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Organizational Communication for Organizational Climate and Quality Service in Academic Libraries

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Introduction

Communication is a way of achieving productivity in academic libraries. Communication is the means by which people are linked together, how they function in to achieve a common goal. Communication is transactional, involving two or more people interacting within a defined environment. Without effective communication among different parties; the pattern of relationships that we call organization will serve no one's needs. Koontz (2001) defines organizational communication as the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receiver. Onuoha (1991) agrees, calling it "the process of transmitting meanings, ideas and information from sender to receiver ." Hybels and Weaver (2001) see communication as " any process in which people share information, ideas and feelings, and that it involves not only the spoken and written word but also body language, personal mannerism and style "— anything that adds meaning to a message. The study of organizational communication involves the intersection of two complex concepts, "organization" and "communication". Both have been defined and approached in a variety of ways. An organization such as an academic library is a group of people whose activities are coordinated to achieve both individual and collective goals. Library organizational structures are created to help users and staff deal with each other in the larger organizational environment. Oakland (2000) concludes that " if one department or an organization has problems recruiting the correct sort of staff, and human resources have not established mechanisms for gathering, analyzing and responding to information of employees correctly, then frustration and conflict will replace communication and cooperation."

Background on Organizational Communication

The study of organizational communication dates back to the middle of the last century Miller (1999). Today, it is a well-established field and very important to library services. Some of the founding approaches originated in other fields like sociology, psychology, business management, and industry, and provide the foundation upon which the field of organization was built.

Miller (1999) describes three schools of thought: the classical, human relations, and human resources approach. These approaches are seen in organizations today. They are prescriptive by nature, describing how organizations should run rather than describing how they do run. These approaches are not designed as approaches to organizational communication, but have implications for communication in the organizational context

Methods of Organizational Communication

There are various ways by which people communicate, including language, signals, facial expressions, music, body movements, gestures, etc. Hybels and Weaver (2001) when they group types of communication as, "i ntrapersonal, interpersonal, small group communication, public communication, mass communication, inter-cultural communication. and ethical communication." In libraries, language, both oral and written, is the most frequent and important way people communicate. Nonverbal communication, such as facial expressions, body language, etc., is also important in any organization, including the library.

Organizational Communication and Academic Library Services

Communication is part of the process whereby rules, regulations, and responsibilities are designed and presented to members of the organization. Communication should not be overlooked when considering ways to improve services. Kreps (1990) states that, "communication in an organization serves to establish managerial control, provide workers with job instruction, and enable managers (librarians) gather information for planning." Similarly, Champoux (1996) observes that the functions of organizational communication include:

- Information sharing
- Feedback
- Integration to coordinate diverse functions
- Persuasion
- Emotion
- Innovation

Factors Affecting Organizational the Communication Climate

Organizational communication is influenced by many factors: Lesikar, in Stoner (2000) list the following factors:

- Formal channels of communication
- Authority Structure
- Job Specialization
- Information Ownership

Barriers to Organizational Communication

Effective communication is needed for productivity. Open or effective communication is not always obtained. Diwan (2000) asserts that, "the problem of effective communication is unfortunately greater than just the recognition of its scale and importance." People may be unaware that their attempts at communicating have not been successful. Koontz (2001) summarizes the barriers against communication, saying that, " communication problems are often symptoms of more deep-rooted problems. For example, poor planning may be the cause of uncertainty about the direction of the organization."

Similarly, a poorly-designed organizational structure may not clearly communicate organizational relationships. Vague performance standards may leave librarians uncertain about what is expected.

Onuoha (1991) notes the following barriers:

- Communication overload
- Badly expressed message
- Inappropriate medium/Language
- Poor, listening/decode and premature evaluation arising from lack of understanding.
- Grapevine with informal organizations within organizations.
- Hostility between the participants
- Bureaucracy

Improving Organizational Communication

Peterson (1962) observes that, “communication can and does affect work adversely if not properly handled. There are gradations of degrees of these effects, ranging from a slight drag against the progress of the enterprise to the causing of errors or misunderstanding of the philosophical foundation of the main organization, and thereby make the output of the system virtually impossible,” stating further that, “one ever-present cause of faulty communication is that, language, whether oral or written, is itself faulty or imperfect when the meaning of words and sentences and equally the emotional content is ambiguous.”

Barriers and other associated problems common with organizational communication climate affect work productivity negatively especially where people and records are jointly managed together, such as the case of academic libraries. The extreme need to improve or find solutions to the highlighted problems and barriers is imperatively necessary. Champoux (1996) recommends the under-listed improvement techniques among the operators and participants:

Champoux (1996) recommends the following techniques to improve communication:

1. Sender

- Understanding of the background and culture of the receiver.
- Expectation of feedback
- Formal training in oral and written communication

2. Receiver

- Knowing and understanding the sender
- Make the receiver's level of understanding clear to the sender.
- Understand the language and practices of the organizational unit to improve listening and interpretation.
- Feedback loop

3. Message

- Clear
- Brief
- Simple
- Unambiguous.

4. Medium

- Reduce noise by using multiple channels.

5. The Organization

- Organization Communication Audit to assess the current state of the communication system.

6. Technology

- Electronic message system
- Voice mail
- Local Area Networking
- Teleconferencing
- Global Satellite Communication Mobile

Summary

The American Management Association (AMA) (1955) suggests the following standards for effective organizational communication climate:

- Clarity of ideas
- Examination of purpose.
- Understanding of human and physical environment
- Planning, consultation and discussions
- Request for support and approval
- Weigh and consider the content and also the overtones of the message
- Communicate helpful and palatable messages
- Actions must be congruent with communication
- Listen well to get the organization move forward.

Conclusion

Information is paramount for librarians, as they acquire, process, store, or arrange them for dissemination. In the process, good and effective communication is vital. Librarians embrace the concept in the treatment of records and staff. Effective organizational climate is the nexus of these factors. Communication barriers lead to poor productivity. The benefits from quality communication cannot be overemphasized. References

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