Instructor Manual

# Chapter 1: Communicating in Contemporary Organizations

## Teaching Notes

There are two major ideas in this chapter that should be emphasized in class lectures:

1*. Over the past 120 years, the importance of managerial communication has increased as the role of the manager has evolved.*

Contemporary managers are much more likely to be successful if they have strong communication competencies. This concept can be explained by reviewing the history of the managerial role in the 20th century and early 21st century and by identifying the communication behaviors that managers used in each era. Ask students to describe the communication patterns they have observed among their current managers and supervisors. Compare and contrast these with earlier patterns.

2*. Several important factors affect managerial communication contingencies*.

First, different types of diversity must be considered: gender, culture, age, and education. Second, the drive for improved product and service quality is relevant. Ethics is a third contemporary dynamic that must be considered. Trends imply that communication will become more frequent, intense, and intercultural as it grows in importance.

## Class Exercise--Communication Channels

The following exercise will help students understand the broad range of communication channels available for the transmission of messages in contemporary businesses and organizations. Divide them into small groups and ask them to brainstorm examples of channels to write in each of the cells in the following matrix. To get them thinking, examples are provided in several cells.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Internal** | **External** |
| Formal--Oral | Meetings |  |
| Formal--Written |  | Corporate annual reports |
| Informal--Oral |  | Social event such as inviting a client to a professional baseball game |
| Informal--Written | E-mail |  |

## Questions for Class Discussion

1. *Discuss the statement, “Most attempts to improve management communication are really attempts to improve manipulation of employees.”*

Since the goals of improving management communication and employee manipulation both result in an improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of the employee, it could be said that there is little difference between the two. However, open and honest communication between management and subordinates achieves these results without the use of manipulation, which can produce poor relations and resentment.

2. *Because you are reading this book, you are probably taking a course at a university. Does the university use the gangplank theory to any extent? Explain.*

The majority of U.S. universities will use the gangplank theory to a significant degree. It would be extremely difficult to channel all communications to the university’s president and then back down to various employees. There would not be enough hours in the day for a university president to handle the flow of such numerous communications. For this reason, subordinates must have the freedom to communicate within their departments and between the diverse schools in the university system.

3. *How does the behavioral approach differ from the contingency approach to management communication?*

The contingency approach matches different communication strategies with different situations. It recognizes that one communication method may be effective in one situation and ineffective in another. Thus, it is a pragmatic approach. The behavioral approach draws from several psychological theories to explain managerial behavior. Unfortunately, the theoretical explanations are extremely complex, often confusing and difficult to learn, making the contingency method the better choice of the two in the majority of business problem situations.

4. *Provide an example in which you have seen a manager attempt to empower employees.*

Any situation in which management delegates some of its authority to subordinates would qualify as an example. For example, if a company manager gives his or her administrative assistant the power and knowledge to schedule appointments for that manager, or if all of the information known by the company CEO is shared with his or her subordinates, then empowerment has taken place. Examples of companies that support a culture of employee engagement and empowerment are Google, Disney, Tesla, and Virgin.

5. *This textbook states that it is not possible to review all contingencies. Elaborate on this statement.*

Since effective communication is dependent upon each situation that may arise, and since each situation may require a different strategy, it would be impossible for anyone to give specific directions on how to handle any problem that might occur.

6. *In which ways do you believe that women communicate differently than men in the workplace?*

Research on gender communication shows that women have a tendency to demonstrate more social support and sympathy, to be concerned about relationships and group dynamics, to provide different types of feedback than men normally do, to use different persuasive and writing styles, and to use space and body language differently. Women’s language is frequently less powerful than men’s--women’s sentences are longer, with qualifiers, modifiers, and requests for agreement added.

7. *Why do you think that men and women may have difficulty communicating with each other?*

In recent years, many social changes have taken place that have put women on a more equal footing with men. In business, women constitute almost half of the workforce, but hold far fewer management positions than do men. The reasons and explanations for this disparity vary widely. Research reveals one possible explanation: Male and female communication behaviors continue to be different.

8. *Give a specific example in which a demand for greater quality also increases the demand for more efficient communication.*

Companies espousing the principles of total quality management, continuous process improvement, and similar business philosophies invariably emphasize the importance of well-developed formal and informal, internal and external communication channels. Teamwork and cooperation are impossible without open communication.

