

EFFECTIVE MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE TECHNICAL CORE

**Patricia Baughman
Blinn College**

**LaShan Williams
Internal Revenue Service**

**Traci Oatis
Internal Revenue Service**

**Reginald L. Bell
Prairie View A&M University**

ABSTRACT

The first-line manager's responsibility is to coordinate the resources and activities required in the production of goods or services. Planning is the primary mission of first-line managers. Planning involves developing production or service schedules, coordinating tasks or jobs, providing materials and tools needed within budgetary limitations. Employees are the most valuable resource of any organization. It is essential that first-line managers take advantage of their employees' individual visions, dreams and hopes. In this communication synthesis of employee involvement in the planning function process, the focus will be on the operational level. Communication is accomplished through clear and concise exchange of information that can be relayed through downward, horizontal or upward progression. The communication can transmit meaning through informal or formal channels thereby enabling managers to achieve goals. The status quo of downward information, with no incentive for upward feedback, is no longer an effective and efficient way for first-line managers to communicate with employees in a complex and global business arena.

INTRODUCTION

Managerial communication (MC) has been an elusive phenomenon, lacking a visible boundary. Defining it has evaded many of the brightest scholars in academia and industry; subsequently, inefficient practices in MC continue to be ubiquitous, and it appears managers understand it generically (Katz & Kahn, 1966). All managers must communicate, with some degree of effectiveness, to function. Even though most management related problems are related to some communication issues, getting a handle on those issues becomes problematic for apparently experienced managers. Katz and Kahn (1966) report an adage that communication can resolve or exacerbate problems. The lack of a definition for MC could be to blame.

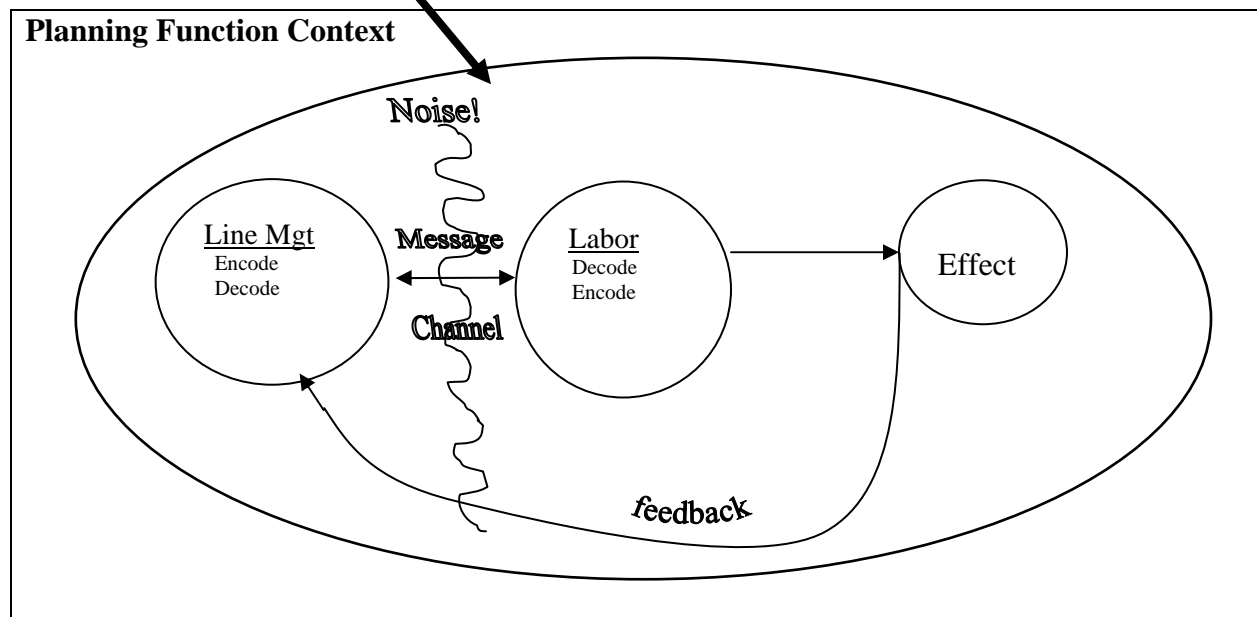
What is MC? Smeltzer (1996) believes there is no definition for MC. Drucker (1974) defines MC to be a process of speaking and receiving back feedback on what was said and perceived by the person receiving the message. Littlejohn (1989) might explain Drucker's (1974) definition of MC as him viewing it from a Transactional Perspective. Drucker (1974) continues by saying people only hear what they understand. Understanding comes from previous knowledge and experience in which is used to decipher the message. If they cannot decipher the information it will be ignored as unwanted "noise."

Noise can be defined as any distorting element of the communication process not germane to the message itself. Noise, in many process models, will be represented by a squiggly line penetrating the message/channel flow of information: this shows that noise has the potential of completely distorting the message. Communication is a process that involves a linear exchange of information and transference of meaning from a source to a receiver. Thus, we propose the following working definition: MC is the downward, horizontal, or upward exchange of information and transmission of meaning through informal or formal channels that enables managers to achieve their goals.

