

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents (1) a summary of the study, (2) a summary of the findings, (3) discussion of employees' satisfaction with e-mail and face-to-face communication, (4) conclusions, and (5) recommendations for further research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

5.1.1 Objectives of the Study

The study attempted to determine employees' satisfaction with the two primary communication channels: e-mail and face-to-face communication. Moreover, the study aimed to investigate problems that employees faced when they communicated via e-mail and face-to-face communication.

5.1.2 Subjects, Materials, and Procedures

The subjects of the study were 120 office based staff working at MSD (Thailand) Ltd. The response rate was 83% or 100 returned questionnaires. The questionnaire was delivered to the subjects of the study in order to obtain demographic information, staff satisfaction levels and their problems in communication. In measuring staff satisfaction levels, a Likert Scale was used by having subjects respond to a series of statements regarding five aspects. Next, the mean for each statement was calculated and used to categorize the level of satisfaction into five levels. The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS program.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

The results of the study can be summarized as follows:

5.2.1 General Information Results

From the study, it was found that the respondents' age ranged from 23 to 52. The mean age was 34.36 years of age. Moreover, 68% of the respondents were women and 60% of them were subordinates. In addition, 58% of employees held Master's degrees or higher.

5.2.2 Employees' Satisfaction Results

The employees' overall satisfaction with e-mail and face-to-face communication were at a satisfactory level. However, it was found that employees' satisfaction level with face-to-face communication was higher than e-mail. The results of the employees' satisfaction are divided into four sections:

1. Employees' satisfaction with the quality of information

It was found that employees were satisfied with both e-mail and face-to-face communication regarding the quality of information. However, the average score of face-to-face communication was higher than e-mail for every question. Therefore, employees were more satisfied with face-to-face communication than with e-mail in terms of quality of information.

2. Employees' satisfaction with feedback

It was found that employees were dissatisfied with e-mail in terms of feedback, especially regarding it being good for brainstorming (mean = 2.42). The average score of face-to-face communication was higher than e-mail for every question. Therefore, employees were more satisfied with face-to-face communication than with e-mail in terms of feedback.

3. Employees' satisfaction with communication climate: personal level

It was found that the employees' satisfaction level with e-mail in terms of communication climate (personal level) was at a neutral level. However, the employees' satisfaction level with face-to-face communication was at a satisfactory level.

4. Employees' satisfaction with communication climate: organizational level

It was found that the employees were more able to receive the updated organizational information by e-mail (mean = 3.97) than face-to-face communication (mean = 3.38). On the other hand, employees felt more motivated when receiving messages from the top management face-to-face (mean = 3.89) than receiving them by e-mail (mean = 3.42).

5.2.3 Employees' Problems Result

1. E-mail problems

The problem that the employees faced most was the speed of getting information (47%). The second problem was the internet server (37%). The third problem was computer technical problems (33%). The fourth problem was junk e-mail (31%) and other problems 26%.

2. Face-to-face communication problems

The problem that the employees faced most was that it was time consuming (60%). The second problem was culture (54%). The third problem was speed of getting information and other problems were 11%.

5.2.4 Employees' Characteristics Results

It was found that employees' characteristics did not result in significant differences in terms of their satisfaction with e-mail and face-to-face communication.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This section is a discussion of how the findings of the study relate to communication theories and earlier research.

The results showed that the employees were more satisfied with face-to-face communication than e-mail in terms of quality of information, feedback and communication climate, both at the personal level and the organizational level.

The literature indicates that code and channel are the important elements in the communication process. To communicate effectively, the sender must communicate the messages by all three codes: language, paralanguage and nonverbal (Hamilton & Parker, 1997). When communicating face-to-face, employees use all three codes to convey messages while e-mail conveys only the language code. In addition, in face-to-face meetings, employees can give feedback in communication more effectively than in e-mail. From the results, employees agreed that they could give and receive feedback immediately, provide feedback freely and receive timely responses on work-related problems through face-to-face communication. Also, they strongly agreed that face-to-face communication is better for brainstorming than e-mail. O'Sullivan et al (1994) state that mass media which allows for limited or delayed feedback is seen as a less efficient way of passing 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 an employees' understanding and productivity (Hamilton and Parker, 1997). Feedback also increases employees' satisfaction with their job because people feel that their ideas and opinions are valuable.

The literature indicates that early in the twentieth century, there were two groups of organization theorists: scientific theorists who wanted to improve organizations from the bottom up and bureaucratic theorists who felt improvements should occur from the top down. Dolphin (2005) reports that a hierarchy-free communications infrastructure quickly leads to better-informed employees and more positive 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 employee involvement within an organization (p. 173). From the results, employees felt more comfortable to communicate about job related problems with their supervisors or subordinates through face-to-face communication than by email and agreed that communicating face-to-face helped them have a better relationship with their supervisors or subordinates. This is because MSD (Thailand) Ltd. is a hierarchy-free communications organization. Employees can talk freely with their supervisors or subordinates. Formal messages flow downward, upward and horizontally in the organization. Therefore, they feel comfortable talking about their problems and think that they will get help from their supervisors. Thus they agreed that they have a better relationship with their supervisors or subordinate through face-to-face communication.

From the results, the employees agreed that they were able to receive more updated organizational information by e-mail than through face-to-face communication. The literature indicates that e-mail can reach mass audiences quickly as it can be sent to a large number of people anywhere in the world within seconds regardless of time boundaries. In MSD (Thailand) Ltd. there is a monthly face-to-face meeting called Date with the Managing Director. The objectives of the meeting are to inform staff about company news, such as new products, new policies, and company activities and to give the employees the chance to ask questions or to give feedback to the management team. In addition, the management team often sends e-mails about organizational information to employees. The employees were better able

to receive information by e-mail than through face-to-face communication because they were often not available to attend the face-to-face meetings but were able to check their e-mail later. However, the results show that employees felt more motivated when receiving messages from the top management through face-to-face communication than by e-mail.

From the results, the employees stated that they had e-mail problems regarding speed of getting information because of delayed feedback, internet server problems, computer technical problems, junk e-mail and other problems such as unclear email, English language barriers, information overload and limitations in the size of the mail box. For face-to-face problems, they mentioned problems about it being time consuming, culture, the speed of getting information and other problems such as the busy schedule of employees, communication skills, records and feedback about sensitive issues.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above.

5.4.1 Based on the results of the study, most respondents were female and subordinate.

5.4.2 The employees were satisfied with face-to-face communication in terms of the quality of information, feedback, communication climate, both at the personal level and the organizational level.

5.4.3 The employees were satisfied with e-mail in terms of the quality of information and communication climate at the organizational level but were neutral in terms of feedback and communication climate at the personal level.

5.4.4 The overall satisfaction of employees with face-to-face communication was higher than e-mail.

5.4.5 Employees' characteristics did not result in significant differences in terms of employees' satisfaction with e-mail and face-to-face communication.

5.4.6 MSD (Thailand) Ltd. should improve face-to-face organizational communication.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for further research.

5.5.1 This study surveyed the satisfaction of employees with the two primary channels of communication: e-mail and face-to-face communication. According to Gochman 2007, it was found that good communication is linked to high levels of employee engagement. Therefore, further research should focus on the relationship between communication and employee engagement, i.e., is an employee's satisfaction with communication linked to their level of engagement?

5.5.2 The population of this study was limited to employees at MSD (Thailand) Ltd. Therefore, the results of the study may not be applicable (or generalized) to the other organizations. Further research should look at larger populations to make the results more valid and reliable.