An Overall Approach to the Communication of Organizations in Conventional and Virtual Offices

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Abstract—Organizational communication is an administrative function crucial especially for executives in the implementation of organizational and administrative functions. Executives spend a significant part of their time on communicative activities. Doing his or her daily routine, arranging meeting schedules, speaking on the telephone, reading or replying to business correspondence, or fulfilling the control functions within the organization, an executive typically engages in communication processes.

Efficient communication is the principal device for the adequate implementation of administrative and organizational activities. For this purpose, management needs to specify the kind of communication system to be set up and the kind of communication devices to be used. Communication is vital for any organization.

In conventional offices, communication takes place within the hierarchical pyramid called the organizational structure, and is known as formal or informal communication. Formal communication is the type that works in specified structures within the organizational rules and towards the organizational goals. Informal communication, on the other hand, is the unofficial type taking place among staff as face-to-face or telephone interaction.

Communication in virtual as well as conventional offices is essential for obtaining the right information in administrative activities and decision-making. Virtual communication technologies increase the efficiency of communication especially in virtual teams. Group communication is strengthened through an inter-group central channel. Further, ease of information transmission makes it possible to reach the information at the source, allowing efficient and correct decisions. Virtual offices can present as a whole the elements of information which conventional offices produce in different environments.

At present, virtual work has become a reality with its pros and cons, and will probably spread very rapidly in coming years, in line with the growth in information technologies.

Keywords—Organization, conventional office, virtual office, communication, communication model, communication functions, communication methods, vertical communication, linear communication, diagonal communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

DEFINED as the process of transmitting information from the source to the receiver, communication has four basic functions: information, motivation, control, and excitement [1]. Mintzberg's definition distinguishes the three basic roles of the manager, which he or she performs using communication. The first of these is the interpersonal role. When performing their role of manager or leader in organizational units, managers interact with their subordinates, customers, suppliers, solution partners, or other people of the same rank.

The second role is that of getting information. Liaising with other managers of equal rank, their subordinates, customers, solution partners, and others on any given issue, managers get information regarding their work and responsibilities. The third role of the manager is that of decision-making. The manager performs such basic roles as applying the new projects, distributing the resources among the organizational units and departments, and developing policies and strategies. When fulfilling these basic administrative functions, the manager constantly makes use of the function of communication [2].

II. COMMUNICATION AND FUNCTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONS IN CONVENTIONAL OFFICES

Communication within an organization has some important functions which can be gathered in the following four groups: providing information, convincing and influencing, training, and unification.

a. **The Function of Providing Information:** Information exchange is considered to be the most basic function of communication. Information is necessary for the individual to have a harmonious relationship with their environment. On the other hand, employees need information as to what needs to be done, how, and why, in order to achieve the goals of the organization. Organizational activities cannot be performed unless senior management informs the employees of the policy and goals of the organization, the goods or services produced the methods of production, and innovations. Communication has a significant function in decision-making. Without the necessary information, problems cannot be solved, nor can a decision be reached on any issue.

b. **The Function of Convincing and Influencing:** Convincing is the process of affecting and changing the behaviours, opinions, and attitudes of the person(s) an individual is in interaction with. Influencing, on the other hand, can be defined as an attempt to change people's attitudes and behaviours, without contradicting their will or aims, over a longer period.

A significant part of the communication taking place in organizations in various ways aims to change people's opinions, attitudes, and behaviours. The

requisite of the members of an organization working efficiently is largely dependent on their internalizing the goals of the organization and their identifying with the organization. This internalizing and identifying will largely depend on the function of communication as to convincing and influencing.

c. **The Function of Communication for Training:** Managers communicate with their subordinates not only to inform them but also to shape their behaviours. Subordinates need training in order to perform in line with the goals of the organization. In order for the training to be successful, positive communication between the trainers and trainees is indispensable.

d. **The Function of Unification:** People's interrelationships and interdependence in social life are made possible by communication. As well as gathering individuals around organizational goals, communication has a significant function in preserving these individuals' psychological integrity and balance.

