

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature regarding related theories, concepts, and relevant research. The summary of the four main parts is as follows:

2.1 Theory of Communication Satisfaction

2.2 The Concept of Organizational Communication

2.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Email and Face-to-Face Communication

2.4 Relevant Research

2.1 THEORY OF COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION

Byrne and LeMay (2006) stated that communication satisfaction is comprised of nine perspectives which have been shown to be significantly related to job satisfaction. Of most interest to the current study are the following three perspectives: (1) communication climate, which refers to communication on both the organizational and personal levels such as information about the organization and job expectations, (2) organizational integration, which refers to satisfaction of information individuals receive about the organization and their immediate job environment, and (3) organizational perspective, which reflects satisfaction in the information relating to the overall functioning of the organization, such as company finances, goals and policies. Communication satisfaction can be constructed by the effectiveness of the media (i.e., organization of meetings, well written documents), coworker communications, the extent to which supervisors listen or offer problem solving help and the extent to which subordinates are responsive to communication (p.152). In addition, trust in management has been shown to be significantly related to satisfaction in communication (p.153). They state that when employees perceived they could trust their immediate supervisor, they believed that the information their supervisor shared was accurate, which is a component of quality information. Therefore, trust in management is necessary to include when examining the satisfaction of information and perceived quality of information from the supervisor.

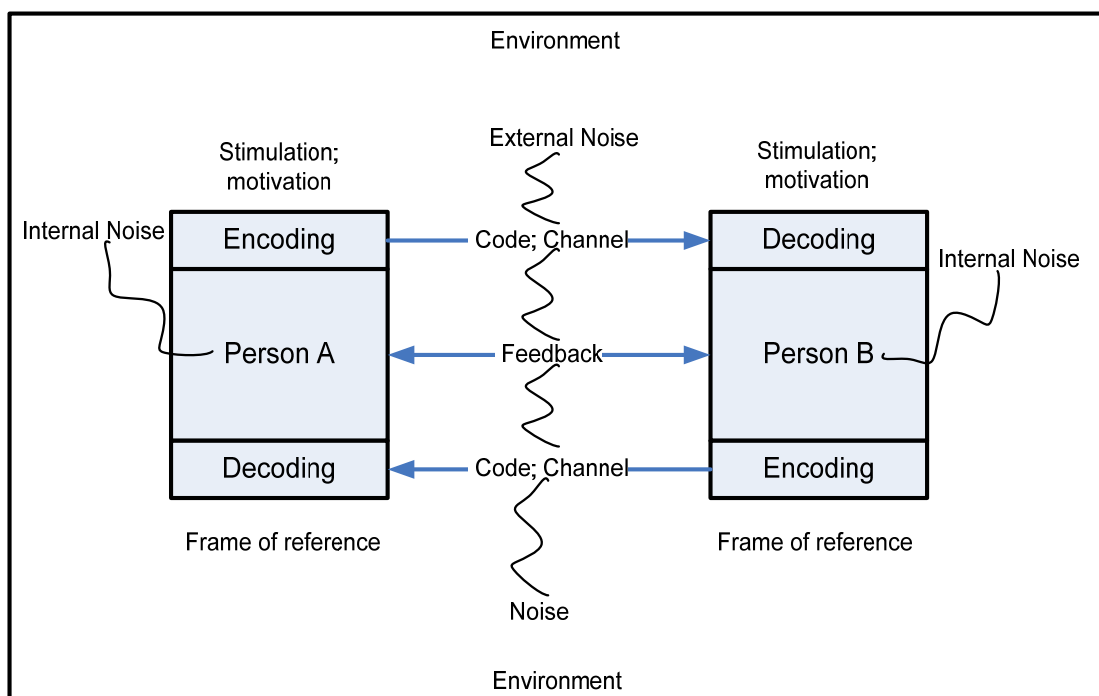
Utairat Atsawarit (1994) explained that satisfaction in communication relates to attitudes of employees toward communications in an organization which are

messages, communication channels, communication climate, communication with supervisors and communication with co-workers. If communication in an organization fulfills an employee's needs, it will satisfy the employee.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

The communication process between supervisor and subordinate is important and related to communication satisfaction. To understand the communication process, a basic model of communication is explained below.

A basic model of communication



From *Communicating for Results* (p.4), by C. Hamilton and C. Parker, 1997)

When communicating with only one person, with a small group, or with many people, the same basic process occurs. This basic model of communication by Hamilton and Parker (1997) explains the communication process and the role that each element plays. Understanding the communication process helps communicators reduce misunderstandings in communication. In the model, person A could be the sender (the source of the message) or the receiver (the interpreter of the message). Person B also could be either the sender or the receiver. Actually, during most of their communication, they will both send and receive simultaneously. For example, when

managers initiate conversation, they are the senders and the subordinates are the receiver. However, when the subordinates respond, the managers become the receivers and the subordinates are the senders.