It requires active listening to what is actually said, word for word, as opposed to what was perceived as said. Although much has been written on management communication, little has been written on the communicative actions required by first-line managers working in the planning function at the technical core of a business enterprise. A model of how knowledge on communication can be viewed between first-line managers and employees, at the operational level or technical core, engaged in the planning function is presented below in Exhibit 1.

**Exhibit 1
Management Levels, Functions and Communication Process Engagement**

Management Type	MC Classification Across Levels & Functions			
Top Management Strategic Level	Planning	Organizing	Leading	Controlling
Middle Management Tactical Level	Planning	Organizing	Leading	Controlling
First-line Mgt Operational Level	Planning	Organizing	Leading	Controlling



Shockley-Zalabak (1988) presents a model that plainly showcases how “noise” can distort a message p. (25). Littlejohn (1989) provides a brief summary of the “Transmissional Perspective.”

Transmission theories view communication as the transfer of information from a source to receiver. They use a linear model of movement from one location to another. This perspective stresses communication media, time, and sequential elements. Generally it is based on World View I and nonactional assumptions, (p. 27).

In Exhibit 1, communication process engagement is illustrated between first-line management (planning function) and labor (employees). The exchange between first-line management and employees, since 1911 when Frederick Winslow Taylor was discovering about and writing on the Principles of Scientific Management, has been fraught with friction. Some of the problems identified in the related literature are discussed in the following passages.

Problems with Information Exchange Identified

First-line managers' challenge is learning how to interpret, reframe, and transmit correctly messages received from middle management, the tactical level of the organization, on behalf of the technical core. First-line management serves the role of liaison between both levels. This information needs to somehow be pre-digested by first-line management. It then needs to be disseminated in a manner that can be interpreted correctly by employees to enhance work processes. Managers need to avoid information overload, where the "supersystem" can inundate its "subsystems" with an unrestricted flow of information (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Restrictions can be accomplished with first-line managers sifting through unnecessary information not pertinent to routine operational level employees' job functions. Katz and Kahn (1966) in their book, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*, offer an excellent overview on Miller's (1960) analysis of seven categories of personnel reactions to information overload. Their formula $60(60-1)/2$ equals 1770 is used to illustrate how many possible communication channels can exist among 60 people if information exchange is unrestricted. In an internet era, unrestricted information exchange may be even more problematic for organizations.

Preston (1976) writes, "The formal organization has three different directions of communication: the upward, downward and lateral communications" (p. 6). Complexity and increased information overload has lead to formal organization structures of communication. Problems that occur with these types of structures are the lack of flexibility to adapt to changes and reorganizations. Organizations need the ability to incorporate rapid changes in lines of communication when necessary to distribute information efficiently.

Preston (1976) also writes, "The important cornerstone of organizational communications is the system of interrelationships that exist between the people," and he writes that William Whyte (1957) observed, "Control communications and you control" (p. 6). In William Whyte's book, *The Organisation Man*, knowledge was power and management was to be careful in sharing information with employees. In today's environment, changes have occurred that information that upper management perceives lower levels need no longer coincide with the demand of information that employees want (Hindel, 2006). Besides management restraints, noise can corrupt information transference and the exchange of meaning, such as physical interruptions resulting in transmission failures or mental distractions resulting in symbolic (transactional) misinterpretations and errors.

Inappropriate behaviors or lascivious language from subordinates, peers, or superiors can override goal directed managerial jargon if embedded as cultural vernacular: the offended

persons might pay more attention to the foul language or racial invectives rather than participating in goal accomplishments, with enthusiasm. Sharp language, unfortunately, is rooted in many organizational cultures, and in some professions it has become a bona fide occupational qualification leading to lawsuits. A simple search in Lexus Nexus (a legal research database) will result in numerous hits on sexual harassment lawsuits with origins emanating from the operational level (technical core) of companies the appeals courts have decided. Legal penalties they award can be costly!

The network NBC has a very popular satirical program that can be seen on Thursday nights called “The Office.” That program serves as a perfect example, though an exaggerated farce, on how some language, symbols, and behaviors can be professionally unsettling and environmentally disruptive. That television show is a depiction of chicanery at its worst and nothing ever seems to get done in that office. First-line managers should emphasize particular techniques of communication that result in information sharing that would link the organization’s goals to the employee’s aspirations.

The operational level employees work at the technical core, on the front-line; they often have direct contact with the public and are directly involved with the production of goods or services. Simon (1976), the Nobel laureate, says the following:

It is obvious that without communication there can be no organization, for there is no possibility then of the group influencing the behavior of the individual. Not only is communication absolutely essential to organization, but the availability of particular techniques of communication will in large part determine the way in which decision-making functions can and should be distributed throughout the organization. (p. 154).

Employees have valuable first-hand knowledge and it is first-line management’s responsibility to foster effective two-way communication in order to discover what knowledge and skills others have. Managers need to understand that employees may tend to feel uncomfortable in sharing what they know. Their knowledge could lead to possible savings on how to optimize their tasks or duties. Employees’ feelings of distress, bitterness, or lack of being appreciation are often unrequited with first-line management, leading to the humdrum routines that appear to be status quo managerial miscommunication practices.

