

Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace

Module Assignment Submission

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Module No:	BMSK4013
Module Title:	Managing Communications

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1. Introduction

Communication and Motivation are essential components of effective management and play a significant role in organisational success. Managers rely on communication to provide direction, build relationships, resolve conflict, and motivate employees within increasingly complex working environments. Similarly, motivation influences employee performance, engagement and productivity, making it a central area of management theory and practice.

Although many communication and motivation models attempt to explain workplace behaviour, human interaction is often more complicated than theoretical frameworks suggest. This report critically analyses key communication and motivation theories used within management including communication models, verbal and non- verbal communication, trust and conflict management, and major motivation theories. Rather than simply describing each theory the report evaluates their practical relevance, strengths, and limitations within real organisational contexts. A key argument throughout this report is that no single theory can fully explain communication or motivation because human behaviour is influenced by emotional, psychological, social and environmental factors.

The report also applies theory to personal experience, particularly through reflection on long-term caregiving for a non verbal autistic child. This experience has developed a deeper understanding of empathy, adaptability, emotional intelligence, and non-verbal communication. By combining academic theory with reflective insight, the report demonstrates that effective communication requires flexibility, awareness, and critical thinking rather than reliance on rigid theoretical models alone.

2. Communication in Management

Communication can be defined as the process through which individuals create and share meaning (Keyton,2017). Within management, communication is essential for leadership, decision-making, teamwork, employee motivation and organisational coordination. Effective managers must communicate clearly to ensure employees understand expectations, organisational objectives, and workplace responsibilities. Communication also contributes to relationship-building and can influence workplace culture, trust, and employee engagement.

Traditional management theory often presents communication as a rational process involving the transfer of information from one individual to another.

However, communication within organisations is far more complex in practice. Mumby and Kuhn (2019) argue that communication is shaped by social context, emotion, interpretation, and organisational power structures. This suggests that communication cannot always be viewed as neutral or straightforward, particularly in environments where hierarchy and authority influence interaction. In management settings ineffective communication can lead to misunderstandings, reduced motivation, workplace conflict and poor organisational performance. For example, unclear instructions from managers may reduce employee confidence and increase mistakes, while poor listening skills can create frustration and disengagement within teams.

Consequently, effective communication involves more than simply delivering information; it also requires active listening, empathy feedback and emotional awareness. From a critical perspective, many communication theories oversimplify workplace interaction by assuming that messages are interpreted consistently by all individuals. In reality employees may interpret communication differently depending on personal experiences, cultural background, emotional state and workplace relationships. This demonstrates the importance of adaptable communication strategies within management practice. Personal experience further supports this argument. Long-term caregiving for an autistic child has demonstrated that communication frequently extends beyond spoken language and often relies on emotional awareness, observation, and interpretation of non-verbal behaviour. This highlights the limitations of management approaches that prioritise verbal communication while underestimating the importance of empathy and non-verbal interaction. Therefore, effective management communication requires flexibility and emotional intelligence in order to respond appropriately to different individuals and situations.

3. Communication Models

3.1 Linear Model

The Shannon and Weaver (1949) model presents communication as a linear process involving a sender, message, channel, and receiver. The model was originally developed to improve technical communication systems and introduced the important

concept of noise referring to factors that interfere with communication. Within management this model can help explain how messages may become distorted through poor communication channels or environmental distractions. A strength of linear model is its simplicity as it provides a clear structure for understanding the basic communication process. It is particularly useful within organisations where information is communicated in one direction, such as announcements, instructions, or presentations. However the model has significant limitations because it assumes communication is a one-way process and treats receivers as passive participants. Critics argue that the model oversimplifies human interaction because communication rarely occurs without feedback or interpretation (Fiske,2011). In modern organisations, employees are expected to respond, question, and contribute rather than simply receive information. Therefore, while the linear model provides a useful foundation, it does not fully reflect the complexity of workplace communication.

3.2 Interactive Model

The interactive model developed by Schramm (1954) expanded on earlier theories by introducing feedback into the communication process. This model recognises communication as a two-way interaction in which both individuals contribute to exchange of meaning. Feedback allows managers to clarify information, assess understanding, and adapt communication where necessary.

