

Timely, Continuous & Credible Communication & Perceived Organizational Effectiveness.

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Managers typically spend between 60 % and 80% of their time communicating. Inability to communicate effectively and efficiently can jeopardize the business interests. The present study investigated the effectiveness of downward communication as perceived by managers and how it impacted the effectiveness of organization which was evaluated on five parameters namely: planning, organizational structure, organizational culture, communication, and outcome. Results showed that there was a positive correlation between effectiveness of downward communication and the organizational effectiveness. The organizational culture or the leaders at various hierarchical levels who provided accurate, timely and clear information and correct feedback to the subordinates improved the performance in terms of planning, structure, and communication. Such firms enjoyed good reputation in the market and the morale of the employees has been high.

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Organizational Communication

Internal communication activities are a determinant of how effectively organizations meet their goals (Farace et. al.1977, Goldhaber & Rogers 1979, Danowski 1980). Coordination and integration of various human activities are possible only if there is an effective system of communication in the organization which provides for exchange of information and sharing of various ideas. Managers typically spend between 60 % and 80% of their time communicating. It is through managerial communication that the employees get their job instructions, come to know about their job expectations, rationale behind the job, their contributions, performance feedback etc (Luthans & Larsen 1986, Kanter 1991). Inability to communicate effectively and efficiently can jeopardize the business interest related managerial functions, especially controlling and organizing (Koul 2000)

Communication is the process most central to the success or fail-

ure of an organization. Many of the problems that occur in an organization may be attributed to failure of communication. Research suggests that poor communication alone is a major contributor for most business and industrial organizations running at less than 12% efficiency. If employees are not given adequate information nor allowed to contribute to the solution of problems, they may revert to being the cause of them, resulting in increased absenteeism, lower productivity and grievances and so on (Hubbards 1999, Hargie et al. 1999, Armour 1998). Managers, therefore, clearly have the main responsibility of facilitating and encouraging open communication, reducing barriers to communication and eliminating boundaries, which hinder the understanding of end-to-end workflows so that it helps in achieving overall mission of the firm. Creating and using symbolic behavior –walking the talk-is a key (Kotter 2007). What leaders do and how they direct their attention allows followers to trust and understand (Buckingham & Coffman 1999, Miller 1997). In “a key-perhaps the key-to leadership... is the effective communication of a story” (Harris & Nelson 2008). Effective interpersonal communication skills allow various symbols –language, strong images, metaphors, physical settings-to influence the way people see their worlds; the leader “ manages their meanings” (Gabriel, Fineman & Sims 2000 :321). Leaders use symbolic activities to direct their followers.

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Managers are also expected to develop communication systems that are characterized by effective listening, feedback, two-way process, and recognition (Domerer 1998). Inadequate information is the major cause of more than half of all problems with human performance. By improving the quality and timeliness of the information people receive, you can improve performance by as much as 20 to 50% (Boyett & Boyett 1998:288). Traditional hierarchies created and maintained a power structure where managers made decisions; passed judgments, gave assignments, and determined success or failures (French Bell & Zawacki 2000). Bureaucracy, structure and Tayloristic work practices produced powerlessness in subordinates because superiors make the major decisions. Establishing rules also to achieve predictability also means imposing control using power, and rewarding or punishing. The consequence is a loss of critical employee input, commitment, and motivation especially given the changing workforce (Chambers 1998). The more your co-workers can depend on you, the greater the trust and comfort among the staff. Thus, creating an effective communication system also involves integrating communication as a fundamental component of the management role, obtaining the commitment of top management, and evaluating the communication process of all its members on a regular basis. Cooperation over work or relationship could not occur at all without communication and social interaction (Bovee 2005, Smith 1990, Argyle 1991).