Code and Channel

Code and channel are the important elements in the communication process. There are three basic communication codes: language (verbal code), paralanguage (vocal code) and nonverbal (visual code). “To communicate effectively, the sender must communicate the same message by all three codes. Whenever there is a conflict among the messages received, people tend to believe more of what they see than what they hear” (Hamilton & Parker, 1997, p. 14). The success of one's message may depend on the channel one selects. A channel is the medium selected to carry the message. Some examples of communication channels are face-to-face discussion, memos, magazines, newsletters, radio, telephone, electronic mail and so on. “In a business meeting, where participants are using the face-to-face communication channel, all three codes —nonverbal, language, and paralanguage—carry messages” (p. 15). In an in-depth report on managing major change called “Communicating Big Change Using Small Communication,” authors Dr. TJ Larkin and Sandar Larkin’s study (as cited in Larkin, 2007) explore the idea of using “thousands of small face-to-face conversations between managers and employees” to bring about big change in large companies. Drawing on various research findings, the report outlines the effectiveness of each of the main communication channels and when and how they should be used in a major change campaign. If the change means employees must change the way they behave, then face to face is the best channel for communicating the message. “Diffusion of innovation” is the study of how groups adopt new behaviors. Surveying 50 years of research and 4,000 studies, Dr. TJ Larkin and Sandar Larkin’s study (as cited in Larkin, 2007) concludes that mediated information (print and electronic) creates awareness of new ideas but rarely adoption. On the other hand, face-to-face communication with a respected leader delivers the most new behavior.

Nonverbal communication is a code used in Face-to-Face communication channel. The types of nonverbal communication that are most applicable to business communications are facial expressions and eye contact, other body movements and

gestures, clothing and personal appearance, distance and personal space, physical environment, and time. Eye contact can show interest and attentiveness. Lack of eye contact on the part of listener is interpreted as disinterest or even disrespect. At the same time, lack of eye contact of the speaker may cause the listener to interpret the messages less favorably (Hamilton & Parker, 1997, p. 18). According to Williams (1982), the most important cue creating the credibility of a speaker is the speaker's willingness to face an audience and allow them to ask questions concerning the content of the message. He also states that this kind of cue can be presented only when the message is delivered in a face-to-face communication situation allowing for two-way interaction.

Feedback

Feedback is the communication to a person that gives that person information about how he or she affects others. Tortoriello (1978) claimed that feedback may deal with work performance, interpersonal relationship issues, or structured organizational information. In face-to-face meetings, people can give feedback in communication. O'Sullivan et al (1994, p.116) state that the mass media, which allows for limited or delayed feedback, is seen as less efficient in conveying information than face-to-face communication. Supervisors who encourage their employees to give feedback (to ask questions and make comments) find that feedback improves the accuracy of employee's understanding and employee's productivity (Hamilton & Parker, 1997, p.18). Feedback also increases employees' satisfaction with their job because people like to feel that their ideas and opinions are valuable.

Communication Networks

In an organization, both formal and informal communication networks are found. A network represents the way in which communication flows in an organization. Formal messages flow downward, upward and horizontally. Formal messages that flow from managers and supervisors to subordinates are called downward communication. In most modern organizations, most information still flows from top to bottom (Tortoriello, 1978, p. 52). Five types of messages that generally flow from the supervisor to the subordinate are job instructions job rationale, policy and procedures, employee performance appraisal and motivational appeals (messages attempting to motivate and increase organizational commitment).

Hamilton and Parker (1997, p. 25) state that to be truly productive, employees should not only receive job instructions but also need to know how their particular job fits into the overall picture of the organization.

Mara (1982, p. 26) reports that employees also want to know about matters that affect their jobs. They believe they have right to know about the organization for which they work: where it's going, what is good or bad and what the direction means to them. This can support that employees don't need only instructions but they need to get information from the company, so they feel they are a part of the company. "The better employees perceive communication practices to be, the better the image that they will have of their organization" (Dolphin, 2005, p.173). Dolphin also states that employees identifying strongly with their organizations are more likely to show a supportive attitude towards them.

Early in the twentieth century, large organizations were new and had no role models. There were two groups of organization theorists: scientific managers who wanted to improve organizations from the bottom up and bureaucratic theorists who felt improvements should occur from the top down. The bureaucratic theorists were interested in improving the efficiency of the manager through structure and control (Hamilton & Parker, 1997, p. 45). Although the bureaucratic organization has a rigid hierarchy, controlled and formal communication, and legal, written rules of action, it is the major model for governmental agencies, educational institutions, and many private firms. However, Dolphin (2005, p. 173) reports that a hierarchy-free communications infrastructure quickly leads to better-informed employees and more positive employee attitudes: employees work more effectively if they are fully informed. Sharing information is one of the easiest and most effective ways that managers can encourage an employee's involvement within an organization.

Communication Climate

Organizational climates have been described as being supportive or defensive. Kreps (1990) states that communication behaviors of organizational members lead to supportive climates in terms of six characteristics as follows:

1. Description: organization members focus their messages on observable events rather than on subjective or emotional evaluations.

2. Problem orientation: organization members focus their communication on solving difficulties cooperatively.

3. Spontaneity: organization members communicate honestly in response to current situations.

4. Empathy: organization members show genuine concern and understanding for other members

5. Equality: organization members treat one another as peers without stressing rank or superiority

6. Provisionalism: organization members are flexible and adapt to the constraints of the different communication situations.

