

## Effects of Professional Leadership Style on Communication in Business Education in Nigeria

Franklin Ohiole Ohiwerei,  
Department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education,  
Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.  
E-Mail: Ohiolefr@yahoo.com  
Ass. Prof. Basil Ogameziem Nwosu  
Department of Business Education, Faculty of Education, Ebonyi State University  
Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria.

### Abstract

This paper discusses the effective communication skills, basics in internal organizational communication, and common causes of problems in internal communication. Downward and upward communication. It's also discussed how professional business communication aids each leadership style; who is a leader. The paper uses historical survey in analyzing and evaluating the views of various authors in an attempt to inform researchers, business educators, scholars on current reasoning on the issue of effects of professional leadership style on communication in business education in Nigeria etc. Conclusion and recommendations such as before communicating, the leader must consider what he/she want to communicate, he/she must hold regular meeting with the staff etc were made.

**Keywords:** communication, professional, leadership, business, educators, style.

### Introduction

Nwuneli (1991) in Esene (2005), defines communication as "sharing experience. He sees communication as "the sharing of experience which may involve two people interacting in a face to face situation or may involve one person telling folktale in the presence of a participating group or audience or may involve many persons or listening to the voice over the radio. Kuntz and Weilrich (1988) in Esene (2005) opined that "communication is the transfer of information from a sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receiver".

According to Wolf (2001) business communication is communication used to promote a product, service, or organization, relay information within the business; or deal with legal and similar issues. Bekenstein (2003) claimed that there is a growing trend in physics to define the physical world as being made of information itself (and thus information is defined in this way). Information has a well defined meaning in physics. Examples of this include the phenomenon of quantum entanglement where particles can interact without reference to their separation or the transmitted light. Information itself cannot travel faster than light even if the information is transmitted indirectly. This could lead to the fact that all attempts at physically observing a particle with an "entangled" relationship to another are slowed down, even though the particles are not connected in any other way other than by the information they carry.

### Effective Communication Skills

Effective communication skills are the tool management uses to get things done. Without it, a manager is as ineffectual as a carpenter without his kit of tools. While it is a management skill, communication is also an essential part of all other management skills. After a manager has established organizational goals, developed reasonable forecasts, made plans, established the organizational structure, and acquired personnel needed, nothing happens if he is unable to communicate effectively with his people. The degree of success in accomplishing missions of the organization depends upon the clarity of his statement of the roles and missions - upon his skill in transferring the concept to others in the organization. The manager must communicate the content of his message, and convey a positive attitude to those who receive it. Communication has been described by some as an atmosphere. If the atmosphere is not favorable, misunderstandings occur and inefficiency or even failure results. The best advice one can give to a manager, who wishes to create a receptive atmosphere, is to suggest that he speak or write as he would like to be spoken or written to. In our daily lives, we play the roles of transmitter (source of the message) and receiver over and over. We are judged by the way we transmit - by speaking or writing - the message and by the way we listen to it or assimilate what we read. The effective manager, through skill in communications, can lead the members of his organization to play their necessary roles.

This effective communication skills guide, devoted to communicating effectively, will cover oral (listening) and written (reading) input, as well as oral (speaking) and written (writing) output. Of course, there are also hybrid inputs and outputs that should be recognized. A written input is received aurally when someone reads aloud to us. The converse of this is when we receive the oral output of written material, such as when a speaker "reads" his paper. One of the most useful hybrids is the oral production of written material, commonly

referred to as "dictation." (Small Business Management Retrieved 25/12/2009)

### **Basics in Internal Organizational Communications**

Most experts on organizations, management and leadership, assert that effective communication is the foundation for effectiveness in any type of organization. They assert there cannot be too much communication. Some leaders misinterpret communications to be the same as paperwork or bureaucracy and so they are averse to a high degree of communications. As leaders and managers mature, they realize the need to effectively convey and receive information, and efforts at communications (internal and external) increase substantially. (McNamara 2008).

### **Common Causes of Problems in Internal Communication**

Many organizations take a deliberate, formal approach to ensuring sound communications (both internal and external) by developing a communication plan. Perhaps the most common communication problem is managements' (leaders' and managers') assumption that because they are aware of some piece of information, than everyone else is, too. Usually staffers are not aware unless management makes a deliberate attempt to carefully convey information.

