

## **COMMUNICATION NETWORKS AND CHANNELS EFFECT OF ICT ON MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION**

As organizational workforces become more and more diverse and widespread throughout the world, communication issues increase in importance.

### **Organizational communication network**

It is the pattern of information flow among task group

members. Five major network structures have been identified.

1. The three centralized networks are structured so that most messages must flow through a pivotal person in the network.
  - a. In the wheel network, all messages must flow through the individual at the center of the wheel.
  - b. In the chain network, some members can communicate with more than one member of the network, but the individual in the center of the chain still tends to control the messages.
  - c. In the Y network, the member at the fork of the “Y” usually becomes the central person in the network.
2. The two decentralized networks permit freer communication among the various members.
  - a. In the circle network, each member can communicate with the individual on either side.
  - b. In the star network, each member can communicate with any other member.
3. Some general differences have been found between the centralized and the decentralized types of networks.
  - a. Effective performance is a function of type of network and type of tasks undertaken.
    - 1) The centralized networks were usually faster and more accurate at performing simple, routine tasks.
    - 2) The decentralized networks were usually faster and more accurate at performing complex tasks.
  - b. Group moral in the decentralized networks was consistently higher than in the centralized, regardless of task assignment.

### **Organizational communication channels**

- A. **Communication channels** are various patterns of organizational communication flow that represent potential established conduits through which managers and other organization members can send and receive information.
- B. **Vertical communication** is a communication that flows from a higher level to one or more lower levels in the organization.
  1. **Downward communication** is a vertical communication that flows from a higher level to one or more lower levels in the organization.
    - a. Most downward communication involves information in one of five categories:
      - 1) Job instructions related to specific tasks.
      - 2) Job rationales explaining the relationship between a task and other organizational tasks.

- 3) Procedures and practices of the organization.
  - 4) Feedback on individual performance on assigned tasks.
  - 5) Efforts to encourage a sense of mission and dedication to the goals of the organization.
- b. Downward communication is prone to distortion.
- 1) Faulty message transmission may occur because of sender carelessness, poor communication skills, and the difficulty of encoding a message for a number of receivers.
  - 2) Overuse of one-way communication methods means that manager get no feedback
  - 3) Filtering of communication may occur through withholding, screening, or manipulating information to enhance personal power.
- c. The effectiveness of downward communication can be increased by using multiple channels, by repeating the message, and by encouraging feedback.
2. **Upward communication** is the vertical flow of communication from a lower level to one or more higher levels in the organization.
- a. Forms of upward communication include individual and group meetings with superiors, memos and reports, suggestion systems, grievance procedures, and employee attitude surveys.
  - b. The information disseminated through upward communication typically pertains to:
    - 1) Progress of current work projects
    - 2) Serious unsolved problems and situations in which subordinates need help from superiors.
    - 3) New developments arising within or affecting the work unit or organization suggestions for improvements and innovations.
    - 4) Employee attitudes, morale, and efficiency
  - c. Upward communication can be distorted.
    - 1) Subordinates filter information that they send upward.
    - 2) Managers do not expend enough effort to encourage upward communication.
  - d. **Management by wandering around (MBWA)** is a practice whereby managers frequently tour areas for which they are responsible, talk to various employees, and encourage upward communication.
- C. **Horizontal communication** is lateral or diagonal message exchange either within work-unit boundaries, involving peers who report to the same supervisor, or across work-unit boundaries, involving individuals who report to different supervisors.
1. Horizontal communication can take the form of meetings, reports, memos, telephone conversations, and face-to-face discussions.
  2. Horizontal communication usually relates to:
    - a. Task coordination
    - b. Problem solving
    - c. Information sharing
    - d. Conflict resolution
    - e. Peer support
  3. There are three impediments to necessary, work-related horizontal communication.
    - a. Rivalry among individuals or work units may cause individuals to hide information.
    - b. Specialization may cause individuals to be concerned mainly about the work of their own unit and to have little appreciation for the

