

Organizational communication and Channels

A study of Sangam, Cooperative dairy in Guntur district, AP

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Abstract

Communication has been found to contribute much more to the effective functioning of the organizations especially if it has large number of stakeholders such as employees, customers as well as other public. Flow of information in a multitude of directions shall communicate the policies, solutions to problems as well as ideologies of any organization. This flow is mediated by large variety of channels that are diverse, and heterogeneous in their functioning also. The purpose of this study is to assess the Effectiveness of Organizational Communication channels used by Sangam dairy to communicate with its publics to enhance corporate reputation. The study is supported by theories of Lasswell model, Shannon and Weavers communication transmission model, Schramm's model of Communication. Furthermore, the study used survey as the research method to gather data gathering and this technique is the most suitable one to collect data from the different publics at the dairy. Recommendations were made to enable the organization to achieve maximum efficiency in communication. Improvements that are required are mentioned so as to help future research.

Introduction

Organizational communication focuses on the place of communication in an organizational set up and has been defined by various scholars as a process where an organization sends, receives,

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encodes and decodes messages amongst its internal and external publics. Turkalj and Fosić (2009:33) assert that organizational communication implies communication among employees, as well as communication between different hierarchical levels in the same organization. The success and growth of a company depends on the effectiveness of their communication channels. Organizational communication is thus perceived as central to organization success. In sustaining relationships among publics of an organization communication play a crucial role (McCroskey 2005). In the context of fast changing trends and emerging challenges the organizations need to prepare themselves as well as the publics to cope the situations and diligence in handling them. In a recent analysis of 23 introductory organizational communication text books (Aust, Limon, & Lippert, 2002) one of the most important aspects is how will the message be presented. This message should be prepared in a meticulous manner so that the receivers are well equipped with nuances of it and the objective of sending it would be realized. This strategizing includes when the message will be presented, who will present the message, and the medium utilized. The Communication among the staff at various levels involves written, oral, face to face and other types to deal with employees of various departments. Written communication includes written words, graphs, pictures and diagrams etc. Both of the media or channels have its own strengths and weaknesses which determine its use and suitability for communication in any particular context. Similarly, spoken word, though a powerful communication medium with high degree of potentiality for speedy and complete interchange of information, suffers from the disadvantage of absence of any permanent record, possibility of its not being read or correctly understood etc. All these channels of communication attempt at analyzing the use by both subordinates as well as supervisor's in communicating various subject matters.

In organizations newsletters, circulation materials, surveys, meetings, in-house television, face-to-face interactions, email, hotlines, suggestion boxes, internet, telephone calls, videoconferences, memos, letters, notice boards, formal presentations, reports, open forums, blogs, and wikis are used to communicate with publics of various department and with those in its various branches (Argenti, 1998; Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Baumruk et al., 2006; Debussy et al., 2003; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Hunt & Ebeling, 1983; Yates, 2006). For many decades, in-house publications have been viewed as the solution to communication with employees, while more personal communication methods have been under utilised. According to Yates (2006)

“effective communication practices drive employee engagement, commitment, retention, and productivity, which, in turn translate into enhanced business performance that generate superior financial returns” (p. 72).

Communication channels were studied in respect of their utilization by the management personnel at different levels of management in the organization. Most of them are being used by the upper level of management personnel followed by middle, lower and staff level of management personnel. The order with which the communication channels are being used is telephone, office letters, formal meetings, circulars, reports, office orders, work orders, lectures, institutional literatures, leaflets, pamphlets, folders, employee handbook, memos, formal interviews, posters, charts, photographs, films, slides and transparencies respectively. All the above-mentioned elements in the communication process are executed as a combination of both the message and medium. Media richness theory argues that the richness as well as effectiveness of a channel are based on the number and ‘mix’ of cues (visual, audio, and written). It contains, the availability and rapidity of feedback, the extent to which it facilitates interactivity and participation by all parties and the capacity to provide emotional as well as cognitive information. There is a hierarchical list of channel richness with face-to-face providing the richest channel and typed memos at the bottom. Choices as to the most suitable channel to use in any situation depend upon a range of factors (Korda and Itani, 2013). For example, the face-to-face channel is preferred for important or personal information whereas the email channel is preferred for less important or routine information.

