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COMMUNICATION TACTICS FOR EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES:
A GUIDEBOOK FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND MANAGERS

by
Todd Michael Pasley

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 3/15/02

ABSTRACT

Todd Michael Pasley
Communication Tactics for Empowering Employees: A Guidebook for Organizations
and Managers
2002
Professor Larry Litwin
Graduate Corporate Public Relations Program

The purpose of this study is to establish communication tactics that apply to various communication situations in an empowerment context. The creation of such a reference source will offer a valuable resource for organizations and managers that wish to implement or change empowerment initiatives.

The completion of the study has yielded a guidebook consisting of case studies that offer solutions to communication problems based on literary research. The case studies will act as a guide for effective communication tactics when implementing or altering an empowerment initiative.

A non-scientific content analysis of relevant literature was completed to ascertain communication tactics and areas of communication prevalent in empowerment initiatives.

A comprehensive literature review was completed to explain and define the following communication areas and their components: supplementary information, company priorities and goals, training, education, performance, teams, and groups. The review also yielded successful communication tactics associated with these areas: interpersonal communication, print communication, electronic communication, facilitators, team and group communication.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Todd Michael Pasley

Communication Tactics for Empowering Employees: A Guidebook for Organizations and Managers

2002

Professor Larry Litwin

Graduate Corporate Public Relations Program

A comprehensive literature review finds a severe lack of unified communication tactics and models for empowerment initiatives. The literature alludes to techniques but never clearly states when the use of each is appropriate. This lack of consensus has led to the creation of a guidebook that can be used as a reference source by organizations and managers.

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CHAPTER 1

Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment is a recent phenomenon that took hold in the 1980s. The concept evolved from a unique history but lacks its own definitive history. Instead, its roots lie in older managerial theories that have been adapted due to recent developments.

The borrowing and modification of older theories means that empowerment lacks a comprehensive definition. However, the essence of **employee empowerment** is, “...the process of providing employees with the necessary guidance and skills, to enable autonomous decision making (including accountability and the responsibility) for making these decisions within acceptable parameters, that are part of an organizational culture” (Geroy, Wright, & Anderson, 1998).

Employee empowerment was created to adapt to the ever-changing business environment. As early as the 1980s organizations began dealing with a highly competitive and flexible business environment. Organizations were forced to change their practices to keep a competitive edge.

Organizations in the 1980s began to see a flux towards a **globalized market** in which organizations had to adapt to a new **consumer market**. Organizations were forced to act swiftly and competently in this new environment. They began to shift away from older managerial practices and undertook new ways to manage people and profit at the same time.

With globalization of the business and political worlds, increasingly rapid changes in the technologies of work, changing demographics of the workforce and customers, organizations are finding that they must continually change their ways of operating to keep up with their internal and external worlds (Randolph, 1995).

The second factor for the evolution of empowerment was organization downsizing. Organizations in the 1980s and 1990s began a shift to smaller more compact systems. The hierarchal organizational structure became flatter and more horizontal than vertical. This new delayered organization could not function based on older managerial models.

In this context, empowerment became a business necessity as the destaffed and delayered organization could not longer function as before. In this set of circumstances, empowerment was inevitable as tasks had to be allocated to the survivors in the new organization (Wilkinson, 1998).

These two factors saw an evolution in managerial practices. Organizations began to seek out ways to make employees more productive and raise profits at the same time. They needed a system that offered an increased benefit to the organization and also met the needs of the new consumer environment. The new organization needed to create a management structure that supported broader communication and decentralization.

The theoretical underpinnings of empowerment can be traced back to human relations theory. Human Relations theory was based on a democratic and humanistic approach to managing employees. It took into account manager-employee relationships

and sought to establish a mutually consenting workforce. It regarded cooperation between managers and employees as the cornerstone of increased morale and motivation.

The 1960s saw an increase in job enrichment and enhancement programs. These initiatives were based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and integrated to improve employee motivation. "There was a recognition that control of the labour process was not possible through coercion or economic incentives alone" (Grieves, 2000).

Empowerment in Context

Empowerment started to be articulated in the 1980s. Employee empowerment is alluded to in managerial texts such as W. Edwards Deming's "Out of the Crisis" (1986). In his text, Deming articulates his "14 Points." He posts these points as guidelines for transforming Western Management. Edward E. Lawler III in his text, "High Involvement Management" (1986) points to a system that allows management to become involved with the most basic of organizational functioning. He also offers management a way in which employees can take a more diverse role in the functioning of the organization.

Empowerment in the present context is considered one of the most recent management trends. "Empowerment is regarded as providing a solution to the age-old problem of Taylorised and bureaucratic workplaces where creativity is stifled and workers become alienated, showing discontent through individual or collective means" (Wilkinson, 1998). It is seen as the key to unleashing employee potential and a way to increase efficiency and effectiveness (Cook, 1994). However, many problems still exist with empowerment and its implementation.

Wilkinson outlines four problems with empowerment and how it is seen: "1. The term is ambiguous, 2. Empowerment is not seen in a historical context, 3. There is very

little discussion about implementation, and 4. The literature ignores the context of implementing empowerment” (Wilkinson, 1998).

The roots of empowerment lie within a complex framework that neither clarifies nor provides a substantial background. Employee empowerment in essence is an ambiguous term. “Although empowerment lacks a universal definition, the term is currently used to describe a variety of interventions that give more autonomy and an increase in power to subordinates” (Grieves, 2000). These interventions are used to increase individual decision-making and freedom to act within their roles. However, empowerment is neither clearly defined nor a structured applicable theory. The theory encompasses a wide variety of management issues, “...it seems that employee empowerment is multi-dimensional. No single set of contingencies can describe it” (Honold, 1997).

This ambiguity leads to a lack of a universally applicable system of employee empowerment.

A complicating factor in defining employee empowerment is that by its very nature, in order for empowerment to be successful, each organization must create and define it for itself. Without this self-reference, employee empowerment invariably fails because the commitment, or the sense of ownership of the concept, is not created (Honold, 1997).

The empowerment initiative of an organization must be implemented throughout the organization. It must encompass the entire organization from upper management to line employees. If employees and management embrace the initiative, they feel a sense of ownership throughout the organization. The initiative then becomes ingrained in the

organizational structure and culture and is undertaken by every employee. This approach lends employee empowerment a framework that cannot be applied universally to all organizations.

One area of employee empowerment and its organizational implementation is committed to communication within the organization.

In a culture of sustainable excellence, management, employee, and customers are kept informed about key issues and problems. Such organizations provide adequate channels or forums for two-way communication – top-down and bottom-up – about employees’ ideas and opinions. And such organizations train managers and other employees in communication skills, feedback techniques, and effective meetings (Hickey & Casner-Lotto, 1998).

However, the communication methods of organizations are not always universally applicable.

Implementation at different organizations means that the strategies used to carry out the empowerment initiative will vary. This variation allows each organization to pursue different tactics in achieving a successful program. It also means that some empowerment initiatives fail because organizations do not have a foundation from which to consult. “Unfortunately, however, attempts to empower employees have been met with varying degrees of success; results of these efforts have ranged from wild successes to miserable failures with empowerment as more myth than reality found somewhere in between” (Appelbaum, Herbert, & Leroux, 1999). A universal approach to empowerment initiatives has not been adopted to provide an applicable framework.

The second problem lies in the categorization of successful tactics. Each company implements its own strategies and tactics to produce a successful program.

No categorization scheme for empowerment is entirely satisfactory as the boundaries between different types are not clear and much depends on the definition adopted. With empowerment not existing as a single unified entity, it can cover a very wide range of schemes, which in turn may involve a variety of diverse management motivations (Wilkinson, 1998).

The overall plan may be unique to each organization. This variation invariably leads to difficulty in evaluating each tactic compared to those used by other organizations.

A case study done in the hotel industry cited empowerment practices such as, training courses, appropriate policies, delayering, job rotation, employee participation, autonomous decision-making, information sharing, and communication. However, the initiative failed due to timing and internal and external conditions (Macandrew & D'annunzio-Green, 1999). The organization was not stable enough to handle the criteria and tactics needed to support the empowerment initiative.

Wickisier (1997), in his case study of Dura-Tech proved to have a very different outcome. The growing company used delayering, team decision making, manager mentoring and coaching, information sharing, training, and recognitions and rewards. Today, the company has established The World Class Quality Leadership Program. It has become a leader and model for empowerment initiatives.

