

# A Study on Effectiveness of Communication in Employee Motivation

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## Abstract

Achieving success in workplace is closely associated with the ability to communicate effectively, both in the workplace and with outsiders. Unlike in the past, today we face a highly volatile world where everything is in a state of flux. Most of the changes associated with transformation revolve around the processing and communication of information. On the other hand, Motivation is an organization's life-blood. To be effective, managers need to understand what motivates employees within the context of the roles they perform. Of all the functions a manager performs, motivating employees is arguably the most complex. This is due, in part, to the fact that what motivates employees changes constantly. A motivated employee is a high performing and industrious one. The immediate superiors have to realize the importance of communication in motivating them. There are certain factors like monetary benefits, bonus and incentives and other benefits like medical facilities, housing loan facilities, etc that motivate them. But nevertheless, these are transitory in nature. According to psychologists, a human being is well motivated when he is appreciated and acknowledged for his good work. Hence, communication has assumed a greater status in the corporate circle. This is power of communication in Motivation.

The paper attempts to make a study on:

1. the role and importance of communication in motivating employees.
2. the effectiveness of communication in motivating employees in improving their performance.
3. how miscommunication can de-motivate workers.
4. how communication in various HR aspects can motivate the employees.

The focus of the paper is to bring out the close linkage and relationship between communication and motivation; how effective communication can boost the performance of the employees. Also, it aims to look at various human resource aspects such as training & development, performance appraisal, staffing etc and what difference can communication make to these functions at large.

**Keywords:** Communication, Communication Process, Employee Motivation, Employee Performance

## 1. Introduction

Achieving success in workplace is closely associated with the ability to communicate effectively, both in the workplace and with outsiders. Today we face a highly volatile world where everything is in a state of flux. Most of the changes associated with transformation revolve around the processing and communication of

information, and motivating people becomes essential to achieve the transformation required. A number of communication challenges exist at workplaces such as identifying a problem, arriving at an appropriate solution, supervising work, coordinating various functions, people and their activities, developing products and services, nurturing relationships - which call for effectiveness and efficiency in communication.

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In modern days, we understand ‘communication’ as one of the most dominant and important activities in organizations (Harris & Nelson, 2008). Communication is the process of exchanging information, usually through a common system of symbols. It takes a wide variety of forms -from two people having a face-to-face conversation to hand signals to message sent over the global tele-communication networks. In addition, organizational capabilities are developed and enacted through “intensely social and communicative processes” (Jones et al., 2004). The process of communication facilitates interaction among people; without it, we would be unable to share our knowledge or experience with anybody else. Common forms of communication include speaking, writing, gesturing, and broadcasting. D’Aprix (1996) has given the hierarchy of employees’ communication needs starting with Job responsibility, performance feedback, individual needs, objectives & results, vision and mission and empowerment.

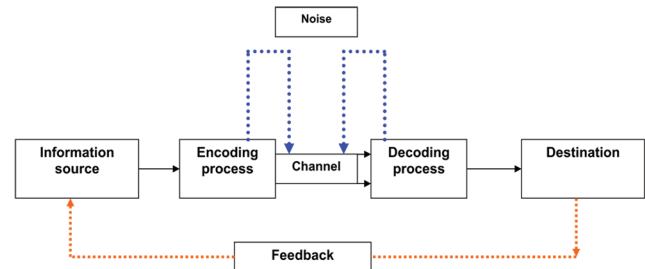
## 2. Literature Review

Organizational communication research has evolved considerably from the early conceptions of communication and its role in the organization. Communication can be defined in different contexts. Shannon, (1949) defines communication (Figure 1) as the process by which information and feelings are shared by people through an exchange of verbal and non-verbal message. The successful transmission of information through a common system of symbols, behaviour, speech, writing or signal. Bates, (2008) states communication is the creation of shared understanding through interaction among two or more agents. Barnard (1938) who exclaimed that communication was the very “heart” of the management process. Research further highlights how organizational communication has an effect on employee motivation and performance. Motivation is the influence or drive that causes us to behave in a specific manner and has been described as consisting of energy, direction, and sustainability (Kroth, 2007). A recent study involving highly creative technical professionals found that how employees are communicated was a significant motivating factor (Hebda, Vojak, Griffin, & Price, 2007). The appearance of the job as a whole has, in fact a bearing on the willingness and quality of an employee’s motivation.