A major strength of the interactive model is that it reflects the importance of response and clarification within organisational communication. In workplace environments, feedback is essential for performance management, problem-solving, and relationship-building. Employees who feel listened to are often more engaged and motivated, demonstrating the practical relevance of this model within management. However, despite improving on the linear approach, the interactive model still has limitations. The model assumes that communication occurs equally between individuals, which may not reflect workplace hierarchies where managers often hold greater authority and influence. In practice, employees may feel unable to challenge management decisions openly, meaning communication is not always balanced or fully transparent.

3.3 Transactional Model

The Transactional model presents communication as a dynamic and simultaneous process in which individuals continuously act as both senders and receivers (Barnlund, 2008). Unlike earlier models, the transactional approach recognises that communication is influenced by social context, culture, emotions, personal experience, and non-verbal behaviour. This model is often considered the most realistic representation of communication because it reflects the complexity of human interaction. Within organisations, communication is rarely structured or predictable, and meaning is often influenced by interpretation and emotional response. Managers must therefore consider tone, body language, workplace relationships, and organisational culture when communicating with employees. A major strength of the transactional

model is its recognition that communication involves continuous interpretation rather than simple message transfer. This is particularly relevant within leadership, teamwork, and conflict management because it acknowledges that communication is shaped by both verbal and non-verbal interaction. From personal experience as a caregiver for a non-verbal autistic child, communication frequently depends on interpreting behaviour, emotion, facial expression, and routine rather than relying solely on spoken language. This demonstrates the importance of adaptability and emotional intelligence within communication processes. Despite its strengths, the transactional model can also be criticised for being difficult to apply in a structured organisational setting because communication is constantly changing and influenced by multiple external factors. Nevertheless, the model arguably provides the most accurate understanding of communication within modern organisations because it reflects the complexity of real human interactions.

3.4 Overall Evaluation of Communication Models

Overall, each communication model contributes valuable insight into workplace interaction. Linear models provide a useful foundation for understanding message transmission, while interactive models recognise the importance of feedback and response. However, the transactional model appears to offer the most realistic representation of communication because it recognizes the influence of context, emotion, interpretation, and non-verbal behaviour. At the same time, no single model can fully explain communication in all situations. Organisational communication is influenced by personality. Power, relationships, culture, and emotional factors, meaning managers must apply communication theories flexibly rather than relying on rigid frameworks.

4. Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication

Verbal communication refers to the use of spoken or written language to share information and meaning. Within management, verbal communication is essential for leadership, teamwork, instruction, decision-making, and employee feedback. Effective verbal communication allows managers to provide clarity, motivate employees, and reduce misunderstanding within organisations. One advantage of verbal communication is that it enables immediate interaction and clarification. Managers can respond to questions, explain expectations, and adjust communication depending on employee understanding. Clear verbal communication is particularly important within leadership because employees often rely on managers for guidance and direction. However, verbal communication also has limitations. Words can be interpreted differently depending on tone, context, culture, and personal experiences (Adler et al., 2018). Poorly delivered communication may create confusion, conflict, or reduced employee confidence. Additionally, excessive reliance on verbal communication may disadvantage individuals who communicate differently or struggle with spoken interaction. From a critical perspective, many management theories prioritise verbal communication while