9. *Describe a workplace situation that may be stressful for you and how this may alter your communication style.*

Varies, this is an excellent question for class discussion as it demonstrates that different stimuli will cause stress in different people. What may cause a breakdown in the communication abilities of one individual may have no effect on another. Awareness of the potential stress levels of those we are communicating with is an important ingredient in effective communication.

10. *Describe a situation that may have caused a manager to behave unethically in which the problem was more one of poor communication than ethics.*

Varies depending on personal experience. One scenario could be the manager of an accounting firm reminding employees that their current client is their largest client and that nothing should be done to “rock the boat.” The employees find significant discrepancies in the course of their audit but do not report them, fearing that it would be against the wishes of the boss. Later, after the audit is completed, the subordinates are “called on the carpet” because they did not report the fraud that they had discovered. This hypothetical example describes a case of poor communication, not one of poor ethics. Of course, poor judgment was involved here, but the most obvious problem is that management failed to tell subordinates that they were expected to think and act without prior approval and without fear of recrimination.

## Cases for Small Groups

### Case 1-1: Ethics and Technology

Chris smiled as he received the analysis packet from his supervisor. He worked from home 3 days a week, and when he received an assignment he did not know how to analyze, he would call one of his buddies who easily accomplished such tasks. He compensated him, usually with a case of beer, when they got together on the weekends. They had been friends for a long time, and Chris knew he could trust him to do a good job on the tasks. Chris would then tailor the analysis according to the way the firm expected reports to be submitted.

Chris was perceived as one of the most dependable analysts in the division because of his past work, much of which had been farmed out to his buddy. He had received accolades and raises as a result and was enjoying his successful career with the firm.

**Case 1-1: Questions**

1. *The method used by Chris is obviously successful, and the company is satisfied with the results. Is it just good business, or is there an ethical dilemma present?*

Students should recognize the ethical violations here. Taking credit for someone else’s work is plagiarism. Furthermore, the friend who provides the material to Chris is also contributing to plagiarism and therefore is being just as unethical as Chris.

2. *Should Chris confess to his supervisor or just continue the successful deception?*

Chris must be honest and acknowledge the sources of his work. Difficulties caused by the information Chris received from his friend can, in extreme situations, land the company in court. Litigation would likely result in penalties for the company and threats to Chris’s position in the firm.

3. *Would your responses change if the information used in the analyses is proprietary and sensitive?*

Additional ethical, and even criminal, violations would have occurred if the information was proprietary. Security restrictions are common in business, and employees should be trained on them, along with consequences of violations.

4*. Does this activity fit the notion of plagiarism?*

Yes, students who claim that plagiarism is merely an academic exercise should learn that the principle applies in business settings, as well as in universities, and the consequences are dramatic and expensive.

5. Does online communication make Chris’ actions more likely?

Employees who telecommute are often poorly supervised in comparison to employees working onsite. Chris’s manager needs to pay more attention to what and how Chris is doing at home.

### Case 1-2: A 120-Year Difference

A historian has said this about Gen. George A. Custer: “Generals who led men were rare; generals who won battles were rarer. It is no wonder that he was idolized from President Lincoln down. All the world loves a winner.” On June 26, 1874, Custer’s 261 soldiers were killed at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Another historian asks, “Was Custer a hero or a fool?”

On February 27, 1991, the allied coalition forces of Operation Desert Storm led by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf overcame the armies of Iraqi’s Saddam Hussein in a victory that quickly became known to the world as “The 100-Hour War.” Shortly before the war, Schwarzkopf is quoted as saying, “I told my family that during the first month of any military campaign, the guy in charge is a hero, and it’s downhill after that.”

We don’t normally think of military leaders as managers, but they are responsible for the actions of numerous subordinates in critical times. They must be effective communicators to carry out this mission. Generals Custer and Schwarzkopf are mentioned here because they help demonstrate the differences in managerial communication that have occurred during the past 120 years.

General Custer led his 261 men on horseback in southeastern Montana. Compare this to General Schwarzkopf as you think about him stepping quickly toward the podium in a fourth-floor ballroom at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Riyadh to address 200 reporters from around the world. No doubt these two managers had different communication support systems, but they also had different responsibilities. General Custer was managing an operation of 261 horse soldiers. Schwarzkopf was coordinating a half-million-strong international military force including the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Army as well as the first Tank Division of the United Kingdom and corps from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and France.