STATUS QUO OF MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATIONS

In a passage from Whitworth and Riccomini (2005) the status quo of MC in today’s world is depicted as “In the distant past, a key role for the manager was to convey information to employees...The manager was the one-way pipeline through which management expected to get its information into all employee’s hands (and minds)” (p. 3). Communication training in most organizations appears limited, not available, or the manager relies on past experiences for guidance. Phillips (1985) reports supervisors spend 90% of their time reading and writing. As a result, educating managers to be better communicators should be an essential part of first-line managerial training. Research supports that training concentrating on personnel involvement as a managerial tool, focusing on planning, implementation of goals, and routine activities such as scheduling is invaluable for managers to be effective in their jobs. Herda and Messerschmitt (1991) recommend ways in which managers can develop communication competence in

organizations. They stress ways to move away from mere words to (social) communication action, based on the work of Jurgen Habermas, noted for contributions on critical theory.

An examination of the related literature on internal human relations, communication skills, and particular techniques of communications was undertaken. Apparently there are several barriers relating to internal human relations such as diversity, management styles, and particular methods of communication. There are three techniques emphasized in this paper that have been developed to facilitate vertical and horizontal integration useful as training tools: Management by Objectives (MBO), Quality Work-life Movement (QWL), and Participant Management Style (PMS).

WHAT OTHERS HAVE WRITTEN

Smeltzer (1996) writes, “Managerial experience is quickly outdated due to the rapid technological pace and the complexity of the global marketplace and organizations need to respond” (p. 5). He continues by asserting MC is not an area that has been defined because of the various perspectives and approaches of business professionals. Business functions vary from business to business, reflective of cultures and environments businesses operate. Management communication differs from business communication in that it is not a field that has been defined. This is due to the various managerial perspectives, methodologies at generating new knowledge, and the varying approaches of business professionals.

The purpose of MC is to develop and disseminate relevant knowledge that may increase effectiveness and efficiency (Smeltzer, 1996). Information communicated downward needs to be more specific the further down it goes (Barnard, 1968). This paper focuses primarily on the operational level management and employee’s need for specific and detailed information in order to perform their job duties. They argue employees at all levels need information, and according to Belcher (1998) the lack of information causes employees to feel no loyalty and feel like “just another cog in the company’s machine” (p. 87).

First-line managers need to master the following technical communication skills: (1) oral expression, (2) oral and written comprehension, (3) speech clarity and recognition, and (4) analyzing information for decision purposes. One of the first-line manager’s administrative duties is to interpret and translate information on a more specifically simplistic detail level that the employees will understand (Barnard, 1968). Operational level employees’ information should be very concise, easy to understand, and detailed, otherwise it may become distorted by the noise of psychological confusion or mental distractions and not heard at all. Cultural elements (distractions) can often drown out goal directed managerial jargon. People normally will block out “truths” that they do not want to hear and it is very difficult to break this barrier without understanding the real problems (Killian, 1968).

Historically, human resource managers have a goal of aligning employee and organizational goals: currently there is a “corporate misalliance” between the corporate goals and employee goals (IOMA, 2004). How does a first-line manager define and measure these goals and align them with the organization’s goals? One of the ways of aligning goals is by forcefully using pronouns when saying the word “we” to communicate “our” goals (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Jay (2005) feels that in order to enhance MC skills, managers need to open up the lines of communication by listening when employees are asking questions and sharing concerns. Preston (1976) gives advice that having a face-to-face discussion with an employee or group will have

more of an effect on problem solving than dealing with a problematic situation” with a status quo method requiring no feedback.

Grapevines can be very useful tools in uncovering real problems; furthermore, grapevines are a fact of life in firms and can be used as tools to eliminate rumors and by utilizing them, the manager appears to be more sensitive to the environment (Preston, 1976). Managers need to be aware of the fact not all information from the grapevines is accurate, but there is enough evidence that there is some truth in what is being said.

Katz and Kahn (1966) assert that one of organization’s problems is the result of inadequate and faulty flow of information due to hostility. Bennis (1997) describes this phenomenon as the Pinocchio effect, and it occurs when a great idea is communicated through several channels, but with inadequate communications flow and the final message is distorted. Kouzes and Posner (1987) say, “Communication pathways are the veins and the arteries of new ideas,” and they need to be kept open and flowing. Organizations need to keep these pathways clear and keep information flowing to promote teamwork and in turn promote productivity.

Functional planning at the technical core must be simplistically specific, including employees’ feedback, with clear purposes leaving less possibility of misinterpretation or transmission error (Sims, 2001). First-line managers also need to be aware of the employees they are planning for such as the Generation X and post-industrial society whose values are linked with employee input and more individualization. This group of employees value more responsibility, engagement, involvement and work satisfaction (Estienne, 1997). Drucker, in a 1996 interview, reminds managers you need the attitude of what is not only best for you as the boss, but what is best for the employees.

