

Effective Team Working and Communication

BMSW4002_LON

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Introduction

Communication is the process through which information, expression of thoughts, ideas or feelings are exchanged. Fundamental to the process of communication is the usage of words (languages), but also other elements such as gestures, tone, body language. Another vital element is the listening that ensures the real exchange to take place (Oxford Dictionary, 2021).

Other definitions emphasise that the process of communication is continuous involving a two-way exchange of information in the form of messages, whilst engaging all the sense (Steve, 2015).

Different approaches to define the process of communication even consider it to be a science and an art of transmitting information. It is the oldest and the most complex concept and is essential in the everyday existence (Sherwyn et al, 2000).

The process of communication is very complex and far from perfect as many factors related to context, interpretations and experiences can impact it. This report will analyse the components of the communication process along with the theoretical perspectives that provide different arguments on the topic.

The process of communication

Types of communication

There are two types of communication: verbal communication and non-verbal communication. Verbal communication uses words spoken or written and can be interpersonal or using technology for conversing, chatting, lecturing, through audio or audiovisual mass media. Forms for written communication can be emails, letters, books, websites, magazines, signs. Non-verbal communication uses body language, sign language, paralanguage, gestures. In communications that involve face to face interaction the verbal and non verbal are intertwined, and non verbal communication provides more meaning to what is spoken (Agarwal, 2009).

There are three main components highlighted in all the theoretical frames: the sender, the message and the receiver. The sender is the source of information who is responsible for encoding the message in order to be sent to the receiver who will decode it. The purpose of the message depends on the sender's intentions and can be overt such as informational, educational, persuasive, entertaining or It can be covert such as selling, attracting attention, creating connections, gaining support.

Barriers of communication

An ideal communication is the accurate matching of the sender's intention with the receiver's interpretation. Individuals are different and the nature of human beings is very complicated and that mirrors in the process of communication and many times communication does not achieve its objectives. Therefore when the communication is not interpreted as intended by the sender there are barriers to communication that had occurred. There are different types of barriers to communication that fall under three main categories: semantic, psycho-social, physical-mechanical. Semantic barriers are related to the usage of words and their meaning. It is even considered that in some situations words could limit the expression of someone's thoughts. The psycho-social barriers are related to the participants abilities to deal with noises, context, who can have selected perception, improper listening. It also involves the personal background, the education, the culture etc. The physical-mechanical barriers are related to the medium used for the communication, the environment, physical distance that create constraints and deficient communication.

Overcoming this barriers, presenting the message in the best possible way and listening are essential for an effective communication. In an effective communication, the message is clear, correct and reliable and the medium makes possible the transmission. Active listening ensures effective communication and it involves full attention from the listener to the speaker in order to understand and interpret accurately. There are three types of listening: critical listening when the listener wants to make a decision based on what it is communicated; informational listening when the listener intends to acquire knowledge, and empathetic listening when the listener accepts what is told and tries to understand speakers thoughts with no judgement (McKay, 2009).

Communication skills

Communication skills are important for every day life, but also in the world of work. Communication skills contribute to professional success and organisations place great value on such skills. Communication is used for training, decision making, motivating, collaborating, education etc. The importance of communication in the business has evolved with great aid from technology that makes possible to ensure high levels of communication with customers (The Telegraph, 2018). When communication fails in business it can affect negatively the performance of the business poor communication creates disinformation, affects team collaboration, reduces profits or even innovation.

At my workplace we often have the opportunity to have different trainings off the job. One of the training sessions at which I participated was on customer service and dealing with complaints. We presented great interest in what it was communicated to us active listening with the informational purpose. Despite that, the process of communication was not very effective as the speaker did not take into account that for some of my colleagues and myself included, English was not our first language. The semantic barrier led to poor communication and that was mirrored in the quiz at the end of the session.

The feedback at the end of the training should have determine the tutor to reevaluate the process of communication for the future. According to the VAK learning styles theoretical frame there are three different learning styles and the speaker should have made use of power point presentations to address the visual learning and for us to understand better the message as we could not keep up with the spoken presentation (Engage Education, 2018).

Models of communication

One of the earliest theories were those propounded by Shannon and Weaver. The Shannon-Weaver (1949) model of communication offers a mathematical perspective of the analysis of the process of communication. The sender is the source of information and is responsible for encoding the message. The encoder is the conversion into signals, binary data. The sender selects the channel used for transmitting the message. The channel is the medium used to transmit the message. The decoder is conversion from the signals into the message. The destination is the person that receives the message. The noise is the sum of disturbances that can occur when the message is transmitted.

This model is also known as the transmission model and it was based on communication that used telephone or telegraph as medium. This model of communication is widely accepted despite that it suggests that all communication should have certain characteristics of the electronic channels. Some critics consider that the meaning of the message is neglected and that is too basic.

In relation to the meaning of the message it was elaborated a different model of communication known as Berlo's model of communication (1960) which removed the mathematics and incorporated substitute verbal equivalents. This model presents four components the source, the message, the channel and the receiver, but it includes a multitude of factors that relate to the process. Both the sender and the receiver correlate to different factors such as communication skills, knowledge, attitude, culture, social systems. The message relates to factors such as content, structure, code, treatment, elements. The channel is the medium used and relates to the five senses of the human beings.