Need for the Study

The ambiguity of empowerment poses a unique situation that lacks a reference source for communication tactics. The literature cites numerous tactics used for the

implementation of empowerment. However, the literature lacks a definitive source of established communication tactics and areas of implementation. This lack of a unified perspective lends itself to an academic study that attempts to create a practical reference source for organizations and managers.

...the process of developing and implementing empowerment initiatives is said to build from communication. Thus the literature aimed at managers implies that empowered states can only be realized where managers have selected a model of empowerment and have worked to communicate the “need” for (this form of) empowerment to employees in a clear and engaging fashion. Conversely this also implies that where empowerment cannot be communicated in a clear and universally acceptable fashion, managers will be unable to develop commitment for the initiative, and so, will be unable to achieve the larger business goals they would aspire to (Collins, 1999).

What is needed at this point is a list of communication areas and tactics designed to meet the needs of individual organizations.

The number of people in the organization who need information, the amount of information they need, and the means to deliver information all have increased. Yet, paradoxically, the real lesson of the component manufacturer is that it’s not always possible to know in advance who will need that information. Thus the imperative of the new model is that organizations must make as much information as possible available, while providing employees with the means – and the responsibility - to obtain that information (Brandon, 1996).

Empowerment in its essence is a strategy used in the field of employee relations and human resources. “Empowerment would appear to fall neatly under the ‘HRM’ banner, with the importance it places on commitment, loyalty, individual motivation and reward, and the unitary perspective” (D’annunzio-Green & Macandrew, 1999). It is the job of the employee relations practitioner to create an environment that fosters cooperation between management and employees. Empowerment can be used to help employees become an important part of organizational functioning.

The objective of empowerment is to tap the creative and intellectual energy of everybody in the company, not just those in the executive suite, and to provide everyone with the responsibility and the resources to display real leadership within their own individual sphere of competence (Oden, 1997).

Therefore, empowerment is a way to draw employees into the organization by giving them the responsibility to actively participate in the goals and objectives of the organization. This approach also requires increased communication between managers and employees.

Empowering employees to improve your organization will require greater amounts of communication than you ever thought possible. It will ask that you not only increase the amount of time you personally spend giving and receiving information, but also that you improve your style and methods of communicating (Hildula, 1996).

Employee empowerment can indeed be used as a strong tool not only for management but also for those most closely associated with the well being of employees. Empowerment has the potential to increase efficiency, effectiveness, profit and enrich the

lives of individual employees. The focus then becomes the need to increase employee well being using appropriate tactics.

Empowerment is an internal decision by an individual to commit to achieving organizational goals and objectives, to collaborate with others towards the accomplishment of common goals and to choose to act freely within the boundaries and structure of the organization for the purpose of achieving individual and organization success (Duvall, 1999).

Empowerment can only work if the employee and the organization become united. The employee must become an active participant of organizational functioning. In Pacanowsky's study of W. L. Gore & Associates, he found that employees "...feel that they stand before their organization as an equal, as a partner, as an entity as capable of affecting their organization as of being affected by it" (Pacanowsky, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Organizations and managers lack a reference source of definitive communication tactics used to reach specific empowerment initiative goals and objectives.

A comprehensive literature review finds a severe lack of unified communication tactics and models for empowerment initiatives. Various tactics are offered by a number of authors, experts, and practitioners. However, none can agree on successful tactics that can be applied in various situations. The literature alludes to techniques but never clearly states when each should be used.

This lack of agreement lends itself to an in-depth study of the problem. It also raises certain questions pertaining to the topic of empowerment and its successful

implementation. What established communication tactics are successful in various situations in the context of employee empowerment?

Limitations

This study deals exclusively with identifying communication tactics for empowerment programs from the perspective of employee relations. These tactics and models are based on various levels and forms of communication explained later in this paper.

Employee empowerment is a complex topic. Empowerment can be approached from many different disciplines including psychology, management theory, and sociology. The expanse of this project has been limited considerably and directed to a more specific area of study. It would be impossible to evaluate all aspects of employee empowerment in one study.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to establish communication tactics that will be applicable in various situations in an empowerment context. The creation of such a guide will offer a valuable resource for organizations and managers that wish to implement or alter empowerment initiatives.

The study will yield a guidebook of case studies that offer solutions to communication problems based on literary research. The case studies will act as a guide for effective communication tactics when implementing or altering an empowerment initiative.

Procedure

The author gathered numerous articles from books, trade journals, academic journals, dissertations, and theses on the area of empowerment. It was then necessary to search through each one for relevant information. The area was refined to the topic of empowerment and its use in employee relations and internal communication. Another review was conducted that left the author with very specific information pertinent to the study of the topic.

The communication problems faced by empowerment programs were collected through a comprehensive literature review. The literature was reviewed for all citations of communication and empowerment issues. Each citation was compiled into a comprehensive list. The list was analyzed for frequency of citation. The problems, issues and tactics mentioned most frequently were used to create a separate refined list.

A literature review, using various books and journal articles, was then conducted to ascertain successful communication tactics in each area. This procedure yielded a comprehensive guidebook for empowerment communication.

Glossary of Definitions

- Globalized Market: An economic market in which companies in numerous countries rely on each other and the consumers they serve to function.
- Consumer Market: An economic market that relies on buyers and the availability of goods to operate and continue functioning.
- Empowerment: "...the process of providing employees with the necessary guidance and skills, to enable autonomous decision making (including accountability and the responsibility) for making these

decisions within acceptable parameters, that are part of an organizational culture” (Geroy et al., 1998).

Tactics: Communication techniques used to relay messages or information from one individual to another.

CHAPTER 2

The Historical Foundations of Empowerment

One of the problems with empowerment is that it lacks a definitive historical background. Without this background it is hard to fully understand what empowerment entails. Therefore, this chapter will lay the basic historical background for empowerment as it pertains to empowerment communication.

The first part of this chapter outlines older managerial theories that set the groundwork for empowerment. These theories represent the chronological development of empowerment up to the present day. The second part of this chapter explains empowerment as it relates to these theories and communication within an empowerment context.

Max Weber

Max Weber, a German sociologist, focused on social systems and their impact on individuals. His most notable work was his concept of bureaucracy. Weber's work sets out to create a theoretical outline for social authority within a specific structure. He set the foundation for the use of authority in a hierarchical structure that eventually became known as a bureaucracy. This form of social structure has been widely used as the basis for management systems.

Where rational-legal authority involves an organized administration staff, according to Weber it takes the form of a 'bureaucratic structure. Here each

member of the staff occupies an office with a specific delimitation of powers and sharp segregation of the sphere of office from his private affairs. The different offices are organized in terms of a stringent hierarchy of higher and lower levels of authority in such a way that each lower level is subject to control and supervision by the one immediately above it (Weber, 1922/1947, p. 58).

Weber, using this definition, outlines the basic physical structure of a bureaucratic organization. However, the structure has dire social consequences for individuals who function within it.

This control and supervision above all includes the power of appointment, promotion, demotion, and dismissal over the incumbents of lower offices. Fitness for office is typically determined by technical competence, which in turn may be tested by long periods of formalized training as a condition of eligibility (Weber, 1922/1947, p. 58).

The organizational structure of a bureaucracy mirrors the structure of authority. The higher levels have control and authority over the lower levels. This also means that the individuals in the lower levels are controlled by authority figures in the higher levels.

“Bureaucracy in this sense, Weber says, is by far the most efficient instrument of large-scale administration which has ever been developed and in the modern social order many different spheres have become overwhelmingly dependant upon it” (Weber, 1922/1947, p. 58). This ‘efficiency’ was reliant upon four basic factors: division of authority, structured hierarchy of authority, formal selection and retention of employees, and formal governing rules. The bureaucratic organization was based upon the division of authority and those who held that authority. This authority was then shaped into a

physical structure in the form of an organizational structure. Formal training and initiation were used to select and retain employees. Formal rules were used to administer authority as well as enforce the rules across the organization.

Weber's theory was that legitimate authority was derived from legal power. He believed that the hierarchy had the right to enforce the rules through the position they held. "It is necessary, that is, that there should be a relatively high probability that the action of a definite, supposedly reliable group of persons will be primarily orientated to the execution of the supreme authority's general policy and specific command" (Weber, 1922/1947, p. 324).