Goal creation includes listening to employees who are involved in the day-to-day activities (Fracaro, 2001). Killian (1968) writes, “Perhaps true rapport is achieved only when the subordinate comes to understand and believe that he is more than an economic, social, and emotional creature to management...When he feels that he represents an ethical spiritual being, he knows that the company is deeply interested in him” (p. 259). Employees in today’s society want to feel that they provide a valuable service to the organization and are not just machines.

Bennis (1997) says, “leaders are capable of deep listening’ in which they can instill a common cause within their group” (p. 23). He also states, “American big business’s obsession with the bottom line in the last decade and its continuing inability to see that workers are its primary asset has gotten it into big trouble” (p. 44). Businesses seem more worried about bottom line short-term profits, and less on developing better quality products. Bennis (1997) appears emphatic about business leaders concentrating more on the quality of their employees. Research shows the better a manager communicates with employees, the better their job performance (Whitworth & Riccomini, 2005). A study conducted in 1985 by Hewlett-Packard supports a link between job satisfaction and MC, which shows effectiveness to be correlated with job performance (Whitworth & Riccomini, 2005). Zachry (2000) investigates the play of text in organizations by examining how communication practices develop at a national production company. If his assertions are prescriptive, managers need to concentrate on understanding what employees need in order to achieve job satisfaction.

There appears to be some research available that serves as a guidepost for first-line managers in dealing effectively with communicating day-to-day goals, objectives, and scheduling at the technical core to their employees (Herda & Messerschmitt, 1991; Phillips, 1985; Whitworth, B., & Riccomini, 2005; Zachry, 2000). The lack of direct empirical evidence has resulted in a need for synthesizing what professionals outside of the field of MC offer as

suggestions and recommendations that appear to be rhetorically disjointed. The following discussion is a synthesis of the sparse and fragmented literature on first-line management’s two-way communication practices with employees at the technical core of business enterprise.

DISCUSSION

First-line managers interpret and re-define specific implementation procedures and processes for departments, work groups, and individuals regarding routine planning for achieving the overall objectives. For example, a 500 seats call center director might know how many calls should be answered by how many seconds for optimal customer care, but the call center supervisors are directly in touch with the actual people answering the calls. Rest assured, the director and supervisors have differing views of taking calls. Supervisors will clearly define what needs to be done, how often, in what quantity, when it needs to be done, and by whom. They deal with short-term issues with a time frame of seconds, minutes, hours, days and weeks—not years.

Supervisors or managers spend 90% of their time reading, writing and communicating. Organizations need to focus on the development of these communication skills since so much time is devoted to communicating (Phillips, 1985). First-line managers need to recognize that employees are the ones responsible for doing the actual tasks, and they have first hand knowledge of what works and what does not work. Also, in today’s society, employees want to feel that organizations value their opinions, and they have an input in the operations.

Research supports the notion performance improves when ideas are shared. Presented in Table 1 below, technical skills are considered the primary skills needed by first-line managers. First-line managers usually are younger (a few newly graduated from college) and have little or no direct line management experience. These individuals usually are promoted from operations into a management position receiving little or no training in making the transition from production worker to manager. In Table 1 below, operational or first-line management level should possess more technical skills to performance their job functions than conceptual or human skills.

Table 1
Types of Management and Skills Needed

MANAGEMENT TYPE	SKILLS NEEDED		
Strategic Level Top Management	Conceptual Skills		Human Skills
Tactical Level Middle Management	Conceptual skills	Human Skills	
Operational Level First-Line Management	Conceptual skills	Human Skills	Technical Skills

Communications for the Technical Core

Reiterated, the focus of this paper is on stressing the importance of effective MC to operational level first-line managers while they make plans for their employees, the most valuable resource of an organization. Managerial communication is a technical skill, and planning processes at the technical core can be used for efficiently and effectively sharing information.

Upper level management relies on first-line managers' inputs because of they possess valuable first-hand knowledge of customer service and satisfaction in which their division or departments might be located. Since directive information flows downward from the top levels, there should be some encouragement for two-way communications so that first-line managers feel that they can send information upward. Barnard's (1968) "objective authority", where management lines are seen as the channels for communication, might be insufficient for modern business organizations as a perspective for viewing knowledge about MC actions. Simon (1976), in a footnote on page 175 of his book *Administrative Behavior*, rebukes Barnard (1968) for confusing communication channels with channels of authority. Kouzes and Posner (1987) strongly believe, "Communication pathways are the veins and arteries of new ideas" and keeping the information flowing is like keeping the blood flowing (p. 56).

Smeltzer (1996) writes, "Management communications is intended to affect or effect a manager's decisions" (p. 4). One cost of ineffective communication occurs in organizations when a boss neglects to pass on crucial information to employees that may cause inefficiency (Killian, 1968). Poor planning, knowledge, and skills of managers is the reason why some plans may fail due to unrealistic goals (Sims, 2001). Plans must be specific with a clear purpose, leaving little possibility of misunderstanding or error on the part of the receiver. First-line managers, therefore, must be receptive to upward feedback from employees.