When organizations are just getting started; their leaders can often prize themselves on not being burdened with what seems as bureaucratic overhead, that is, as extensive written policies and procedures. Writing something down can be seen as a sign of bureaucracy and to be avoided. As the organization grows, it needs more communications and feedback to remain healthy, but this communication is not valued. As a result, increasing confusion ensues – unless management matures and realizes the need for increased, reliable communications. For effective internal communication Professional business communication aids each leadership style in any organization, through the following principles has to be followed:

1. Unless management comprehends and fully supports the premise that organizations must have high degrees of communications (like people needing lots of water), the organization will remain stilted. Too often, management learns the need for communications by having to respond to the lack of it.
2. Effective internal communications start with effective skills in communications, including basic skills in listening, speaking, questioning and sharing feedback. These can develop with some concerted review and practice. Perhaps the most important outcome from these skills is conveying that you value hearing from others and their hearing from you.
3. Sound meeting management skills go a long way toward ensuring effective communications.

### **Basic Structures/Policies to support Effective Internal Communication**

Professional business communication aids each leadership style through both downward and upward communications as follows:

#### **Downward Communication**

1. Ensure every employee receives a copy of the strategic plan, which includes the organization's mission, vision, values statement, strategic goals and strategies about how those goals will be reached.
2. Ensure every employee receives an employee handbook that contains all up-to-date personnel policies.
3. Develop a basic set of procedures for how routine tasks are conducted and include them in standard operating manual.

#### **Upward Communications**

1. Ensure all employees give regular status reports to their supervisors. Include a section for what they did last week, will do next week and any actions/issues to address.
2. Ensure all supervisors meet one-on-one at least once a month with their employees to discuss how its' going, hear any current concerns from the employee, etc. Even if the meeting is chit-chat, it cultivates an important relationship between supervisor and employee.
3. Use management and staff meetings to solicit feedback. Ask how it's going. Do a round table approach to hear from each person.
4. Act on feedback from others. Write it down. Get back to it – if only to say you can't do anything about the reported problem or suggestions, etc.

For effective communication in professional business communication to aid each leadership style in management, Nwosu (2002) stated that the answer to rumour-mongering: When unexplained actions of management occur, a vacuum is thereby created. The vacuum is usually filled by the receiver's own interpretation of the actions. "Since human nature abhors vacuum" they will, usually, supply the missing link. Effective communication is therefore the answer to the dysfunctional aspects of grapevine. Communication makes work to go on – through it, orders and instructions are given. It makes work purposeful by giving meaning to the job. If we know that the goals are and what progress is being made towards them, we feel that we are a vital part of the team.

### **How Professional Business Communication Aids Each Leadership Style**

According to McNamara (2008), supervision is often considered to include designing the job, hiring someone to fill the job, training them, delegating to them, guiding them via performance review, helping them develop their career, noting performance issues, and firing them, if needed. Obviously small nonprofits may not be able to afford full attention to all of these activities.

However, there are several basic and regular activities which provide a solid foundation for effective supervision. These basics ensure that everyone is working together – as important, that staff feel they are working together – towards a common cause. Ironically, these basics are usually the first activities that stop when an organization is in a crisis. Consequently, an organization development specialist, when “diagnosing” an organization, often first looks to see if these basics are underway. The following activities should be conducted by the new employer’s supervisor.

- (a) Having all employees provide weekly written status reports to their supervisors. Include what tasks were done last week, what tasks are planned next week, any pending issues and date the report. These reports may seem a tedious task, but they are precious in ensuring that employee and their supervisor have mutual understanding of what is going on, and the reports come in very handy for planning purposes. They also make otherwise harried staff and managers stand back and reflect on what they are doing.
- (b) Hold monthly meetings with all staff together – review the overall condition of the organization and review recent successes. Consider conducting “in service” training where employees take turns describing their roles to the rest of the staff. For clarity, focus and morale, be sure to use agendas and ensure follow-up minutes. Consider bringing in a client to tell their story of how the organization helped them. These meetings go a long way toward building a feeling of teamwork among staff. (<http://www.managementhelp.org/misc/mtgmgmnt.htm>)
- (c) Hold weakling or biweekly meetings with all staff together if the organization is small (e.g., under 10 people); otherwise, with all managers together. Have these meetings even if there is not a specific problem to solve – just make them shorter. (Holding meetings only when there are problems to solve cultivate a crisis-oriented environment where managers believe their only job is to solve problems.). Use these meetings for each person to briefly give an overview of what they are doing that week. Facilitate the meetings to support exchange of ideas and questions. Again, for clarity, focus and morale, be sure to use agendas take minutes and ensure follow-up minutes. Have each person bring their calendar to ensure scheduling of future meetings accommodates each person’s calendar.