The bureaucratic structure made the compliance of all subordinates necessary for the organization to function efficiently and effectively. It also took personal control away from individuals. The responsibility for finishing tasks was not held by the individual but instead with the authority that resided in the hierarchy and the rules of the organization.

Fredrick Taylor

Fredrick Taylor is considered the father of scientific management. In 1911, Taylor published his book, "The Principles of Scientific Management." His book focused on increasing productivity through cooperation between management and employees. His management theory eventually became known as Taylorism or Taylorised bureaucracy.

His management theory was based on the old bureaucratic structure, but recreated the relationship between manager and employee. However, even in this case, management would still hold the authority and power over the employees.

He proposed and outlined four principles based on the scientific management of an organization. These principles were outlined as duties to be implemented within the organization.

The first principle stated, “They develop a science for each element of a man’s work, which replaces the old rule-of-thumb method” (Taylor, 1919, p. 36). Taylor proposed that each employee fill a role within the organization. That role would be established and clearly defined. This would ultimately eliminate the ambiguity of the role the employee played within the organization. It would also replace older methods that had become overburdened by inconsistencies.

The second principle stated, “They scientifically select and train, teach, and develop the workman, whereas in the past he chose his own work and trained himself as best he could” (Taylor, 1919, p. 36). Taylor focused on consistent training for employee’s that matched their role within the organization. Training, teaching, and developing allowed the organization to have a uniform basis for employee knowledge. This would lead the employee to become more efficient in their role. Employees would become better suited to their particular positions within the organization.

The third principle stated, “They [managers] heartily cooperate with the men so as to insure all of the work is being done in accordance with the principles of the science which has developed” (Taylor, 1919, p. 36). Management had a direct responsibility to ensure that production was completed effectively by the individual employee. This was carried out in two ways: the training of employees and rewards based on productivity. Increased productivity for both employees and management was linked to an increase in income.

The fourth principle stated, “There is an almost equal division of the work and the responsibility between the management and the workmen. The management take over all work with which they are better fitted than the workmen, while in the past almost all of the work and the greater part of the responsibility were thrown upon men” (Taylor, 1919, p. 38). Management and employees became dependant on each other to accomplish tasks. In the past, it was left to the employee to finish tasks delegated by management. Taylor focused on creating a team approach in which both employee and manager were responsible for the completion of tasks.

Taylor envisioned a system that fostered cooperation between management and employee. This system was based on the science of better equipping both to handle their particular roles within the organization. It also increased the contact between upper management and line employees. The employee was no longer a tool, but a part of the overall functioning of the organization. However, the system was still based on a bureaucratic structure that needed to be changed to offer the employee a role that was closely linked with the organization and its productivity

Douglas McGregor

The theorist Douglas McGregor was in the forefront of employee development. McGregor’s “Theory X,” outlined the adverse effects older managerial theories had on employees. While his “Theory Y,” set new standards for the relationships between management and employee.

“Theory X”:

Theory X leads naturally to an emphasis on the tactics of control - to procedures and techniques for telling people what to do, for determining whether they are

doing it, and for administering rewards and punishments. Since an underlying assumption is that people must be made to do what is necessary for the success of the enterprise, attention is naturally directed to the techniques of direction and control (McGregor, 1985, p. 132).

McGregor created “Theory X” based on assumptions made by older managerial theories.

1. The average human being has an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if he can.
2. Because of this human characteristic of dislike of work, most people must be coerced, controlled, directed, threatened with punishment to get them to put forth adequate effort toward the achievement of organizational objectives.
3. The average human being prefers to be directed, wishes to avoid responsibility, has relatively little ambition, wants security above all (McGregor, 1985, p. 34).

He contends that these assumptions are based on human nature and human behavior. This has led older managerial theorists to create theories based on management control and authority. Employees are then left without freedom, responsibility, and job satisfaction.

“Theory Y”:

Theory Y, on the other hand, leads to a preoccupation with the nature of relationships, with the creation of an environment which will encourage commitment to organizational objectives and which will provide opportunities for the maximum exercise of initiative, ingenuity, and self-direction in achieving them (McGregor, 1985, 132).

McGregor thought that a new theory of management should focus on the relationship between management and employees. Once again, this new relationship is based on assumptions about human behavior and nature.

1. The expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest.
2. External control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort toward organizational objectives.
3. Commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement.
4. The average human being learns, under proper conditions, to not only accept but also seek responsibility.
5. The capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population.
6. Under the conditions of modern industrial life, the intellectual potentialities of the average human being are only partially utilized (McGregor, 1985, p. 47-48).

McGregor focused on increased employee participation based on the assumption that employees are industrious and motivated. Employees given the proper chance by management would ultimately fulfill their job requirements. Without the control and authority of management, employees are allowed to accomplish tasks and enrich their working lives.

Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman

Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman are closely associated with the Excellence Movement. "...the debate brought about by the excellence movement seeks to

restructure bureaucracy by building on some of the arguments put forward by social scientists a generation or more before..." (Grieves, 2000). In 1982, Peters and Waterman published their book, "In Search of Excellence," which focused on the need to change the process of managing people. Their recommendations were based on a study of the most successful companies committed to achieving excellence at the time.

They also refuted the old model of business based on rationalism. Rational means sensible, logical, reasonable, a conclusion flowing from a correct statement of the problem. But rational has come to have a very narrow definition in business analysis. It is the 'right' answer, but it's missing all of the messy human stuff, such as good strategies that do not allow for persistent old habits, implementation barriers, and simple human inconsistencies (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 31).

They believed that the older theories based on rationalism did not accommodate the human factor.

To counteract the rational model they advocated eight principles displayed by companies committed to excellence.

1. A bias for action - a preference for doing something – anything – rather than sending a question through cycles of analyses and committee reports.
2. Staying close to the customer – learning his preferences and catering to them.
3. Autonomy and entrepreneurship – breaking the corporation into small companies and encouraging them to think independently and competitively.
4. Productivity through people – creating in all employees the awareness that their best efforts are essential and that they will share in the rewards of the company.

5. Hands-on, value driven – insisting that executives keep in touch with the firm’s essential business.
6. Stick to the knitting – remaining with the business the company knows best.
7. Simple form, lean staff – few administrative layers, few people at the upper levels.
8. Simultaneous loose-tight properties – fostering a climate where there is dedication to the central values of the company combined with tolerance for all employees who accept those values (Grieves, 2000).

In these eight principles, Peters and Waterman outlined some of the key factors in empowerment initiatives. They cite decreased administrative levels, attention to employee awareness, breaking down company barriers, and an understanding of company values. They focused on integrating company policies with the human side of business. They contended that business was not just quantity and productivity but also the humans behind the achievements of the company.

W. Edwards Deming

W. Edwards Deming made his greatest contribution to empowerment in his book “Out of the Crisis” (1982). In it, he articulates his “14 Points,” the basis for transforming Western management. The principles that he outlines call for the improvement of management and its restructuring. Ten of his 14 points clarify the development and integration of employees into the functioning of the organization.

The importance to empowerment begins with Deming’s (1986) fifth point and follows through to his fourteenth point. These 10 points as noted in his book are:

5. Improve constantly and forever the system of production and service. The manufacturer must set precedence to improving production and service. A standard must be set and abided by which preserves a proactive stance of improving the organization.
6. Institute training on the job. Training on the job involves employee development in the area of knowledge. The better trained an employee the more they can achieve for the organization.
7. Institute leadership. Managers must be leaders, not watchers. “The job of management is not supervision, but leadership” (Deming, 1986, p. 54).
8. Drive out fear in the workplace. Fear in the workplace becomes a barrier to effective and efficient cooperation in the workplace. An environment of trust and cooperation must be established to maintain proper employee moral.
9. Break down barriers between departments. Barriers are a source of interorganizational alignment. Goals must be consistent throughout the organization, but barriers forestall cooperation and communication.
10. Eliminate slogans, exhortations, and targets for the workforce. ““Your work is your self portrait. Would you sign it?” *No*-not when you give me defective canvas to work with, paint not suited to the job, brushes worn out, so that I can call it my work. Posters and slogans like these never helped anyone to do a better job” (Deming, 1986, p. 65).
11. Eliminate quotas. Quotas are a barrier to product quality. Quality may be sacrificed in order to meet numerical quotas pressed upon employees.

