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"A LOOK AT THE SPOKEN AND WRITTEN WORD IN ORGANIZATIONS"
A PATTERN OF GROUP COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

This experiential learning exercise is used in my Organization Behavior class to explore the concept of person to person communication in small work groups.

The status structure of the group and the behavior of the group is studied. Communication networks together with spoken and written communication is used to put emphasis on the behavior that exists in work groups.

Homans model of work group behavior (Figure One) is the cognitive base used to discuss the consequences of required and emergent work group behavior.

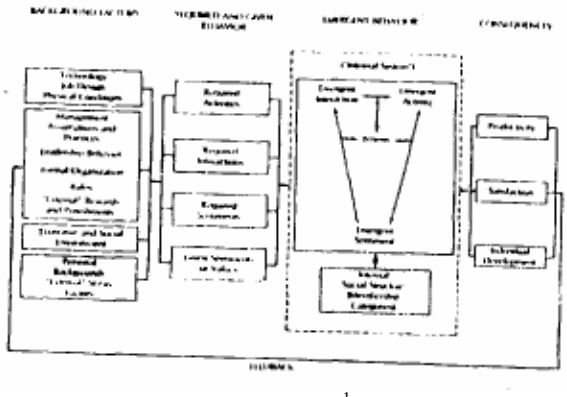


Figure One[1]

INTRODUCTION

Objectives:

1. To demonstrate the strengths and limitations of verbal and written communication.
2. To demonstrate how communication effective- ness depends on the situation you are involved in and the people receiving and sending the messages.
3. To increase awareness of behavioral and inter- personal factors that influence communication.
4. To allow participants to experience the frustrations which may occur in all types of communications.
5. To illustrate distortions which may occur in the communication process.

General Description:

One of the most common statements you hear from people at all levels of organizations is 'What we have here is a communication problem." Most people fail to really understand that communication is a complex process which takes on many different issues This exercise looks at some of the different components of communicating in organizational settings

Group Size:

Any number of groups with from five to seven participants per group.

Time Required:

Three to four hours, depending on the number of groups and processing time.

Materials Utilized:

1. Paper and pencil for each participant.
2. Note cards 3 x 5 (100 for each group).
3. Sheets of newsprint and felt-tipped markers.
4. Chalkboard and marking tape.
5. Watch with a second hand.

Physical Setting:

A room large enough to accommodate the number of groups (five to seven participants per group). The room should also provide space for the entire group to come back together after the exercise to process the experience.

[1] Gray Jerry and Frederick Starke, Organizational Behavior Concepts & Applications, Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 2nd Edition, 1980.

Process:

I. The facilitator introduces the exercise with a lecturette on communication systems in organizations.

COMMUNICATION IN SPOKEN WORD

II. One participant is chosen to be the communicator and will communicate a task to be completed by the group members.

   a. The facilitator leaves the room with the communicator and informs the communicator that he/she will communicate a design (Appendix One) that the other participants will attempt to duplicate.

   b. The communicator is informed that he/she will not be able to get any feedback from the participants. The communicator will be placed behind a screen or face a wall to avoid any type of eye contact.

   c. The facilitator returns to the room and informs the group members of their task and that they may not communicate with each other or the communicator.

   d. The communicator enters the room and begins when he/she is ready and finishes communicating when he/she feels the task is ended.

   e. The facilitator times the task without in- forming the participants.

III. The facilitator asks the participants to take out a sheet of paper and respond to several questions about this part of the exercise. Example: Now much time did it take to complete the task? (In minutes) Now effective were you as a listener? Did you complete the task or did you give up? Explain!

IV. The communicator will communicate a second task to be completed by the group members.

   a. The facilitator leaves the room with the communicator and informs the communicator that he/she will communicate another design (Appendix Two) that the other participants will attempt to duplicate.

   b. This time the communicator will be able to receive feedback from the group members.

   c. The communicator is informed that he/she cannot show their design to the group and he/she cannot draw or trace the design for the group. The communicator can only use the spoken word with the group members.

   d. The facilitator returns to the room and informs the group that this time they may communicate with the communicator and with each other in completing the tasks.

   e. The communicator enters the room and while facing the group begins the exercise. The communicator informs the facilitator when the task is complete.

   f. The facilitator again times the exercise.

V. The facilitator again asks the group members along with the communicator to take out a sheet of paper and to respond to a series of questions about this part of the exercise. (Example see Step III).

VI. The group then processes the exercise to this point. Emphasis is placed on how the group members responded to the one-way and the two-way communication system.

COMMUNICATION IN WRITTEN WORD

VII. The facilitator divides the participants into groups of five to seven members each. Each group is told they will use a particular communication network. (Appendix Six)

   a. The facilitator informs the group that they will communicate with each other in the written word only.

   b. Each group is given 100 - 3 x 5 index cards.

   c. The facilitator informs the group that each member of the network will have the same in- formation and all group members must agree on a solution as a group.

   d. The facilitator informs the participants that all members of their particular network must have the same correct answer and that each member must have the answer in their possession.

   e. The facilitator tells the groups that he/she will only check a network's answer when all members of that network have their hands raised signaling they have a solution.

VIII. Each group is given time to develop and discuss a tactical plan they would like to use in their particular network.

   a. Group members are informed that all messages they receive must be initialed before they are passed on.

   b. Group members are informed that the infor- mation sheet given by the facilitator may not be passed through the network.

IX. The facilitator distributes information sheets (Appendix Three) to all participants.

X. The facilitator asks the participants to take out a sheet of paper and respond to several questions about this part of the exercise. Example: Now did you feel about the communication method your group used? How did other members of your group help in completing the task? How did you help in completing the task? How did other group members hinder the group? Now did you hinder the group?