## 3. Theoretical Background

### 3.1 Communication Process

Communication process can be understood with the help of the below diagram showing the flow of communication:



**Figure 1.** Shannon Weaver Model of Communication.

Any communication process happens in a systematic manner as follows:

- Step 1:* Sender conceives an idea based on the purpose of communication.
- Step 2:* Sender chooses appropriate symbols, encodes the idea and formulates the message.
- Step 3:* Message is sent through a suitable channel (oral or written) by the sender.
- Step 4:* Message is received by the receiver.
- Step 5:* Receiver decodes the symbols, comprehends and interprets the message.
- Step 6:* Receiver sends response which is observed by the sender.

### 3.2 Benefits of Effective Communication

Effective communication makes a difference and can bring success to the organisation. Managerial performance is intricately linked to communication; almost everything a manager does involve communication (Bates, 2008). One cannot make decisions without adequate information, and to obtain this information, communication plays an integral role. After the decision is taken, it needs to be communicated else the finest plan, the best idea, or the most creative suggestion cannot become a reality. Thus, effective communication can derive vast benefits which can be shown from the below diagram:



**Figure 2.** Forms of Communication in organisations.

Two forms of communication can be recognised in any organisation.

- a) Formal communication
- b) Informal communication

### A. Formal Communication:

Formal communication is that which is connected with the formal organizational (Figure 2) arrangement and the official status or the place of the communicator and the receiver. It moves through the formal channels authoritatively accepted positions in the organization chart. Formal communication is mostly in black and white.

It connotes the flow of the data by the lines of authority formally acknowledged in the enterprise and its members are likely to communicate with one another strictly as per channels constituted in the structure. Thus, it is a purposeful effort to influence the flow of communication so as to guarantee that information flows effortlessly, precisely and timely.

### B. Informal Communication: beyond the Organisational Hierarchy

Communication in organisations goes far beyond sending formal messages up, down, or across the organisational hierarchy. To get a complete picture of organisational communication, attention must be paid to informal communication-information shared without any formally imposed obligations or restrictions. Flow of

informal information assumes an important role because when people communicate informally, they are not bound by their organisational positions. People transmit information to those who come in to contact with them, there by providing conduits through which all sorts of messages can travel. Thus, informal interaction results in rapid flow of information which is commonly called the 'grapevine'. This refers to the pathway along which unofficial information travels and therefore this form of communication in organisation needs to be observed keenly.

## 3.3 Functions of Communication

Griffin, (2014) states communication has become a fundamental function of a modern day organisation and its not surprising that researches have shown the managers to be spending as much as 80 percent of their time in communication, such as reading reports, giving press interviews, listening to employees' grievances, preparing proposals, etc. Therefore, it can be said that the growth and success of an organisation can be gauged by the quantity and quality of information that flows through its members/personnel.

Communication serves four major functions in an organisation:

- Information
- Control
- Motivation
- Emotional expression

Though each of these functions of communication have an equal important task in the organisation, the focus of this paper will be on the motivation function. This paper attempts to shed a light on the role of communication as a helping tool to motivate the employees.

## 4. Motivation

Atkinson (1964) has defined motivation as the contemporary immediate influence on the direction, vigor and persistence of action. Motivation can be defined as "the internal and external factors that stimulate desire and energy in people to be continually interested in and committed to a job, role, or subject, and to exert persistent effort in attaining a goal". Motivation is the energizer of behaviour and mother of all actions. It results from the

interactions among conscious and unconscious factors such as the (1) intensity of desire or need, (2) incentive or reward value of the goal, and (3) expectations of the individual and of his/her significant others.

The term motivation is generally used for the function of activation; human beings are activated by the interaction with nature, necessity, and other humans. Thus, motivation is one of the most important functions in any organisation. When a person enters an organization, he can think of two levels of performance. One, the minimum he can get away with, the other is the maximum he is capable of. The difference between the two can be said as motivation.

Without sustained motivation, no organisation can be run in an effective and self sustaining manner. Organisations have to reckon the management of their following resources:

- Money
- Material
- Machines
- Manufacturing
- Media
- Men

It is interesting to observe that all these resources, other than 'men' are inert. They cannot do anything by themselves nor can they move anything into action or life. It is only the 'men' that can breathe life and dynamism into the other resources and make them productive or useful. However, 'men' themselves may not necessarily become or remain productive to their full potential unless they are primed into a state of motivation, and this motivation can come only from the other 'men' resources i.e. the leaders, through the alchemy of motivation.

