

A Problem in Communication

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Authors Note

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Abstract

The increased volume of communication and evolving communication technology has intensified the competitive environment and made internal company communication ever more critical to its success. This issue has prompted researchers to study what organizations can do to implement a communication system that fits within their organization and eliminate dysfunction and breakdown in the messaging needed between managers and employees. A literature review was conducted to analyze a management framework using planning, organizing, delegating, and controlling models to find a solution to a communication breakdown in a provided case study. The literature supported that a solution can be found using a robust email system, a project management software solution, and incorporating a Christian worldview that will meet the company's needs and understands the employees' personal needs. All of which are critical to business success.

Keywords: communication system, internal communication, external communication, P-O-L-C system, virtual teams

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A Problem in Communication

Introduction

Evolving communication technology, the increased volume of information needed by a business, and the intensified competitive environment have made internal company communication more critical to business success. (Murphy & Campbell, 2017) As noted in the case study provided, the furniture businesses' communication system is failing, and a solution is necessary for the organization to remain competitive in the Internet marketplace. The manager must be mindful of the steps needed to implement that system. This paper provides a solution using a management framework of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling. A review of the secular and Christian literature was conducted to find a viable solution to this communication system breakdown.

Case Solutions: A Problem in Communication

Plan

Contemporary management trends have increased individual employees' demands to take greater responsibility for everything from quality and efficiency to the organization's brand. (Andersson, 2019) It is the manager's job to solve problems creatively. One of those issues is communication. To communicate effectively, a manager's function involves putting forth a communication plan that involves setting objectives and determining a course of action for achieving those goals. One critical aspect of planning on best reaching a colleague through a communication mechanism is understanding another person better. Proverbs 18:2 (NIV) addresses this: a fool has no delight in understanding but in expressing his own heart. Managers should plan to implement the steps to become better listeners first, be aware of critical

contingencies, forecast future conditions, and identify alternate courses best to implement their plans through a robust communication network.

Organize

Organizations should discover, evaluate, and exploit the sources of opportunities from their environment. (Tan and Tan, 2005; as cited in Kim, 2016) Decisions must be made about each member of the organization's roles and duties, and managers must decide how to best coordinate their efforts effectively. Various communication media are used throughout an organization, such as face to face, spoken communication transmitted electronically, personally addressed written communication, and impersonal, written communication. This is known as a communication network. (Tasselli, Zappa, & Lomi, 2017)

A manager is tasked with developing an organizational structure for their firm in a communication network that includes internal and external systems. Since communication is often fluid and tends to flow in patterns, a manager's role determines which system works the best for a given objective. Belso-Martinez, Diez-Vial, Lopez-Sanchez, & Mateu-Garcia (2018) found a benefit of belonging to a tightly connected group of local networks between firms and supporting organizations. This proximity fosters an exchange of valuable information and provides a basis for developing knowledge between co-located agents. (Morrison & Rabellotti, 2009; as cited in Belso-Martinez et al., 2018) Communication should occur across all groups and departments and within, up and down, and side to side throughout the organization. External communication networks can also be organized by the manager to provide information in other like-minded organizations such as networking events, clubs, and other associations.

Direct

The case study shows that the current communication system is flawed and headed toward dysfunction. It could quickly become a crisis and one that the manager can lose control of if he does not act accordingly and swiftly. Internal crisis communication comprises situations in which the employees interpret and make sense of the organizational management's crisis communication. (Strandberg and Vigsø, 2016; as cited in Kim, 2018) The manager's normal function is to direct and delegate their employees as they navigate through the firm's regular communication channels. The manager needs to encourage employees to engage in boundary-spanning activities and frequently interact with an organization's environment to gather, select, and relay information from the environment to decision-makers or other internal members. (Grunig and Repper, 1992; as cited in Kim, 2018)

Control

Extensive research indicates that employers favor candidates who demonstrate proficiency in skills that cut across fields of study, specifically written and oral communication, teamwork, ethical decision-making, critical thinking, and the ability to apply knowledge in real-life situations. (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2002; Hart Research Associates; as cited in Andrade, 2020) The manager with a level of control over a communication system can provide this robust collaboration amongst the organization's members. A method of control ensures that performance does not deviate from established standards in an organization. Managers control by three steps: 1. They are setting performance standards, 2. comparing actual performance against standards, and 3. taking corrective action when necessary. It is also important to note that control should not be confused in the behavioral or manipulative sense but rather as a manager's function to take necessary actions to ensure that

subordinates' work-related activities are consistent and contributing toward the goals and objectives outlined for the company.