Scott and Mittchel point to four main functions of communication in organizations: control, motivation, expressing emotions, and transmitting information.

a. **The Function of Control:** Communication makes control possible by clearing up duties and responsibilities. In face of ambiguous problems, it is then possible to get down to the source of the problem and take action.

b. **The Function of Motivation:** Communication improves loyalty to organizational goals and, therefore, raises motivation.

c. **The Function of Expressing Emotions:** Communication enables emotions to be expressed and social needs to be satisfied.

d. **The Function of Transmitting Information:** Communication is also used in transmitting the information necessary for decision-making. The making of effective decisions requires different options and information.

Organizational communication is an exchange of information and thoughts in the internal and external environments of the organization aiming to keep its day-to-day activities running and its targets met. Modern organizations of our day continue their work in a changing and dynamic environment.

A dynamic environment pushes organizations to become open systems. Organizing as an open system makes communication vital for the establishment of a relationship between the organization and its environment. This importance arises from the need to constantly watch the environment, analyze the changes, and develop policies and strategies for the future.

A. Organization Communication

An organization is a unit set up to achieve certain goals. In other words, an organization is the structuring of organizational elements in a productive relationship.

An organization is a structural process in which individuals engage in mutual behaviours in order to achieve their goals. This process is run by the manager. The things that happen in an organization are interdependent.

The word 'organization' can be defined narrowly or broadly. In its narrow sense, an organization is the specification of the work to be done to achieve a certain goal and the groups to carry out this work. In its broader sense, it is a structure where people bring together their physical tools and capabilities in order to reach a certain objective.

Organizations cannot possibly carry out their activities without communication. The coordination of employees is allowed by communication. Cooperation is not possible when employees are unaware of one another's needs and emotions.

Communication helps implement the basic functions of management such as planning, organizing, and control; and thus organizations can fulfill their duties. With efficient communication taking place, individuals feel more attached to their work.

Organizational communication is an exchange of messages in the internal and external environments of the organization. Put another way, organizational communication is the structural communication of all the employees of the organization with their internal and external environments.

Organizational communication is an administrative function crucial especially for executives in the implementation of organizational and administrative functions. Executives spend a significant part of their time on communicative activities. Doing his or her daily routine, arranging meeting schedules, speaking on the telephone, reading or replying to business correspondence, or fulfilling the control functions within the organization, an executive typically engages in communication processes.

Efective communication is essential for the implementation of organizational functions. Efficient management requires thorough communication. Mell Grosz argues that the basic function of management is information processing during planning and control, and that this process continues through communication.

B. Significance of Organizational Communication

The need for the right information for the running of administrative activities and decision-making is met by communication, which is indispensable for increasing work efficiency and mobilizing organizational resources. The implementation of administrative and organizational activities is helped by organizational communication. The existence of various departments and titles gives rise to organizational hierarchy, which underlines the need for formal and informal communication channels among those various departments.

Executives liaise with the relevant people through communication. In an organizational activity, communication is necessary, but not sufficient, for an executive. In order to get the message across, communication also needs to be perceived, that is, it needs to mobilize the employee. Efficient organizational communication depends on employees' communicative abilities.

Efficient communication in organizations is considered important for two reasons. Firstly, communication makes the planning, organizing, guidance, and control functions of management possible. Secondly, it is an important part of the administrative process on which executives spend a significant amount of their time for coordination purposes [3].

Efficient communication in organizations requires an efficient use of management techniques. Communication provides various departments with information to enable them to guide, plan, organize, motivate, and control. Efficient communication is essential for the successful running of administrative and organizational activities [4].

Efficient communication is the principal device for the adequate implementation of administrative and organizational activities. For this purpose, management needs to specify the kind of communication system to be set up and the kind of communication devices to be used. Communication is vital for any organization.

All organizations need information. The information needed closely concerns not only senior executives but also junior executives and all employees, even though they may not take part in the decision-making process. This information is provided through communication.