What a difference! But in some ways, their training was quite similar. Both were educated at West Point, went through army war colleges at Fort Leavenworth, were stationed at Fort Riley and had frontline battle experience. Both had experienced defeat and victory.

**Case 1-2: Questions**

1. *Compare the management communication systems of these two managers. How are the basics similar? What was the role of technology?*

In the management communications systems of both men, the goal was to get orders and directives to every soldier under the command of each general. General Custer was able to do this only by word of mouth and written, hand-carried communications. All of today’s technology was available to General Schwarzkopf. He had access to satellite communications, computers, and fax machines, telephones in the field, and many types of radio communication between himself and his troops.

2. *Which of the two generals had the easier job? Consider this question carefully because Custer had a much smaller group of men, but Schwarzkopf had sophisticated technology and organizational structure.*

In hindsight, we might say that Custer had the more difficult time with communicating with his troops since they all perished in battle. Had he had more advanced communications systems, he may have been able to retreat to fight another day, saving the lives of at least some of his soldiers. On the other hand, General Schwarzkopf had the lives of half a million troops under his control as well as the lives of thousands of Iraq and Saudi Arabian citizens. With the destructiveness of modern weapons, and the mass casualties that could have occurred, Schwarzkopf’s job would probably be considered to be the more important and the more difficult.

3. *Which of the two managers required more advanced training in management communication? Why?*

Naturally, Schwarzkopf required more advanced training in communication since he had to work with so many different mediums. Custer had only to worry about handwritten and oral, one-on-one communication.

4. *How would you compare these two generals to business managers during the same era?*

In Custer’s era, the principles of scientific management were just being devised. Custer’s goals were that his men obey and do what he told them as efficiently as possible. Schwarzkopf had to deal with multicultural troops from many places on the globe. He had to take into consideration the wishes and knowledge of other officers involved in the war, and he had to succinctly communicate with people of many languages using many types of technologically advanced communication devices. Today’s globally diverse companies require managers who also possess all of these skills.

### Case 1-3: Like Grandfather, Like Granddaughter?

Clarence opened a farm supply store in Montana during the early 1900s. His neighbors in the county were also his customers. Every person who walked into his store felt comfortable. In fact, they would often sit, sip a cup of coffee or shell some peanuts, and solve the world’s problems before loading up their purchases. Clarence prided himself on knowing what his customers needed to be successful farmers, and he freely gave them advice about which brand of flea dip would work best on their cattle, and which tonic would help a colicky horse. By the time he retired and his son, Seth, took over, the company had expanded to three stores in three towns and had 14 full-time employees.

As a youth, Seth had been to the state college and had earned a degree in agricultural business. He had studied and absorbed the principles of accounting, management, marketing, and finance. He eagerly applied what he had learned to the family business. He was convinced that technology was the key to success, not personal relationships. Over the years, he struggled to convert all his father’s old, handwritten records to electronic files. Eventually, he installed a completely computerized information system that tracked inventory, personnel, and accounts. He sometimes boasted about being an “entrepreneur,” but Clarence snorted at that term. “Just do what’s right for your customers and you’ll be doing what’s right for yourself,” he would retort.

When Seth retired, his daughter, Kathy, took over the company that now has 23 stores with 228 employees in three states and one wholly owned subsidiary of 18 gas stations. Kathy’s vision involves offering a broader range of products than farm supplies. She wants to sell the “image” of the family farm. Her stores stock Western clothing, boots, hats, and jewelry, home furnishings, even CD’s featuring country, and Western music.

Kathy finds herself traveling extensively from the corporate office to the various stores. Finding time to manage everything is a problem, but she has a staff of 12 professionals in the corporate office to assist her. An intranet, e-mail, and fax machines help tremendously.

**Case 1-3: Questions**

1. *How have the communication requirements differed for Clarence in the early 1900s and Kathy in the early 2000s?*

The growth in size of the business, number of employees and geographical locations all affect communication requirements. The faster pace of today’s business transactions and increased competition call for instant communication.

2. *How do you think the management behaviors differed for Clarence and Kathy?*

Contemporary workforces are better educated and expect to be given a voice in business decisions. Authoritarian management styles have been replaced by collaborative and cooperative efforts. Further, Kathy’s gender may affect her management style. Women are generally more team-oriented and willing to empower subordinates.

