

Developing Interpersonal Communication Strategies

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Abstract

The revolution in information technology and the rapid globalization have brought communication to the front line of academia and industry with the whole world becoming a global market and business getting varied and result oriented, professionals, scientists, teachers and students are facing newer challenges in communication everyday. We have to communicate with entire world – with the people of different nationalities various background and diverse experiments. The greatest need of the hour is to learn to work together as team. To exist in this mode of working, organizations and institutions require a high level of competence in Interpersonal communication. The corporate world values those who have the ability to communicate effectively. Recruiters rank communication skills as important criteria for hiring employees. Effective communication and interpersonal skills are crucial to increase employment opportunities and to compete successfully in the business environment. Interpersonal communication leads to good rapport and better human relations which give rise to favorable work climate in any organization. interpersonal communication differs from other forms of communication in that there are few participants involved, the interactants are in close physical proximity to each other and there are many sensory channels that give immediate feedback. Also the roles of sender and receiver keep alternating. Moreover, most interpersonal communication situation depends on variety of factors, such as the psychology of the two parties involved, the relationship between them, the situation in which the communication takes place, the surrounding environment, and finally the cultural context. The present paper is an attempt to explore the power of interpersonal communication and to suggest some strategies to develop interpersonal communication to excel in personal, professional and social life.

Keywords: Interpersonal, Intrapersonal, Attitude, Values, Communication, Empathy.

1. Introduction

Interpersonal communication is a crucial factor in human life particularly where collective endeavor is contemplated. All human exchange-professional or personal is based on communication. It is our responsibility to make others understand not their responsibility to understand us. The confidence and ability to express oneself is perhaps the most important of skills a person can possess. In the context of interpersonal communication, it would be appropriate to emphasize the importance of intrapersonal communication. This takes place within the individual. Intrapersonal communication takes place whenever we evaluate and react to internal and external stimuli. The first step towards effective communication with others is successful communication with ourselves. Intrapersonal messages reflect our physical, emotional, and social self as well as our self concept, self motivation, self determination, values, beliefs, and attitudes in short our entire personality. Thus the study of intrapersonal communication begins with knowing ourselves. Intrapersonal communication is the foundation upon which interpersonal communication is based Therefore it is necessary to understand how we communicate with ourselves before we approach the process of communicating with others.

Interpersonal communication has a long history within the vast area of communication. In the early 1900s, Simmel (1950) was making astute observations about interpersonal communication that are still debated today such as ‘reciprocal knowledge’, ‘characteristics of the dyad’, interaction ‘rituals’, ‘secrecy’, ‘lies and truth’, and ‘types of social relationship’.

Many intellectual seeds for the study of interpersonal communication were sown during the 1920s and 1930s. Elton Mayo and his colleague at the Harvard Business School were attempting to uncover the potential power of social interaction and social relationship in the work setting. In the 1940s and 1950s Eliot Chapple believed that the matching of interaction rhythms led to an impression of harmony whereas mismatching signaled discord regardless of the content. Anthropologists. Bird whistell (1952) and Hall (1952) were interested in the total process of communication, but their pioneering efforts and observations of body movement, gesture, postures, and the use of space laid the ground work for the study called “non verbal communication”, predominantly examined as interpersonal behavior. In late 1950s, Fritz Heider’s book, the psychology of interpersonal Relations (1958) helped to launch a line of research on attribution theory that is integral to the study of interpersonal communication today. By the late 1970s, the research in interpersonal communication established itself as a major area of study, along with mass communication, in the United States, though this was not the case in Europe, Asia, and South America. Even today, interpersonal communication outside the United States is likely to be housed within psychology, sociology, or anthropology. The late 1980s and early 1990s seemed to be characterized by a tendency to embrace a variety of approaches in the study of interpersonal communication (e.g., quantitative and qualitative, micro and macro) to face difficult questions about what we know and how we know it (Knapp, Miller, & Fudge,

1994). The reason why many scholars study interpersonal is the hope of generating information that will improve social interaction and human relationship. They seek to uncover and articulate what might be termed “solutions” for communication problems. As a result the literature in communication is now dotted with studies focusing on behaviors that are meant to enhance our close relationships and help us to achieve our interpersonal goals.

2. Strategies for interpersonal effectiveness

We are living in a complex and dynamic society with continuous developments in science and technology, electronically controlled robots and computers are replacing many human function. As a result, life is becoming fast, and relationships between two people are getting more and more complicated. Human values are declining day by day and the number of quarrels, disputes, divorces, and enmities are increasing. This is creating an unhealthy atmosphere resulting in a lack of mutual understanding, faith and trust between individuals. In such situation interpersonal skills are essential and are accorded with paramount importance at the work place. According to Wikipedia, “Interpersonal skills refer to mental and communicative algorithms applied during social communication and interactions in order to reach certain effects or results”. In simple words, it means a congenial and a pleasant interaction of people with others. The various psychological factors that exist within every human being and which consequently influence our behavior while interacting with others are referred to as interpersonal skills. Those possessing effective interpersonal skills are capable of appropriately communicating with different people who possess a variety of personality traits. Since this skill is constantly evaluated by every one concerned co-workers to superiors, it has an important role in one’s career growth. Though these interpersonal skills are to some extent inherent in oneself, they can be nurtured and developed with effort. Often there are chances of interpersonal conflict if a number of people work together on a project. One can make a mark in such cases by being an effective mediator, who takes a neutral position. The main concern, in such instances, should be to look at the overall interests of the organization without creating any bitterness in the people or team that hold opposing views. One also has to convince the people about the rationale behind the right decision those benefits the organization. One who possesses such interpersonal skills to resolve conflicts gets noticed, since he makes the organization realize that he can take an objective view considering only the organization’s benefits.

