



Research Paper

Lmol 605 Organizational Communications, Conflict Resolution and Negotiation

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Lmol 605 Period 1 Assignment- Value of Communication Article

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ABSTRACTS

The link between leadership and competent communication has received limited attention by business and communication scholars alike. According to Holladay and Coombs (1993), leadership is a behavior enacted through communication. Specifically, Holladay and Coombs suggested that communication shapes the perceptions of a leader's charisma, and communication can be divided into the content of the leader's messages and the presentation of those messages. Similarly, messages sent by leaders are considered to contain both affective and cognitive strategies (Hall & Lord, 1995), and when leaders effectively communicate their vision, they win the confidence of followers, which in turn aids in communication satisfaction between the leader and follower (Pavitt, 1999). Castaneda and Nahavandi (1991) suggested that subordinates who perceive their supervisors' behaviors to exhibit both relationship orientation and task orientation report being the most satisfied.

Based on previous research, leadership appears to be enacted through communication in such a way that it contains a relational (affective) and task (content) component. Additionally, when leaders communicate effectively, their followers experience greater levels of satisfaction. Thus, the purpose of this article is to examine the influence of leadership style, relational leadership style, and communicator competence on follower job and communication satisfaction.

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VALUE OF COMMUNICATION

I. INTRODUCTION

A critical role of a good leader is to be able to communicate effectively. For managers 30 years ago, system and processes was the key to success, **now for contemporary leaders, relationships and communication are king.** Your success or failure as a leader will often be dependent on your communication skills. Most people want to be heard and their ideas at least genuinely considered, if not accepted. **Our dilemma seems best summed up in the questions: How participative can I be? How directive must I be? How non-directive can I be?**

"Developing excellent communication skills is absolutely essential to effective leadership. The leader must be able to share knowledge and ideas to transmit a sense of urgency and enthusiasm to others. If a leader can't get a message across clearly and motivate others to act on it, then having a message doesn't even matter." One way or another, we are all both leaders and followers. The value of an integral understanding of leaders and followers seems to have become heightened commensurate with a dramatic increase in the uncertainty and complexity involved throughout the world.

Barack Obama is the current president of the United States and is excellent example of a good communicator. He has the ability to connect with his audience and sense a prevailing mood. He delivers his speeches with confidence and self-belief. During his political debates it was pointed out by journalists the fact that he seems to be very comfortable with the audience. He took each question from the audience and gave a very personable response. This makes him a good communicator because he makes the listeners believe in his

vision. In this case, Obama was successful in making the audience (the whole of America) believe in his message of change. It is not only enough to know your facts but it is essential that you deliver them while holding the audience attention. He also has common sense by not swearing or telling jokes, thinks about what he wants to say before speaking, doesn't interrupt or start talking while someone else is still speaking to him and he asks for other peoples' opinions not just his own. Lastly, he repeats back what he heard in insure clarity and gets the message across verbally, mentally, and metaphorically. By him being such a strong leaders outcomes in a good communicator.

So what do leaders need to do to improve their communication?

- **Command the language.** Be supremely articulate, even eloquent, in all written and spoken communication.
- **Be yourself.** Authenticity is a vital element of credibility. If you try to sound like someone else, your message will be diluted or lost entirely.
- **Invite dialogue.** Communication involves more than simply relating facts or your particular point of view. Let your listeners respond, question, and contribute to the conversation.
- **Speak with confidence.** Your honest display of conviction and passion will earn the respect of your audience.
- **Walk your talk.** Don't just say it. Do it. Live it.
- **Say it again. And again.** Even the most powerful and important message must be repeated to get into the hearts and minds of your listeners.
- **Take a stand.** Inconsistent or wishy-washy communication will be quickly discounted. Better to take an extreme or unpopular stance than to waver from one position to the next.
- **Say it in different ways.** Speak to individuals, small groups, and large audiences. Write powerful memos. Send timely emails. Issue press releases. Use the Internet. Today there are myriad venues for delivering your message. Use them.

Great leaders know: it's not just what you say; it's also how you say it. Communicate with authority, conviction, authenticity, and poise. That's the way great leaders get results.

II. COMMUNICATING GLOBALLY AND CROSS- CULTURALLY

Every person on this earth has a unique ideology, drawn from upbringing, history and culture, as well as education, thinking patterns and perceptions and each person verbalizes and constructs sentences in a completely different ways. In other words, we each frame communication from a unique set of criteria that no one else could possibly have; our 'terms of reference'. The potential for miscommunication as a result is therefore very high, even higher if there are language barriers.

When communicating in business, particularly across international borders, it is important to read and use body language. Good eye contact, open gestures and a lack of distracting fidgeting motions all help, as do having a clear idea of the message and desired outcome.

And, of course, communication is not a one way process, so it's vital that the signs of understanding are being read; eye contact, nodding, smiling and asking questions are good signs, whereas distractedly looking around the room and fidgeting are clearly very bad signs of boredom and disengagement. Encouraging questions throughout the communication or presentation is also vital, as it helps to establish understanding of the content and provides an opportunity for any tricky points to be covered again or explained further if they are being misunderstood. Never assume that you have been understood until you know you have.

Jargon, business-speak and heavily technical language should be avoided, as these can overcomplicate matters and detract from the overall message. Equally, overly complex visuals and presentation formats can distract from the core message and switch off the audience's interest like a light bulb. 'Death by PowerPoint' is an oft-repeated phrase and a phenomenon which most people will have experienced at one time or another during their careers. Needless and seemingly endless PowerPoint slides add nothing to the presentation and messages being given, but simply repeat what is being said by the presenter, or vice versa.

The secret to creating an impact when presenting or communicating is to engage the audience by creating trust, which provides a human connection. This can be done by identifying common ground, a link or shared value. A good way to broach this is for you to give some personal information about yourself, which can immediately create a connection and the opportunity to glean information about the audience too, such as interests and passions which can form the basis for a common point of reference.