It has been established that communication is central to successful leadership

activities (Bennis & Naus 1997, Clemes & Mayer 1987, Drucker 1998, Hackman & Johnson 2000, Miller 1997). “In writing on leadership and in business people’s accounts of their own leadership crises, the ability to communicate effectively emerges repeatedly as the most important skill to cultivate” (Barrier 1999:28). The ability to communicate effectively increases productivity, not only of managers but of organizations as well. Achieving success in today’s workplace is closely tied to the ability of employees and managers to communicate effectively with each other and with people outside the organization. While there is a vast range of literature available in the fields of communication both in the West and America, research into organizational communication area in the Indian context is at an early stage.

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Organizational effectiveness is an essential part of competitiveness and India needs to increase its competitiveness for becoming a major economy of the world (Pillania 2008a). With liberalization of Indian economy, one of the visible affect is the dramatic change in the composition of its workforce. This change in the composition of the work force is likely to be unidirectional, as more and more business is conducted in multicultural societies across the global village. Secondly, the system of hierarchy which is very strong in the Indian culture finds itself being

challenged by the notion of collaborative and team based organizations. The command-and-control style of traditional management structures are questioned by the new generation of employees who are increasingly becoming more demanding, expecting to be respected and valued as individuals in the workplace and are quite vocal about it. They like open communication with their managers, want to make their own decisions, want to share their ideas and their enthusiasm, and not just be told what to do (Schaefer 1993, Offerman & Gowing 1990, Loden & Rosner 1991, Dean & Snell 1991).

These cataclysmic changes have put organisations under tremendous pressure calling, among other things, to employ people: (a) who can best communicate in cross-cultural environment, and (b) reduce barriers to communication which impede the understanding of end-to-end workflow and better performance on strategic goals. However, a corollary is that important issues involving information transmission from those with managerial power to those without have been insufficiently explored by the Indian scholars. In fact, communication as a research has raised its profile only recently in India (Prasad 2005).

The present study is undertaken to find out the main effect of state, levels of management and their interaction effect on the perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication and also to study the correlation between perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication and Organizational effectiveness.

Hypothesis

Based on the review of literature the following hypotheses were formulated for the present study:

- There exists a significant positive relationship between the Downward Communication and organizational effectiveness.
- The state has a significant effect on the Downward Communication in the automotive industry.
- The levels of management has a significant effect on the Downward Communication in the automotive industry.
- There is a significant interaction effect of the state and the levels of management on the Downward Communication in the automotive industry.

Survey Instrument & the Sampling Process

The study was based on the design and administration of a survey. For this purpose two scales namely Downward Communication Scale developed by Gayatri (2001) and Organization Effectiveness Scale developed by the author were used.

It was decided to study organizations which met the following criteria:

- Had more than three distinct management levels which could be classified as top, middle and lower management levels.

- Were large enough so that the statistically significant sample size could be collected.
- Had similarity of business operations (say manufacturing sector, service sector etc).
- Organizations should be in different states, to enable determining the extent to which Downward Communication processes are able to overcome the impact of socio-cultural, economic and political influences.

Six large-scale automotive manufacturing firms from Punjab and Haryana were selected on the basis of the criteria that turn-over should be Rs.100 crore, the number of employees should be 500 or more and the product should be automobiles or automobile parts. Since these were large firms, the workforce was national in nature (from all over India), with a local bias normally mandated by the state because of political reasons. The top management composition is normally more national in character, compared to middle and lower management, to enable better co-ordination among employees from different cultures and work environment. These companies are governed by different state legislations, have different predominant religions, languages and cultures. They compete against each other in the process of industrialization. These states have different political, economic, and social compulsions.

The management levels were classified in different sets based on the criteria: top management level comprised

persons in policy planning and decision making including heads of departments and above. Middle management consisted of assistant managers and above. Lower management comprised engineers, assistant engineers and junior engineers. However, due to inadequate number of personnel at top management level, it was decided to take at least ten persons from the top management levels of each firm to have appropriate representation in the sample. A stratified proportionate random sample of about 100 personnel working at three different management levels of top, middle and lower management were selected from each of the six firms. They were all men falling in the age group of 23-55. Thus the total stratified sample for the study comprised 631 persons (Top management-60; Middle management-209; lower management-362) at different management levels working in six large scale automotive firms, three each from the states of Punjab and Haryana.