12. Eliminate barriers which rob management and the hourly worker of his right to workmanship. Existing barriers include poor equipment, job role ambiguity, faulty materials, and poor management. These barriers pose a large problem in allowing employees to take pride in claiming excellent workmanship.
13. Institute a vigorous program of education and self-improvement. The resources of individual employees must be tapped using education and self-improvement. The employee is the most basic and most valuable resource that a company maintains. Through education and self-improvement, individual potential can be fostered and used as a valuable resource for the organization.
14. Take action to accomplish the transformation. Management and employee must cooperate to institute organizational change. This is only possible if both are involved in the transformation process. It is the job of the management to lead the organization forward in this transformation. The employee serves as the core resource for the organization and needs to adopt and enhance transformation (p. 54-66).

Deming, using these principles, introduced a new system of management. The ten principles stray from the old bureaucracy based theories. The principles are meant to set a precedence for management and employees. They offer a unique structure to follow in improving the quality of production and process. These same principles offer improved management/employee cooperation.

Deming realized that the effectiveness and efficiency of an organization could only increase if there is a cooperative effort. The transformation can only occur if the old bureaucratic barriers are dismantled and a cooperative effort is instituted.

Edward E. Lawler III

In 1986, Edward E. Lawler published his book entitled, “High-Involvement Management.” The basic purpose of his book was to set a foundation for participatory management. Participatory management poses the simple principle that employees should become highly involved in the management process. Total cooperation between employee and manager can increase employee satisfaction and the efficiency of the organization.

Lawler based his participatory management on four elements, “...power, information, knowledge, and rewards—can be used to describe any participatory management program” (Lawler, 1986, p. 22). He advocated the downward flow of these four elements from upper management down to line employees. However, all four elements must be present in a congruent fashion to foster participatory management.

In his book, Lawler (1986) defines and explains these four points.

1. Power—Power is referred to as the power to make decisions in a participative environment. Management must delegate decision making power to employees.
2. Information—“It is a source of power and effectiveness in organizational coordination and cooperation” (Lawler, 1986, p. 24). Access to information is a source of power in many areas of the organization. “Participative management approaches focus on such information as ideas for improvement, employee attitudes, operative results, strategic plans and performance of competitors” (Lawler, 1986, p. 25).
3. Rewards—Rewards affect the behavior of employees. If more responsibility is delegated to employees, the rewards for increased power should increase.

However, rewards come in two forms, extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic rewards are linked to performance and rewards such as promotion and pay increases.

Intrinsic rewards refer to psychological rewards such as self-worth gained by making a certain accomplishment.

4. Knowledge—Knowledge is derived from training and education. It offers the employee a chance to better increase their performance and contributions to the organization. The more knowledgeable an employee the better armed they are to accomplished difficult tasks (p. 24-25).

Lawler set a foundation for employee/management cooperation. His principles offer management a way to increase employee participation in organizational functioning. It is based on the downward flow of all four elements. All four elements must exist as an interdependent system if participatory management is to function properly. “If just one, two, or three of these key issues are affected, it leads to incongruence and ineffectiveness...” (Lawler, 1986, p. 42).

Cynthia Scott & Dennis Jaffe

In their book, “Empowerment: Building a Committed Workforce” (1991), Cynthia Scott and Dennis Jaffe build a contemporary view of empowerment. They articulate empowerment as a relationship between three things: employees, teams and organizational structure.

1. Employees: Employees feel responsible in making the whole organization work more efficiently. The empowered employee is a proactive problem solver that is given the freedom to make organizationally relevant decisions.

2. Teams: Teams work towards increased performance, understanding, and productivity.
3. Organizational structure: The organization is structured in a way that people feel they can achieve the results expected of them. They are free to complete what is expected of them without hindrance. They are also rewarded for achieving the results that are a part of their job (Scott & Jaffe, 1991, p. 14).

These three components are combined to create a process that can empower an organization.

The empowered workplace stems from a new relationship between employees and a new relationship between people and the organization. They are partners.

Everyone not only feels responsible for their jobs, but feels some sense of ownership of the whole. The employee is a decision maker, not a follower (Scott & Jaffe, 1991, p. 15).

The core of their ideas stems from a major change in the employee's role and the organization. These ideas extend from basic procedures that must be implemented to create an empowered workforce. Scott and Jaffe (1991) expressed these ideas in four points:

1. Empowerment is total: All individuals within the organization must support the empowerment initiative. It must be accepted and implemented from the highest employee to the lowest employee.
2. Attitudes: Attitudes must be moved to process responsibility, and learning. Employees must understand the process of how to achieve the goals it sets. Responsibility for ideas, change and functioning must be realized by all

employees. The responsibilities given to managers are now held by all employees. Employees must become proactive, and be able to take risks, solve problems and work together. This facilitates learning on an individual and organizational level.

3. Second order change: The organization must change the core functioning of employees. Employees must become self-managing, responsible and accountable. Relationships based on communication and feedback must be instituted. The organizational structure must be changed using policies, practices and incentives to match the goals of empowerment.
4. Motivation: Employees are willing to excel if given the proper resources and freedom. Employees need respect from others in the organization, flexibility to meet personal needs and the encouragement to learn and develop new skills. Employees need information about the processes of the organization and information that pertains to their functioning. Employees need to have control over their work and involvement with decisions that affect them (p. 34-48).

Empowerment in a Communication Context

Max Weber set the foundation for the classic bureaucratic organization. He outlined a structure based on hierarchal authority from a sociological perspective. His model severely limited the power of lower level employees as compared to higher-level managers. Autonomy was strictly limited and power was derived from an employees place in the hierarchy. The structure created an environment that limited and stifled the freedom of employees.

Weber's hierarchal structure set the foundation for many organizations. It limited the autonomy and freedom of employees. It also created a structure in which communication flowed exclusively downward.

Communication derived from authority figures in the upper level of the hierarchy. The lower level employees then responded to what they received. No feedback or cooperation was present between the upper and lower levels.

Fredrick Taylor changed this view through his idea of scientific management. He introduced the concept of cooperation between managers and employees. This was done through the integration of bureaucracy and cooperation.

The integration was expressed in four principles related to employees and managers: unambiguous roles, training, manager/employee cooperation, and equal responsibility. These four ideas set a foundation for changing the relationships in organizational structures. It granted lower level employees authority and representation.

Douglas McGregor further refined these ideas in his "Theory X" and "Theory Y." These two theories dealt specifically with employee behavior and motivation. McGregor proposed that "Theory X" expressed the need to control human nature based on older managerial theories. Older theories emphasized a need to control employees based on an employee's inherent human nature.

However, McGregor's "Theory Y" expressed a new relationship between management and employees. He stated that if given the proper conditions employees would sufficiently meet their job responsibilities. This new theory hypothesized that human nature would foster employee participation. This could be accomplished if

employees were given more freedom by management and a commitment to organizational goals and objectives.

Peters and Waterman furthered McGregor's idea of fostering the inherent human nature of employees. They set the groundwork for empowerment by providing practitioners with eight principles to increase efficient functioning of the organization. These eight principles also set a precedence for nurturing action and freedom within the organization and employees.

Underlying those principles was a new standard for communication within an organization. One of their points is to increase productivity by making employees aware that they are essential to organizational functioning. That means that the organization and management must actively communicate the importance of the employee's role.

Another point is to reduce administrative levels and simplify the organizational model. This would ultimately reduce the need to go through numerous levels of upper management. Unlike the old bureaucratic structure, employees would be able to communicate more efficiently with management.

The last point they make is fostering a climate based on the dedication to the central values of the organization. This also includes the tolerance of employees who accept those values. For such a climate to be created significant communication must take place through the organization and between management and employees.

These points were expanded upon and added to by W. Edwards Deming. Ten of Deming's points are pertinent to improving cooperation between management and employees. However, three of those points directly deal with increasing employee communication.

Deming was an advocate of job training and employee education. He believed that a knowledgeable employee was more efficient. Employee education meant that more communication would be needed to foster an increase in knowledge.

The organization would need to decrease barriers for this to become a reality. Barriers came in the form of management levels, a large number of departments, and information gatekeepers. An organization must limit those barriers to foster cooperation and communication.

Later, Edward E. Lawler would introduce the idea of participatory management. His theory expressed the need for employees to become involved in the management process. Total cooperation between employees and management was essential to efficient functioning of the organization.

He advocated the downward flow of four elements to increase employee participation: power, information, rewards, and knowledge. Information and knowledge required the most amount of communication. Without these two elements, employees would not be knowledgeable enough to participate in the decision-making process.