Effectiveness

The organization deals with them regularly through various channels. Though there is no separate dept the communication is being handled by the company in a semi professional manner. The HR department is in charge of all the communication functions of the organization. The department interacts with the different publics of the organization regarding its position and goals by informing them through different channels of communication that have been adopted (McCroskey *ibid*). Malan and Estrange (1988:2) felt that only when a company’s good qualities are known to the outside world they would be appreciated and supported. It suggests that the unique and special features of an organization should be informed to the stakeholders through

communication. From this it is evident that Communication plays a significant role in success of any organization (Turkalj and Fosić 2009:34). In this context we should try to find out as to what extent do different channels of communication enforce effective organizational communication.

Theoretical framework

In the Human resource approach, managers recognize the innate abilities of employees and typically adopt a participative management style which encourages such behaviour, that is, loose control, heavy delegation of authority, and a reward system designed to promote initiative, creativity and high job performance. At the heart of a participative style lies communication (Gibson and Hodgetts 1989, 38).

The communication status during the human resource management era was both formal and informal in nature. Communication took whatever direction necessary to ensure efficiency and effectiveness, and was used for more than mere control purposes, namely to support participative planning. Decision-making processes were decentralized and, in many cases, authority based on knowledge replaced authority of the position. Furthermore, the informal organization was an important part of organizational life and management encouraged its support and assistance. The purpose of communication was to tap the full potential of all individual organizational members (Gibson and Hodgetts 1989, p.45-46; Narayanan and Nath 1993, p.40).

Thus the study would be influenced by four theories which try to explain the flow of information within and outside an organization. These theories included the concept of, Lasswell (1948) model of communication, Shannon and Weaver (1949) Communication Transmission Model, Schramm (1954) organizational model and Bureaucracy Theory. The theories chosen helped in assessing the effectiveness of different channels of communication.

Each theory emphasizes the way of sending information to its intended audiences and how they interpret it. To assess the effectiveness of the channels of communication, the researcher employed triangulation which helped in the collection of relevant information on the channels of communication and their effectiveness. This method assisted in understanding of beliefs, concerns, and preferences regarding the channels of communication used in the company. The

purpose of this study is to examine whether employee engagement is influenced by these elements.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher investigated the following question

1. What are the major communication channels in the program?
2. How do the staff members use these communication channels?
3. Which communication channels are more effective?
4. What changes can be made to improve the current communication channels?

Basing on the above, the researcher assessed the importance of communication at Sangam dairy the different channels of communication and how effective they are and how they have benefited the company. Sangam, a milk processing dairy was established in 1989, in cooperative sector in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. With more than 1200 permanent employees and a strong marketing division the dairy has milk producers, milk buyers and procurement as well as marketing staff as stake holders.

Objectives: The researcher tried

1. to find out as to what type of communication channels are used by Sangam dairy management
2. to find out whether the channels of communication used by the company are effective in communicating with both their internal and external publics
3. to find out whether the company have regular communication platforms and how effective are they

Methodology

The study used quantitative analysis as the sole research paradigm for organizational communication; it offers the best approach in that it explains deeply the communication interaction process. It delves deeper into issues that the quantitative method cannot explain. This research is therefore largely qualitative but would also borrow from the quantitative tradition. This method is going to be used in collecting relevant data on the channels of communication and their effectiveness in disseminating information to the publics at the dairy. The study has a sample size was 250 people of who were randomly selected. The study implored convenience

sampling because some of the targeted population like the employees were not available or too busy. Thus the researcher had to work with those most convenient to him. Again purposive sampling was used in the research to get rich information for in-depth analysis of the core issues being studied above.

CSQ is “arguably the best measure of communication satisfaction in the organizational arena” (Clampitt and Downs, 1993) and Communication audits consistently show that though not all communication climate, communication with supervisors (Madlock, 2008), and personal feedback are the dimensions most strongly correlated with overall communication satisfaction (Downs and Adrian, 2004, p. 155; Downs and Hazen, 1977). The study therefore used questionnaire for data gathering as questionnaires made it easy to collect large quantities of data from considerable number of people who are working in the organization. The data was generated to establish the effectiveness of organizational communication channels used by Sangam to communicate with its Publics. The researcher administered questionnaires to a total of 250 across all the four groups of stakeholders. The respondents include those from top management, employees and the external publics of the organization, mainly those in the production as well as marketing community. Few were administered at department, all of them were returned and the respondents expressed satisfaction at the way communication was being carried out at main plant as well as in its subsidiary units.