underestimating the role of emotion and interpretation. In practice, effective communication requires managers to consider not only what is being said, but also how messages are delivered and understood.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication includes body language, facial expressions, postures, eye contact, gestures, tone of voice, and emotional expressions. Mehrabian (1971) argued that a large proportion of communication is conveyed through non-verbal behaviour, particularly when discussing emotions and attitudes. Within management, non-verbal communication can sternly influence workplace relationships and employee perceptions. For example, managers who maintain positive body language and attentive listening skills are more likely to build trust and engagement within teams. In contrast, negative non-verbal behavior such as avoidance, dismissive gestures, or aggressive tone may reduce employee confidence and create tension. A key strength of non-verbal communication is its ability to reinforce verbal messages. However, non-verbal communication may also contradict spoken communication, leading to confusion or mistrust. Employees are often influenced as much by a manager's behaviour and emotional expression as by the actual words used. Personal experience has demonstrated the significant importance of non-verbal communication. As a caregiver for a non-verbal autistic child, communication frequently depends on interpreting behaviour, emotional changes, routines, and facial expressions rather than spoken language. This experience highlights the limitations of communication theories that focus heavily on verbal interaction while overlooking emotional awareness and behavioural interpretation. Critically, effective managers must recognise that communication styles differ between individuals. Some employees may communicate confidently through speech, while others may rely more heavily on observation, listening, or non-verbal behaviour. Consequently, adaptable communication strategies are essential within diverse organisational environments.

5. Trust, Conflict and Difficult Communication

Trust is a fundamental component of effective communication and organisational success. Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to another individual based on positive expectations of their behaviour. Within management, trust encourages openness, collaboration, teamwork, and employee engagement. Managers who communicate honestly and consistently are more likely to build trust within teams. Employees who trust management are often more motivated and willing to contribute ideas and feedback. In contrast, poor communication or inconsistent behaviour may damage workplace relationships and reduce morale. However, trust can be difficult to establish and easily damaged. Organisational change, poor leadership, or lack of transparency may create uncertainty and reduce employee confidence. This demonstrates that communication is closely connected to emotional and relational factors rather than simply information exchange.

Conflict

Conflict occurs when individuals or groups experience disagreement due to differences in goals, values, opinions, or expectations. Within organisations, conflict is often viewed negatively however, Rahim (2002) argues that conflict can also be constructive when managed effectively. A positive aspect of conflict is that it may encourage problem-solving, creativity, and organisational improvement. Employees who feel able to express different opinions may contribute valuable perspectives that improve decision-making. However, poorly managed conflict may reduce teamwork, increase stress, and negatively affect communication. Managers therefore require strong communication skills in order to manage conflict professionally and fairly. This demonstrates the importance of interpersonal communication within leadership and management practice.

Difficult Conflict

Difficult communication is an unavoidable aspect of management and leadership. Managers are often required to deliver negative feedback, address poor performances, manage conflict, or communicate organisational changes that may be unpopular with employees. These situations can create anxiety for both managers and employees, making effective communication particularly important. One of the main challenges of difficult conversation is the emotional response they can generate. Employees may feel criticised, defensive, or undervalued, while managers may avoid conversations due to discomfort or fear of conflict. As a result, poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, reduce trust, and lower levels of motivation within teams. Effective management of difficult communication requires honesty, empathy, active listening, and emotional intelligence. Goleman (1995) argues that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in interpersonal effectiveness because it enables individuals to understand and manage both their own emotions and the emotions of others. Managers who demonstrate empathy and self-awareness are often better equipped to handle challenging conversations constructively. From a critical perspective, communication theories frequently focus on message delivery but may underestimate the emotional complexity involved in workplace interactions. Difficult communication is rarely a simple exchange of information. Instead, it involves relationships, perceptions, and emotional responses that influence how messages are interpreted. Consequently, successful managers must adapt their communication approach to suit individual circumstances and maintain positive working environments. Overall, trust, conflict, and difficult communication highlight the importance of interpersonal skills within management. Effective communication depends not only on the accurate transmission of information but also emotional awareness, empathy, and relationship management.

6. Motivation Theory: Introduction

Motivation refers to the internal and external factors that influence the direction, intensity, and persistence of behaviour (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Within organisations, motivation is closely linked to employee performance, job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity. As a result, understanding motivation is an important responsibility for managers seeking to improve individual and organisational performance.

Communication and motivation are closely connected because managers influence employee attitudes through feedback, recognition, support, and goal-setting. Effective communication can increase employee engagement and encourage positive workplace behaviour, whereas poor communication may reduce motivation, and create dissatisfaction. Although numerous theories attempt to explain motivation, no single approach fully captures the complexity of human behaviour. Individuals are motivated by different needs, experiences, values, and personal circumstances. Therefore, managers must adapt a flexible approach when applying motivational theories within diverse workplace environments.

