

Chapter 5: Selecting and Using Communication Technologies

Chapter Summary

Every communication technology has unique nuances that can hinder or improve the effectiveness of the manager. One of the greatest challenges for today's managers is how to manage effectively the myriad of communication channels that are available.

The major criterion used in channel selection is personal convenience--as a channel's ease of use increases, so does the likelihood of its use. Generally, little consideration is given to how the channels filter the message as well as the secondary messages the channel generates.

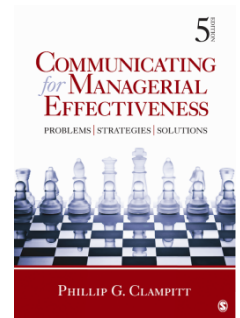
The chapter presents the B – C model, which helps orient the user's thinking around the benefits and costs of channel choices. Costs to consider include learning costs in using a technology, as well as some less obvious costs such as opportunity costs, coordination costs, and switching costs. The emphasis is on making channel choices that maximize value.

The B – C model suggests some strategies and tactics that enhance the selection and usage of communication technology. For example, a prudent manager can better manage this complexity by 1) promoting a robust mind-set of the benefits and costs of communication channels, 2) deciding on the appropriate cost-benefit trade-offs when selecting channels (i.e., using rich channels for persuading others and for managing conflict) and 3) embracing the promise of social media while managing the costs of misappropriation, misinformation, misunderstanding, memory and manipulation.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter you will be able to:

- describe the components of the B - C model
- describe how perspective influences value
- use the SMCR model to determine appropriate media choices
- describe the most effective use of specific channels
- describe strategies and related tactics to enhance media choice
- consider how to integrate social media into the organization



Outline

- I. The B – C Model: A Deeper Look
 - A. Attributes
 - B. Benefits
 - C. Costs
 - D. Value

- II. How Perspective Shifts Value
 - A. User Perspective
 - B. Time Perspective
 - C. Micro/Macro Perspectives

- III. What to Do?
 - A. Promote a robust mindset of the benefits and costs of communication channels and technologies
 1. Sync the sender’s needs, message attributes, and receiver attributes with the channel choices
 2. Search for hidden benefits and costs
 3. Identify benefits and costs at different organizational levels

 - B. Consciously decide on the appropriate cost-benefit trade-offs
 1. Diversify your portfolio of channels
 2. Use rich channels for persuading others, analyzing ambiguous information, managing conflict and resolving complex issues
 3. Select “who” channels to highlight the relationship, “what” channels to highlight the task
 4. Amplify your message by selecting channels that send the proper symbolic cues

 - C. Detect and respond to patterns that develop with technology usage
 1. Estimate how the cost/benefit ratio will shift over time
 2. Reshape expectations about power relationships
 3. Match the tempo of communication with the needs of the organization

 - D. Embrace the promise of social media while managing its risks

1. Develop a policy statement about how social media will be integrated into the business strategy
2. Determine the role of social media
3. Identify experts within the organization to teach others about social media conventions and protocols
4. Actively assess the utility of the firm's social media strategy
5. Be aware of threats posed by social media
 - a. Misappropriation
 - b. Misinformation
 - c. Misunderstanding
 - d. Memory
 - e. Manipulation

IV. Conclusion

Case 5.1: Determining Channel Mix and Usage

Purpose:

The purpose of this case is to determine how to select and effectively use different communication channels.

Situation:

A paper mill is experiencing "communication problems." Upon investigation, you determine that there are three major problems:

- Employees do not feel adequately informed about the direction of the company.
- Employees are not adequately informed about day-to-day changes.
- There are shift-to-shift and department-to-department communication problems.

There are four primary channels used in the mill:

- A monthly employee newsletter
- Bulletin boards located at the time clocks
- Departmental meetings held at the discretion of the manager
- Weekly production reports

Other facts about the mill:

- 800 employees (150 of which are office staff)
- unionized, with four rotating shifts
- 40 departments
- located on a ½ mile stretch of a river

- the operation is highly profitable

The company lives its values of customer-focused quality, safety and empowered employees. The CEO has an MBA from Harvard and an undergraduate degree from MIT. He is an engineer by training, has excellent interpersonal communication skills and is committed to “Managing by Walking Around.” He is well liked by the employees but, in a plant this large, he admits, “it’s difficult to keep in touch with everyone.” In his library-like office, he talked about his vision of having a “world-class communication system.” How should he spend his limited resources in accomplishing this vision?

Your objectives:

1. Determine if the mill needs any new channels.
2. Design the proper channel mix for the various communicative functions.
3. Describe how these channels should be utilized. Consider such elements as the content, frequency of their usage, and the audience.
4. Describe how the information should be presented to the CEO.
5. Provide your rationale for the above objectives.