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 **Why Business Communication Is Essential for Your Business**

In the age of digital, global businesses, it is essential for organizations of all sizes to effectively communicate not only within their organization, but also with shareholders, vendors, clients, and customers. Effective communication is at the forefront of significant business processes and must be efficient so that personnel can successfully share and communicate information that helps to run a successful enterprise, and to drive the most critical business processes.

Effective communication is critical for a business to operate at their peak level, and to ensure that everyone is on the same page. While budgets, operational procedures, project timelines, and the bottom/top line of an organization are often the focus of Board meetings, effective, honest, and ethical communication principles don’t always receive the same level of focus. According to Blue Source, most employees - 97 percent to be exact - regard communication as having a real impact on everyday tasks. Thus, effective business communication is not just an abstract concept that can be relegated to the background due to having little real impact on business affairs - it is a concrete principle that businesses need to apply daily. These principles are most critical to business success, since a business cannot flourish or meet its goals if all personnel are not communicating effectively. Additionally, effective communication can mitigate project delays, and can help teams stay on time and on budget for projects, while ensuring that the business is able to complete its goals and fulfill its overall objective according to its business model and strategic plan.

Statistics align more effective business communications with better workplace productivity. Blue Source indicates that productivity goes up by 25 percent in businesses with connected and engaged personnel, and - at the same time - 44 percent of employees want more broad adoption of internal communication tools, suites, and apps. This shows how important effective communication is in a business - personnel can work better and operate within a team in a more effective manner when good communication practices - and platforms - are utilized.

Companies with engaged personnel (about communication) can increase operating income by 19.2 percent over a 12-month period as 85 percent of employees use more than one device to effectively communicate at work.

Ultimately, effective business communication allows all parties within a business to operate efficiently, about intra-enterprise communications and communications that include external parties (shareholders, vendors, clients, customers, etc.).

What is Business Communication?

Business communication is a broad concept that is related to any sharing of information in a business or enterprise for the sole purpose of benefiting the organization. This includes relaying information in a variety of forms, which can be carried out on a myriad of platforms and devices. Business communication often includes two phases: relaying of information, and feedback, the latter of which is equally important in order to optimize all business workflows and to ensure that everyone is on the same page.

Forms of Communication

There are three major forms of business communications that can be carried out in an organization of any size:

 Verbal: Verbal communication entails transmitting or relaying information to another party or person orally via words from a distance. This includes a variety of communication platforms, from video conferences, online interviews, live Skype meetings, phone calls, etc.

 Written: Written communication entails either digital or non-digital media, where one party writes information to be shared with another party. This type of communication can include older forms of written systems like a paper letter, to more modern forms such as a written email, a cloud (shared) document, a messaging app transmission, etc. Written (modern, digital) communication is one of the more popular forms of communication in the modern day.

 In Person: While verbal communication often includes talking to a second party over an electronic media, face-to-face communication (orally) is still an effective way to share information and relay critical data to the pertinent party.

Methods of Communication

There are a variety of platforms that can be used to communicate in the three major forms above (verbal, written, in person), which usually - in modern day - includes digital and/or electronic devices:

 Web-Based Communication: Web and cloud portals give businesses a novel way to communicate via sharing and synchronizing of data from one person to the entire company, regardless of location.

 Video Conferencing: Video conferences allow pertinent business parties from all over the globe to participate in an online video session or e-meeting, where information is shared, and feedback is given.

 Reports and Presentations: Reports and presentations can be written or given via digital media (e.g. PowerPoint presentations or Slides) in order to share data with another via an online transmission or in a meeting.

 Phone Meetings: Phone meetings involve a multi-party session where information is shared (verbally), feedback is given, and questions are answered by the pertinent parties within a business.

 Personal Meetings: Personal meetings typically include a one-on-one, face-to-face session where information is shared and/or relayed between the two parties. This can include interviews or a general business meeting.

 Suggestion or Feedback Box: Feedback boxes give businesses the ability to utilize written (or digital) communication forms for anonymous, or non-anonymous, feedback that is often given to management from personnel. They can include comments, questions, requests, feedback, or general suggestions.

