

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

In an organization, there are a lot of messages that employees have to convey in working each day. Messages in an organization flow from managers to subordinates (downward communication), flow from subordinates to managers (upward communication) and flow laterally between persons of the same position (horizontal communication). Effective communication is a major component of an effective organization. Research from Gochman, 2007 shows that good communication is linked to high levels of employee engagement. According to Gochman, the Watson Wyatt's Work USA 2006/2007 survey of 12,205 full time US workers found that 56% of highly engaged employees are much more likely to receive communication from senior managers at least once a month. In contrast, 42% of low-engaged employees say they receive annual communication or no communication at all. This means that employees who enjoy frequent communication from senior management are more likely to be engaged with their organization. Another study found that employee satisfaction is more influenced by how people communicate than by level of earnings. According to a survey by an HR consultant, Chiumento, 2007, British workers say good relations with colleagues are more important to workplace happiness than financial reward. The study found that 73% of employees feel strong interaction with colleagues creates a positive working environment and less than 50% mentioned pay as a factor in their enjoyment of the workplace. Therefore, communication is an important component of an organization.

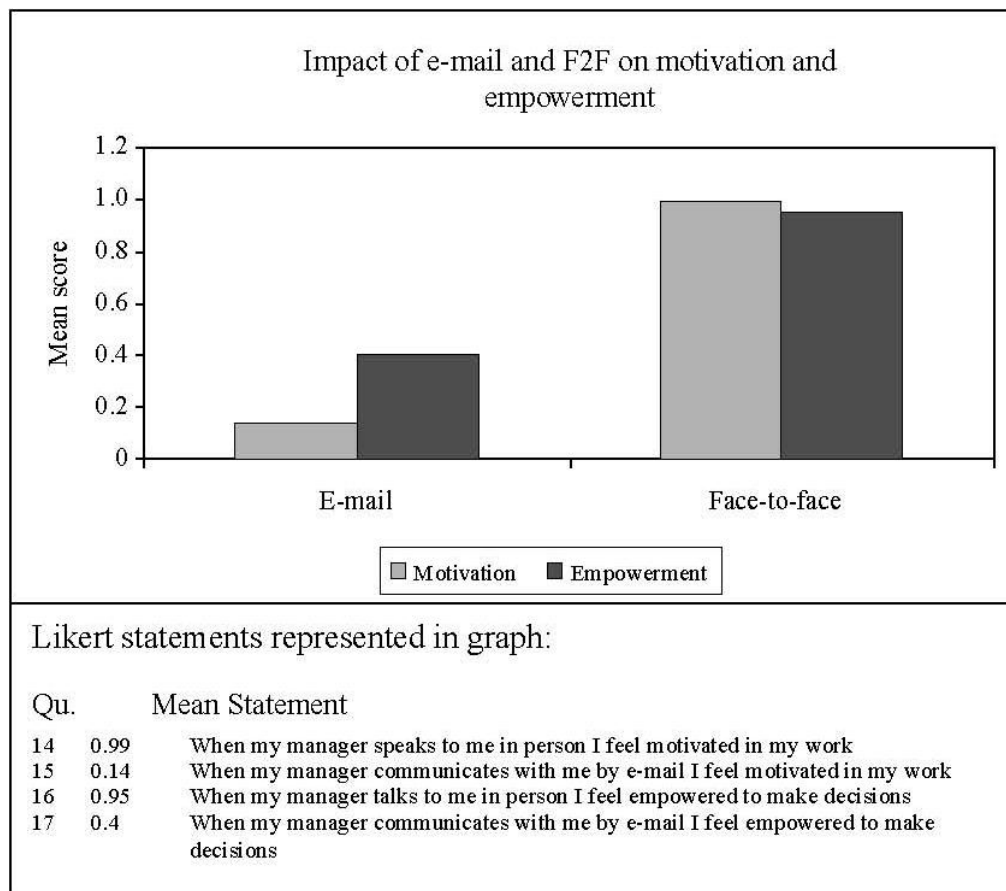
The success of internal communication depends on many factors. The channel for communication is an important factor. Zetterquist and Quirke (2007) state in *Transforming Internal Communication at Ericsson* that "a comprehensive analysis of the function and channel helped clarify a new strategy more focused on business needs"(p.19). They analyzed the restructuring in Ericsson's approach to internal communication in 2007 and found that communication channels are one of the four crucial communication areas to achieve their objectives, which is to give both communicators and leaders the skills needed to drive business performance. There are