Data analysis

With regard to the no. of employees in respondent’s department, 52.2% of the respondents are having below 20 employees, followed by 20-50 employees(41%), 50-100 employees (4.4%) and above 100 employees(2.4%). (Table 1)

Table 1

Percentage distribution of the respondents, according to the no. of Employees in their Department

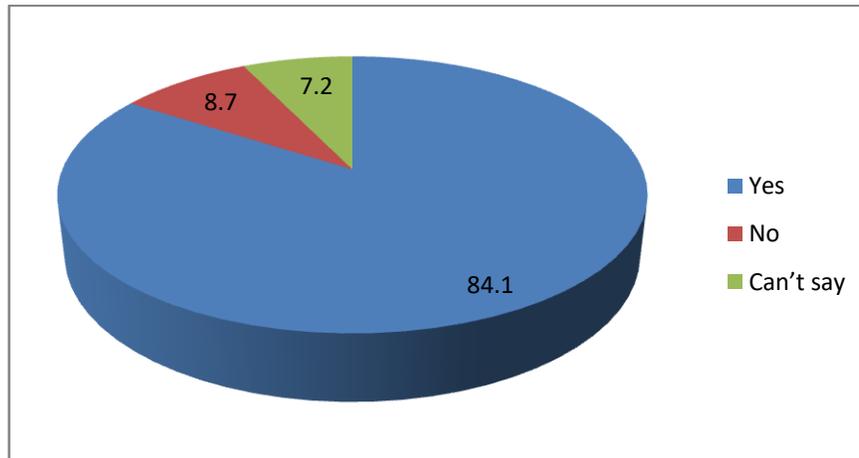
S.No	Work in shifts	fr	%
1	Below 20 employees	108	52.2
2	20 to 50 employees	85	41.0
3	50 to 100 employees	9	4.4
4	100 above	5	2.4
Total		207	100

With regard to the adequacy of the communication in the organization, 84.1% of the respondents opined that it is adequate, 8.7% answered negatively and 7.2% are not sure (Table 2).

Table 2

Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the adequacy of the amount of communication

S.No		fr	%
1	Yes	174	84.1
2	No	18	8.7
3	Can't say	15	7.2
Total		207	100

Figure 1**Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the attitude towards communication in the company**

With regard to the frequency of using of channels for communication, in case of face to face meetings, 61.4% of the respondents using it once in a day, followed by once in a week (15.9%), once in a month (11.6%), every alternative day (7.7%) and thrice in a week (3.4%). In case of letters, 29% of the respondents using it once in a month, followed by once in a week (28.5%), once in a day (19.3%), every alternative day(15%) and thrice in a week (8.2%). In case of circulars, 32.4% of the respondents using it once in a month, followed by once in a week (27.1%), once in a day (17.4%), every alternative day(12.6%) and thrice in a week (10.6%). In case of reports, 49.8% of the respondents are using once in a month, followed by once in a day (22.7%), once in a week (15.9%), every alternative day(7.7%) and thrice in a week(3.9%). In case of notice boards, 58% of respondents are using it once in a month, followed by once in a week(15.9%), once in a day(13.5%), every alternative day(6.8%), and thrice in a week (5.8%). In case of meetings, 68.1% of the respondents are using once in a month, followed by Once in a week (16.4%), once in a day (6.8%), every alternative day(5.8%) and thrice in a week (2.9%). In case of phone calls, 83.1% of the respondents are using once in a day, followed by once in a month (6.8%), every alternative day(5.3%), thrice in a week (3.4%) and once in a week (1.4%). In case of SMS, 41.5% of respondents are using once in a month followed by once in a day(36.2%), once in a week(9.7%), every alternative day(6.8%), thrice in a week(5.8%). In case

of e-mails, 54.6% of the employees using once in a month followed by once in a day(28.5%), once in a week(10.1%), thrice in a week(3.9%), and every alternative day(2.9%). In case of news letters, 85% are using once in a month, followed by once in a week (5.3%), once in a day (4.3%) every alternative day(3.4%) and thrice in a week (1.9%). In case of others, 88.4% of the respondent are using once in a month, followed by once in a week (4.3%), once in a day (2.9%), every alternative day(2.4%) and thrice in a week(1.9%)(Table 3).