### **Who is a Leader?**

According to Ohiwerei (2012) a leader is a person who is placed in an authority over others. A person who exercises control over other employees in a workplace environment. Lee and Chuang (2009) say a leadership is one with most dynamic effects during individual and organizational interaction. In other words, ability of management to execute “collaborated effort” depends on leadership capability. Excellent leader not only inspires subordinate’s potential to enhance efficiency but also meets their requirements in the process of achieving organizational goals.

Fry (2003) explains leadership as use of leading strategy to offer inspiring motive and to enhance the staff’s potential for growth and development several reasons indicate that there should be a relationship between leadership style and organizational performance. The first is that today’s intensive and dynamic markets feature innovation based competition, price/performance rivalry, decreasing returns, and the creative destruction of existing competencies (Santoral, Seaton and Sarros (1999) studies have suggested that effective leadership behaviours can facilitate the improvement of performance when organizations face these new challenges (McGrath and Macmillan (2000).

Fenwich and Gayle (2008) in their study of the missing links in understanding the relationship between leadership and organizational performance concluded that despite a hypothesized leadership performance relationship suggested by some researchers, current findings are inconclusive and difficult to interpret.

### **Develop a Basic Communication Plan**

Whether planning your internal or external communication efforts, it helps a great deal to develop a communication plan, either informally or formally. For example, consider:

1. What key messages do you want to convey?
2. To what key stakeholders do you want to convey the key messages (e.g. consider clients, founders, community leaders, service providers, etc.
3. What is the best approach to reach each key stakeholder, including who/how should the message be conveyed?

### **New Employee Disorientation**

Alexander Heron’s 1942 book sharing information with employees is the first ever written on employee

communication. One of the best jobs ever knew of making ‘company investment’ take on a life meaning is done by a manager of a small plant employing about five hundred. “However, says” This manager systematically plans to see each new employee soon after he joins the organization. He plans the conversation so that he can ask the new employee why he prefers to work for wages rather than to work for himself. Of course, the answer is almost always, I have no capital. You got to have capital to work for yourself” And here is where the trouble begins: Wisely and slowly this manager leads to recognition of the fact that capital is no less necessary if the man is to work for wages. He points out that the visible, physical things which had to be provided before he or anyone else, could work for wages in that plant – the land, the buildings, spur tracks, the heavy equipment, machines, and tools. He casually jots down the figures as he goes along, mentions the total dollars, the number of workers, and he and the employee together discover that the physical plant represents \$22,000 per worker. These are all communication in professional business communication that aids each leadership style.

### **Why you Need to Get Your Message Across**

Professional business communication can only aid each leadership style when you consider the following on why you need to get your message across to everyone around you both within and outside the organization.

Effective communication is all about conveying your messages to other people clearly and unambiguously. It is also about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible. Doing this involves effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. And it is a process that can be fraught with error with messages muddled by the sender or misinterpreted by the recipient. When this is not detected, it can cause tremendous confusion, wasted effort and missed opportunity. In fact, communication is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication.

By successfully getting your message across you convey your thoughts and ideas effectively. When not successful, the thoughts and ideas that you actually send do not necessarily reflect what you think, causing a communications breakdown and creating roadblocks that stand in the way of your goals – both personally and professionally. In a recent survey of recruiters from companies with more than 50,000 employees, communication skills were cited as the single more important decisive factor in choosing managers. The survey conducted by the University of Pittsburgh’s Katz Business School, points out that communication skills, including written and oral presentations, as well as an ability to work with others, are the main factor contributing to job success. In spite of the increasing importance placed on communication skills, many individuals continue to struggle, unable to communicate their thoughts and ideas effectively – whether in verbal or written format. This inability makes it nearly impossible for them to compete effectively in the workplace, and stands in the way of career progression.

Being able to communicate effectively is therefore essential if you want to build a successful career. To do this you must understand what your message is, what audience you are sending it to and how it will be perceived. You must also weigh-in the circumstances surrounding your communications such as situational and cultural context.