several channels used for internal communication in an organization, such as face-to-face meetings, group meetings, email, memos, journals, posters, telephones and so on. Internal communication teams need to understand which channels are used by employees for different types of information, how well communication channels are working and what way is the best to give people the information they need (p.19).

In an organization, many types of messages flow from management to subordinates (downward communication) such as job instructions, job rationale, policy and procedures and so on. While flowing, those messages were received and interpreted by employees and then communicated back to the managers (upward communication). There are two major channels, electronic mail (e-mail) and face-to-face (FTF), that are often used in communication between managers and subordinates.

Nowadays, employees use e-mail as a communication medium in their work because of its high capability. Adam (2002) states that people say that they are able to communicate more openly in the work place by e-mail. That is because employees can contact others to obtain information without the need for a discussion about unnecessary topics that waste their time. However, each employee is currently spending about four hours a day reading and composing emails and it may cause stress in the workplace (p.86). Moreover, employees may waste their working time reading many e-mails each day.

Hewitt (2006) states that written communication is not the best medium for getting a message across in every situation, and it is often not the best way to motivate employees. He explains that internal communication is more likely to be effective if communication is balanced with the possibility for dynamic feedback which is more likely in a FTF channel.



From “ Electronic Mail and Internal Communication: A three-factor model,” by P. Hewitt, 2006, *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*; Vol.11, No. 1, 2006, p.86

Hewitt (2006) surveyed the impact of e-mail and FTF on motivation and empowerment in an organization. The results show that e-mail has no significant positive impact on the effectiveness of the line manager’s relationship with staff. Unsurprisingly, staff felt much more empowered and motivated by FTF interactions with their line managers. Therefore, FTF communication is the best way of building strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect. Today’s employees do not want only high-tech and sophisticated communications, they also want personal contact with their managers. This understanding can help internal communication in an organization to be more effective.

Like other organizations, MSD (Thailand) Ltd. has a lot of communication between managers and subordinates via e-mail and FTF communication. Employees spend a lot of time reading and sending e-mails. When the e-mail server goes down, they feel frustrated and uncomfortable. However, FTF communication is still highly

used to process work in the company. Currently, there is no examination of employee satisfaction with communication via these two channels. According to the study of Byrne and LeMay (2006), there is a correlation between satisfaction of an employee and the communication channel. This study will find the level of employee satisfaction with internal communication channels between e-mail and FTF communication focused on communication between managers and subordinates. As communication is an important component to an organization's success as mentioned above, the findings will help the company to improve its internal communication and help employees to communicate effectively.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

As communication is an important component to an organization's success, this survey was conducted to measure employees' satisfaction with two primary channels of communication: Electronic mail and Face-to-Face communication. Therefore, the survey aimed to answer the following questions:

Main question

- Are the employees satisfied with the two primary communication channels: Electronic Mail and Face-to-Face communication?