7. Motivation Theory Part 1: Content Theories

Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of need is one of the most widely recognised theories of motivation. The theory proposes that individuals are motivated by a series of hierarchical needs before progressing towards social belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. A key strength of Maslow's theory is its simplicity and intuitive appeal. The model encourages managers to recognise that employees have needs beyond financial reward and highlights the importance of wellbeing, security, and personal development. Many organisations continue to apply aspects of Maslow's theory through employee support programmes, career development opportunities, and workplace wellbeing initiatives. However, the theory has been criticised for lacking strong empirical evidence. Wahba and Bridwell (1976) found limited support for the strict hierarchy proposed by Maslow, suggesting that individuals may pursue multiple needs simultaneously rather than sequentially. Furthermore, cultural differences may influence motivational priorities, channelling the assumption that the hierarchy applies universally. Consequently, while Maslow's theory provides a useful framework for understanding employee needs, managers should avoid applying it rigidly and instead recognise individual differences in motivation.

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) distinguishes between hygiene factors and motivators, including achievement, recognition, responsibility, and personal growth, which are believed to encourage higher levels of satisfaction and performance. A major strength of Herzberg's theory is its emphasis on intrinsic motivation. The theory highlights the importance of meaningful work and personal achievement, which remains relevant within modern management practice. Organisations that provide opportunities for development and recognition often experience higher levels of employee engagement.

Despite its practical value, Herzberg's theory has also received criticism. Researchers have argued that employees may interpret factors differently depending on personal circumstances, making it difficult to separate hygiene factors and motivators clearly. Additionally, the theory may oversimplify motivation by assuming that all employees respond similarly to workplace conditions. Overall content theories provide useful insight into what motivates individuals. However they are less effective at explaining the psychological processes through which motivation occurs leading to development of process theories.

8. Motivation Theory Part 2: Process Theories

Expectations Theory

Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) suggests that motivation is influenced by an individual's belief that effort will lead to performance and that performance will result in desirable outcomes. According to the theory employees are more likely to be motivated when they believe their efforts will be recognised and rewarded fairly.

A significant strength of expectancy theory is its flexibility. Unlike content theories it acknowledges that employees are motivated by different rewards and outcomes. This allows managers to tailor motivational strategies to individual needs and preferences. However the theory assumes that individuals behave rationally when making decisions about effort and performance. In reality behaviour is often influenced by emotions, stress, workplace culture and personal circumstances. Therefore the theory may not always accurately predict employee behaviour.

Equity Theory

Adam's Equity Theory (1965) focuses on perceptions of fairness within the workplace. Employees compare their contributions and rewards with those of others and may become demotivated if they perceive inequality. The theory remains highly relevant because fairness continues to influence employee satisfaction and organisational commitment. Employees who feel undervalued or unfairly treated are more likely to experience dissatisfaction and reduce motivation. Nevertheless perceptions of fairness are subjective and may differ significantly between individuals. What one employee views as equitable may be perceived differently by another. This subjectivity can make the theory difficult to apply consistently within organisations.

Goal-Setting Theory

Goal-setting Theory developed by Locke and Latham (2002) argues that specific and challenging goals can improve performance by providing direction and focus. The theory suggests that employees are more motivated when goals are clearly achievable and supported by regular feedback. Research has consistently supported the

effectiveness of goal-setting in improvement performances. Managers frequently use targets, objectives and performance reviews to encourage employee development and accountability. Despite its strengths the theory can sometimes place excessive emphasis on measurable outcomes while overlooking emotional wellbeing and workplace relationships. Employees may become stressed or disengaged if goals are unrealistic or poorly communicated. Overall process theories provide a more dynamic understanding of motivation than content theories because they explain how motivational decisions are formed. However they still cannot fully account for the complexity of behaviour and individual circumstances.