Not all information distributed is needed. Employees are more concerned with human resources policies, safety rules, regulations and company policies because these policies directly affect them. This information needs to be communicated in a clear and factual content to avoid misinterpretation and prevent overflow of unnecessary information. Information overload, which is too much information, may cause dysfunctional reactions, such as omission or denial of information, and possible error (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

Cooperative Goals

Setting goals using cooperative methods is a process that promotes teamwork through the encouragement of information sharing. Managers need to show excitement and enthusiasm in sharing the information in hopes that this enthusiasm may rub off (Fracaro, 2001). Management by Objective (MBO) is useful as a tool for communication at the technical core. Being a part of the personal goal setting agenda may encourage employee commitment, as well as educating employees on the importance of their jobs, as well as how their actions could affect the organization (Belcher, 1998). Individualized goals often energize employees and focus their attention on goal-relevant activities and steers them away from goal-irrelevant activities since "One's conscious goals affect what one achieves" (Latham, 2004, p. 126).

Particular Techniques of First-line Management Communications

Techniques for producing responses vary from gender, which according to Beverly Ann Scott, organization development manager at McKesson says, “Know your followers and speak their language” (Kouzes & Posner, 1987, p. 10). To obtain employees’ support managers must have knowledge of their employees’ needs and interests. Influence communication flow through questions and careful listening to employees who are involved in the day-to-day activities (Fracaro, 2001). Drucker (1974) asserts even though we are moving toward a more effective way to process information and generating more data, the communication process becomes more formal where there is a loss of perception and human relationships. Simon (1976) certainly advocates particular techniques of communication in decision making functions. Written statement of duties is vital to informing employees of their roles and how their roles relate to the organization as a whole. Katz and Kahn (1966) say the following:

If a man knows the reasons for his assignment, this will often ensure his carrying out the job more effectively; and if he has an understanding of what his job is about in relation to his subsystem, he is more likely to identify with organizational goals (p. 242).

Duties and procedures that is very detailed and comprehensive for understanding what responsibility and authority they have, the working relationships with others, and the boundaries of the position (Killian, 1968). Belcher (1998) states the following concerning employees:

By keeping employees informed, management sends a powerful signal: It says that people are viewed as an important asset of the organization. Lack of communication sends an equally clear signal: Employees are not valued enough to be kept informed (p. 87).

Internal Human Relations

First-line managers need to concentrate more on dealing with internal human relations at the operational level. Bennis (1997) says leaders can be capable of deep listening in which they can instill a common cause among the group. A basic economic fact is people are a primary resource to the organization and “the inventory goes home at night” (p. 43). Businesses worried more about the bottom line or profit and less on developing better quality products and should concentrate more on the quality of their employees.

Bennis (1997) also states, “One of the best ways to build trust is by deep listening” whereby the employees believe that they are being heard and the manager is not just agreeing with them (p. 75). Drucker (1996) asserts organizations and managers deal with the whole nature of man, their values, commitments convictions and passions; this is consistent with Bennis (1997). Don’t rely on one means of communication by developing communications skills in many areas; for example, improve your writing skills instead of trying to impress your employees with how much you can write. “When you speak, be listening for the verbal and non-verbal feedback...When you listen, try to go beyond the words being spoken...When you read, ask yourself what the writer would want you to get from the writing” (Preston, 1976, p. 9).

According to a Gallop Organization study, truly great managers should discover what is unique about each person, and then capitalize on their talents (Buckingham, 2005). Managers

need to match skills requirements with available staff and take advantage of the employee's strengths and weaknesses. Use goals as motivation to instill purposes, challenges, and meaning in otherwise tedious and boring work. "The primary purpose of communication is to motivate a response...It produces an activity which is most appropriate for the achievement of established goals" (Killian, 1968, p. 254).

"Perhaps true rapport is achieved only when the subordinate comes to understand and believe that he is more than an economic, social, and emotional creature to management...When he feels that he represents an ethical and spiritual being, he knows that the company is deeply interested in him" (Killian, 1968, p. 259). Ethical and moral behavior needs to be instilled and practiced at all levels of the organization to create an optimism and loyalty. "Shared values: foster strong feelings of personal effectiveness, promote high levels of company loyalty, encourage ethical behavior, promote strong norms about working hard and caring" (Kouzes & Posner, 1987, p. 193-194).

Listening Skills and Feedback

Listening is crucial. "Words are not merely information because they carry emotional associations" (Drucker, 1974, p. 486). When emotions are high, one needs to be especially carefully of what words are used and in what tone and manner. Jay (2005) writes "On a personal level, people feel acknowledged when others validate their feelings...From a business perspective, emotions can also interfere with clear thinking" (p. 1). Listening is vital. When employees are sharing ideas but "When managers stop listening to ideas, employees stop offering them...That means managers are essentially cut off from the creativity and expertise of the people on their team, and leadership becomes an illusion" (Jay, p. 2). All employees have viewpoints. They may have very good ideas that may provide for opportunities to increase production or efficiency.