Employees needed information to make effective decisions. This required that employees have access to information concerning, operations, plans, competitors, etc. The organization had to communicate this information to employees for participatory management to be effective.

Knowledge, for Lawler, derived from training and education. Once again, the idea is that the better trained and educated the employee, the more of an asset they are to the company. This also required increased communication between employees and management.

The ideas of older managerial theories are brought to fruition in Scott and Jaffe's book, "Empowerment Building a Committed Workforce" (1982). One area of the book focuses on the employee's role within the new organization. Employees must be responsible for making the organization work efficiently. This includes the employee becoming a proactive problem solver in an environment where freedom is fostered.

The organization must foster the new role that employees play. This is done through: attitudes, motivation, and total empowerment. It also requires increased communication throughout the organization.

Empowerment must be implemented and accepted throughout the organization. This will require the organization to communicate with all levels of employees and management. At the same time, the organization must change the way it communicates to include feedback and cooperation.

Employees must understand that change is necessary to the functioning of the organization. They must become proactive in solving problems, taking risks, and working together. This requires increased education and communication between employees and managers.

The process also requires increased information flow and skill building. The organization must grant employees increased access to information. These factors lead to an organization that provides an empowered environment for employees.

The present form of employee empowerment was an adaptation of older managerial theories. Organization in the 1980s began to see a change in the business environment. Businesses were becoming more competitive and flexible. Companies were also forced to focus on introducing changes to stay competitive.

Organizations in the 1980s began to see a flux towards a globalized market in which organizations had to adapt to a new consumer market. Organizations were forced to act swiftly and competently in this new environment. They began to shift away from older managerial practices and undertook new ways to manage people and profit at the same time.

With globalization of the business and political worlds, increasingly rapid changes in the technologies of work, changing demographics of the workforce and customers, organizations are finding that they must continually change their ways of operating to keep up with their internal and external worlds (Randolph, 1995).

The second factor for the evolution of empowerment was organization downsizing. Organizations in the 1980s and 1990s began a shift to smaller more tightly run systems. The hierarchal organizational structure became flatter and more horizontal than vertical. This new delayed organization could not function based on older managerial models.

In this context empowerment became a business necessity as the destaffed and delayed organization could not longer function as before. In this set of circumstances, empowerment was inevitable as tasks had to be allocated to the survivors in the new organization (Wilkinson, 1998).

These two factors saw an evolution in managerial practices. Organizations began to seek out ways to make employees more productive and raise profits at the same time. They needed a system that offered an increased benefit to the organization that also met the needs of the new consumer environment.

Empowerment became a solve-all solution to managerial problems.

“Empowerment is one of the current management fashions. It is seen by many as a panacea for overcoming the problems of staid, bureaucratic and rigid organizations, filled with unmotivated, unthinking and unhelpful employees” (D’annunzio & Macandrew, 1999). However, empowerment as a new managerial imperative has core problems.

Problems with Empowerment

Wilkinson outlines four problems with empowerment and how it is seen: “1. The term is ambiguous, 2. Empowerment is not seen in a historical context, 3. There is very little discussion about implementation, and 4. The literature ignores the context of implementing empowerment” (Wilkinson, 1998).

The term empowerment is ambiguous because it relates to the core ideals and values of an organization. This means that each organization defines empowerment based on what it believes empowerment should entail.

A complicating factor in defining employee empowerment is that by its very nature, in order for empowerment to be successful, each organization must create and define it for itself. Empowerment must address the needs and culture of each unique entity (Honold, 1997).

This has led to a situation in which a set definition cannot be obtained by organizations or academics. “A central problem in this field is that the term empowerment has been used very loosely by practitioners and indeed academics” (Wilkinson, 1998). The problem with defining empowerment is that it encompasses many ideas and a conglomeration of implementation techniques.

In an ideological perspective, empowerment is hard to define because “Linguistically empowerment all but defies definition. Any attempt to define empowerment, therefore, yields not a definition but a series of ideas and definitions which reflect the complex and diverse histories of the English speaking world” (Collins, 1999). If empowerment cannot be defined through one concrete definition it must be constructed around an ideology stemming from a conglomeration of ideas that constitute empowerment.

The second problem is that empowerment is not seen as a historical theory. It is easy to assume empowerment is simply a new phenomenon in that standard texts on involvement and participation make scant reference to the term. Thus, many accounts write as if empowerment is entirely a product of the times and do not set it in a historical context (Wilkinson, 1998).

Empowerment is seen as a new phenomenon that has not been articulated from older managerial theories.

The third and fourth problems are rooted in the implementation of empowerment at individual organizations.

No categorization scheme for empowerment is entirely satisfactory as the boundaries between different types are not clear and much depends on the definition adopted. With empowerment not existing as a single unified entity, it can cover a very wide range of schemes, which in turn may involve a variety of diverse management motivations (Wilkinson, 1998).

These schemes encompass many criteria and tactics. Often these criteria and tactics are combined in various ways to suit the organization and its view of

empowerment. This means that empowerment is implemented in various ways in different organizations in search of the perfect combination. The creation of various schemes leads to a greater problem, that of creating a universally applicable set of criteria and tactics for implementing empowerment.

Empowerment is seen by many as a way to increase an organization's functioning by increasing an employee's resources and freedom to act on behalf of the organization. However, critiques of empowerment see it as a self-centered management imperative.

Collins argues that empowerment is an ambiguous term and cannot be properly applied because of its ambiguity. The ambiguity may also lead to management misusing the concept. "The paper, therefore, has attempted to demonstrate the ways in which an essentially ambiguous concept may allow managers to construct a particular and self-interested discourse" (Collins, 1999).

This type of discourse may not be noticed due to the way empowerment is implemented. Within empowerment initiatives there is a tendency for direct communication between managers and employees. This direct communication may be seen as a barrier between management, employees and employee representatives.

Moreover, communication is direct to the workforce rather than being mediated by employee representation or trade unions. Thus critics have argued that such schemes incorporate workers and/or bypass trade unions and is designed not to provide better information to empower workers but convince them of the logic of management action and hence reduce the scope for genuine empowerment, i.e. the opportunity to influence or change decisions (Wilkinson, 1998).

Other critics see it as a way for management to reduce the number of employees but increase the workload. With the increase of downsizing employees are forced to take on greater workloads and responsibilities. The use of empowerment may be seen as a way to mask the hidden intentions of management.

Areas of Empowerment Communication

An informal content analysis of the literature shows areas of communication that are present in empowerment initiatives. Each area includes the types of information communicated and the tactics used to communicate that information. These areas will be elaborated upon in Chapter 4.

Company to Employee

Supplementary information – sales figures, product information, financial status of company, statistical information, personal sales.

Communication – print communication, electronic communication, group communication.

Company priorities and goals – mission statement, sales goals, organizational priorities.

Communication – print communication, interpersonal communication, group communication.

Manager to Individual Employee

Training/Education – Policies, procedures, corporate culture, sales, benefits, job descriptions and responsibilities, customer service.

Communication – Coaching/mentoring, modeling, interpersonal communication, print communication.

Performance and job related communication – personal performance, questions pertaining to job, job role.

Communication – interpersonal communication, print communication.

Team/Group

The team/department consists of one manager acting as a facilitator/team member and a group of employees that have a shared goal within a designated area of the organization.

Facilitator communication – The manager becomes the facilitator for employee teams and groups.

Communication – interpersonal communication, group communication.

Group communication – Manager and employees act as a cohesive whole to obtain overreaching goal. Consists of communicating information and the need to express concerns with management.

Team communication – The manager and employees act as a cohesive whole to produce a product, either materials or ideas.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

All required research was completed at Campbell Library at Rowan University. Numerous books and journal articles were collected and analyzed to produce a comprehensive literature review.

The topic required an established historical perspective before continuing research. Once the historical foundation was established the author extracted communication methods used in an empowerment context. This also led to the development of a framework of how and what communication tactics were used in empowerment initiatives.

Historical information on empowerment was readily available in numerous managerial texts and journal articles. Five books were used to lay the historical foundation: *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1919), *Out of the Crisis* (1986), *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best Run Companies* (1982), *High Involvement Management* (1986), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1947) and *Empowerment: Building a Committed Workforce* (1992).