Sub-questions

1. To what degree are the employees satisfied with these communication channels: Electronic Mail (e-mail) and Face-to-Face communication (FTF communication)?
2. What are employees' problems when they communicate via e-mail and the FTF channel?
3. What are the characteristics of employees who prefer communication via e-mail or FTF channel?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 Main objective:

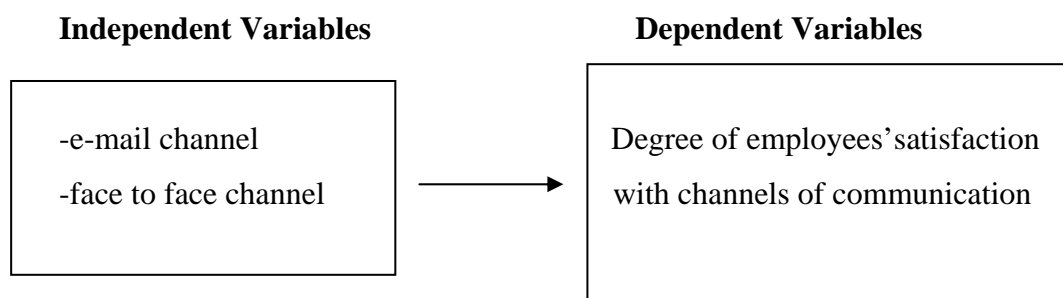
To measure satisfaction of employees with the two primary communication channels: Electronic Mail and Face-to-Face communication.

1.3.2 Sub-Objectives:

1. To investigate the problems that employees face when communicating via e-mail and FTF channel.
2. To describe the characteristics of employees who prefer communication via e-mail or FTF channels.

1.4 VARIABLES AND DEFINITIONS

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of satisfaction of employees with channels of communication in MSD (Thailand) Ltd: Electronic Mail Versus Face-to-Face Communication.



Term Definitions

In order to understand the terms used in this study, the researcher provides the definitions of terms as follows:

Conceptual Definition

<i>Satisfaction</i>	Employees' needs, wants and expectations throughout their communication.
<i>Office based staff</i>	Employees who work in the MSD (Thailand) Ltd. office in Bangkok.
<i>Electronic Mail</i>	The computer's version of the postal service or interoffice mail.
<i>Face-to-Face Communication</i>	An employee meets and talks with others directly.

Operational Definition

<i>Satisfaction</i>	The degree of agreement/satisfaction or disagreement/dissatisfaction toward e-mail and face-to-face communication channels.
<i>Office based staff</i>	Superiors and subordinates who work in the MSD (Thailand) Ltd. office in Bangkok.
<i>Electronic Mail</i>	The degree of employees' satisfaction with e-mail communication in terms of quality of information, feedback and communication climate.
<i>Face-to-Face Communication</i>	The degree of employees' satisfaction with face-to-face communication in terms of quality of information, feedback and communication climate.

Indicator

<i>Satisfaction</i>	Likert 5-point scale: Strongly agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree and Strongly disagree.
<i>Office based staff</i>	Classificatory scale: Superior and Subordinate
<i>Electronic Mail</i>	Likert 5-point scale: Extremely satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied and Extremely dissatisfied.
<i>Face-to-Face Communication</i>	Likert 5-point scale: Extremely satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dissatisfied and Extremely dissatisfied.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on only office based employees who work in the MSD (Thailand) Ltd. office in Bangkok. The study aims to measure the level of employees' satisfaction. Moreover, the study investigated problems that employees face when communicating via e-mail and by face-to-face communication and the characteristics of employees who prefer each type of communication.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The benefits of this study are as follows:

1. The results of this study will be presented to the Human Resources Department, MSD (Thailand) Ltd. so that the organization will know the level of satisfaction of employees with the two primary communication channels: e-mail and face-to-face channel.
2. The organization will become aware of the problems investigated in the survey so that they will be solved in the future.
3. In addition, the results from the study can be used as a guideline for further research about organizational communication.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study of the satisfaction of employees with channels of communication in this paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter one includes the background of organizational communication and statement of the problem, which led to the objectives, the scope of the study, the definition of terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter two is designed to review the related literature concerning communication satisfaction and organizational communication and relevant research. Chapter three describes the subjects, materials, procedures, and data analysis. Chapter four presents the findings of the study. Chapter five includes a summary of the study, findings, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further study. In the appendix, the researcher included the questionnaire which was used for data collection from the sample group.