practices make the employees aware of their two major roles such as spanning provisions of key information, and, creating a sense of community within Walmart, UK.

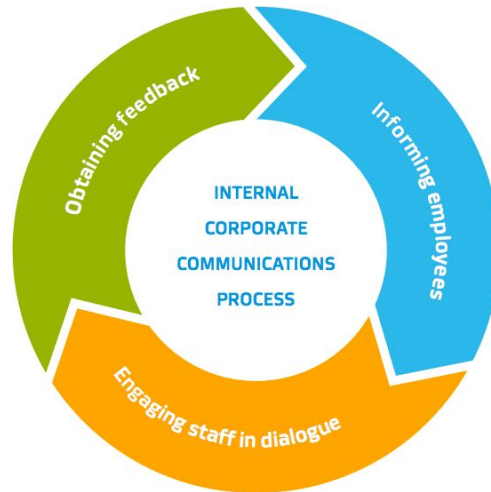


Figure 6: IC Process

(Source: Jacobs *et al.* 2016)

Development of a sense of community via efforts of IC leads the employees of this firm establishing along with maintaining a key relationship between Walmart, its supervisors, employees, and other stakeholders. At the same-time, Walmart's employees could experience positive and productive workplace relationships; there will be two dominate of an employee's professional-life such as a productive relationship with their supervisors, and with their organization. Communication from Walmart's management needs to come directly from a specific manager to the next, and then from supervisor to the respective employee only.

Provide examples (organizations) already using the same strategy

This strategy of communication has already been utilized by *BT* (British Telecommunication) and *Sony Company*. These two firms have implemented a sophisticated IC system for engaging their employees across the world (Yeomans and FitzPatrick, 2017). A small family-owned firm of printing gets also benefitted from information sharing and IC system with feedback for helping their business performing better. Businesses like Sony and BT for explaining their customer's needs in a quite different manner, works on improving the communication, engagement, commitment, and enthusiasm-level of their employees. Business as BT has been delivering effective communication by engaging its employees worldwide, then, Walmart

focusing at UK's location could also improve the communication-level of management and employees by applying IC systems and practices as well. IC Practices are also considered as social assets that could be generated through an effective communication among the employees (Jacobs *et al.* 2016). IC practices guides Walmart for creating such working atmosphere that needs to be full of respect, honesty, integrity, and loyalty for every employee within this company.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the chosen entity, Walmart, has effective communication policies at their workplace in the UK, but the implementation of these seem to be slightly faulty in nature. It has been identified that effective communication is necessary to gain competitive advantage in current competitive business environment. The report has identified the relevant principles for such communication. The implementation of both as interactional model and Shannon-Weaver model, establishes that the company needs to integrate new policies for clarified top-down and bottom-up communications. Furthermore, the company in order to implement the IC practices, can have integration of periodic meetings, social media forums etc. These can also help the organisation enhance its current state and poor-level of communication.

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