C. Goals of Organizational Communication

Communication takes place in view of an objective, and organizational communication aims to reach certain goals. These goals can be listed as follows [5]:

a. giving information on the organization's policies and decisions, working order, long and short term objectives, remuneration system, reward and punishment system, promotion opportunities, and benefits,
b. communicating the organization's annual budget, revenue, activities, and projects to the employees and other interested parties,
c. briefing the employees and the unions on the new technologies and management approaches adopted,
d. introducing the various departments and executives of the organization through internal publications, and raising organizational awareness,
e. promoting the organization in its external environment,
f. informing the members of the organization of the legal framework regulating their field of activity in order to prevent potential mistakes.

Organizational communication ensures the interaction of all the elements in the organization and thus helps towards organizational integrity.

Efficient communication in organizations depends on communication being interactive. Interactive communication arises from various needs. The most important goals of interactive communication in organizations can be listed as follows [6]:

* **Coordination of Work:** contributes to efficient coordination of organizational and administrative work.

* **Problem-Solving:** overcomes problems arising in various departments

* **Information-Sharing:** ensures the sharing of new information with all members of the organization.

Conflicts between individuals, groups, or departments can only be resolved through efficient communication.

The four principal goals of communication in organizations are information, motivation, control, and organizational excitement. Organizational communication fulfils these functions [7]. Organizational communication serves several important purposes for the organization and its management. These are information-sharing, feedback opportunities, convincing, excitement, and innovation. The communicative process thus allows the sharing of information both inside and outside the organization.

D. An Organizational Communication Model

The organizational communication model developed by Lee Thayer sees organizations as open systems feeding on information. Organizations form and continue their existence through their communication with their subsystems and their environment. Thayer's concept of organizational communication is such that explains all the data flow inside the organization and between the organization and its environment as communication. According to Thayer, there are three basic communication subsystems that meet an organization's communicative needs and functions [8]:

Processing Communication System: aims to carry all the data relevant to the organization's activities from the source to the target. This system usually holds information on production, inventory, and accounts.

Organizing Communication System: transmits application procedures relevant to the specification and organizaton of the duties, activities, and behaviours of the members of an organization.

Preventing and Developing Communication System: provides the communication necessary for the existence of the organization both inside and outside. Messages relating to public relations, human resources management, marketing and advertising, research and development, etc. are transmitted within this system.

E. Functions of Organizational Communication

An organization's competitiveness in both domestic and foreign markets depends on its keeping pace with the innovations in the production of goods and services. Communication mobilizes the decision-making mechanisms within the organization and provides information from the external environment. Adapting to the changes in the outer environment is possible through communication as a whole.

There are various modes of communication within organizations. Some are among individuals, others are about internal incidents, and yet others are between the organization and its environment [9]. Organizational communication is needed for the strategies designed to increase employees' participation. In this context, the function of communication is to raise mutual understanding and to create a spirit of solidarity among the members of the organization. Ensuring loyalty and mutual decision-making, communication guarantees participation through free information flow.

Organizational communication is one of the basic functions of organizational management. The function of communication is also compulsory for organizational change [10]. It provides the right information in line with the members' emotional expectations.

Organizational information brings two main goals to light:

Raising mutual understanding within the organization. Making everyone understand what is expected of them during work hours and raising awareness of the duties and responsibilities in work groups are important functions of communication.

Ensuring upward information flow. Ensuring that each manager is aware of the behaviours and wishes of the employees under his or her command.

Improving management begins with communication. Managers use communication in many administrative and organizational activities such as decision-making, problem-solving, explaining organizational decisions, using discretion, giving authority, motivating, organization development, making suggestions, reconciling, managing conflicts, training, informing, planning, and setting goals and objectives.

Planned communication by management contributes to the improvement of the linear, vertical, and inter-departmental relations among employees, causing positive change in their expectations, morale, and behaviours. This change in behaviour increases staff productivity and energy in their functions.

III. HOW COMMUNICATION WORKS IN CONVENTIONAL OFFICES

With a systemic approach, communication in conventional offices can be looked at inside and outside the organization. Inside the organization, upward, downward, and linear types of communication can be distinguished depending on the structure being formal or informal. Outside the organization, public relations, sales, advertising, etc. can be seen [11].

Communication inside the organization contributes to coordination among office staff. Organizational communication is an important device that lets employees know what is going on and work with confidence. Its function is to meet the employees' needs for information. For this reason, communication needs to function healthily inside an organization in order to raise productivity and efficiency.