- work and communication needs of others.
- c. Motivation may be lacking when subordinate horizontal communication is not encouraged or rewarded.
- D. **Informal communication**, better known as “the **grapevine**,” is communication that takes place without regard to hierarchical or task requirements.
1. Informal communication within organizations differs from formal communication.
    - a. **Formal communication** is vertical and horizontal communication that follows paths specified by the official hierarchical organization structure and related task requirements.
    - b. Formal communication relates to position in the organization; informal communication depends upon personal relationships.
  2. Grapevines can be configured in a number of ways.
    - a. In the single-strand chain, communication moves serially from person A to B to C and so on.
    - b. With the gossip chain, person A seeks out and tells others.
    - c. When following the probability chain, person A spreads the message randomly, as do individuals F and D.
    - d. In the cluster chain, the most predominant form, person A tells three selected individuals, and then one of these tells three others.
  3. Grapevines have a number of characteristics.
    - a. They are fast.
    - b. The data produced ranges from 50 to 90 percent accurate.
  4. Grapevines are most harmful when they carry false rumors and gossip.
  5. Grapevines might serve positive organizational purposes.
    - a. They may serve to transmit organizational rules, values, and morals.
    - b. They may serve to disseminate organizational traditions and history.
    - c. They may help to reinforce formal messages, to test new proposals, and to obtain feedback about employee feelings and ideas.
    - d. They may help to foster innovation by facilitating communication among various parts of the organization.

### How Technology Affects Managerial Communication

Two developments in information and communication technology seem to be having the most significant impact on current managerial communication: networked computer systems and wireless capabilities.

#### Networked Systems

1. An **electronic mail system** is a mail system that allows high-speed exchange of written messages through the use of computerized text-processing and communication networks.
  - a. Electronic mail has advantages.
    - 1) It is a time-saver.
    - 2) It leads to exchanges of information among managers who previously did not communicate.
    - 3) Managers tend to receive new types of information through these systems.
  - b. Electronic mail has a couple of disadvantages.
    - 1) It eliminates the nonverbal cues that serve as aids in face-to-face communication.
    - 2) It is easy to vent anger and frustrations over email that

- would never be communicated through regular written communication channels.
- 3) It leads to an excess of irrelevant mail.
2. **Voice mail** is the recording systems which enable senders to leave messages for receivers by telephone.
- Some nonverbal cues are sent, such as voice quality and tone.
  - It is particularly suited for short messages that require no further discussions or feedback.
3. **Teleconferencing** is the simultaneous communication among a group by telephone or via computer using specially designed software. The software is often referred to a “groupware.”
- Meeting can be held while members are not in the same location.
  - Each group member has access to their own computer which is linked to a network and to an overhead projector.
  - Messages are anonymous.
  - Most, and sometimes all, communication is done through the computers.
  - These systems have incredibly high speeds and, usually, very high success rates.
4. **Videoconferencing** is the holding of meetings with individuals in two or more locations by means of closed-circuit television.
- 1) It is synchronous, meaning that senders and receivers can engage in simultaneous communication of the type associated with face-to-face conversation.
  - 2) It is fast.
5. **Electronic data interchange (EDI)** is a way for organizations to exchange standard business transaction documents, such as invoices or purchase orders, using direct computer-to-computer networks.
6. **Intranet** systems are organizational communication networks that use Internet technology and are accessible only by organizational employees.
7. **Extranet** systems are organizational communication networks that use Internet technology and allow authorized users inside the organization to communicate with certain outsiders such as customers and vendors.

### **Wireless Capabilities**

Wireless communication depends on signals sent through air or space without any physical connection using things such as microwave signals, satellites, radio waves and radio antennas, or infrared light rays.

### **How Information Technology Affects Organizations**

1. Communication and the exchange of information among organizational members are no longer constrained by geography or time.
2. However, managers must not forget to address the psychological drawbacks such as the cost of an employee being constantly accessible, pressure to “check in” even during off hours, and the separation of work lives and personal lives.