Data Collection & Statistical Techniques

Data was personally collected from the six automotive firms selected for the study. Scales on Downward Communication and Organisational Effectiveness were administered to managers at the top, middle and lower management levels. A total of 631 scales were given to six firms and a total of 538 filled in scales were received back. To study the main effect of state, levels of management and their interaction effect on the perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication, 2×3 ANOVA was applied and t-ratios were worked out wherever F was found to be significant. Product Moment Correlations were also arrived at to determine the extent of the relationships between Downward Communication and Organizational Effectiveness.

Analysis & Discussion

Summary of 2×3 ANOVA applied on Downward Communication scores is given in Table 1

Table 1: Summary of the 2 × 3 ANOVA for Downward Communication in Automotive Industries Punjab & Haryana

Sources of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Sum of Squares	F
State (2)	214.25	1	214.25	1.91
Levels of Mgmt. (3)	1202.08	2	601.04	5.36
State into Levels of Mgmt. (2*3)	369.51	2	184.75	1.64
Within	59589.08	532	112.01	
Total	62877.68	537	117.09	
df 1, 532 F Significant at.01 level		= 4.85		
F Significant at.05 level		= 3.01		
df 2, 532, F Significant at.01 level		= 6.69		
F Significant at.05 level		= 3.86		

States & Downward Communication

It is evident from the insignificant F-ratio of 1.91 (Table 1) that state had no effect on Downward Communication. The result implies that there were no significant differences between the automotive industries in Punjab and Haryana with regard to the perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication. Table 2 shows the means and SD of Downward Communication in the automotive industries in Punjab and Haryana.

Table 2: Mean Scores and Standard Deviation for Downward Communication in the Automotive Industries of Punjab & Haryana

State	No of Personnel	Downward Communication	
		Mean	SD
Punjab	273	56.79	11.64
Haryana	265	60.33	9.60

The mean scores on Downward Communication for automotive industry in Punjab and Haryana were found to be 56.79 and 60.33 respectively. (Table 2) Personnel working in these firms find

Downward Communication equally characterized by appropriateness, preciseness, job instructions, explanation of rationale behind the task which helped them in understanding their jobs and achieving organizational goals and targets, use of multiple channels of communication, performance feedback, repetition of messages etc. The insignificant differences in Punjab and Haryana automotive industry could be due to similar culture of the two states i.e. people within these two states have more or less similar values, ethics, habits etc.

(b) Management Levels and Downward Communication

F-ratio of 5.37 (Table 1) for Downward Communication was found to be significant at .05 level indicating that there exist significant differences among top management, middle management and lower management levels regarding perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication in the automotive industry. Table 3 shows the means and t-ratios of Downward Communication in the automotive Industry of Punjab and Haryana.

Table 3: Significance of Difference between Means of Top, Middle and Lower Management Level Personnel on Downward Communication

Management Levels	Number	Mean	SE _M	Group Differences	t-ratio
Top Mgmt TM)	43	58.55	2.03	TM & MM	1.008
Middle Mgmt.	185	60.75	0.79	TM & LM	0.63
Lower Mgmt.	310	57.21	0.58	MM & LM	3.59**
t-Ratios					
Df	Significant at .01 level			Significant at .05 level	
226	2.60			1.97	
351	2.59			1.97	
493	2.59			1.96	

** Significant at 1% (p=0.01 level)

Middle management personnel perceived Downward Communication to be more effective.