In conventional offices, communication takes place within the hierarchical pyramid called the organizational structure, and is known as formal or informal communication. Formal communication is the type that works in specified structures within the organizational rules and towards the organizational goals. Informal communication, on the other hand, is the unofficial type taking place among staff as face-to-face or telephone interaction.

A two-way information exchange is noted in formal communication in conventional offices. It is an inter-status communication type following the organizational rules and abstracted from the members' identities.

Informal communication emerges from the natural relations among office employees without adhering to a certain structure [12]. It is a communication type witnessed in the informal groups created by office employees.

1. Formal Communication Methods

Relations among various departments or individuals in an organization are established through either pre-specified formal channels or unpredictable natural channels. Formal channels are those set up by the organization to ensure communication inside and outside the organization. The natural communication network, on the other hand, develops spontaneously and ties social groups together. Organizations employ various methods in communicating with their inner and outer environments. These methods can be examined under two headings in terms of the structure of communication and the direction of the message flow:

i-Communication in terms of structural functioning

a) Formal communication

b) Natural communication

ii-Communication in terms of the direction of the message flow

  a) Vertical communication

  1. Downward communication
  2. Upward communication

  b) Linear communication

  c) Diagonal communication

Even though most communication in conventional offices tends to be formal, a fast information exchange is sometimes entered into in order to speed things up. Formal channels are usually clearly specified in the organizational plans. Each employee knows who they report to, who they are controlled by, what their authority is, and whom to consult when problems arise. These relations happen in vertical and linear communication channels. After these channels are set up, the

decision-making process works efficiently and significantly affects irregular practices [13].

In both their inner and outer structures, organizations are systems in constant mutual relationships. Internal and external relationships need to be regular in order for the organizational activities to be efficient and appropriate for the goals. Defined as an organizational function, communication regulates, controls, and ensures relationships among departments and individuals both inside and out.

Communication has a three-way flow within the organization structure: vertical, linear, and diagonal. Vertical communication is the downward or upward communication type set up by the employees within the organizational structure and policies.

In normal circumstances, communication runs downwards and takes place in writing. Linear communication takes place between equals and arises from functional relations. Diagonal communication happens between different ranks within the organizational command network.

1) Vertical Communication

Vertical communication is the type between the managers and their subordinates, running downwards or upwards [14]. Downward communication starts at the top with senior executives and goes all the way down to the most junior employees.

Downward communication aims to inform the subordinates of the organization's goals and policies and to assess their performance. Upward communication aims to inform senior management of what is going on at subordinate levels [15]. This type of communication includes progress reports, suggestions, explanations, and information and data necessary for making decisions.

Organizational communication aims to improve inter-departmental relations through job descriptions, standards, quality control practices, accounting transactions, and other written stuff. This is possible through vertical and linear communication. Vital decisions are made through vertical communication. Leadership within organizational structure is evidence of vertical communication and is essential for organizational activities.

According to Katz and Kahn, the main goals of communication between seniors and juniors are as follows [16]:

1. giving instructions for job training
2. giving information about the practices of the organization
3. providing information for the logical integrity of the job
4. raising employees' performance
5. giving information that facilitates the comprehension of the goals.

As a natural consequence of organizational structuring, communication runs two ways between senior management and junior staff. While seniors communicate their decisions and orders downwards, staff communicates the results of these orders and instructions, their complaints and suggestions upwards.

The communication channels between the seniors and their subordinates need to be unobstructed in order to reach the organization's goals quickly and efficiently.

2) Linear Communication

Linear communication is the type taking place between two or more employees of equal or similar rank in their daily activities. While the planning and control functions mostly require vertical communication, the guidance and coordination functions require linear communication.

Linear communication usually arises from work flow relations, communication between work groups, relations between work groups and group members from different departments, and senior relations.

The principal goal of linear communication is organizational coordination and problem-solving. In this way, organizational communication becomes simpler and more efficient. Another benefit of linear communication is the development of senior level and functional relations among the members [17].