Problems with communication can pop-up at every stage of the communication process (which consists of the sender, encoding, the channel, decoding, the receiver, feedback and the context. At each stage, there is the potential for misunderstanding and confusion.

To be an effective communicator and to get your point across without misunderstanding and confusion, your goal should be to lessen the frequency of problems at each stage of this process. With clear, concise, accurate, well-planned communications. (Managerial Communication 2009).

### **CONCLUSION**

Professional business communication can only aid each leadership style when you consider the need to get your message across to everyone around you both within and outside the organization.

The message being communicated to others must clearly and unambiguously. You must pay attention about receiving information that others are sending to you, with as little distortion as possible. Doing this involves effort from both the sender (leader) of the message and the receiver (subordinate). And it is a process that can be fraught with error with messages muddled by the sender or misinterpreted by the recipient. When this is not detected, it can cause tremendous confusion, wasted effort and missed opportunity. In fact, communication between the leader and subordinate is only successful when both the sender and the receiver understand the same information as a result of the communication.

To do this the leader must understand what message (order or duties to be assigned) is, what subordinate he is sending it to and how it will be perceived. The leader must also weigh-in the circumstances surrounding his communications such as situational and cultural context. Workers must be assigned the duties where they have the skill and capacity. Otherwise, communication cannot aid leadership style.

The Manager (leader) should not that problems with communication can pop-up at every stage of the communication process (which consists of the sender, encoding, therefore, the manager must consider all the

stages of communication i.e. from the beginning to the end all efforts and attention must be focused.

### **Recommendations**

After due analysis of the above, the authors hereby recommend as follows:

1. That before communication, the leader must consider what he/she wants to communicate.
2. That he should consider the physical position of the person he wants to communicate with.
3. He should be mindful of his communication.
4. His communication must be clear, concise, accurate, well-planned communications.
5. He/she must hold regular meeting with his staff.

### **REFERENCES**

- Alexander, H (1942). Book sharing information with employees.  
<http://writingboots.typepad.com/writing.boots/communication-philosophy>
- Bekenstein, J. D. (2003). *Information in the holographic universe*. *Scientific American*. Retrieved from <http://www.referencenter.com>
- Kuntz and Weilrich (1988) in Esene, R. A. (2005). *Business communication for tertiary institutions*. Agbor: Krisbec publications. ISBN 978 2494 55 X.
- Lee and Chuang (2009). The Impact of leadership styles on Job stress and turnover intention: Taiwan Insurance Industry as an Example: [www.hclee@ttu.edu.tw](http://www.hclee@ttu.edu.tw).
- Managerial Communication (2009). *Why you need to get your message across*.  
<http://www.mindtoos.com/Comm.SKll/communicationIntro.htm>
- McGrath, G. R. & Macmillan, I. C. (2000). *Entrepreneurial Mindset: Strategies for Continuously creating opportunity in an Age of uncertainty*. Harvard Business School Press Boo.
- McNamara, C. (2008). *Basics in Internal Organizational Communications*. Field guide to leadership and supervision.
- McNamara, C. (2008). Guidelines for meeting management.  
(<http://www.managementhelp.org/misc/mtgmgmnt.htm>)
- Nwosu, B. O. (2002). *Communication in the office*. *Office Management in Nigeria*. Owri: Barloz publishers.
- Nwuneli (1991) in Esene, R. A. (2005). *Business communication for tertiary institutions*. Agbor: Krisbec publications. ISBN 978 2494 55 X.
- Ohiwerei, F. O. (2012). *Managing Your Boss, Secretarial Duties and Office Administration*. A paper Delivered at a one-day Annual Seminar Organized by Association of University Secretarial staff (AUSS) held on Tuesday, September 25, 2012 at Alumni Building, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma.
- Santora, J. C., Seaton, W. & Sarros, J. C. (1999). Changing Times: Entrepreneurial Leadership in a Community –Based Nonprofit Organization. *Journal of Leadership Studies*. 6(3-4); 101-109.
- Small business management. *Effective communication skills: How to be a better communicator*. Retrieved 25/12/2009.
- Wolf, M. H. de W. (2001) *Marijke Hello de Wolf Fundacion futuro latinoamericano*.  
(<http://www.managementhelp.org/misc/mtgmgmnt.htm>)