3. *In what ways do you think Clarence and Kathy were alike as company presidents?*

Both probably were dedicated to the well-being of their business. Both probably realized that the keys to success are a satisfied workforce and a satisfied customer base. Both probably invested all their efforts into expanding the company and eventually handing it over to the following generation in a healthy, viable condition.

## Bonus Case and Discussion Questions

(*The following case and case questions do not appear in the textbook. They are offered here as supplemental material.*)

### Case: General Motors’ New Top Buyer

In the spring of 1992, Ignacio Lopez de Arriortua hit Detroit like a storm. General Motors was in trouble and needed help, so the company’s president appointed Lopez as the vice president of global purchasing. He had saved the company millions of dollars in its European operation and set out to do the same for the entire corporation. His goal was to save the company $5 billion in purchasing costs in 1993 alone.

Lopez approached his mission like a military commander. He dubbed his employees “warriors” and moved a group of young managers into key positions. He convened a series of intense meetings steeped in the rhetoric of war. At these meetings, he insisted that the Western world is under attack, adding that saving GM was tantamount to saving Western civilization. Attendees reported being overwhelmed by scores of PowerPoint slides that Lopez projected to support his points. “It’s a message that’s as crafty as it is captivating,” suppliers say. “He knows how to pounce on the emotional needs of an audience,” said Donald C. Trausch, president of Borg-Warner Corporation.

Lopez created upheaval. He immediately sent a directive to all GM suppliers that costs had to be cut by as much as 10%. Contracts were canceled and suppliers had to resubmit proposals. He said he would work with suppliers only if they guaranteed to cut prices every year. Some suppliers were extremely angry, while others were happy about the chance to do business with the huge auto company.

Lopez received considerable attention because he was responsible for purchasing billions of dollars’ worth of parts. However, some of the attention and maybe even enemies were caused by his communication style. For example, when he arrived in Detroit, he issued a 44-page health manifesto titled “Feeding the Warrior Spirit.” He told his employees they would have to follow his diet to remain competitive in his purchasing organization. In addition, he told everyone, including the company president, to wear their watches on their right hands to remind them of the trouble faced by GM. And his Basque accent could be perplexing, as he frequently caught people off guard. At one interview, he replied, “I laugh at your question,” as he unnerved the journalist. He tore into people as he demanded performance. He responded to allegations that he might be too tough by saying, “It is tough, but it is fair.”

Although some were extremely critical of Lopez, others were complimentary. “Lopez comes through and hits you over the head with a 2 × 4 and starts you bleeding. Then, he puts on a bandage and helps you heal,” said one manager. A vice president of GM in Europe said, “Lopez has been tremendously misunderstood. The bottom line is that his teams get in and do it.” When accused of possibly causing too much stress in the organization, Lopez simply shrugged, “We do not have the time. If we had three years, we could make everything comfortable and no one would be fearful.”

**Case Questions**

1. *Comment on Mr. Lopez’s style in relationship to what has been discussed in this chapter. From which era of management thought does Lopez borrow the most?*

Lopez’s style is similar to the administrative approach as developed by Henry Fayol. Lopez used his authority to give orders and did not look for input from subordinates. He wanted his employees to give up what they want in order to better an overall change that he was trying to bring about at GM.

2. *Did he attempt to empower employees?*

Lopez made no attempt to empower employees. Even though he promoted some employees to middle management positions, he gave them no voice of their own. He even went so far as to dictate the diet that he wanted each of his subordinates to observe.

3. *What is the role of cultural diversity in the reaction to Mr. Lopez?*

Cultural diversity played a significant role in Lopez’s approach to management. His style had worked well in Europe and employees there had respect for what he had been able to accomplish. Being Basque, he was also very militaristic and authoritative. Other global GM team members were better able to appreciate this approach if it was closer in approximation to the management style that they had come to expect in their own cultures. However, in the United States, he was seen as “too tough” because he did not allow their input, but only strict adherence to the rules that he had made.

4. *How did he create job stress?*

His demanding nature and authoritarian style appeared to allow for no errors, and no free thinking on the part of subordinates. Those who made a mistake or tried to accomplish a goal using their own ideas could probably expect to be dealt with quickly and severely by Lopez. This could easily cause stress in the calmest of employees.