Communication tactics were located in a number of books and journal articles in electronic databases. Electronic databases included Lexis-Nexis, Emerald Library, ProQuest UMI, MasterFILE Elite, and MasterFILE Premier.

Books included, *The Corporate Communications Bible* (2000), *Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders* (1999), *Effective Communication: The Essential Guide to Thinking and Working Smarter* (1998), *Communication for Business and the Professions* (1989), and *Business Communication Today* (2000).

An informal content analysis was conducted using related literature on communication and empowerment. The literature was reviewed for all mentions of empowerment communication criteria and tactics. Each mention was compiled into a comprehensive list. The list was analyzed for frequency of mention. The criteria and tactics cited most frequently were used to create a refined list. The author used this list to extract categories that included types and uses of communication.

Company to Employee

Supplementary information – sales figures, product information, financial status of company, statistical information, personal sales.

Communication – print communication, electronic communication, group communication.

Company priorities and goals – mission statement, sales goals, organizational priorities.

Communication – print communication, interpersonal communication, group communication.

Manager to Individual Employee

Training/Education – Policies, procedures, corporate culture, sales, benefits, job descriptions and responsibilities, customer service.

Communication – Coaching/mentoring, modeling, interpersonal communication, print communication.

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Group communication – Manager and employees act as a cohesive whole to obtain overreaching goal. Consists of communicating information and the need to express concerns with management.

Team communication – The manager and employees act as a cohesive whole to produce a product, either materials or ideas.

After the list was completed the author conducted a comprehensive literature review to compile communication tactics used in empowerment initiatives. These communication tactics were analyzed and explained in detail.

The related information was used to create a guidebook for communication tactics and their uses in empowerment initiatives.

CHAPTER 4

Communication Guidebook

This chapter consists of a comprehensive review of literature relating to empowerment. It represents literature pertinent to understanding empowerment and the communication techniques used in an empowerment context.

The chapter is broken into two parts. The first section explains the areas of communication covered in empowerment initiatives. It also offers an in-depth view of why these areas are pertinent to empowerment. The second section covers communication techniques in each of these areas. The section offers communication strategies and tactics used to convey information in an empowered environment.

Areas of Empowerment Communication

Managers use various types of communication to help train and educate individual employees.

Areas in training and education include: policies, procedures, benefits, job descriptions and responsibilities, decision-making, and customer service.

One of the basic premises of empowerment is that employees must be competent in their role. This means employees must undergo training and education in certain areas to become a viable decision maker and a catalyst for action at the most basic level.

Employees must be properly trained. It does not make sense to empower employees to do such things as make decisions and approve or initiate action if

they are not properly trained. Nor, for that matter, will conscientious employees be prepared to take on such responsibilities unless they are trained. Technical training, decision making skills, group process skills, are all required if empowerment is to be accepted and produce results (Gandz, 1990).

Another factor in employee training is the need to communicate basic procedures and policies within the company. It is necessary to lay a basic groundwork for all employees to follow.

A set of shared values is needed. Employees and managers need a sense of shared values – beliefs about the way things should be done, the standards of behavior that are appropriate, the ethics of organizational actions and so on. Such values compel and propel behavior and minimize the risk that empowered employees will make decision that are harmful to the organization or organizational members (Gandz, 1990).

Employees must realize the benefits of empowerment as they relate to the employees' role within the organization. An explanation of benefits also becomes necessary to procure full cooperation from employees.

Benefits need to be shared. One way in which shared vision and values are made palpable to all employees is through shared benefits. When empowered employees reduce costs raise quality, eliminate low value-added work, take on more responsibility, upgrade their skills, process more transactions or bring other benefits to the organization, the benefits should be shared (Gandz, 1990).

The last major issue in training is customer service. Employees are usually the only direct link between the customer and the organization. Therefore, an employee's knowledge and level of customer service is pertinent to the success of the organization.

All employees ought to understand their critical role in successful customer service. We have to strive to empower our employees. This may only involve adhering to a simple formula: if it doesn't break a law or expose the locality to potential financial loss, and if it isn't unethical, "just do it" (Letcher & Hannah, 2000).

Companies use various types of communication to inform employees of its mission, goals and priorities.

Some topics in this area include: mission statements, goals, and priorities.

Organizations must communicate basic organizational premises including, mission, objectives, and goals. Without these employees are unaware of their function in the organization. Common goals and a shared mission motivate employees to work to their full potential to benefit themselves and the organization.

Among the motivators, "having a sense of achievement" will invariably be the common denominator cause of the majority of stories describing high motivation. This tells us that human beings want to accomplish something. One of the values of the organization having clear job descriptions, goals, objectives and mission is that it puts in focus the arena in which a human can accomplish something... It is part of empowerment because it relates to a primary source of human motivation (Harley, 1995).

Managers use various types of communication to communicate employee job performance and job related issues.

Some issues in this area include: personal performance, questions pertaining to the job, and an employee's role within the organization.

Middle managers are the bridge between upper management and line employees. Their role serves to create a bond with employees that leads to greater efficiency and productivity. This can be brought about through middle managements participation in various ways. "Coaching, supporting, training, reinforcing, and communicating describe the key role to be played by the middles managers in empowerment" (Klagge, 1998).

Feedback is one of the most important parts of a manager's job in the empowered environment. It allows the manager to communicate whether or not employees are performing their jobs effectively. With proper feedback, employees are in a better position to improve themselves and their work.

Whether the feedback relates to management effectiveness or dimensional tolerances on a manufactured part, when one understand the goal of his or her work and the work environment is feeding back data on how he or she is doing and one has the skills and confidence to self-correct, the foundation for a continuous improvement environment exists (Harley, 1995).

However, a climate must exist in which both the manager and employee trust each other. This type of environment allows both parties to feel a certain amount of trust and support.

“In addition, the feedback must occur in a climate which allows the employee to feel safe, to feel that management is supporting his or her efforts and to feel co-workers want the employee to succeed” (Harley, 1995).

Two-way communication between management and employees is the premise for effective communication of work related issues. “Middle managers are in the perfect place in the organization – the middle – to facilitate the two-way communication necessary to link the unifying vision of top management with the diverse strengths of line employees” (Klagge, 1998).

In addition, two-way communication helps employees understand the role and function they serve within the organization.

To be effective, employees must understand the concept of profit: what it is, where it comes from and why they should care if their company is profitable.

They should also understand the risks, hard work and lost opportunities it took to get their company where it is today (Murphy, 1999).

Continuous communication also keeps employees informed about the actions of the organization. Without this information employees may feel disassociated from the company. “Keeping employees informed about how their company is doing and how they each play a role in that success is critical to improving attitudes and changing behavior” (Murphy, 1999).

Managers use various types of communication to communicate supplementary information about the organization that is pertinent to the performance of an employee's job.

Types of information in this area include: sales figures, product information, financial status of the organization, and statistical information.

Another element in the empowered organization is the downward flow of information to line employees. Employees must have access to information to perform their jobs in a way that benefits themselves and the organization.

The number of people in the organization who need information, the amount of information they need, and the means to deliver information all have increased. Thus the imperative of the new model is that organizations must make as much information as possible available, while providing employees with the means – and the responsibility – to obtain that information (Brandon, 1996).

Management, in this situation, is required to communicate and make available all pertinent information. Managers must become effective communicators of information.

Empowering employees to improve your organization will require greater amounts of communication than you ever thought possible. It will ask that you not only increase the amount of time you personally spend giving and receiving information, but also that you improve your style and methods of communicating (Hildula, 1996).

The sharing of information has an impact on employees and their commitment to the organization. If employees understand the reasons for organizational action then employees are more likely to accept that action.

There has been a great deal of interest, in recent years, in management increasing downward communication to employees, typically via newsletter, the management chain or team briefing, to communicate organizational goals and the business position of the organization. The logic here is that employees will understand the reasons for business decisions and, as a result, be more committed to the organization's action (Wilkinson, 1999).

The communication of information also has a psychological impact on employees. In the empowered environment, employees must have access to information. Without it, employees may feel that empowerment is lacking.

“Workers may perceive a lack of empowerment when being denied access to critical information by management. Workers may develop a similar perception when denied an opportunity to give input on matters directly affecting them” (Haskins, 1996).

Managers become facilitators for group and team communication to prompt decision-making, communicate information and express ideas.

Managers do not hold the traditional role of leader in the empowered organization. Instead, managers become facilitators that interact as part of a group or team.