Table 3

Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the frequency of usage of channels for communication

Sl.No.	Channels	Once in a day		Every Alternative Day		Thrice in a week		Once in a week		Once in month	
		fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%
1	Face to Face Meetings	127	61.4	16	7.7	7	3.4	33	15.9	24	11.6
2	Letters	40	19.3	31	15.0	17	8.2	59	28.5	60	29.0
3	Circulars	36	17.4	26	12.6	22	10.6	56	27.1	67	32.4
4	Reports	47	22.7	16	7.7	8	3.9	33	15.9	103	49.8
5	Notice Boards	28	13.5	14	6.8	12	5.8	33	15.9	120	58.0
6	Meetings	14	6.8	12	5.8	6	2.9	34	16.4	141	68.1
7	Phone Calls	172	83.1	11	5.3	7	3.4	3	1.4	14	6.8
8	SMS	75	36.2	14	6.8	12	5.8	20	9.7	86	41.5
9	E-mails	59	28.5	6	2.9	8	3.9	21	10.1	113	54.6
10	News letters	9	4.3	7	3.4	4	1.9	11	5.3	176	85.0
11	Others	6	2.9	5	2.4	4	1.9	9	4.3	183	88.4

$\chi^2 = 986.9854$ df = 40 $p < 0.00001$ and is significant at 0.01 level

With regard to effectiveness of channels of communication, in case of face to face meetings 57.5% of the respondents have opined it as effective, followed by very much effective(31.9%), average(9.2%), not effective (1%), and not at all effective(0.5%). In case of letters, 72.5% of the respondents have opined it as effective, followed by very much effective (14%), average(11.1%), not effective(1.4%) and not at all effective(1%). In case of circulars, 58% of the respondents have opined it as effective, followed by average (22.2%), very much effective (18.8%), not effective(0.5%) and not at all effective (0.5%). In case of reports, 53.6% of the respondents have opined it as effective followed by average (29%), very much effective (15%), not effective(1.4%) and not at all effective(1%). In case of notice Boards, 39.6% of the respondents have opined it as average followed by effective (37.2%), very much effective (17.4%), not effective(3.9%) and not at all effective (1.9%). In case of meetings, 66.2% of the respondents have opined it as effective, followed by very much effective (20.8%), average (11.1%), not effective (1%) and not at all effective (1%). In case of phone calls, 65.2% of the respondents have opined it as effective, followed by very much effective (26.6%), average (5.8%), not effective (1.9%) and not at all effective (0.5%). In case of SMS, 48.8% of the respondents have opined it as effective followed by average (30.9%), very much effective (11.6%), not effective (6.3%) and not at all effective (2.4%). In case of E-mails, 30.9% respondents have opined it as not effective, followed by effective (28%), average (19.8%), very much effective (14%), not at all effective (7.2%). In case of news Letters, 50.7% of the respondents have opined it as not at all effective, followed by effective (16.9%), not effective (14.5%), average (13.5%), very much effective (4.3%). In case of others, 54.6% of the respondents have opined it as not at all effective followed by average (15%), effective (13.5%), not effective (13.5%) and very much effective (3.4%) (Table. 4)

Table 4**Percentage distribution of the respondents, how effective the channels for communication**

Sl.No.	Channels	Very much effective		Effective		Average		Not effective		Not at all effective	
		fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%
1	Face to Face Meetings	66	31.9	119	57.5	19	9.2	2	1.0	1	0.5
2	Letters	29	14.0	150	72.5	23	11.1	3	1.4	2	1.0
3	Circulars	39	18.8	120	58.0	46	22.2	1	0.5	1	0.5
4	Reports	31	15.0	111	53.6	60	29.0	3	1.4	2	1.0
5	Notice Boards	36	17.4	77	37.2	82	39.6	8	3.9	4	1.9
6	Meetings	43	20.8	137	66.2	23	11.1	2	1.0	2	1.0
7	Phone Calls	55	26.6	135	65.2	12	5.8	4	1.9	1	0.5
8	SMS	24	11.6	101	48.8	64	30.9	13	6.3	5	2.4
9	E-mails	29	14.0	58	28.0	41	19.8	64	30.9	15	7.2
10	News letters	9	4.3	35	16.9	28	13.5	30	14.5	105	50.7
11	Others	7	3.4	28	13.5	31	15.0	28	13.5	113	54.6

$$\chi^2 = 1463.621 \quad df = 40 \quad p=0.00001 \text{ and is significant at } 0.01 \text{ level}$$