9. Personal Development Plan (PDP)

Introduction to Personal Development personal development is an important aspect of effective management because it encourages individuals to evaluate their strengths, identify areas for improvement and develop strategies for future growth. Communication skills are particularly important within management as they influence leadership effectiveness, relationship building conflict resolution and employee motivation. To support personal development Gibbs' Reflection Cycle (1988) has been used as a framework for reflection. Gibbs' model encourages individuals to examine experiences systematically by considering description feelings eventuate analysis conclusion and action planning. This structured approach supports continuous learning and professional development.

Criteria for Effective Communication

Based on module content and personal reflection the following communication skills were identified as essential for effective management.

- Active listening
- Clarity and Conciseness
- Empathy
- Confidence
- Adaptability
- Assertiveness
- Non-verbal communication awareness
- Constructive feedback

These skills contribute to effective workplace relationships and support positive communication outcomes.

Reflection and Self-Assessment

Through reflection several communication strengths were identified. One of the most significant strengths is empathy. Providing long-term care for a non-verbal autistic child has required patience, understanding and the ability to recognize emotional and behavioural cues. This experience has strengthened my ability to listen attentively,

respond sensibly, and adapt communication to individual needs. A further strength is non-verbal communication awareness. Many interactions within caregiving rely on interpreting facial expressions and emotional responses rather than spoken language. This has increased my awareness of the importance of non-verbal communication and reinforced the view that communication extends beyond words alone. However reflection has also highlighted areas requiring further development. Having spent many years outside formal employment confidence within professional and academic communication environments remains an area for improvement. There can be occasions where uncertainty affects my willingness to contribute to discussions or communicate assertively. In addition there is scope to improve clarity and conciseness when presenting ideas within academic and professional content. Using Gibbs' reflective framework it can be concluded that while empathy and listening skills are strengths, greater confidence and assertiveness would enhance my effectiveness within management settings. This reflection demonstrates the value of continuous learning and self-development.

Development	SMART Goal	Actions	Success Measure	Timescale
Confidence in Professional Communication	Increase Confidence when contributing to discussions in communication ideas.	Prepare discussion points before and contribute at least one in session.	Increased participation and positive feedback from tutors.	At the end of the academic year.
Clarity and Conciseness	Improve the ability to communicate key messages clearly in written and verbal communication.	Use structured planning techniques and review work before submission.	Reduced repetition and improved feedback on assignments.	Over the next 6 months
Assertiveness	Develop confidence in expressing opinions respectfully and professionally.	Practise assertive communication during group activities and discussions.	Greater willingness to contribute and share my ideas.	Within the next 6 months
Professional Communication Skills	Strengthen communication skills to future management roles.	Attend workshops, engage with academic resources and practice formal communication.	Improved academic performance and professional communication ability.	Before completion of the module.

Academic Writing	Improve critical analysis and evaluation within university assignments.	Read academic journals, review tutor feedback and apply critical thinking.	Higher assignment grades and improved tutor feedback.	Throughout the academic year
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10. Conclusion

This report has critically examined a range of communication and motivation theories and evaluated their relevance within contemporary management practice. This discussion demonstrated that communication is a complex process influenced by interruption, emotion, relationships, and organisational context rather than simply the transmission of information. The analysis of communication models identified the transactional model as the most realistic representation of communication because it recognises feedback context and the influence of non-verbal behaviour. However the report also acknowledged that all communication models have limitations and should be applied critically rather than accepted without question. Similarity motivation theories provide valuable insight into employee behaviour but cannot fully explain the diversity of human needs and experiences. Content theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory help identify factors that influence motivation while process theories such as Expectancy Theory Equity Theory and Goal-Setting Theory provide greater understanding of how motivation develops. Nevertheless no single theory fully captures the complexity of human behaviour within organisational settings. Personal reflection further highlighted the importance of empathy, adaptability and emotional intelligence in effective communication. Experience gained long-term caregiving has reinforced the significance of non-verbal communication that meaningful communication often depends on understanding behaviour, emotions and individual needs rather than relying solely on spoken language. Overall the report concludes that effective management requires a flexible and critical approach to communication and motivation. Successful managers must combine theoretical knowledge with emotional intelligence, adaptability and self-awareness in order to respond effectively to diverse needs of individuals and organisations.

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