Preston stated, "The important cornerstone of organizational communications is the system of interrelationships that exist between the people" (1976, p. 6). Organizations cannot survive without communication. Communication is the backbone and organizations need to keep information flowing to avoid inadequate flow. One example of inadequate flow is the "Pinocchio effect [which] is when a great idea is communicated through several channels but with inadequate communication flow, the final message is distorted" (Bennis, 1997, p. 84). Katz and Kahn (1966) state, "Communication is the very essence of an organization" and that one of the organization's problem is the result of inadequate and faulty flow of information due to hostility.

Facilitating communication is more than just listening and leading the conversation. Fundamentals of good listening includes attention to what is being said, knowing what you are planning to say, allowing others to finish speaking, and repeating back what you heard for clarification (Jay, 2005; Killian, 1968). Communication skills are needed not only verbal skills, but in nonverbal skills. Use the word "we" to communicate "our" goals and not just mean the management's goals (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). "Simple message involves a whole system of human elements and responses... The human mind is a marvelous thing, but it has no magical power to comprehend something entirely outside its previous experience or knowledge" (Brown 1973: 55-58). Different styles of management may result in lack of communication, for example, managers who dictate and micromanage such stifles the thinking of the workforce. These employees may become unmotivated and will not function without constant directions (Elash, 2003). "Business communication can be defined as the scholarly study of the use, adaptation,

and creation of languages, symbols, and signs to conduct activities that satisfy human needs and wants by providing goods and services of private profit” (Reinsch, 1996, p. 1).

The most effective method of communication is the informal by example, where employees see you communicating along with the appropriate action that backs up what you are saying (Preston, 1976). If there is a breakdown in communications, try to communicate by face-to-face. MC is as much as about listening as it is about talking by discovering what questions and concerns employees have and providing responses through a dialogue to create a common understanding” (Whitworth & Riccomini, 2005).

“Informal communication networks such as the grapevine exists in nearly every organization, and are usually very active and often quite reliable...Employees in a survey rated it as second most-often used source for information, but gave it very low marks for preference and credibility (Whitworth & Riccomini, 2005, p. 4). Become sensitive to missing information. Use this informal method as a tool to be aware of additional information that can ultimately make you a more sensitive and effective manager (Preston, 1976).

Whitworth and Riccomini (2005) discuss how most companies have eliminated the one-to-one communication and now are relying on electronic forms. Research has shown that the better a manager communicates with his or her employees; the better their job performance may become (Whitworth & Riccomini). “In the distant: past, a key role for the manager was to convey information to employees...The manager was the one-way pipeline through which management expected to get its information into all employees’ hands (and minds)” (Whitworth & Riccomini, 2005, p. 3).

Communication Barriers

People only hear and understand information that they can personally perceive which are based on past experiences and knowledge. People normally will block out “truths” that they do not want to hear and it makes it very difficult to break this barrier (Killian, 1968). Communication content, no matter how neutral it maybe, still has subjective overtones that may reflect differently what the person is really saying based on their previous experiences. Drucker (1974) asserts that even though we are moving into a more effective information process, generating more data, when the communication process becomes more formal, there is a loss of perception and the human relationship element involved in informal communication.

In the last 20 years there has been a shift from centralization to decentralization management structure. This evolution involves delegating more management responsibility to lower management. The lower level functions are given more authority to make decisions resulting in demand for more information to be disseminated at the lower levels. Challenges created in a decentralization environment for top management is shifting from a “command-and control” environment to a “coordinate-cultivate” environment. This “coordinate-cultivate” environment is achieved by improving the flow of information to better “coordinate efforts” between the functions (McWhorter, 2005). Two-way communications involved issues of what and why and encouragement of “collaboration” between the departments to avoid the “silo mentality” of us against them (McWhorter). This is accomplished by the coordination of downward information and by ensuring the organization’s structure encourages a two-way communication process of what is happening along with “why” it is happening (McWhorter).

A new barrier in the last few years is one of operating in global markets due to improvement of communications and technology. Global markets create diversity and cultural

business communication problems. Each culture and race of people has different expectations and perceptions of how information is received and delivered. Also, many times communication is delivered through media in which employees are not face-to-face in a room and the nonverbal communication is lost. According to Mehrabian (1968), statistics show “that 55% of a message comes from the speaker’s appearance, facial expression, and posture, while vocal aspects delivers 38% and the actual words deliver only 7%” (as cited in Hynes, 2005, p. 179).

Estienne (1997) speaks that there is a lack of attention to the generation gap. For example, there is a saying one can’t trust anyone over 30 years old. He goes on to say that Generation X and the post-industrial society values employee input and more individualization including responsibility, engagement, involvement, as well as work satisfaction. Currently there is a society stigma of communication with the under 30’s group or the over 65 group (Killian, 1968). Each of these groups has different perceptions and communication styles, and organizations need to update their policies and procedures to include these differences for a more efficient working environment. Understand how to communicate to a diverse workforce with different cultures will first involve appreciation of individuality (Buckingham, 2005).