With regard to which level the Respondents often met for communication, in case of One to One Group, 57.5% met regularly, followed by very regularly(20.8%), normally(11.1%), rarely(9.2%), and very rarely (1.4%). In case of small group, 55.1% of the respondents often meet normally, followed by regularly (27.1%), rarely(10.6%), very rarely (4.3%) and very regularly(2.9%). In case of department, 32.9% of the respondents met rarely followed by regularly (28%), normally (23.7%), very regularly (13.5%), and very rarely (1.9%). In case of All staff 35.7% of the respondents met rarely, followed by normally (23.2%), regularly (21.7%), very regularly (13.5%) and very rarely (5.8%) (Table. 5).

Table 5**Percentage distribution of the respondents, which level they often met for communication**

Sl.No.	Group	Very Regularly		Regularly		Normal		Rarely		Very Rarely	
		fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%
1	One to One	43	20.8	119	57.5	23	11.1	19	9.2	3	1.4
2	Small Group	6	2.9	56	27.1	114	55.1	22	10.6	9	4.3
3	Departmental	28	13.5	58	28.0	49	23.7	68	32.9	4	1.9
4	All Staff	28	13.5	45	21.7	48	23.2	74	35.7	12	5.8

$$\chi^2 = 208.819 \text{ df} = 12 \text{ p}=0.00001 \text{ which is significant at 0.01 level}$$

Discussion

The study used quantitative analysis to find out as to what is the sole research paradigm for organizational communication. The study identified a population of 522 and set the sample size of 250 people who were randomly selected. Communication satisfaction questionnaire, CSQ is used as the tool to collect data and Communication audits consistently show that though not all communication climate, communication with supervisors (Madlock, 2008), and personal feedback are the dimensions most strongly correlated with overall communication satisfaction. The researchers studied the pattern of usage of channels and opinions of the sample with regard to their effectiveness. With regard to the communication with the number of employees in respondent's department, half of the respondents are communicating regularly with less than 20 employees and only 2.4% deal with more than 100 people. With regard to the adequacy of the communication in the organization, a maximum majority opined that it is adequate and more than half of them said that face to face meetings are used by more than half in a day, followed by once in a week whereas circulars are dispatched once in a month, followed by once in a week. Reports say that half of the respondents are using once in a month, followed by once in a day. Notice Boards, Meetings, are conducted on a monthly basis. In case of Phone calls regular usage is observed and less than half uses SMS also regularly whereas e-mails and news letters are being used once in a month.

With regard to effectiveness of channels of communication, in case of face to face meetings 57.5% of the respondents have opined it as effective, and in case of letters, 72.5% of the respondents have opined it as effective,. In case of circulars, reports and notice boards around half of them said effective which shows that traditional channels are favoured by them. In case of meetings, 66.2% of the respondents have opined it as effective and the same number appreciated phone calls. Interestingly SMS are favoured by half of them and one fourth use E-mails effectively shows that despite the presence of dairy in rural area modern tools are being engaged. News Letters and others are not much appreciated which is an indication that modern methods need to be employed. With regard to levels of interaction more than half consider one to one group as well as small group are effective and in case of departmental level less than half meet regularly. Same is the case with all the staff which indicates that traditional pattern is followed other than the professional pattern of staff meetings.

Conclusions

From the data collected it is understood that the communication seems to be still traditional format and need to be improved.

1. Interpersonal communication may be improved by conduction get together or participatory method can be introduced.
2. Apart from the regular channels new media as well as social media can be introduced.
3. Awareness programmes may be conducted by the management to facilitate more information flow among the staff.
4. Information overload, gossip is some of the impediments that also should be tackled effectively.
5. Already existing patterns such as inter personal as well as group communication may be improved upon to suit the contemporary needs of the staff.

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