t-ratios (Table 3) indicate that there were significant differences between middle management and lower management regarding perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication in automotive industry. Middle management personnel perceived Downward Communication to be more effective (M=60.75, Table 3) than the lower management personnel (M=57.21, Table3). They were of the opinion that they received more appropriate, adequate, clear job instructions than the lower management personnel and that constructive feedback from superiors helped them in improving their performance. In addition, they felt that there was more use of multiple channels of communication as compared to lower management personnel. This could be explained on the basis, that personnel at lower management levels may be getting messages through too many channels leading to confusion or they may not be getting enough and timely information from their superiors. Differences

between top and middle management personnel and top and lower management level personnel were however found to be insignificant as is evident from insignificant t-ratios (t= 1.00; 0.63, Table 3). The personnel at top management level found Downward Communication in the automotive industry equally characterized by clarity, preciseness and timely transmission of information, appropriateness of feedback, and use of multiple channels of communication as by the middle and the lower management personnel.

Interaction Effect

There exist no significant differences among six groups on the basis of state and levels of management.

As is evident from F-values.164 (Table1), Interaction effect of state varied at two levels, and levels of management varied at three levels was found to be insignificant on Downward Communication. The result indicates that there exist no significant differences among six groups on the basis of state and levels of management. All the groups perceived Downward Com-

Table 4: Interaction Effect of State and Levels on the Perceived Effectiveness of Downward Communication in the Automotive Industry of Punjab and Haryana

State	Mgmt. Levels	Downward Communication	
		Mean	SD
Punjab	Top mgmt	59.80	18.00
	Middle mgmt	58.75	12.97
	Lower Mgmt	55.44	9.71
Haryana	Top mgmt	57.47	7.46
	Middle mgmt	62.46	8.27
	Lower Mgmt	59.30	10.50

munication equally effective in the automotive industry. Means and SDs for six groups entered in Table 4. shows that middle management personnel in the automotive industry of Haryana had slightly higher mean effectiveness score on Downward Communication (M=62.46, Table4), than the rest of the five groups.

Downward Communication & Organizational Effectiveness

Product moment correlations were calculated to determine the extent of the relationships between Downward Communication and organizational effectiveness.

and vice-versa. In organizations perceived to be effective, Downward Communication will be characterized by accuracy, timeliness, preciseness and clarity of information to subordinates, constructive feedback, use of different modes of communication, repetition of important messages.

Table 5: Correlations between (a) Organisational Effectiveness (OE) and (b) Downward Communication (DC)

Downward Communication	Correlation with OE total
Downward communication	.67**
df:536 Table value for r significant at.01 Level**	=.115
significant at.05 Level*	=.088

* Significant at 5% (p=0.05 level)

** Significant at 1% (p=0.01 level)

The results of the present study indicate that effective organizations are perceived to be very open to its employees. There is transparency in

The correlations between Organizational Effectiveness and Downward Communication were found to be significant at 0.01 level. The results indicate that there exists significant positive correlation between Perceived Effectiveness of Downward Communication and Organizational Effectiveness which implies that higher the Perceived Downward Communication, higher will be the Perceived Organizational Effectiveness and vice-versa.

communication within the organizations. Leaders at different levels of the management communicate effectively with the employees of the organization. There are frequent interactions among the supervisor and the subordinates and the leaders ensure that all the employees are knowledgeable about the vision and mission of the organization. This finds support in Farmer’s study (1999) that the leader who flattened the communication hierarchy was more likely to achieve shared vision.

Organizational Effectiveness & Downward Communication

As is evident from Table I, the correlation between Organizational Effectiveness and Downward Communication (.67, Table 5) was found to be significant at.01 level of significance indicting a significant positive relationship between them. This implies that higher the Perceived Effectiveness of Organizations, higher will be the Perceived Effectiveness of Downward Communication