This model is known as the SMCR model and is more complex than the Shannon-Weaver model because it emphasises different angles of the process and factors that can affect the process. The criticism for this theory is in relation to the assumption that sender and receiver share the same characteristics which is not practical in the real life (Thayer, 1968).

Another model of communication is Scramm's Model of communication where the emphasis lies on the encoding and decoding and that communication is a two-way process being complete only when

the receiver gives feedback based on the message. Schramm also considers that the interpretation of the message depends on the cultural background of the receiver, his knowledge (Schramm, 1954). Examples of poor communication from my work will be analysed using the theoretical framework. Because of the current pandemic and lockdown the restaurant was closed and we only offered takeaway service and food delivery. For food delivery we received phone calls from the customers who communicated us what food they wanted. Applying Shannon-Weaver model of communication it can be assessed this process of communication. When the customer called to place an order he was the sender, the source of information. The message was the food order and the channel was the telephone. The message was encoded into signals and the receiver decodes into words and the destination is the staff member that takes the order. Many times due to noise occurred on the channel the message was not understood and the order was incomplete. That lead to customer dissatisfaction and it was not good for the business. According to this theory in order to have an effective communication it should be removed the noise.

Similarly, in the case study “Maria and Pedro” it is presented a communication on the phone between this two individuals who are husband and wife. Maria calls Pedro who is at work, he works on a building site, and asks him to buy her a chicken. Pedro replies positively, but when he returns home he does not have the chicken. Instead he goes to the kitchen looking for Maria. When Maria asks him about the chicken he says that he did not buy one as he understood that he has to go to the kitchen. The theoretical model that can be applied to analyse this communication is the Shannon-Weaver model. The source of information is Maria who sends the message using the telephone as channel. The encoding of the message is realised using English language which is transmitted into signal waves. The decoding of the signals are transforming the signals back into a message to be understood by Pedro who then gives feedback. Pedro’s feedback did not specify that he understood the message. It is assumed that building sites are loud in general and the external noise influenced the message and made the communication ineffective as Pedro did not hear that he has to buy a chicken, he understood that he has to go to the kitchen. Another case study can be found in the Appendix.

Another example of poor communication from the workplace was in face to face communication with the customer. In order to analyse this process of communication the best model to apply is the SMCR model. When I was required advice on the menu, I was the sender, the message was the menu description information, the channel was through air and the customer was the receiver. According to this model the sender and the receiver should share similar knowledge, communication skills, attitude and social and cultural background which is what led to poor

communication. The customer did not share the same knowledge or cultural background on the food ingredients and preparation and it was not satisfied with what food he received as he had other expectations. For an effective communication it should be taken into consideration all these factors and the sender should have ensured that his message is clear and explains in detail the menu without making assumptions that the receiver is familiar with it. The advantage of this model of communication is the cyclical characteristic and the central feature which is the feedback. It highlights the importance of the message interpretation for clear understanding.

In a communication between employees, manager and staff member, an example of poor communication can be assessed using Schramm's model of communication. The manager, the source, transmitted a message to one of the waiters, the destination. The encoder realised the transformation of the message in codes, a careful formulation using words and the decoder interpreted the message to understand it. The channel used was through email. The manager sent an email with the available extra shifts to the waiter A, but the waiter A replied saying thank you for the email, but did not give any feedback on the message. The manager thought that the waiter A is not interested in the shifts and then he emailed another colleague, waiter B who replied that he would like to cover those shifts. Waiter A then was not happy about it as he assumed he would have those shifts. The problem in communication was in the feedback given. This model of communication assumes that it is a two-way process. The waiter A should have provided an answer based on the message received, saying clearly if he wants the shift or not.

Conclusion

This report described and analysed the process of communication critically assessing it, whilst contrasting different approaches using different theories.

The models of communication presented share similar components, but presents different perspectives for analysing the process of communication. For better assessment of the theoretical framework there were presented practical examples of poor communication from the workplace and the report provided suggestions for effective communication.

The communication is very important in the workplace. Having good communication skills it benefits the individual and the organisation. Effective communication facilitates coordination of the

operations, team work and can be a key factor in maintaining stakeholders happy and satisfied as it can make his of their feedback.

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Appendix

Barry and communication barriers

Summary: In this case study, Barry is a restaurant manager and leads a vary diverse team, with young and older members and also with different cultural backgrounds. One of his responsibilities is to make sure staff is trained for Food safety. He often notices that his staff does not act accordingly their training.

Analysis: According to Berlo's model of communication the process involves a variety of factors. Language and cultural are many times barriers in communication. Barry needs to ensure the process of communication is effective. In order to do that Barry should apply Schramm's model of communication which is a two way cycle process. This way Barry would get feedback from the staff ensuring they understood what there were told. This way if there is any misunderstanding Barry would be able to address them and give further explanations and repeat the process.