Interpersonal Communication:
A Strategic Perspective

Johnny R. O'Connor Jr.
Lamar University, USA

Keonta N. Jackson
Texas A&M University – Commerce, USA

INTRODUCTION

For decades, communication has proven to be essential to effective leadership (Attwater & Waldman, 2008; Terek, Glusa, Nikolic, Tasic, & Gligorovic, 2015; White, 2015). In fact, it has been stated that leadership can only exist through effective communication (Witherspoon, 1997). According to Miulescu (2014), communication is fundamental to human existence. Moreover, its importance has become increasingly essential, given the emergence of the many collaborative leadership structures within today's work environments (Katzenback & Smith, 1993). Consequently, leaders that truly understand the value and impact of communication are able to carefully view the related complexities of this phenomenon, while recognizing its multifaceted effect on work related outcomes (Clampitt, 2005). Whether communication is necessary to complete a meeting, convey a message, or display an emotion, nearly all actions within an organization involve some aspect of communication (Katz & Kahn, 1966). However, communication as a standalone construct is not very effective or efficient. It is the actual communicative interaction between individuals or groups that begins to shape its strategic basis. This type of communicative interaction is commonly known has interpersonal communication.

It is not only important to recognize the mere existence of communication, but yet, attention must be given to how communicative interactions present, in terms of quality and context, as well how communication supports the overall attainment of organizational goals (Young & Post, 1993). This requires a more interactive and direct interpersonal communication platform. According to Bedwell, Fiore, and Salas (2014), interpersonal communication skills are vital in today's work environment. Current research has noted that interpersonal communication skills are fundamental for those seeking both career and organizational success (DeKay, 2012; Du-Babcock, 2006). This is important namely because information conveyed to stakeholders is critical to the decision making of organizational leaders, and the cultivation of work related relationships (Halawah, 2005). When managers learn how to effectively address the power of interpersonal communication, it can pay big dividends (Jackson, 2016). This chapter will seek to provide the reader with foundational information regarding interpersonal communication, its strategic implications, as well as several considerations that a strategic leader must make when communicating to various stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is key to the survival of any organization. In fact, one could argue that without communication the thought of sustainable success would be remote or virtually non-existent. According to Sethi and Seth (2009), interpersonal communication is the means by which individuals exchange information. That is, it is the ability to convey messages that can be decoded and processed for the execution of a given action (Morgan, Paucar-Caceres, & Wright, 2014). In addition to the afore-mentioned elements, Hartley (1999) adds that "Both the form and the content of the communication reflect the personal characteristics of the individuals as well as their social roles and relationships (p.20). Furthermore, the process of communication can be verbal or non-verbal. Non-verbal communication includes silent forms of communication used to convey a message. This type of communication includes body language and other nonverbal cues that tend to influence the reception of an idea or thought (Phu-tela, 2015). Research suggests that over 50% of our communication message is portrayed by our body language (Lynall, 2011). Conversely, verbal communication is that communication which employs the use of your voice. It encompasses and employs the use of structured verbalizations and sounds.

Leaders in a variety of fields have identified the relevance and necessity of developing interpersonal skills. This thought has extended well beyond the typical professions of sales, business, management, etc. (Bedwell, Fiore, & Salas, 2014), and includes many departments throughout all types of organizations (Argenti, 2007). Given the relational basis of many organizations today, interpersonal communication is a key tool in strategic leadership.

STRATEGIC IMPILICATIONS OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Communication is an intentional act, which scholars have linked to professional effectiveness (Conrad & Newberry, 2011). As it relates to strategic leadership within organizations, interpersonal communica-tion is often perceived as an influencer that can either negatively or positively shape the perspectives of an individual or group of stakeholders. Much thought and careful consideration must be given to how communication is utilized within a work environment. In support of this, Kirby and Romine (2009) ad-vocated that communication assessments be embedded within coursework, in order to better understand and prepare students for future employment. Despite this, communication in organizations continues to be a struggle, with research studies reporting fair to poor communication and listening skills among managers and other employees (Conrad & Newberry, 2011, Pearce, Johnson, & Baker, 1995).

Communication is a process. It does not just occur. However, shifting this ideology is often difficult, due to the belief that communication behaviors are only an act of information (Kim, Grunig, & Ni, 2010). This thought contradicts the relevance of the transmission aspect of the process. As a strategic leader, one must begin to consider how the initiation of the communication process may potentially impact any expected outcomes. This requires the development of communication competence. That is, what we know about communication and how we use this information in a cohesive and strategic manner (Conrad & Newberry, 2011).

9 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/interpersonal-communication/173530

Related Content

Differences in the Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction among Scientists and Engineers
Vasanthakumar Bhatand Andrew Person (2016). *International Journal of Applied Management Sciences and Engineering (pp. 1-10).*
www.irma-international.org/article/differences-in-the-factors-influencing-job-satisfaction-among-scientists-and-engineers/143671

Exploring Factors Influencing Big Data and Analytics Adoption in Healthcare Management
Sampson Abeeku Eduand Divine Q. Agozie (2020). *Handbook of Research on Managing Information Systems in Developing Economies (pp. 413-428).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-factors-influencing-big-data-and-analytics-adoption-in-healthcare-management/253330

Women Entrepreneurship in Namibia: Challenges and Prospects
Efigenia Madalena Mario Semente (2019). *International Journal of Applied Management Sciences and Engineering (pp. 1-14).*
www.irma-international.org/article/women-entrepreneurship-in-namibia/232736

An Efficient Algorithm to Produce Sponge Packing Particles: A Case Study
Ofer Barkaiand Gadi Vitner (2020). *International Journal of Applied Management Sciences and Engineering (pp. 71-82).*
www.irma-international.org/article/an-efficient-algorithm-to-produce-sponge-packing-particles/276367

Promoting Leadership Development and Talent Management in Modern Organizations
Kijpokin Kasemsap (2016). *Project Management: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 178-205).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/promoting-leadership-development-and-talent-management-in-modern-organizations/155267