Solution

To propose a solution for the manager, it must be understood that for an effective communication system to work, he must pay attention, be a good listener, be empathetic towards his organizations' members, and be forgiving and respectful. There are already myriad issues with their current communication system, and it is leading toward dysfunction. In today's business landscape, where teams may be spread across a business campus, and worldwide, it is the manager's job to implement a solution that works well for meeting the company's goals and objectives.

One solution is internal communication and email. While this communication method has been used in the past with the furniture company, there was a breakdown in the communication cycle. The manager can develop an email system that is clear and concise while still recognizing his company's needs. The manager can create a system to send messages that are clear and complete. Ly (2016) found that informants prefer a clear, direct, and short email when their colleagues request. This is a simple solution using a communication system that is already in place.

A more robust system could be the development of virtual teams. As noted herein, internal communication such as face to face and email may work well; virtual teams and project management software suites such as Trello could be the answer. Trello and other project management systems work well in situations where a team gets into problems where they face various project-related decisions. (Dorskocil, 2016). A project management software suite could

help the furniture company minimize consequences or correct erroneous choices while also providing an environment that allows for collaboration and feedback. (Dosckocil, 2016)

Using a software suite such as Trello is intuitive and easy to use and can be shared across many platforms and distributed to all organization members. It is designed as a series of what are called “cards” where a team can communicate and collaborate on various aspects of a project, whether it be a simple to-do checklist or a complex undertaking requiring input from many departments. A project management software suite is comfortable for the managers and the teams to monitor since all information is stored in the “cloud.” Multiple notification systems can be set up for the groups for alerts of upcoming projects and deadlines.

No matter which communication system is used, a manager should encode messages in symbols that the receiver understands. The message should be free of cliché’s, jargon and use a common vocabulary. Messages should also be formatted in the proper context. Ly (2016) found a preference for direct requests can be explained by the work context in which the request is received. In this context, the claim is instead seen as part of a routine work task. The end goal for any manager should be to provide accurate information appropriate for the task at hand and uphold the value systems' goals and objectives.

Lastly, the case study did not show that the furniture business is a Christian-led organization. Still, a solution would be to include a Christian worldview in their daily operations. God is the great communicator, and his word can strengthen our relationships, and we can learn to think and act more like our Creator. Within the furniture business, their communications can follow the advice of Ephesians 4:15 (NIV), which allows us to speak the truth in love, and we may grow up in all things with a better understanding of Christ. The managers could also follow the example as outlined in 1 Thessalonians 1:2 (NIV), which shows that God’s spirit is the true

source of our joy and, as Paul did, let people know we are thankful for them—having an understanding that when we speak softly kindly and wisely, we can defuse negative feelings and promote positive relationships. Using these, along with the tools provided herein, should go a long way in providing a solution to the company's communication breakdown and dysfunction and start them on a path of growth and fulfillment as they move forward in the future.

Conclusions

Organizational communications have primarily been assessed based on the content of the message. (Murphy et al., 2017) It is a manager's primary challenge to solve problems creatively. As the furniture company case study illustrates, their communication system breakdown is on the verge of dysfunction if a solution is not found. This paper reviews the literature to gain a better understanding of a common framework for creative problem-solving. It is understood that planning is an essential part of finding a solution. Andersson's (2019) research shows how to best reach a colleague through a communication mechanism to better understand another person.

Organizing develops an organizational structure that is conducive to a viable communication system. The work of Kim (2016) argues that decisions must be made about each member of the organization's roles and duties, and managers must decide how to best coordinate their efforts effectively. The research Belso-Martinez et al. (2018) shows proximity fosters an exchange of valuable information and provides a basis for developing knowledge between co-located agents. Directing and delegating are essential functions of a manager in the development of a consistent communication system. Kim's (2018) research shows they encourage employees to engage in boundary-spanning activities and frequently interact with an organization's environment. Andrade (2020) found that managers with a level of control over a communication system can provide this robust collaboration amongst the organization's members.

Using the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling framework, a solution was ascertained to provide the furniture company with a viable solution to their communication breakdown. It is suggested that a more robust email system is implemented along with a project management software program that can be used to provide accurate information that is appropriate for the task at hand and upholding the value systems the goals and objectives of the organization. This, along with incorporating a unified Christian worldview, will position this business to develop a communication system that meets the company's needs and understands the employees' personal needs. Both of these are critical to business success.

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