

ETW: Effective Team working and Communication

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1. Introduction

My name is Mariana Tipordei and I currently work as a breakfast guest service assistant at Holiday Inn Express London-Stratford. The hotel is part of the IHG brand group and is committed to deliver excellent customer service to its customers. The company I work for belongs to the hospitality industry. In the breakfast team we are a team of 7 people and we always ensure that all our duties are met and effective team working, and communication is key into delivering the right service.

There are different ways to define team work and academics have different opinion on its importance and role in the workplace. One way of defining team work is by looking at it as a synergetic way of working, where the overall value is more important than the parts and everything connects together. When you are working in a team, you need to ensure that each member of the team is doing what they are best and more efficient at, ensure communication is effective and no one is repeating the same task, as well as looking at ways to work collaboratively and that fits entire team needs. There are different tools that can be used to establish more direction for the team, such as setting goals. In our team, we use weekly targets that motivates our team and makes us work collaboratively. We are also using a checklist listed on an online programme that our department uses (DM Book Pro) to ensure we complete all tasks in an efficient and timely manner. (The Happy Manager, 2017)

Communication is also a very important part in the workplace, in order to avoid conflicts and ensure effective working. Poor communication in the workplace can lead to poor performance off the team, increased stress in the workplace which can lead to sick calls and loss of revenue, as well as gossip and exclusionary practices. It is always important to maintain good communication in the workplace for the department to run smoothly, ensure targets are met, but also that employees feel happy and safe at their workplace. (Smallbusiness.chron.com, 2017)

2. Types of Communication

There are different types of communication and the channel used to express them. One type of communication is face to face communication when you are speaking directly with someone that is located in the same place. Quick conversation can sometimes be the most effective way of communication. Another way to communicate is through body language and facial expressions. You can also use phone conversation and written conversation in an office environment.

3. Verbal Communication

Verbal communication can be defined as the use of words in order to share information with others. The issue around verbal communication is that it can often be misinterpreted, or the message modified. (Mouton, 2016)

In my team at Holiday Inn Express London-Stratford we believe that the key to effective verbal communication is listening to the speaker. We also try to always communicate with each other and if a message is not clear to kindly ask the person to repeat themselves. We are always trying to summarise the main points and ensure that each member of the team gets time to speak.

4. Non-verbal communication

Non-verbal communication is usually caused by non-verbal behaviours. This usually refers to facial expressions, the tone and the pitch in which the voice is used, gestures and even the physical distance between the persons speaking. Some researchers suggest that up to seventy percent of our communication is non verbal. (Skillsyouneed, 2018).

In our workplace at Holiday Inn Express London-Stratford we often use non-verbal communication in order to reinforce what we have said in our words. For example if the chef is asking if a table has been served, we would say yes, but also nod at the same time. We also use it in order to convey our emotional feelings, for example if it is really busy and we have too many tables to serve, we might feel stressed, therefore we will use a different tone of voice than in usual. Non verbal communication often also reinforces the relationship between us and make us feel more bonded as a team, which results in us delivering better customer service and meeting our sales and time targets. Non-verbal communication is also regulating the flow of the conversation and helping in maintaining a pace in the communication.

5. Theories of communication

One theory of communication is from Wilbur Schramm that believes there is no meaning behind the message, except people put into it. This means that in order to understand the

human communication process, the two people communicating need to know how to relate to each other. If we take this example in the workplace, that means the co-workers sometimes have to consider the cultural background of each other and the ways they relate to each other. Different people can take the same message in different ways, based on their upbringing, system of beliefs and society they are currently living in. The social environment of the people communicating will influence the frame of reference and the way in which the message has been received of both communicator A and B.

Furthermore, Walter Lippmann introduces theories around barrier to effective communication, such as limitation of social contact, less time of attention span and artificial censorship. This theory looks at the limitation of communication and getting the right message across. Many times, the communication does not get across because of lack of attention. In our workplace this can be due to a very busy environment and not enough time to communicate between the team as the service of the tables needs to be fast and accurate.