XI. Each group is given a different communication network (Appendix Six).

   a. The facilitator informs the group that each member of the network will have the same in- formation (Problem more difficult - Appendix Four) and all group members must agree on a solution as a group.

   b. If the group needs more 3 x 5 cards, the facilitator should make them available.

c. Repeat direction in Step VII, d and *e*.

XII. Repeat directions in Step VIII.

XIII. The facilitator distributes information sheets (Appendix Four) to all participants and the exercise begins.

XIV. Repeat directions in Step X.

XV. Each group is again given a different communication network (Appendix Six).

a. For identification purposes each member of a group should be given a number one through six.

b. The facilitator informs the group that each member of the network will have different information and the group must arrive at a solution.

c. Repeat directions in Step VI

XVI. Repeat directions in Step VIII.

XVII. The facilitator distributes information sheets (Appendix Five) to all participants and the exercise begins.

XVIII. Repeat direction in Step X.

XIX. The group then processes the second part of the exercise. Emphasis is placed on how the group members responded to the use of written communication and the use of different communication systems.

XX. The facilitator begins the debriefing of the exercise.

Variations:

I. In place of Appendix One and Two, the communicator could be required to draw his/her own design to communicate to the group.

II. Class members could be assigned the role of observers during any or all parts of the exercise.

III. If the experience is to be completed over several sessions, the exercise can be cut off after Septs VI, X or XIV.

IV. During the written communication part of the exercise, a group could remain in the same communication network for all three exercises.

Debriefing the Exercise:

The exercise brings to light many of the problems and limitations that certain methods of communication create. The facilitator would be wise to begin the debriefing session by recording on a chalkboard or a flip chart many of the initial comments made by the participants. These comments may be referred back to as the theory components are presented.

Many of the issues that surface during the discussion deal with the following areas:

- The groups deal with the frustration and limitations that cause problems with the one-way communication exercise.

- The participants begin to point out that in the two-way communication system the group usually does very little to help each other.

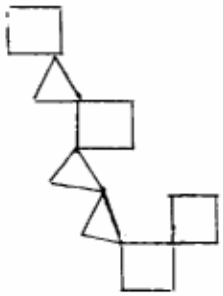
The participants discuss the strengths and limitations of using only the spoken word and only the written word.

- Participants discuss how their tactical plan worked when all people had the same information and only needed to arrive on an agreement to a solution.

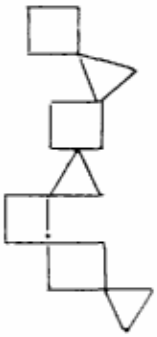
- Participants usually discuss why in the last exercise the person with more valuable information either did or did not pass that information on to others.

This exercise has been helpful in making participants aware of the way communication issues affect their own performance in organizational situations.

APPENDIX I



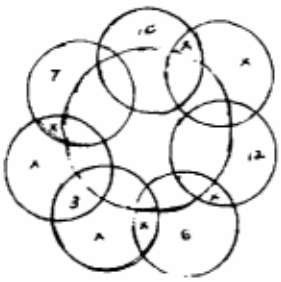
APPENDIX II



APPENDIX III

Mr. Barker, Mr. Jones and Mr. Simon worked at the same firm and were good friends. One was the cashier, the second the buyer and the third the firm's accountant (not necessarily in order of their names). The accountant was an only child and had the lowest salary. Mr. Simon, who married Mr. Barker's sister, earned more than the buyer. What was job of each?

APPENDIX IV



APPENDIX V

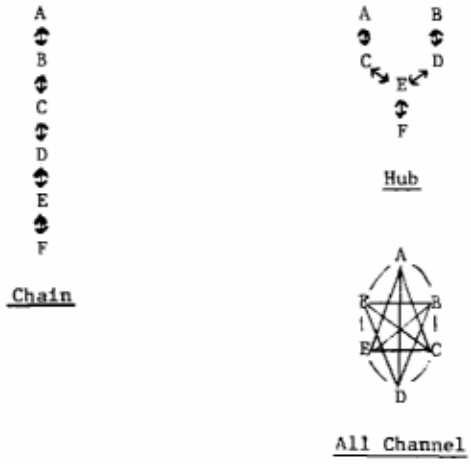
Person 1 saved "a"	multiply 25 by 3 and add 108: this is your number
Person 2 penny	divide 366 by 2, and subtract 183: this is your number
Person 3 a	multiply 63 by 7; divide 242 by 11; multiply 10 by 8; add these figures: the result is your number
Person 4 earned	multiply 10 by 2 add 242: this is your number
Person 5 is	multiply 18 by 16; multiply 4 by 19; multiply 2 by 97; add these figures: the result is your number
Person 6 penny	calculate this problem: 10 x 22 x 3

The final and correct solution to the math problem is found in the total of all the numbers held by the group.

The task has two answers: the first answer is a proverb; the second answer is a number. All group members should have both of these answers.

APPENDIX VI

Communication Networks:



APPENDIX VII

Appendix I: One-way communication

Appendix II: Two-way communication

Appendix III: Accountant - Mr. Jones
Cashier - Mr. Simon
Buyer - Mr. Barker

Appendix IV; The correct solution to this problem is as follows: Begin with 10-clockwise: 10, 2, 11, 8, 12, 1, 6, 14, 4, 3, 13, 5, 7, 9.

Appendix V:

Person One:	183
Person Two:	0
Person Three:	1555
Person Four:	262
Person Five:	558
Person Six:	660
Total	3218

A penny saved is a penny earned.

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