 Email: Electronic mail is one of the most popular ways to utilize digital, written communication systems for relaying critical information within a business. Such email suites can be utilized on desktop workstations, tablet computers, and mobile devices.

 Business Instant Messaging (Slack): Like email, messaging apps allow for digital, written communication between two (or more) parties. However, while email is sent somewhat instantly, it is usually a slower manner of communicating, and it may take time to get a reply. Every day, as noted by Blue Source, there are upwards of 205 billion emails sent across the globe, while only one third of emails are actually opened. Instant messaging apps, like Slack, Messenger, Skype, etc. allow for near-instant communication over a network, and can include a number of parties, along with synced communications and data that is stored in the cloud for collaboration with other parties.

Additionally, electronic mail is stored on servers and can be pulled by client-side applications when needed, while instant messages are typically instantly pushed to client-side applications from remote servers, and are likened to instant phone calls (messenger apps) versus a mailed letter or fax (i.e. emails).

Why Is It Important?

Communication is important and critical for both managers/executives and lower tiered personnel. Executives typically communicate with different parties (via the three major forms), including:

 Shareholders: Shareholders must receive honest, timely, concise pieces of information that can help to shape the future of a business. During board meetings, it is critical for all notable members to discuss critical organizational matters in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

 Personnel: In order to manage a business, executives must plan and direct all activities and personnel correctly, which includes efficiently conveying what needs to be done, and exactly how it is to be done. In return, feedback is sometimes required from personnel, which often is associated with the relayed information, that is, what has been done and what needs to be done - along with questions - to ensure that all goals of the organization - be it short term or long term - are completed correctly and in the way that management desires.

 Clients/Customers: Executives often meet with clients and customers in order to ensure that their desires are being met and to obtain key and critical data that can help drive the externally facing (customer-facing) workflows that make a business work. Since customers/clients are at the heart of a business, knowing how to effectively communicate with them is key to knowing what they want, how they want it, and the best way to completely deliver on giving customers and clients what they need most.

 Vendors/Contractors: Vendors often provide a business with critical IT infrastructure, such as with enterprise suites. Outsourced contractors and consultants, and other external personnel, often operate in a way that is different from internal staff. That said, both vendors and outsourced contractors require a business to effectively communicate what is expected of them, when it is expected (timeframes), and how each task is to be completed, in relation to critical projects and key processes.

With personnel, business communication is an internal affair, while with the shareholders, clients/customers, and vendors, business communication is typically external. For management to do their job effectively - including planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling - they must know how to effectively communicate what needs to be done and how it is to be done.

Benefits of Good Communication?

Businesses operate within a sphere of a constant flow of data and information. Sharing and relaying information, and obtaining feedback, can be done optimally, or sub-optimally. When business communication is done correctly, everyone is on the same page, confusion is mitigated, and everyone can do their job, all of which increases productivity and even creativity - which translates to a better top and bottom line. On the contrary, sub-par communication results in confusion, confrontations, delays, budgeting issues, and a variety of other problems that can result in a business stalling, not scaling, and/or projects being delayed or going over budget, all of which negatively affects the bottom and top lines of the organization.

It is important to recognize that good communication practices, based on key ethical principles in a company’s code of conduct (or code of ethics), can result in measurable gains associated with productivity and overall workflow efficiency.

Communication Failure

Good communication means that everyone is on the same page and can finish their tasks, complete their projects, and operate in the most effective manner possible, while remaining productive. Everyone knows their specific duties, which helps to mitigate personnel either doing work that is not intended for them or doing work in a way that isn’t optimal. Both issues are often a result of a breakdown in communication.

Communication failure often results from a lack of consistent information, dishonesty (lack of ethical communication), being vague (giving instructions that aren’t detailed), and a failure of management to answer questions and concerns from personnel. All of these issues result in a myriad of difficulties that can greatly diminish the overall productivity and efficiency of personnel, projects, and team operations.

What Are the Effects of Poor Communication?

While good communication helps to build productive teams that are engaged, misunderstandings, confrontations, and disagreements often result from poor communication, which results in poor teamwork, wasted time (e.g. time used to argue about tasks), and low productivity. In the workplace, it is critical that employees and managers are on the same page and that disagreements don’t turn into arguments. Ultimately, if everyone is to work effectively and optimally, everyone must be on the same page. A project that has team members - or managers - arguing and following poor communication practices will never be completed successfully.