#### 4.1 Motivation: Why important?

Motivation is an organization's zeal without which it would lose the desire to survive and grow further. Of all the functions a manager performs, motivating employees is arguably the most complex which is due, in part, to the fact that what motivates employees change constantly. To be effective, managers need to understand what motivates employees within the context of the roles they perform.

Various theories of motivation have been proposed, the first being the 'need hierarchy theory', by Abraham H. Maslow which was published in 1943. This created

quite an impact among the thinkers and researchers on motivation and many other theories such as 'the 'two-factor' theory, carrot – stick approach, theory 'x', theory 'y', etc came in. Regardless of which theory of employee motivation is followed, the outcomes of research conclude that interesting work, appreciation, pay, good working conditions, and job security are important factors in helping to motivate.

To ensure that strategies used to enhance motivation within the organisation obtain the most effective results, they should be based on:

- An analysis of the factors that individual staff members believe are motivators for them
- The performance objectives of the individual
- The strategic goals of the organisation
- The values and culture of the organisation

Key actions that managers and leaders can take to make a difference in the motivation levels of their workers include:

**Show trust and respect:** An environment where it is safe to take risks and staff are trusted to try new things can inspire and motivate employees to seek out new ideas and improvement initiatives.

**Reward achievements:** A simple 'thank you' goes a long way with employees. The employees are motivated to work hard if they know they are recognised and appreciated for their contributions. Rewards do not need to be costly to have an impact, but if valued and appreciated by staff they can have a significant impact on motivation.

**Job enlargement and enrichment:** Options for job enlargement, job enrichment and promotions should be considered". Job enlargement can provide opportunities to make work more interesting by increasing the number and variety of activities performed, and job enrichment can also make work more interesting and provide opportunities for increased pay and responsibility.

**Plan for advancement opportunities and support mentoring:** Employees motivation can be enhanced by providing opportunities for challenge and advancement within the organisation. Mentoring can have positive motivational spin-offs for both the mentor and the worker being mentored. Mentors can benefit from sharing their knowledge and expertise and this added responsibility

can add to their feelings of being recognized as well as providing job enrichment opportunities. For those being mentored, working with an experienced worker can add challenge; provide job enlargement, enrichment, and feedback opportunities.

### 4.3 Communication in Motivation: A sweet word can move mountains

The focus of this paper is on the inter dependence of motivation and communication in an organisation and how employees can be motivated using communication as a tool and technique.

In a typical organisation, where there are lots of unskilled labourers, superiors have to realize the importance of communication in motivating them. From motivation of a low class blue collar labour to motivating a team leader, communication has its own vitality. Whenever we come across de-motivated or unproductive human resources, managers should sit them down and communicate. From very small tiny units to multimillion dollar MNCs, we find counseling cells, grievance handling units, suggestion boxes, open door policies, help lines and so on. This is the power of communication in Motivation.

Discovering successful methods to motivate the employees is not a one ingredient recipe. In order to find what “clicks”, you’ll have to use a combination of ingredients such as open communication, acknowledgement, praise and practicing active listening. To determine the best way to encourage employee’s correct assessment of their needs is essential; it is important to understand the relationship between job satisfaction and performance. If employees are not motivated to perform, most of the time this is a strong indicator they are not satisfied in their position and is a good area to start making changes.

Since motivators are characteristics in the job which are inherently tied to satisfaction; the key to motivating employees is to identify individual needs. Whichever methods of motivation may be adopted with the employees, the main thing is to remember that employees want to be treated as an asset. Leaders need to CARE to motivate employees.

**C** = Creative Communication

**A** = Atmosphere and Appreciation for All

**R** = Respect and Reason for Being

**E** = Empathy and Enthusiasm

### **C = Creative Communication**

Effective communication is a large part of what contributes to a healthy, cooperative work environment. Organisations must be open and honest in their communications with employees. Employees can take bad news; what they can’t live with is the fear that they’re being kept in the dark. Be open, be honest, be up-front, be creative, and be real. In order to establish this environment, organisations need to communicate well by holding frequent “townhall” meetings to dispel rumors, keep any promises they have made, and clearly articulate the company’s progress. With the daily deluge of phone calls, postal mail, and email, organisations need to do something extra, something that surprises people, to get their attention for the most important communications to be heard and heeded.

