BUSINESS COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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Abstract

Business communication is how you communicate in your line of work. It is also a matter of human relationships. Good business communication is a must to meet the demands of the business environment. Most of us spend a lot of time communicating our knowledge, thoughts, and ideas to others. Your communication at the workplace can make all the difference between success and failure. Communication is described by many as the single most important factor in choosing managerial level staff, yet despite this fact many people are unable to convey their thoughts and they are struggling to communicate effectively.

Keywords: communication, competence, culture, language, companies, business environment

Preliminary considerations

Effective communication is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. It's also about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible. Doing this involves effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication. By successfully getting your message across, you convey your thoughts and ideas effectively. When not successful, the thoughts and ideas that you actually send do not necessarily reflect what you think, causing a communication breakdown and creating roadblocks that stand in the way of your goals – both personally and professionally.

Communication skills are the single more important decisive factor in choosing managers. Communication skills, including written and oral presentations, as well as an ability to work with others, are the main factor contributing to job success. In spite of the increasing importance placed on communication skills, many individuals continue to struggle, unable to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively – whether in verbal or written format. This inability makes it nearly impossible for them to compete effectively in the workplace, and stands in the way of career progression. Being able to communicate effectively is therefore essential if you want to build a successful career. To do this, you must understand what your message is, what audience you are sending it to, and how it will be perceived.

Business communication

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Oral communication is the essence of management, so a proper education is a must in this field. Oral skills are as important as written. Many people lack in the skills and confidence to make effective presentation. Your strategy, structure and style of speech should be striking. Your attention and actions play a major role in oral communication. Managers and supervisors have to be aware of the other people, and have to exert themselves to ensure the other person understands them. Eye contacts, gestures and dressing sense, all reflect your attitude and approach towards business. If you are in an online business then you must have the ability to reach the audience that wants your services or products. Since the online world is so big and it offers so many amazing things, your online business communication needs to be instantaneous and effective. Otherwise your clients will look somewhere else for their requirements. In online businesses, there are so many ways that one can convey one's thoughts.

Business communication is the first step in achieving a business. All people know it is important and necessary to improve business communication competence. No matter whether we are having an occasional contact with someone from another culture or working with culturally diverse workforce, we should use skills. We should master the ability to handle problems caused by cultural conflicts or other factors. We should try to correctly interpret the nonverbal information accompanied with verbal information in order to obtain the speaker's real intention. There are many things we should pay attention to, like cultural differences, cultural sensitivities, cultural biases, flexibility, patience. All these ask for an appropriate handling when we communicate cross-culturally.

Because of our cultural background, we have our own ways of thinking, our attitude towards other people, and our habit of doing things. In a word we are characterized by our own ways, and there is nothing good or bad, noble or humble when we are talking about our own features. However, once we are in culturally

diverse workforce, we should be flexible. Be flexible means that we should be ready to change our way or attitude when required. Sometimes it may be the case internally, yet sometimes it may be the case externally. To change our way or attitude has nothing to do with giving up our principles or standards for business. In fact, such a change is only for solving the problem or for building up some business relationship.

> Patience is another factor required for the modern business people. Patience is required in many ways. For example, the person we speak to may not understand us very well, so we have to explain the points to him in more details. Perhaps we have met someone who is so self-centered that we find it is very hard to convince him. A self-centered person will certainly give us a headache; however, if such person is our boss or an important customer, all we can do is to be patient, until we find some appropriate chance to work things out. We are bound to suffer if we want to cut him short and make some suggestions at that very moment.

Cultural competence

Companies consider cultural competence an important management requirement. Cultural competence should be a part of everyone's strategy. Companies that want to compete successfully must hold managers accountable for underutilizing people who are not like them. Managers must perform their role or be removed to another area where they can be effective. Understanding differences helps individuals learn how to get along. In essence, cultural competence and strong diversity management will help companies effectively draw upon talent, intellectual capital, and motivate more employees.

One dimension of cultural competence is the ability to deal with ambiguity. The more you deal with it the more effective you can be. Dealing with complexity is another skill. From a cultural perspective, it might be the ability to switch between cultural paradigms. Cultural competence is knowing what I don't know and learning to understand what other's expectations are. Although it is a mistake to claim total identification with someone of a different culture, one can empathize with the person's feelings and communicate recognition, respect, and caring. Enhancing questions, listening and responding skills is essential to demonstrate this understanding. Cross-cultural encounters are bound to lead to conflict. Three areas of miscommunication are likely to lead to this conflict: values, perceptions, and assumptions. Managing conflict constructively requires checking assumptions, finding common ground, and generating solutions. When conflict can be thought of as an opportunity for creative tension, we begin to see a basis for better decision-making, more creative ideas, solutions to problems, and improved communication and interpersonal relationships.

Developing cultural competence takes work and education, but is well worth the investment. Learning about cross-cultural management is important because it will allow you to maximize the chances that your multicultural workplace will be productive, efficient, and harmonious. It will also enable you to attract and retain high-quality workers of diverse ethnic or cultural backgrounds. It will allow:
- better communication despite accent and language barriers.
- more effective motivation of workers through the accurate interpretation of behaviors and the design of culturally aware motivation strategies.
- the accurate evaluation of culturally diverse applicants and employees through a better understanding of presentation styles, behaviors, and language facility.
- harmony and comfort in the workplace through an understanding of the motivations and perspectives of others.
  Moreover, cross-cultural management minimizes:
- worker alienation that can result from misunderstandings of etiquette, values, and behaviors.
- costly discrimination suits that arise from poor communication and worker alienation.
- unnecessary terminations that result from communication breakdown and misinterpretation of employee behavior.
- your managers' reluctance to hire and work with culturally diverse workers.
- racism and discrimination that can result from misinterpretations of the behaviors of others.