How Is It Practiced Effectively?

In the workplace, people will often disagree and present different ideas on how to finish a project or deal with an issue. A key part of management is giving concise directives and communicating what needs to be done in the midst of a busy workplace environment. The very fabric of the workplace environment revolves around team members communicating information and relaying data so that everyone can collaborate on projects and processes. That said, in both scenarios above, the two issues - disagreements and directing personnel amongst a network of information and projects - can be readily dealt with if key principles are followed. In order for such a positive communicative environment to be established in the midst of disagreements and necessary management tasks, open, honest communication is a must.

Outlets must be provided where everyone can be heard and everyone can have their say, while at the same time knowing when to listen and when the final say has been spoken by an executive.

A business should dictate that negative communication practices, including dishonesty, rumors, talking behind another’s back, etc. are not allowed, creating an honest and transparent atmosphere.

Another type of communication that can be utilized, and must be understood for effective workplace transmission of information, is non-verbal communication, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. Such non-verbal communicative mechanisms can help to provide context within any conversation, which must be understood for effective communication of critical information.

The final goal of utilizing good business communication practices is not only to optimally convey information, but to create and cultivate an environment of respect in the workplace. Ultimately, it is also important for companies to recognize that their brand can be optimally represented to its customers based on communicating and creating a credible and trustworthy image, resulting in a positive impression that can create a large impact.

Guide to Ensuring Communication Works

There are some key steps that businesses of any size should take when seeking to ensure that their communication principles are intact within their work environment, all of which are related to specific aspects of everyday communication processes.

Consider the Receiver

Communication is a two-way road: one person communicates, and the other person is the receiver of the information. Effective communication takes into account who is listening, their perspective, their language, what they already know or think, what they do, their place on the issue, and what power they have to either solve the issue or even impede the solution’s progress, etc. An effective speaker thus pinpoints his/her recipient’s demographics in order to tailor what they have to say to the individual listener, so as to have the biggest impact on them.

Tailor the Message (Customer service/external or internal)

Communicating in a company can take on two forms: intra-organizational communication between personnel, and between the company and external parties. Certain departments rely on effective external, customer-facing communication mechanisms, such as customer service representatives. Others, like management, communicate mostly within the company to employees. That said, it is clear that the receiver of the message should help dictate to the speaker how the information should be tailored, and thus conveyed. A customer service representative would not speak in the exact same way to a customer about a piece of information as a CEO would to his/her employees.

Timing of the Message

There is a place and time for everything. An effective communicator knows when to apply tact in order to understand when to speak, how to speak, what tone to use, and how to tailor the message in a way that will have the biggest, and best, impact on the listener(s).

Making Sure It Was Understood

A message is only as good as how well it is understood. If the most critical business communication is not understood by its recipients, then it will have no effect, or won’t have the desired impact. Thus, asking for feedback, ensuring that the information was understood, etc. is a good way for communicators to know that their transmitted information is having the impact that was intended, based on it being understood. When it comes to management, there are ways to ensure that the information was understood, like inviting questions from recipients, having listeners summarize what was said, and/or repeating what the ultimate outcome/point of the message was. This can help all parties involved recognize what the actionable message is, what was intended, and how problems can be solved based on the message. This is the case for every piece of information that is conveyed within an organization - it should have an impact based on being fully understood.

Create a Communicative Culture

The communicative culture of a business is critical to its success. While utilizing hard skills to finish tasks and projects is good, it is the soft skills and social intelligence that is required for a business to effectively and optimally maintain productive teams and a positive environment where everyone is on the same page - all of which results from good communication practices being in place. When everyone is on the same page, teams can work effectively, management can convey their directives clearly, personnel can ask questions and offer concise ideas, and more work can be done in less time, all of which results in a better bottom and top line for the business. Not only should a clear code of ethics detail ethical and good communication practices in the workplace, but mandatory communication training can be an option for employees and executives within an organization to ensure that the best communication principles are always utilized in the enterprise.