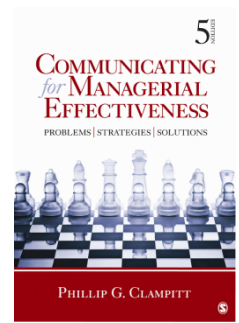


Chapter 2: Examining Communication Approaches

Chapter Summary

This chapter presents three approaches to analyze managerial communication: the "Arrow," "Circuit," and "Dance" approaches. The Arrow manager believes that "effective expression = effective communication" and views the receiver as a passive information processor. The Circuit manager assumes that "understanding = effective communication." This manager believes that understanding will lead to agreement and that understanding should be the primary goal of communication. Both of these approaches simplify the communication process. A preferred approach is to use the "dance" metaphor, which expresses the nuances and complexity of organizational communication. There are many similarities of communication to dance. In both activities, there are patterns that emerge and rules, written or unwritten, that govern behavior.



Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- describe the Arrow, Circuit, and Dance approaches to management
- identify behaviors of the above approaches
- identify strengths and weaknesses of the Arrow and Circuit approaches to management
- describe the similarities of communication to dance
- analyze a conversation and determine the regulative and interpretation rules

Outline

- I. The Arrow Approach
 - A. Judging effectiveness
 1. Being able to clearly and precisely put thoughts into words
 2. Speaking with credibility and authority
 3. Getting the results desired by talking to employees

B. Explaining communication breakdowns

1. Employees are inherently ignorant, lazy or subversive
2. The “proper” words were not uttered

C. Origins

1. The technical training of many managers reinforces a stimulus/response orientation
2. A “speech teacher” focus emphasizes a sender orientation
3. Certain people may have personality predispositions to communicate in this way

D. Evaluation

1. Arrow managers inappropriately assume that receivers are passive information processors
2. Arrow managers inappropriately assume that words are containers of meaning
3. The Arrow approach encourages clear thinking, lucid expression and organized speaking
4. The Arrow approach links communication behavior and action

II. The Circuit Approach

A. Judging effectiveness

1. Listening to employees to make them happy
2. Showing sensitivity and openness to employees by adapting message to each individual

3. Making employees feel included and understood
- B. Explaining communication breakdowns
 1. People just “don’t connect”
 2. People are poor listeners
 3. People fail to develop the proper communication climate
 - C. Origins
 1. The human relations school of management has influenced many leaders
 2. Some people have a natural affinity for the Circuit orientation
 3. Some communication teachers encourage a Circuit orientation
 - D. Evaluation
 1. Circuit managers incorrectly assume that understanding always leads to agreement
 2. Circuit managers inappropriately assume that understanding should be the primary goal of communication
 3. Circuit managers highlight important communication skills such as building strong relationships, managing hidden agendas and providing constructive feedback
- III. Communication as Dance
- A. Communication is used for multiple purposes
 - B. Communication involves the coordination of meaning
 - C. Communication involves co-orientation
 - D. Communication is rule governed

E. Communicators develop a repertoire of unconscious skills

F. Communication can be viewed as a patterned activity

IV. Conclusion

Case 2.1: The Consulting Contract

Purpose:

The purpose of this case is to learn how to communicate with different types of people while presenting a proper perspective on the nature of the communication process.

Situation:

A software design firm that employs 500 people has hired your consulting team. The firm's senior management has determined that the six managers of the software development department and the six managers of the customer service department are "ineffective communicators." They have hired you to conduct a 2-hour introductory seminar on "Communicating for Managerial Effectiveness" for the twelve managers. These managers have never participated in this kind of training and are unaware that the senior management views them as "ineffective". All the managers have college degrees and are under 35 years old. The customer service managers have degrees in management and the software managers have degrees in computer science. Top management has told you that if this initial training is successful, they will hire your firm for a major contract. Your main contact is a 28-year old vice president who seems introspective. There are a number of paintings by Claude Monet around the vice president's precisely organized room. The initial meeting with the VP started and ended right on time.

Your objectives:

1. Specify the precise material you would cover with each group of managers.
2. Specify how you would present the material: a) to the vice president, and b) to the two groups of managers.
3. Most importantly, provide a rationale for all your choices based on the material presented in the book.

Case 2.2: The "Communication President"

Purpose:

The purpose of this case study is to develop a deeper understanding of how the communication process operates in an organizational context.

Situation:

A grocery store chain recently appointed a new president. You are the communication specialist in the organization, which has 18 departments and 350 employees. The second day on the job, the president called you into her office, where a picture of T.S. Eliot was prominently displayed

among a disarray of papers and files. She warmly greeted you and said that she wanted to "kick around a few ideas." She told you that she wants to be known as the "Communication President." She wants you to devise a "talking proclamation -- kind of like the Ten Commandments, my Magna Carta" for employees, which demonstrates her commitment to effective communication. She relayed the following:

Here's my idea. I want everyone to feel free to discuss anything with me or anyone else. I would like to foster an open climate here. I'd like to draft a statement of my communication principles. For instance, we could say something like: "Effective communication is the basis for an effective organization." No, I like this better: "I believe effective communication is the basis for an effective organization." You get the idea? Then we could list some principles like:

- We believe in an open-door policy.
- Communication should always be frank.
- It's important to keep all employees apprised of relevant information.
- Address everyone by his or her first name.
- Make sure you thoroughly understand someone before criticizing his/her ideas.
- First listen, then talk.
- Even if you think you understand someone, check to make sure.
- Be sensitive to others.
- Be open to new ideas.

That should give you a feel for what I'm trying to do. Since you are the communication expert, you can revise these ideas and get back to me with a specific proposal.

Your objectives:

1. Specify the precise proposal you would make to the president.
2. Specify the approach you would use in presenting the proposal.
3. Provide the rationale for the approach and proposal.