### **A = Atmosphere**

To create a positive work atmosphere:

- Encourage fun.
- Create a good physical place to work, including needed resources to do the job right.
- Establish a mentoring program.
- Actively promote positive relations among co-workers.
- Support frequent contests, celebrations, and team-building activities.

### **A = Appreciation for All**

Managers who truly appreciate their employees and show it in small but powerful ways have the lowest turnover and the highest commitment. Most of us would do just about anything for a manager who appreciates us and our work. Following points can be recommended to create appreciation for all:

- Get to know employees as individuals (personalize appreciation, awards, and recognition).
- Find out what is satisfying and dissatisfying to each employee.
- Constantly change rewards and recognition.
- Delegate responsibility for reward programs and recognition such that employees at all levels are involved.
- Make appreciation a part of daily management routine.

### *R = Respect*

When employees know they are looked as individuals and not numbers they feel they are being treated with respect. Part of this respect includes learning about employees, encouraging them and valuing their strengths. Unless leaders can engage the whole person, they will not be even close to capturing the potential contribution of each employee.

To increase respect for employees, leaders must:

- Foster flexibility in every area-hours, benefits, tasks.
- Provide ongoing training and personal development-growth opportunities.
- Develop an organisation-wide code of ethics and cascade that process down to each team-agreement on behaviours they will use with each another.
- Give employees freedom, whenever possible, to choose work assignments and find challenging work according to their interests and skills.
- Provide internal promotion and transfer opportunities.

### *R = Reason for Being*

People desperately seek for meaning in their work; the workplace should make a positive difference to employee's life. To give employees a reason for being, organisations must:

- Emphasize the deeper, broader purpose of each person's work- how what they do every day is making someone's life better
- Engender pride and commitment through the organisation's culture and brand - how are we special
- Help employees understand the organisation's mission statement, vision, values, and how these apply to their day-to-day working – what is counted
- Encourage employees to write their own personal mission statements – you make difference
- Support character development and integrity training – you are counted
- Promote the spirit of family in the organisation –not we and you, it is us.

### *E = Empathy*

When organisations listen to employee's personal needs, and help to provide resources to fill those needs, they will be creating loyal, motivated employees. Another common need is being of service to others. Organisations that encourage and support employees in community service projects will win further commitment and loyalty. In order to empathize with their employees, organisation must:

- Support work/life programs.
- Foster understanding of personal concerns/problems/needs.
- Encourage job sharing and exchanges.
- Provide monthly and yearly social welfare opportunities, encourage employees to give back and care about the world outside their own doors.

### *E = Enthusiasm*

Analysing as a manager, "contagiously enthusiastic" about the importance of the work and workers are doing. To spread contagious enthusiasm among employees, leaders must:

- Celebrate what is going right on a frequent basis.
- Hold "guerilla" or spontaneous celebrations often.
- Encourage positive work relations through team-building and training.
- Get employees at all levels involved in planning and executing celebrations of all kinds.

Just being aware of the factors that will influence employees' motivation is a great first step in CAREing Bergson, Paul, & Palmer, (2004).

Critical evaluation of communication in motivating employees' is a very beneficial tool to analyze the effectiveness of communication in motivating them, bridge the gap of communication and increase the productivity in the organisation. Effective communication helps the management to increase the employee morale. These strategies help the organisation to reduce the cost of employee turnover and also to diagnose the training and development needs of the future. Effective communication

not only reduces the job turnover rate but also motivates potential employees to join the organisation. It guides the management by providing necessary information to make important decisions of the organisation.

## 5. Conclusion

Communication has the power to make deals or to lose deals. It is a self-evident fact that organisational communication plays a vital role in employee motivation and performance. Everything that happens in an organisation directly or indirectly is the resultant of communication. This means that it is not enough for communication to be a one-way ticket (Torrington & Hall 1991). There has to be downward and upward communication. Communication is a vital in any organisation as it keeps morale high of all the employees by motivating them. There are several illustrations in the organisations where we see that an employee is always motivated and drives himself for the betterment of the organisation in-terms of productivity, pushing the company at its higher peak. Most of the times an employee does this; not because of his salary or incentives nor any kind of bonuses or monetary benefits. He does this most of the times just because he receives a pat on his back for all the good work he does. Manager or supervisor can see the change in the organisation if they can appreciate the employees and can communicate to them that they are the asset to the organisation.

It can be aptly concluded that communication motivates employees to a greater extent and can certainly direct an organisation towards productivity.

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