Further, in the perception of the managers at the three management levels, job roles of the individual employees are clearly defined. Appropriate job instructions are given which are precise, timely and clear. Hence, the individual employee of the organization has the knowledge and skills to perform their respective jobs. Employees are explained the rationale behind the task, helping them to understand what and why a job is being done which thus, helps the leaders in meeting

the organizational requirements. This finding is corroborated by Wanguri (1984) who found that managers would share confidential task related information to subordinates to motivate them; to develop team spirit, to solicit subordinate input; to provide information when there was need-to-know. Brenner and Segband (1973) showed that the subordinates who were given assignments, clear job instructions, and an easy access to their superiors gave supervisors better feedback. Those who received direct assignment from their immediate supervisors felt they were better informed, had more time to complete assignments. Roy (1990) however, in his study revealed that supervisors, who practiced significant intra level variability with regard to amount of information to be given to subordinates, did not receive high rating from their subordinates about their credibility and communication style. It signified lack of intra group cohesiveness and the tendency to hold back information in some people.

The results of the present study also imply that the leaders at different levels of the management motivate staff to perform at their optimal level. They feel that effective organization focuses on high performance. Thus, performance of employees is closely monitored and regularly appraised by the organization. The managers think that the organization has a well defined performance appraisal procedure and good performance of employees is rewarded. Corrective feedback is provided to employees of the effective organizations to improve their performance. Employees receive regular

coaching from their manager\ supervisor to improve their performance. Thus, knowledge of performance level and suggestions help improve skills and task performance. This finding is supported by the Pettit et al (1997) that supervisors might be able to promote adequate levels of job performance and job satisfaction among their employees by providing them with appropriate and accurate information and feedback.

Knowledge of performance level and suggestions help improve skills and task performance.

Managers at the three management levels feel that individual employees of the organization have access to information needed for taking future career decisions. In fact development plans of employees of the organization are framed every year in consultation with them, and also, training of the employees is linked to their career development. Thus, the morale of the employees within the organization is high and turnover of the employees is low in the effective organizations. Nguyen (2005) study suggested a significant correlation between managerial communication and leadership skills and employees' sense of empowerment and job satisfaction

Further the results suggest that multiple channels of communication-written; circulars, meetings; person-to-person interaction, telephone- are used in order to increase the chances of communication being received and also, facilitate accuracy and reduce the ambiguity of information.

And, important messages are repeated to ensure accuracy. The findings by Minsky and Marin (2001) and Sullivan (1996) showed that employees' preferences for communication channels vary according to the type of communication task undertaken, thereby lending partial support to the findings of the present study.

It can also be implied from the results that managers think that the organizational structure is flexible that many times, formal channels in the organizations can be bypassed if the message is not clear or if they want to save on time. But Reif et al's (1973) study contradicts the findings of the present study. The study reveals that respondents perceived that the formal organizations were more valuable in satisfying their needs. Reddy and Gayatri (2000) revealed that large organizations with higher level of bureaucratization were able to communicate all policies and procedures accurately to their members and functioned effectively.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study of perceived Downward Communication Effectiveness in relation to Organizational Effectiveness in the Indian Automotive Industry, the following conclusions can be drawn from the results thus obtained:

- There is significant positive relationship between Perceived Organizational Effectiveness and Downward Communication. Thus the first hypothesis that there exists significant positive relationship between the Perceived Effectiveness of Down-

ward Communication and Organizational Effectiveness stands accepted. These findings are corroborated by other research studies such as by Massey (1975), Muchinsky (1977), Roy (1990), Maloney (1993), Kumar (1994), Noone (1996), Pettit (1997) etc.

- There exist insignificant differences in Punjab and Haryana automotive industry with regard to overall perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication implying that the state had no effect on the overall organizational communication and its dimensions. Thus the second hypothesis that the state has a significant effect on the perceived effectiveness of Downward Communication in the automotive industry stands rejected. However, the researcher did not come across a study that shows the impact of state on the Perceived Effectiveness of Downward Communication
- There are significant differences among the personnel at three management levels (top, middle and lower) in the automotive industry with regard to Downward Communication Effectiveness indicating that levels of management had an effect on Downward Communication. Personnel working at middle management level perceived Downward Communication in the automotive industry more effective than the personnel at both top and lower management levels. In the case of Downward Communication, significant differences were found between middle management

and lower management. Thus, the third hypothesis that the levels of management have a significant effect on the Perceived Effectiveness Downward Communication in the automotive industry stands accepted. Larson and King (1973), Smith and Keil (2003), Rosen and Tesser (1975), Jablin (1979) studies substantiate the findings of the present study.