Linear communication has important factors for efficient communication. The most important reason for this is that linear communication allows the fulfilment of tasks anywhere within an organization. It is commonly used for intra-organizational communication. It is also used for coordinating activities, convincing other managers of the same rank, and finding out about activities and emotions [18].

Linear communication is an important means of controlling the idea of authoritarian leadership. At the same time, it contributes to a favourable climate of organizational communication and improves coordination. Managers of equal rank can cooperate without needing instructions from senior levels through linear communication.

Linear communication is needed for solving the problems of such departments as production, marketing, human resources, accounting-finance, public relations, etc, ensuring coordination, and speeding up the functioning [19].

Linear communication does away with the waste of time caused by formal communication and is based on mutual trust.

3) Diagonal Communication

This is the type of communication taking place between managers and subordinates of different functional units. It is not come across in many offices. In fact, diagonal communication enables different units to better understand each other's responsibilities and facilitates collaboration. Diagonal communication is particularly needed in companies focusing on group work, so that participation can yield useful results.

In problem-solving or process development, work groups need to see and identify their problem from various angles in order to fully analyze it and come up with solutions. Therefore, the more common diagonal communication is, the more useful it becomes.

Those working with diagonal communication are open to self-improvement and can assess their work from various

dimensions. Diagonal communication also raises empathy in people's relationships.

IV. COMMUNICATION IN VIRTUAL OFFICES

Virtual offices are equipped with powerful communication infrastructures backed with information technologies in order to keep virtual activities running. They increase organizational efficiency by largely improving the coordination and communication functions with the help of information technologies. Organizational change in today's context is brought about with the development of communication technologies [20].

In virtual offices, communication takes place through shared database, e-mail, intranet, computer-based meetings, softwares, groupwares, computer-supported cooperative work systems (CSCW), video-based communication systems (video conferencing), etc. The greatest use of these technologies in terms of communication and coordination is instant access to information through shared database [21]. Communication technologies back up common functional work and improve coordination among offices.

In order to make good use of information and communication technologies in virtual offices, they need to be coordinated towards the following objectives:

1. All information necessary for the office must be processed electronically,
2. This information must be accessible at different times and different places,
3. The electronic communication infrastructure must overcome communication and coordination problems.

The principal factor raising the importance of communication and coordination in virtual offices is that the tasks are carried out virtually. These are offices running on computers, printers, and integrated copying machines. Virtual offices cause significant change in coordination and communication approaches [22].

Today's offices make great use of computers in communication. Multi-media practices allow texts, graphics, photographs, film and sound data to be numeritized and used digitally in smaller formats.

Communication in virtual offices is important for two reasons: firstly, the need to equip employees with the information necessary to do their work and share this information, and secondly the need to create values towards coordination, performance, and job satisfaction.

In virtual work order, people choose their work places themselves. Choosing the work place can be as clourful as choosing a holiday destination. A laptop computer with a modem card and a mobile telephone connected to it are enough to get the work done anywhere.

The place chosen could be a holiday resort, a cottage, etc. Those who feel uncomfortable in formal work environments can get a work place of their own where they can work freely through telework.

V. CONCLUSION

Communication in conventional offices is a social process that allows a constant exchange of information and opinion between the components of the organization and its environment in order to ensure its functioning in line with its goals. In this context, communication is the most important device of organizational management.

One of the most salient features of modern organizations is their ability to make use of their employees' knowledge. With today's workload increasingly becoming 'information processing', virtual office work has gained significance. Another important condition of virtual work is to not only have information but also share it through information and communication technologies.

Communication in virtual as well as conventional offices is essential for obtaining the right information in administrative activities and decision-making. Virtual communication technologies increase the efficiency of communication especially in virtual teams. Group communication is strengthened through an inter-group central channel. Further, ease of information transmission makes it possible to reach the information at the source, allowing efficient and correct decisions.

Virtual offices can present as a whole the elements of information which conventional offices produce in different environments. What allows flexible work or telework today is this component of information technology, which is why today's modern offices develop as virtual offices with information and communication infrastructures.

At present, virtual work has become a reality with its pros and cons, and will probably spread very rapidly in coming years, in line with the growth in information technologies.

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