In contrast, Kreps (1990) describes defensive communication behaviors as having the following characteristics:

1. Evaluation: organization members focus their messages on personal assessments of other members.

2. Control: organization members attempt to direct the behaviors of others through their communication.

3. Strategy: organization members communicate on the basis of preconceived notions and plans rather than of the specific social situation.

4. Neutrality: organization members do not communicate concern for other members or their problems.

5. Superiority: organization members demonstrate status, rank, and authority through their communication.

6. Certainty: organization members are dogmatic and communicate a lack of openness to others' ideas.

Supportive organizational communication can lead to a supportive organizational climate and can increase worker satisfaction. The quality of organization member communication and the communication of the organization leader can have a major impact on the effectiveness of the organization (Kreps, 1990).

Communication between superiors and subordinates also has a communication climate or the climate of an interpersonal relationship. Each person has different feelings and backgrounds. When communicating to others, people exchange their

thoughts and feelings as well as having a manner in which they attempt to communicate to each other. Thayer (1968) explains that the climate of every interpersonal relationship is constantly changing and it changes the needs and opportunities for effective and efficient informative communication. The most facilitating climate comes from the most mutually advantageous intentions and actions.

2.3 ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF E-MAIL AND FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION

Several studies (Hamilton and Parker (1997), Adam (2002), Hewitt (2006) reveal that e-mail and face-to-face communication have both advantages and disadvantages as shown in the table below:

	E-mail	Face-to-face Communication
Speed of getting information	Better	-
Having a record	Better	-
Understanding	-	Better
Feedback	-	Better
Time consuming	Better	-
Brainstorming	-	Better

E-mail is better than face-to-face communication in terms of speed of getting information, having a record and time consuming. E-mail can reach a mass audience quickly and it can be sent to a large number of people anywhere in the world within seconds regardless of time boundaries. Moreover, it can be recorded as evidence. However, face-to-face communication is better than e-mail in terms of understanding, feedback and brainstorming. People have the opportunity for discussion, dynamic feedback, questioning and checking the understanding of the messages sent between senders and receivers through face-to-face communication.

2.4 RELEVANT RESEARCH

Byrne and LeMay (2006) carried out research on *Different Media for organizational communication: Perceptions of quality and satisfaction*. They examined the satisfaction with, and perceived quality of, information about one's job, the business unit, and the company, as well as the perceived quality of urgent news communicated via different media. Results from 598 fulltime employees revealed that rich media (e.g., face to face) was most related to satisfaction in information about one's job and the business unit and in the perceived quality of the information from the supervisor; lean media (e.g., company newsletters) was most related to satisfaction with, and the quality of, information from top management, while moderate media (e.g., electronic mail) was only significantly related to the perceived quality of urgent news.

Young (1995) conducted research on *The relationship between electronic and face-to-face communication and its implication for alternative workplace strategies*. The total survey sample of 2,642 was taken from a multinational computer company based in the Silicon Valley area of California. The focus group had a total sample of 1,000 taken from the participant organization with a variety of job types, work experience, ages and gender. Three main questions along with several sub-questions guided the research into the roles of electronic communication technologies (ECTs), e.g., e-mail, telephone and fax, in maintaining work-related communication.

(1) Are there specific tasks or project stages for which ECTs work especially well?

(2) Are there limits/barriers to the successful use of ECTs for workplace communication?

(3) What is the relationship between electronic and face-to-face communication?

It appears that not only are ECTs necessary for collaboration with employees at different work sites, but they can also be more efficient than face-to-face communication in some instances. Over 90 percent of respondents felt that they were able to get technical information quickly from co-workers using ECTs. Subjects also appeared to be comfortable with the speed with which they could get help in solving work-related problems using ECTs. Nearly 90 percent agreed that they could get helpful feedback in a timely fashion using a combination of ECTs. Subjects seemed

comfortable asking questions using ECTs and felt that they received timely responses on technical and work-related problems. Subjects were split almost equally between using ECTs and using a face-to-face meeting for providing feedback. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being strongly agree, 5 being strongly disagree) the mean was 3.04. The statistical analysis suggested a significant difference between levels of work experience and likeliness of offering feedback via ECTs rather than face-to-face. It would seem that the less experienced a person is, the more likely they are to offer work-related feedback via ECTs.

Subjects were asked what usually prompted a face-to-face meeting between themselves and one or more co-workers who they regularly communicated with via ECTs. A content analysis of the open-ended responses to this question, in addition to a review of subjects' responses to all the questions, revealed that the most limiting aspect of electronic communication was related to the lack of richness it provides. The high bandwidth provided by face-to-face communication made it much easier for subjects to communicate complicated issues. For example, face-to-face communication was necessary when something is hard to explain over the phone, or the person feels that he/she will explain things better if he/she has a face-to-face meeting.

Subjects appeared to have little trouble meeting others in their organization using ECTs. In fact, it seems that in some ways developing relationships can be easier using ECTs than using face-to-face communication. People can make connections with others they have never met. Those who are shy or uncomfortable meeting others face-to-face may benefit by being able to meet people via electronic media.