Types of business communication

Business communication is one essential ingredient you need in order to keep your organization running effectively. Without business communication, it will be impossible to keep strong relationships with your employees and with your customers. There are a few different types of business communication, each having a large impact on the business:
- *external business communication*
  External communication refers to any communication one has with customers, vendors, and people that are outside the business. These people help keep the business thriving by offering low prices on raw goods and purchasing products from the company. When you are dealing with external communication, it comes down to your ability to reach everyone around you. Advertising and marketing campaigns are often used as external communication tools. When you are working on improving your external communication skills, start with the image you would like to present to others. Look for different ways to look professional at all times, but still adding a human touch to your company. Customer satisfaction surveys can also help your external communication skills as you will gain

information directly from your customers as to what you are doing right and what needs improvement within the company.

- ***internal business communication***

 Internal business communication is often harder to work on. Each person is going to come with their own preferences as to how things should be done in the office and breaking them free of this mentality can be challenging. You can help improve internal business communication by talking to your employees and giving them clear instructions. Have an open-door policy and be approachable so your employees can reach you whenever they need to. Work on creating a productive business atmosphere. This will start with having a relaxed attitude and being a good person to your employees. Treat them well and let them know how much you really do appreciate their hard work. Positive work environments allow people to become more productive and satisfied in their jobs. Set goals with your employees that challenge them to use new skills and enhance their existing skills. Look for every possible way to communicate with your employees. Hold weekly staff meetings to address all the concerns of the staff and then hold individual meetings with your employees to go over their goals and objectives. Use email to your advantage to keep in contact with your employees.

Successful intercultural business communication

Intercultural communication occurs when people of diverse ethnic backgrounds discuss ideas and tasks in a language other than their native tongue. With the explosion of global business, productive intercultural communication has become more important. Successful intercultural communication is effective, frequent, and simple.

Successful intercultural communication avoids translation errors by using simple language and repeating important points in different ways. Avoid long, complex sentences and jargon for optimal communication. In written communications, bullet point lists are helpful in identifying key information without the distraction of a long sentence. Verbal presentations should be given at a slower pace with special attention to enunciation as well as stopping to verify everyone understands what was said. Visual aids should be used whenever possible to highlight key points in writing. Many cultures are much more authoritarian when compared to the US and hierarchy is important. Outside of the US, respect and compliance are often granted based on job title and rank, making it inappropriate for a secretary or junior staff member to make requests of an executive. Americans tend to equalize and minimize title, whereas other cultures tend to stratify and use titles to emphasize rank and status. Successful intercultural communication compensates for these power differences by funneling directions and requests through equally ranked staff..

Understanding cultural history and etiquette are keystones of successful intercultural communication. Knowing how to properly present a business card and who receives one first can set the stage for a productive business interaction. Successful intercultural communication requires basic understanding of cultural mores and adapting business communication style to them as much as possible. Learning a few key phrases such as greetings and expressions of gratitude can greatly improve intercultural communication. Making the effort to greet someone in their own language shows respectful interest in their culture and creates a receptive audience. Cultural respect is often reciprocated and is vital to building positive working relationships that result in successful intercultural communication.

Culture doesn't just result in distinct languages and food traditions, it also affects conflict resolution, sense of efficiency and problem solving. Close follow up on action items and projects will be required to compensate for cultural differences in business process. It is possible to receive an affirmative response to a request only to find out later the action was never carried through. Successful intercultural communication entails building in more frequent checkpoints into projects with constant communication and verification of agenda items.

Conclusions

As organizational structures flatten and transformational leadership styles are fostered, corporate demand for employees skilled in interpersonal communication is on the rise. Organizations are working to recruit, promote, develop, and train transformational leaders who connect with employees emotionally and have verbal and coaching skills. Organizational communication competence is the judgment of successful communication where goals are met using messages that are perceived as appropriate and effective within the organizational context. Communication competence in organizations involves knowledge of the organization and of communication, ability to carry out skilled behaviors, and one's motivation to perform competently.

The pre-competence stage is when a newcomer to an organization has not yet developed the capacities necessary to communicate competently in a particular environment and threshold competence is achieved when an employee eventually meets basic communication qualifications for his/her specific job description. This approach assumes that through the screening process, socialization, and training in the company, most employees achieve the threshold level. Next, workers move toward a proficient level of competence, in which the employee uses competent scripts to select and perform messages.

The competent communicator possesses certain motivations, knowledge, and skills. Motivation is often associated with one's willingness to approach or avoid interaction with others. Motives are usually connected to goals such as self-

presentation, relational, and instrumental goals. Most communication motivation research falls within a trait, anxiety framework such as communication apprehension or shyness. Employees with high levels of communication anxiety are perceived as less productive and less likely to achieve, and have lower levels of job satisfaction than those with low communication apprehension.

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