Another theory looks at the Hawthorne Effect, that states that we do not always need words in order to communicate a clear message. The theory believes that actions can be communicators as well. As an example in our workplace, we get a bonus if we become the employee of the month, this is a communicated message from the management that they care about our performance and although it has not been said in words, the action reflects the attitude and message that the management is expressing towards us. (Praccreditation, 2019)

6. Shannon-Weaver Model of Communications

The Shannon-Weaver Model is a communication model that looks at the cycle of the message. It starts with the sender, that is usually the person who is making and creating the messages and they get the choice of channel and also way of expressing. Channel is usually the medium used in order to deliver the message, and the decoder also known as the receiver is the person at the end that is receiving the message. Shannon-Weaver models also considers that the message can be disrupted by external sources, for example noise. If we take the example of the work I do at Holiday Inn Express London-Stratford, one example would be our service during busy breakfast periods. My manager would want to tell me something and he chooses to do so verbally. I only get part of the message because of the noise and I am not able to action his request because the message got lost as a result of external factors. Another example would be if my manager chooses to e-mail me and the internet is down, the message will not reach me as the channel is not functional. The model also incorporates that there are different levels of communication problems. One category is technological problems which can be related to both software and hardware and this is an issue that is affecting the channel of communication. This example can also be used when looking at a team having a Skype meeting. If there are technical issues, the message will not pass through. Another category are semantic problems, which can often be caused by cultural or language differences. This can happen when the message that was meant to be sent is received and believed to be in different context. An example in our workplace would be if our manager calls in a colleague for a meeting for feedback, but the colleague takes it in the wrong way. Another category is effectiveness and is usually looking how effective the

message is communicating. For example, in our hotel if we have established new rules is always the most effective to get people to log in their online portal and sign it off. If we would only do it by verbal agreement, the communication will not be effective or suitable. (Businesstopia, 2018)

7. Berlo Model of Communication

Berlo model has four components that describe the communication process. They are sender, message, channel and received. Each of the components have a series of factors that affect the message getting across.

The first component is the sender, who is the source where the message is created and originating. The sender is affected by a series of factors. The first one is the level of their communication skills. As an example, in our workplace, some people are more proficient in their communication skills than others and if the sender has better communication skills the message will be communicated clearer across. If the sender does not have sufficient communication skills the message might not be efficient or misinterpreted. Communication skills usually look at someone's skill to speak clearly and loud, read and write effectively. The attitude of the speaker can also change the effect of the message. In our workplace, for example, if the manager has a sarcastic tone, the staff members might take it as a criticism, whilst if the manager has a positive attitude, the staff members will take it as constructive feedback. Knowledge on the content is also essential in order for the message to be formulated clearly and passed on in an effective manner. It is also important to consider the social systems and culture of the sender. Values and laws often influence the sender's way of communicating the message. When working across cultures, which is very relevant to our workplace, it is important to not produce any offensive content that might not be acceptable in another culture.

The second component is the message, that can be in diverse forms and channels. The author believes the key factors play an important role in delivering the right message across. For example, the content of the message is very important, the content representing everything from beginning to end. Furthermore, non-verbal communication also plays an essential part, as the gestures and signs might influence the way the receiver looks at the message. The code of the message is also very important and that often be language or specialised term. A piece of website coding might be a message for someone that can read code, but can only look like numbers for someone that does not hold the correct knowledge. The channel of receiving the message can be diverse, such as hearing, seeing, touching, smelling and tasting. An example of touching message is when someone hugs someone, they indirectly let them know they care.

When looking at the last component, the receiver, it is most important to consider that the message reached is successful only if the receiver has the reaction that the sender wanted to inflict on them. (Businesstopia, 2018)

8. Schramm's Model of Communication

According to Schramm's coding and decoding are the two essential processes of an effective communication. The author also emphasizes the fact the communication is considered

incomplete until the receiver receives feedback from the sender. Schramm believes that the communication is a two way process and requires both parties to be actively involved. (Management Study Guide, 2019)

9. Conclusion

Communication it is one of the most important elements in the workplace as it ensures the shifts are smooth and also people are getting the right message across in the team. Good communication is essential in achieving productivity, trust among employees and maintaining strong relationships in all levels of the organisation.

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