A smiling face is always preferable to a gloomy coffee – pot face. When dealing with team mates, one can get great results just with the help of cool and a smiling face. It costs nothing but pays much to keep a cheerful attitude. It can create an infectious aura within the team leading to a positive, energizing and productive ambience. If one wants to get the best out of team mates and co-workers, one should appreciate the work the team members have been doing. A small pat in the back or a simple remark such as , ‘well done’, ‘carry on the good work’, etc., can go along way to increase their enthusiasm and prompt them to work more efficiently.

Communication skill is one of the most important skills. Communicating without ambiguity is the cornerstone of strong performers and leaders. It is possible to avoid many conflicts and be an effective leader by communicating crisply. While communicating with anyone, proper attention should be paid to what others have to say. Listening is a vital skill. It plays an important role in improving relationships and teaming in a corporate setting. Develop empathy for others. The word ‘empathy’ simply means to understand and appreciate another person’s position. In interpersonal communication body language plays a vital role. Facial expression, gestures, postures and dress code will give hint as how one wants to continue with an association. For example, a teacher who reciprocates with a smile or wish to a student’s greetings is acknowledged as a good teacher by the student lot. So are the bosses who heed to their sub-ordinates and the employees who sincerely care and work for the reputation of the concern. Giving due respect to one’s right, values and needs, assumptions are also keys of interpersonal communication.

With unprecedented advancements in the methods of communication and transportations the world has become smaller. There are certain aspects of interpersonal communication that are of crucial importance in this context. As we are aware communication is to some extent culture specific. The system of symbols beliefs, attitudes values expectations, and patterns of behavior, differ from culture to culture. These differences are manifested in the notions of status, attitudes towards time, decision-making habits use of space and body language and social behavior. A recognition of these differences mainly engendered by national variables such as education, religion, economic condition, political system, etc. and an awareness of relationship among language, culture, and behavior are far more important, in respect to the interpersonal communication with the members of a different culture. To avoid cross-cultural conflicts you need to be more open minded, tolerant and courteous and keenly perceptive of the non-verbal symbols and clues because these may be different or even at variance with your socio cultural norms and patterns. Treat your foreign counterpart not as you would like to be treated but rather as he wants to be treated. To understand this point let us look at a few illustrative examples. The gift of a clock to Chinese would offend him because it is supposed to bring bad luck to the receiver. Thus the gift meant to be a symbol of good will may in fact act as a barrier to communication. Similarly, if you go to a Latin American country to attend a business meeting, do not get uneasy if before the meeting some time is spent on socialization. It is customary to do so in Latin America. For instance, while talking in North America people generally stand at some distance from

each other, where as in Latin America they touch each other quite frequently while communicating. The absence of touch would result in poor communication. Shaking hands is very important now all over the world, but it is given very special importance in Persian and Afghan culture. No headway can be made without a firm handshake. Thus while dealing with people belonging to a different culture, do not take the things for granted observe carefully their social behavior, study their values and be meticulous in making audience analysis before encoding and transmitting your messages.

There is a direct link between the quality of our communication and the quality of our life. Generally, people do not react to what we say; instead they react how we say. Interpersonal communication is a series of events occurring between the sender and the receiver. Some of these events are interactive, others communicative, and still others contactual in character, which means, in fact, that they consist in the participants' interactive communication and contactual behaviors. Contact is treated as an effect of interaction and communication, i.e. the final objective. The distinguishing feature between interaction, communication and contact is the degree of closeness and trust between two people. It is the highest in contact and the lowest in interaction. People interact in many situations, but only some of them involve communication and fewer lead to contact. It is an important development task for all the participants of the process of interpersonal communication to improve the skills of advancing from interaction to communication and finally to contact.

"When two individuals interact on consecutive occasions and each interaction can influence the following interactions, it is said that these persons are in specific relation" (Hinde & Stevenson Hinde, 1987 P.2). Advancing from interaction to communication and to contact is made possible owing to common knowledge (common ground) about joint activity, which in turn enables the participants of the process of communication to take common action. (Clark 1996). In summation let me assess the significance of the participants' capacity to progress from interaction to communication and contact for their development. This capacity enables them to build and maintain good relations. These relations influence their ability to develop common ground or understanding, drawing on which becomes particularly important in conflict or otherwise difficult situations, when problems need to be solved and agreement has to be reached. Good relations and common ground allow not only for sharing experiences but also enhance the chance of their being assimilated and used for modification of behavior. Proficient advancement from interaction to communication and contact brings about a significant qualitative change in person's interpersonal communication and is itself an essential development task.

3. Conclusion

The power of interpersonal communication is the most important aspect of the human personality. Above discussion shows that how we can make our interpersonal communication more relevant and fruitful. First, interpersonal effectiveness starts with – understanding yourself; it is essential to understand what drives your behavior, and knowing your strengths, weakness and triggers. Secondly intercultural effectiveness is possible only if the participant satisfy an attitude of openness towards each other's cultural perspectives; and they must communicate under conditions which they mutually accept as fair. Finally the quality of interpersonal communication depends on interaction, communication and contact because all these bring about a significant qualitative change in person's interpersonal communication. Thus strategy of interpersonal communication lead to good rapport and better human relations which give rise to favorable work climate in any organization. It promotes trust, openness and do extremely well in personal professional and social life.

4. References

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