- The interaction effect of state and management levels on the Perceived Effectiveness of Downward Communication in the automotive industry was found to be insignificant. Thus the fourth hypothesis that there is a significant interaction effect of the state and the levels of management on the Perceived Effectiveness of Downward communication in the automotive industry stands rejected. The researcher again did not come across such a study highlighting the interaction impact of both the state and the management on the organizational communication and its dimensions.

The managers in their perceptions felt that leaders at various levels should keep the employees informed about the importance of their contribution for the organizational functioning. They should ensure that the employees understand the rationale behind the task that will help him in achieving his goals\ targets easily. Appropriate, timely, clear and accurate instructions should be given to the employees regarding their job performance. Knowledge of performance level helps improve skills. It is also important to identify the appropriate vehicle for commu-

nication –such as memos, speeches, meetings, videos, newsletters, electronic message boards, training sessions, news releases, posters and so forth, keeping in mind the rationale, the attitude and the limitations of the employees or the nature of the task involved. Preferably complex job instructions should be in a written form or properly documented to avoid confusion.

The employees should be provided with the correct feedback and suggestions in order to improve their performance. Organizations must have well defined performance appraisal procedure through which good performance of the employees should be rewarded. Work plans of individual employees of the organization should be developed collaboratively. There should be an easy access of the information to employees of the organization, needed for taking future career decisions. The leaders at various levels should give required resource support and training to its individual employees for performing their job.

However, the managers at three different management levels also, in their perceptions felt that occasionally, the use of too many communication channels only added to chaos than facilitating communication and further bypassing hierarchy created more of uncertainty about who is the real boss. The desired features of the Downward Communication will lead to the satisfaction of employees. Their morale will be high and turnover of the employees will be low. Organizations enjoy good reputation in the market.

Implications

A culture of engaged employees is one of the things that can help a business get through economic downturn, and high engagement levels are often a result of strong leadership communication. The research findings of Kaufman et al (1994), Adams et al (1995), Witherspoon et al (1996), Stroh (2002), Appelbaum et al (2003), emphasized that communicating effectively both with external and internal audiences in crisis or change situations, is one of the key factors in containing damage to the company's reputation and determining effectiveness. Kaufman et al (1994) suggested that a careful and right kind of communication from the management help organizations to survive the thorniest of the challenges. Witherspoon et al (1996) findings revealed that differential distribution of Downward Communication and inconsistent use of the potential of new communication technologies such as e-mail affected the functioning of the organization. Daly et al (2003) found that there was a strong relationship between efficacy of internal communication and change which was dependent upon a host of common and interdependent variables, communication being one of them. Appelbaum et al (2003) highlighted that mis-management of communication strategies during organizational downsizing by the management led to a lingering and negative impact on surviving employees behaviour and attitudes demonstrated by decrease in productivity, motivation, job satisfaction and increase in absenteeism .

While most leaders accept this, many still find it a challenge to actually com-

municate in a way that inspires the workforce to go the extra mile. Working with leaders who claim to have no time to focus on communication is one of these barriers.

The challenge for the Indian managers, therefore, is to develop an effective communication system by making communication a fundamental component of the management role, ensuring transparency, trust and interactive communication climate where employees are given opportunities to fully voice their opinions and deploy their talents and competences. The ability to communicate and seek communication from people down the line will effectively increase productivity, not only of managers but of the organizations as well.

This study can be further extended to other automobile companies in India or an international comparison can be undertaken. Further, it can be extended to other sectors of Indian economy.

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