“The leader is the person who is in charge of the personal development of team members – the person who creates the environment for performance, learning and development. This new type of leader is called the facilitative leader” (Scott & Jaffe, 1992, p. 66).

The role of a manager changes drastically in the empowered organization. They relinquish their control to become a catalyst for group discussion and team decision-making.

“Once managers have come to terms with the fact that empowerment is the way to go for their organization, they must commit to the process of transforming ‘being in charge of their employees’ into ‘being a member of the team’” (Appelbaum et al., 1999).

This change requires an effort on the part of the manager. They must disregard older managerial practices and adopt a new style of managing employees. It also requires them to fully understand their new role within the organization.

This process is not an easy one since it involves going from leading by dominating, motivating and influencing a group of followers to functioning as the coordinator of the group’s efforts while moving together with it. The line is very fine between controlling individuals and having control over the decision making process, the mastery of this concept is essential to becoming a good leader in the context of an “empowered” organization (Appelbaum et al., 1999).

Companies use group and team communication to generate ideas, foster consensus decision-making and communicate information to achieve the company’s goals and objectives.

Teams are an important part of the empowered organization. For some organizations, the team is the basic unit of productivity.

“The basic building unit of the empowered organization is not the individual achiever, but the coordinated group of people – the team” (Scott & Jaffe, 1992, p. 66).

Teams and groups are vehicles to build and maintain employee participation within the organization. They also act as disseminators of information. This participation and information sharing allows employees to effectively adapt to change.

Teams are a way to organize and distribute responsibility, authority, and information otherwise given only to supervisors and managers. When team members have decision-making authority and share information directly, they can respond rapidly and flexibly to changing business demands (Hickey & Casner-Lotto, 1998).

Teams also contribute to decision making within the organization. Decision making in this context becomes a shared responsibility.

“This type of emphasis promotes openness and teamwork through participation in organizational decision making. Empowered employees must feel that the people in their unit can work together to solve problems – that employees’ ideas are valued and taken seriously” (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997).

Communication Tactics for Empowerment

Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication is the basic type of communication used in the workplace between managers, employees and co-workers. “Most communication is carried out face to face with individuals: asking for information, offering advice, your annual performance appraisal, or telling someone what you think of their performance, all tend to be done in a one-to-one situation” (Roebuck, 1998, p. 16).

Two forms of interpersonal communication are prevalent in empowerment, coaching/mentoring and modeling. A study completed by Jay Klagge (1998) showed that, "...the middle managers in the focus group clearly saw coaching as their role in empowering employees. Providing the needed leadership, modeling, training, confidence building, and support are the tasks which the middle managers saw as their unique contribution to empowerment" (Klagge, 1998).

Coaching.

Coaching requires the individual manager to effectively communicate with employees on an individual level. It includes helping employees reach their full potential and understanding the needs of the individual employee. "Employee empowerment relies upon effective coaching as managers help employees take on more responsibility. It requires that we ask more questions and listen well. This may require that we further educate ourselves and our employees in coaching techniques" (Hildula, 1996).

Coaching can be considered, "...a process whereby the employee is given guidance in assessing his/her own performance, obtains feedback on strengths and weaknesses and learns new behaviors and skills" (Geroy et al., 1998).

This approach is different from past techniques. "Coaching is different from old-fashioned performance appraisals and evaluations, as the process focuses on what people are doing right and on the ways they can capitalize on their strengths to improve further" (Geroy et al., 1998).

The goal of coaching is to, "...improve job performance by increasing an employees' capability for managing their own performance" (Geroy et al., 1998). Managers relinquish the traditional role of authority figure and become equals with

employees. This also serves to put the manager in the position of teacher and mentor. A mentor is someone that, "...works with you to give support when you need it and to help find solutions to your problems. This means that you can actually access and use the mental assets of a more skilled and experienced person, benefiting from the time they invested in achieving that level of knowledge" (Roebuck, 1998, p. 94).

At the Southern Company, employees related a story about the actions of one of their foreman.

One group related how its foreman had taken on someone from another work group, an employee who had the reputation of being an exasperatingly slow worker. The foreman worked with him and discovered that he had developed such a fear of making a mistake that he had become paralyzed with perfectionism. The foreman coached him and built his self-confidence over a few weeks, and now the employee is performing well and showing other signs of increased self-confidence and self-esteem (Thompson, 1995).

Modeling.

Modeling is also considered an important technique when interacting with employees in an empowerment context.

As leaders in organizational improvement, your co-workers will look to you to model the change. The demands upon your communication skills will increase. You'll be asked to model self-assessment and continuous improvement – to own up to your issues and needs (Hildula, 1996).

Modeling consists of managers becoming a model for employees to emulate. "A role model is someone whose behavior you copy because they do what you think are the

right things” (Roebuck, 1998, p. 94). The basic premise is that employees will emulate the actions and values of managers. However, modeling also involves increased interaction between manager and employee.

“Modeling, then, is part skills based training. Using discussions, demonstrations, role-playing and feedback, skills can be taught. Modeling, however, is also value based. Behavioral change cannot be brought about solely by changing skill levels” (Geroy et al., 1998).

Therefore, managers must set high standards concerning values. They must behave, and act in a way that they want employees to follow. “By setting high standards, providing examples, stating clear values and maintaining behaviors that follow these values, managers build commitment, and commitment is an ingredient essential to the empowerment process” (Geroy et al., 1998).

At the Southern Company, it was shown that leaders or managers become models for employees based on feedback from employees. Leaders were found to,

...discuss their views on the psychology of people freely, and they examine their own behavior against their beliefs to ensure consistency. To help with this process, they regularly measure their own actions against the expectations of employees. One leader holds an open feedback session every few months where he stands at a flip chart and asks for reactions to several key characteristics or initiatives. His team reported that he really listens and makes adjustments based on that feedback (Thompson, 1995).

Leslie Hildula (1996) offers some basic guidelines to interpersonal communication within the context of coaching/mentoring and modeling.

1. Use “I” statements instead of “you” statements – Focus on what is needed not what the other person can or did not complete.
2. When discussing a problem, be specific and focus on the behavior – Make language specific and focus on debilitating behaviors.
3. Resolve conflicts early. Do not let conflicts fester. – Deal with tension and any interpersonal conflicts in their earliest stages.
4. Make sure you understand the message – Always clarify and make certain you understand what someone is trying to tell you.
5. Ask questions, especially when you are angry – Do not jump to conclusions based on anger. Instead, ask questions and try to resolve the problem through proper decision making.

Print Communication

Print communication, in the context of empowerment, is communication that is relayed to employees in a printed or written format. This type of communication can come in many forms. “The word communication connotes obvious and formal channels such as newsletters, brochures, bulletin boards, policy statements, and addresses by senior management” (Hickey & Casner-Lotto, 1998).

However, all of it pertains to increasing employee knowledge and giving them the information they need to function properly. The propagation of information serves as one of the basic premises of empowerment initiatives. “Companies committed to employee empowerment provide more information in greater detail than the average company. One firm, a film processing lab with 120 employees, posts charts that show financial results and sales trends per product line” (Hildula, 1996).

This form of communication can also communicate ideas in a way that allows employees to read the information at any time. “Written communication allows you to communicate complex ideas and information in a format that lets the recipient assimilate it at his or her own pace and style” (Roebuck, 1998, p. 94).

One company, Eastman Kodak, provides information to employees through a newsletter. “A newsletter provides ongoing information on how the division is living up to Eastman Kodak’s Five Values (respect, integrity, trust, credibility, and continuous improvement) and how well the company is satisfying customers, employees, and shareholders” (Hickey & Casner-Lotto, 1998).

At 84 Lumber, Joe Hardy, the company’s founder,

...would always share each store’s profit-and-loss statement with all employees as a way of motivating them to outperform previous sales results. Store managers have year-end bonuses tied to that profit and loss, but for employees, it is simply a way to be more involved in the day-to-day operations (Page, 1997).

A study at Dura-Tech, a manufacturer of, “...labels, dials, nameplates and panels for components of automobile dashboards, medical and recreational equipment” (Wickisier, 1997), showed that print communication can also be used as an effective training aid. “To meet training needs, the committee directed the development of resource guides, which were to be used for regular training of tools and skills for team members” (Wickisier, 1997).

Some basic guidelines to keep in mind when using printed forms of communication are:

1. The mission of employee communication

2. What role employee communications has in helping the company achieve its goals?
3. The goals of employee communications
4. The objectives of employee communications
5. Evaluation mechanisms, such as focus groups and surveys (Dilenschneider, 2000, p. 57).