Being aware of cultural differences is also crucial. For example, some cultures don't shake hands; some are more literal in their descriptions than others who use copious metaphors. Gestures and greetings vary between countries and, while a kiss on each cheek may be acceptable when meeting clients in parts of Europe and the UK, it would certainly not be acceptable in some other countries. The definition of a working lunch also varies from country to county too. In Germany it is unacceptable to continue talking shop whilst eating, all work talk must stop, whereas in the UK it perfectly acceptable to continue chatting over your sandwiches at the board

table, to save time. Humour also varies between countries, so it is vital to be wary of the fact that what might be found hilarious by a UK audience may seriously offend others, or leave them puzzled as to its meaning.

These communication issues should also be considered when issuing or distributing written content too and not just in face to face communication. **The old adage of 'keep it simple stupid' (KISS)** comes into play here, especially when developing client/follower newsletters and direct marketing materials. Albert Einstein once said, "If you can't explain it to a six year old, then you don't understand it yourself" and if you throw international communication into the mix too, complex or wordy materials will simply confuse the message.

In today's business environment, the ability to communicate effectively across geographies and cultures is increasingly important. Do you know that someone from a different culture may be showing you respect by avoiding eye contact in conversation? Culture might also explain why you don't receive quick e-mail replies from colleagues or clients in Asia.

In the West, it is common for managers to ask for opinions and feedback from subordinates. But in some cultures that behavior may be interpreted as a weakness in leadership. Saying "give it to me straight" may be direct. It's not the most effective way to obtain information from colleagues or subordinates in other cultures.

So how can a leader and follower engage in a seamless cross- cultural communication and avoid confusion and conflict?

1. Familiarize yourself with cultural basics.

If you're going to be doing business with someone from a different country or culture, acquaint yourself with the basics in advance, Cotton recommends. A simple online search for the location or culture with the words "cultural competence" will yield several web sites with information and resources to help you understand cultural norms and cautions.

2. Pay attention to your gestures.

In-person or on video conference calls, simple gestures and stances can mean wildly different things in different cultures. For example, sitting casually with a foot resting on the opposite knee is the equivalent of showing one's foot, which is a highly offensive gesture to some people from the Middle East.

While hugging or kissing is a common greeting in some cultures, touching -- even the simple act of shaking hands -- may be verboten, especially between men and women. Choose a more formal demeanor with good posture, feet on the floor or crossed at the ankle, and hands folded or at your sides if you are unsure of what is acceptable and what's not.

3. Take cues from clues.

Whether in person or online, take your cues from the other person's communication. Cotton says people's use of chit-chat, even in electronic correspondence, before they start talking about business is a clue that the individual is social and that you shouldn't jump right into business conversation. If you cut them off and dive into correspondence about work, they are going to feel like they haven't had the time to interact with you in the way that they need to before business talk starts, that could hinder the relationship.

4. Start reserved.

It's usually best to keep business interactions toned down and professional until you get a sense of what the other person expects, Avoid slang or informalities, and carry yourself the way you would if you were meeting a dignitary. You can always adjust to a more animated, informal or affectionate manner, but more conservative people may be put off by anything less than a reserved and respectful manner.

As a leader, you must inspire others through your words and actions. And before you speak, make sure you listen and observe; knowing your audience is as important as the message you're delivering. Communication informs, persuades, guides, and assures, as well as inspires. You must be willing to reveal more of yourself, to let others see your soul. If you don't, you will undermine your effectiveness as a leader, and your followers may soon drift to the sidelines.

III. UNDERSTANDING COMMUNICATION STYLE

Communicating effectively is a big challenge for cross- cultural teams because communication styles differ so much across cultures. For team members to work through these differences, they first have to understand that people communicate differently.

- Direct communicators – say what is on their mind, and they deal with conflict by addressing it promptly
- Indirect communicators - speak around an issue, use nonverbal cues and carefully choose words to avoid offense
- Informal communication – communicates informally, speak as equals, avoid titles, interrupt or speak over each other

•Formal communication – polite, wait their turn to speak, wait for their manager to speak first
As a leader you need to recognize such dynamics and develop an environment that brings out the best performance of all individuals.

Language: Accents and the quality of spoken language have become major challenges for cross-cultural teams. Language difficulties can impede conversations, which may have to be planned ahead so messages can be conveyed accurately.

To combat this, leaders/followers should:

- Develop listening skills
- Be respectful
- Speaking more slowly
- Avoid slang or idioms
- Be patient

IV. CONCLUSION

It is my view that regardless of what nation we live in, our line of business or our personal ideology, good communication spans borders and touches people in a unique and memorable way and taking into consideration the factors above can make the difference between a real connection and a communication breakdown.

Good communication helps in building proper understanding between the leader and follower; that actually contributes to the development of a better and healthier relationship. Communication doesn't mean you just talk to the other or point out mistakes; it's about helping one another to understand the different perspectives so as to avoid unnecessary arguments and misunderstandings. Good communication is an essential tool in achieving productivity and maintaining strong working relationships at all levels of an organization. It is basically the keystone on which you can build a happy relationship.

Leaders who invest time and energy into delivering clear lines of communication will rapidly build up levels of trust amongst followers, leading to increases in productivity, output and morale in general. Poor communication in the workplace will inevitably lead to unmotivated staff that may begin to question their own confidence in their abilities and inevitably in the organization.

Finally - leadership is essentially a communication-based activity. John Maxwell defined leadership as "influence," and no influence is possible without communication. Spending time, energy and resources to improve your communication efficiency is therefore an investment in your leadership calling, and should be a prime priority for any leader looking to improve his or her impact and influence.

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