Management Techniques

There are three types of management techniques that we found linking management’s goals and objectives along with the employee’s goals and objectives. The first type is management by objectives (MBO) process where managers and employees identify common or more realistic goals which are based on the employee’s goals (Stanley, 2004). MBO allows operational level employees to participate in the decision making process, facilitating vertical and horizontal communication; the goals are written with a clear purpose that is measurable, but challenging. This process enables employees to feel they had some control over their work plans and commitment to the organization’s objectives (Sims, 2001).

The second style is the quality worklife movement (QWL). QWL describes congruence between personal and organizational goals. The human relations approach is based upon the belief that more satisfied employees are more productive. The assumption of this technique is treating employees as valuable resources, capable of making significant contributions to the organization’s performance (Belcher, 1998). A QWL environment is one that challenges the human spirit, inspires personal growth and development, along with getting things done. QWL creates an environment evolving around the whole human concentrating on personal needs, as well as challenging and inspiring personal growth and development (Belcher).

The third style is participant management style where employees participate in goal and planning setting, with more adaptability to change (Belcher, 1998). Employees have a greater sense of belonging when they are fully informed of developments and are able to make changes in the organization. Organizations are moving towards a management style of empowering employees and allowing them to participate in decision making. Employees do not want jobs in which they are told what to do and are not allowed to share their ideas or viewpoints.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO FIRST-LINE MANAGERS

The first set of recommendations to first-line managers is (1) give and receive feedback and (2) give and receive feed-forward for areas of less than adequate employees’ performances. Upward feedback from employees can make the difference. Feed-forward is a method that alerts

the employee that an area of poor performance has been identified and that the employee has the capability of performing better. The managerial training that was offered was more focused on the “touchy feely” motivational aspects. Many managers prefer the technical training of computer applications and administrative management procedures for performing the job.

The second set of recommendations to first-line managers is to (1) develop passion AND compassion,(2) understand the need for corporate diversity, (3) use good technical communication skills,(4) be patience, (5) be knowledgeable of different cultures and religions, (6) believe in employees’ knowledge, (7) be respectful, and (8) use common sense. Herda and Messerschmitt (1991) stress the importance of the social as a means leading to interpersonal relationships and communication action. This aspect of the technical manager’s job can provide a context for critique, change, and organizational advantages or its competitiveness. Managers should be knowledgeable of the tasks that are managed by them. They should never exaggerate their lack of knowledge pertaining to the positions that they manage.

The last recommendation to first-line managers is they should seek training on how to develop a more adult-to-adult relationship with employees at the technical core. Organizations, in which they no longer will act as parents to the employees, can no longer afford to create individualistic cultures, or climates of selfishness. Communication today appears to be moving from a hierarchy and a bureaucratic organization structure to a matrix structure and interdependent team structure. The most commonly cited reasons for this change of structure are that most managers don’t have the needed communication skills, global communications, and managers rarely receive adequate communication training (Estienne, 1997). Managers must work with their employees to seek answers to: What’s my job; How am I doing; Does anyone care; How are we doing; Where are we headed; and How can I help? Estienne (1997) claims these individualist cultures will require challenging work and motivational environments.

CONCLUSION

Society appears to be in a state of change moving toward more individuality where employees are demanding more from their working environment. According to Peter Drucker, this is a world of infinite choices, mobility and “they (employees) carry their tools in their heads and can go anywhere” (1996, p. 6). Managers appear to follow in the footsteps of the management culture that has been established, but there needs to be a change and managers should concentrate on human behavior skills as stated in 1994 by Reinsch (1996). “Business communication can be defined as the scholarly study of the use, adaptation, and creation of languages, symbols, and signs to conduct activities that satisfy human needs and wants by providing goods and services of private profit” (Reinsch, 1996,p. 1).

Through examining published research and other source materials, it has been determined that few papers have been published on formal training programs or workshops provided for first-line managers regarding effective MC at the technical core. It appears that many managers are giving minor guidelines, with no specifics. Some managers are provided leadership classes that deal with team building and motivation. Many managers have expressed that these trainings do not deal with the day-to-day problems. Many managers are left to relying on experience in order to deal with different types of circumstances that may occur on the job. Many first-line managers complain about the lack of guidance from the upper management to assist in dealing with situations.

Several problems expressed are communication barriers, language barriers, and staffing. Some scheduling problems in the retail industry were age limit requirements for cashiers, consideration of religious beliefs, and working with part time employees such as college students (majority of the application pool), wanting off for extracurricular activities.

In conclusion we would like to refer to the 1996 Peter Drucker interview where he stated that one needs to see themselves as a leader of an orchestra, directing a group of potentially diverse and talented people, to work together to produce a product or “music” that he (the leader) wants to hear. We agree that from past experiences that this type of management where employees can be utilized to their fullest potential can be accomplished if the manager “trusts” and respects their employees. Employees in this type of work environment will try to perform to the best of their abilities trusting that the manager will lead them in the right direction; a win-win situation for both.