Electronic Communication

Electronic communication can also be considered a written form of communication. It has had a pronounced impact on employee communication in the past few years.

Technology has also revolutionized employee communications. With electronic networking, interactive intranets, and the Internet, access to information has become more democratic. Communications that used to be available only to senior management, shareholders, customers, or suppliers is now accessible to employees (Dilenschneider, 2000, p. 58).

It also has the added advantage of being fast and convenient. “Electronic communication is fast. It’s all in one place: on your computer. If it’s written well, it’s meant to be an easy read. Electronic communication also sends the message: We are with it” (Dilenschneider, 2000, p. 73).

Sears Hardware, as part of their empowerment initiative created a database with relevant information and made it available to all employees.

The company has invested millions of dollars in a company wide database system that tracks sales to an individual store. Bad ideas don’t get far before they are

caught. As a result, the company is more willing to experiment with new products that a sales associate or store manager might suggest (Page, 1997).

Group Communication

Two areas of group communication exist within an empowered environment. The first is the need for managers to become facilitators. The second is the communication that takes place between employees working together as a group.

Facilitators.

An empowerment case study done at an electric utility company showed that, “Management chose to respond to the situation by implementing the notion of employee empowerment. Specifically, they relinquished their traditional role of planning and directing to the employees, and sought to facilitate and support the employees’ activities” (Smith, Anderson, & Brooking, 1993).

In another study, conducted at the Southern Company, it was found that managers became supporters of employee efforts. “The few self-managing teams we observed had taken the foreman’s role to another level. The role had evolved to that of a facilitator to the team. The foreman worked to establish systems that supported the team’s efforts” (Thompson, 1995).

The role of management becomes that of a task-facilitating role. This role clearly defined includes four areas of interaction.

1. Initiating: getting the group started on a line of inquiry.
2. Information giving or seeking: offering (or seeking) information relevant to questions facing the group.

3. Coordinating: showing relationships among ideas, clarifying issues, summarizing what the group has done.
4. Procedure setting: suggesting decision-making procedures that will move the group toward a goal (Bovee & Thill, 2000, p. 47).

Small group communication.

Small group communication is also of vital importance to empowerment initiatives. This type of communication allows employees to voice concerns and discuss work related issues with management. It also allows the company to spread important information to employees and managers.

According to Andrews and Baird (1989),

A small group consists of 3 to about 20 people and must display certain characteristics.

1. Perceive themselves to be a group and be interdependent on one another.
2. Communicate with each other.
3. Have some shared interest or goal.
4. Have some form of leadership [facilitator].
5. Have repeated encounters over time (p. 222).

Leslie Hildula (1996) noted a construction company that kept employees informed using small group meetings.

All employees are invited to a Saturday breakfast, unpaid but hosted by the company, where their performance is reviewed. Problems are discussed, success celebrated, plans made and full participation is encouraged in this process. All financial information is open to all employees, including wages. The owners feel

that if an employee thinks they should be making as much as someone else, then that employee can freely discuss that with their managers.

The former Rickel Home Centers also held meetings with employees to enhance participation and communicate information.

Every Tuesday, a satellite broadcast informs sales associates of the company's plans for the week and allows them to pose questions. District managers, who are responsible for eight or nine stores, meet every four to six weeks to review and offer suggestions on every aspect of the business (Page, 1997).

Some basic guidelines to follow when meeting and communicating with groups are:

1. Background: Tell the team why the task is necessary.
2. Objectives: Outline what the team or group is aiming to achieve.
3. General tasks: Let the team know the overall plan.
4. Specific tasks: Detail the objectives, stages, and individual tasks involved.
5. Administration: Tell everyone where support, resources, interim reports, action on problems, and contacts are coming from.
6. Timing: Outline the start time, finish, and intermediate stages of deadlines.
7. Any Questions?: Don't forget the crucial feedback stage (Roebuck, 1998, p. 56).

Team Communication

Team communication differs greatly from small group communication. It is also the cornerstone of many empowerment initiatives.

"Teamwork is an important element in assisting employees to take on new responsibilities as it creates a supportive and open environment. Like the Prudential Corporation, companies such as Rank Xerox, Dupont and the Stock Exchange have

devoted much time and effort to the promotion of teamwork within their organizations as a means of enabling empowerment to take place” (Cook, 1994).

Teams differ from small groups in that the main purpose of teams is productivity. A team is constructed so that the main objective is to produce results through effective decision-making. Effective teams also display a number of qualities that many small groups may not. They are also more complex due to the necessity to produce results.

1. Members are clear about and agree with team goals.
2. Members are clear about and accept their roles.
3. Role assignments match members’ abilities.
4. An open communication structure allows all members to participate.
5. The team gets, gives, and utilizes feedback about its effectiveness and productivity.
6. The team spends time defining and discussing problems it must solve or decisions it must make.
7. Members also spend time planning how they will solve problems and make decisions.
8. The team uses effective decision-making strategies.
9. The team implements and evaluates its solutions and decisions.
10. The team contains the smallest number of members necessary to accomplish its goal.
11. The team is highly cohesive and cooperative.
12. Periods of conflict are frequent but brief, and the group has effective conflict management strategies (Wheelan, 1999, p. 37-38).

The Prudential Corporation, Rank Xerox, Dupont and the Stock Exchange have all introduced teams as a way to become more effective.

These organizations have found that the benefits of adopting a team approach include the creation of a greater commitment to company aims and values, increased efficiency and effectiveness, as well as improvements in communication. Rank Xerox, for example, has created teams of six to ten staff who have responsibility and accountability for operational tasks. They are self managing and have control over their working conditions, group appraisals and incentives (Cook, 1994).

Teams can also take on the role of a manager and may be more effective than an individual.

At Miller Brewing Company's plant in Trenton, Ohio, self directed work teams are responsible for the day-to-day management of the business units. The teams coordinate production, conduct routine maintenance and quality checks, ensure safety, and monitor their own performance. Members meet daily to discuss technical practices, share information, and attend to group dynamics. Team members learn all of the jobs in their areas of responsibility. They act as partners, trainees, and communicators (Hickey & Casner-Lotto, 1998).

Teams also serve the function of monitoring processes within an organization.

Braintree District Council, nominated UK's top council for quality, has formed over 100 teams from its 11,000 employees. The teams meet on a monthly basis to

identify areas in which they can eliminate error and waste and to pinpoint improvements which can be made to service quality (Cook, 1994).

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Evaluation

Empowerment was created as a way for companies to function effectively at a time when, globalization, downsizing and a change in consumer markets were occurring. The creation of empowerment initiatives led to an increase in communication within the organization. To adapt, companies had to create communication tactics that would support those initiatives. The problem was that companies often created their own schemes for carrying out communication. This led to different tactics being used by various companies.

For this reason companies were left without a definitive guidebook for communication within an empowerment context. Organizations and managers needed a guidebook from which to refer.

Through literary research it was possible to compile various areas of communication in empowerment initiatives. This then led to the creation of a source for successful tactics that can be implemented in each situation.

Contribution to the Field

This thesis has compiled and analyzed communication tactics in an empowerment context. The completed research has led to the creation of a reference source for organizations conducting empowerment initiatives. It will provide organizations and

managers with a definitive guidebook for implementing or altering communication tactics in an empowerment initiative.

Practical Influence on the Field

Companies now have a guidebook for communication tactics as a reference source. Before this time a comprehensive academic source did not exist.

Information on empowerment communication was distributed throughout a broad range of materials. Companies can now refer to this thesis as a source where that information is compiled and analyzed. The result is that companies can save time and created communication tactics based on relevant research.

This may also lead to more companies using a universal system of tactics. This would begin to create a communication system that is universal to all empowerment initiatives.

Further Research

- An empirical study dealing with the types of communication used in empowerment initiatives.
- An in-depth study of how electronic communication is used in empowered organizations.
- How does empowerment communication motivate employees and prompt behavior?
- The process companies use to pick the communication tactics used in an empowerment initiative.
- A measure of employee attitudes towards the communication tactics a company uses in its empowerment initiative.

- What communication tactics are the most effective for various empowerment categories?
- An empirical study to determine a universal definition of empowerment.
- An empirical study of empowerment tactics and criteria to determine their effects on employee behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge.

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