REFERENCES

- Barnard, C. I. (1968). *The Functions of the Executive* (pp. 161-184). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Belcher, J. G. (1998). *How today's best run companies are gaining the competitive edge* (pp. 68-87). Houston: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Bennis, W. G. (1997). *Managing people is like herding cats* (pp. 23-112). Provo, UT: Executive Excellence Publishers.
- Brown, D. J. (1973). *The Human Nature of Organizations* (pp. 53-67). New York: AMAMCOM.
- Browne, J. (2000). Scheduling employees for around-the-clock operations. *IIE Solutions*; retrieved October 11, 2005, from <http://solutions.iieneet.org>.
- Buckingham, M. (2005). What great managers do. *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 83, Issue. 3, pp. 70-79.
- Drucker, P. F. (1974). *Management: task, practices and responsibility*. (pp. 481-493). New York: Harper & Row Publishers
- Drucker, P. F. (1996). *The Shape of Things to Come: An Interview with Peter F. Drucker*. Leader to Leader, No. 1, Summer 1996. Retrieved October 29, 2005, from <http://www.pfdf.org/leaderbooks/L2L/summer96/drucker.html>.
- Elash, D. D. (2003). Leadership style can restrict employee thinking. *Tire Business*, Vol. 21, Issue. 12.
- Estienne, M. (1997). An organizational culture compatible with employability: *Industrial and Commercial Training, MCB University Press*, Vol. 29, Num. 6, pp. 94-199.
- Fracaro, K. (2001). Achieving goals and persistence. *American Salesman*, Volume 46, Issue. 10.

- Herda, E. A. & Messerschmitt, D. S. (1991). From words to actions: communication for business management. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Volume 12, Issue 1.
- Hindel, T. (2006). The new organisation. *Economist.com*. Retrieved September 30, 2006 from www.microsoft.com/business/peopleready/news/economist/neworg.msp.
- Hynes, G. (2005). *Managerial communication: strategies and applications* (pp. 177-179). Boston: McGraw-Hill Irwin.
- Jay, J. (2005). On communicating well. *HR Magazine*. Vol. 50, Iss. 1.
- Katz, D. & Kahn, R. (1966). *The social psychology of organizations* (pp. 223-258). New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Killian, R. A. (1968). Communication: focusing on action response. *Managing by Design for Maximum Executive Effectiveness* (pp. 253-259). American Management Association, Inc. Vail-Ballou Press
- Killian, R. A. (1968). The skills of professional management. *Management by Design for Maximum Executive Effectiveness* (pp. 90-137). American Management Association, Inc. Vail-Ballou Press.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1987). *The leadership challenge: how to get extraordinary things done in organizations*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass Inc.
- IOMA. (2004). How to close the gap between corporate goals and employee performance. *Pay for Performance Report*. Issue 04-8. Retrieved from <http://www.ioma.com> September 8, 2004.
- Latham, G. P. (2004). The motivational benefits of goal setting. *Academy of Management Executive*. Vol 18, No. 4.
- Littlejohn, S. W. (1989). *Theories of human communication, 3rd ed.*(p. 27). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Miller, J. G. (1960). Information input, overload, and psychopathology. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Volume 116, pp. 695-704.
- McWhorter, T. (2005). Doing right by departmental business officers. *NACUBO Business Officer*.
- Phillips, J. J. (1985). Improving supervisor's effectiveness (pp. 225-270). San Francisco: Josey-Bass Publishers.
- Preston, P. (1976). The critical "mix" in managerial communications. *Industrial Management*

- O-net Online (2004). Summary Report for: 35-1012.00 First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Food Preparation and Serving Workers. *Occupational Information Network*. Retrieved from <http://online.onetcenter.org/link/summary/35-1012.00> September 3, 2005.
- Reinsch, L.N. (1996). Business communication: Present, past and future. *Management Communication Quarterly: MCQ* Vol. 10, Issue. 1, pp. 23-27.
- Shockley-Zalabak, P. (1988). *Fundamentals of organizational communication*. New York: Longman.
- Simon, H. A. (1976). *Administrative behavior: A study of decision-making processes in administrative organizations*, (3rd Ed.). New York: The Free Press. pp. 154-171.
- Sims, R. R. (2001). Planning, organizing, and controlling. *The Challenge of Front-line Management: Flattened Organizations in the New Economy* (pp. 145-146). Westport: Quorum Books.
- Smeltzer, L. R. (1996). Communication within the manager's context. *Management Communication Quarterly: MCQ*, Vol. 10, Iss. 1.
- Stanley, T.L. (2004). The best management ideas are timeless. *Supervision*, Vol. 65, Iss. 6, pp. 9-11.
- Taylor, F. W. (1998). *The principles of scientific management*. USA: Dover Publications, Inc.
- U.S. Department of Labor. (2005). *Occupational outlook handbook*. Bureau of Labor Statistics: Bulletin 2540.
- Whitworth, B., & Riccomini, B. (2005). Unlocking higher employee performance. *Communication World*. Vol. 22, Iss. 2. Retrieved September 15, 2005 from Business Source Database.
- Whyte, W.H., Jr. (1956). *The Organization Man*. NY: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Zachry, M. (2000). Communication practices in the workplace: a historical examination of genre development. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, Volume 30, number 1, p57-79.