Session 8

Communication
Group Dynamics & Teamwork
**Introduction to Communication...**

- **Communication**
  - Definition: the interpersonal transfer of information and understanding from one person to another.
  - A linked social process of sender, encoding, medium, decoding, receiver, and feedback.
  - The essential issue in communication is to send an idea from one person to another in a way that will be understood by the receiver.
The Interpersonal Communication Process

Sender

Encode

Idea
Perception

Feedback

Medium

Receiver

Decode

Understanding
Perception

NOISE
The Communication Process

- Encoding
  - Translating internal thought patterns into a language or code the intended receiver of the message will likely understand and/or pay attention to.
  - Cultural diversity can create encoding challenges.
Selecting a medium: how to communicate?

- Face-to-face; telephone, e-mails, letters, computer reports, photographs, meetings, organizational publications...
- Media richness: a medium’s capacity to convey information & promote learning – ranging from rich (high) to lean (low)
The Communication Process (cont’d)

- Characteristics of rich mediums
  - Provide simultaneous multiple information cues.
  - Facilitate immediate feedback.
  - Have a personal focus.

- Characteristics of lean mediums
  - Convey limited information (few cues).
  - Provide no immediate feedback.
  - Are impersonal.
The Communication Process (cont’d)

- **Decoding**
  - Successful decoding depends on the receiver having
    - a willingness to receive the message.
    - knowledge of the language and terminology used in the message.
    - an understanding of the sender’s purpose and background situation.

- **Feedback**
  - To assure that idea has been understood
  - Feedback affects the form and content of follow-up communication.
  - Effective feedback is timely, relevant, and personal.
The Communication Process (cont’d)

Noise

- Noise: any interference with the normal flow of communication.
- Understanding decreases as noise increases.
- Dealing with noise
  - Make messages more understandable.
  - Minimize and neutralize sources of interference.
Barriers to Communication

- Process barriers
  - Sender barrier
  - Encoding barrier
  - Medium barrier
  - Decoding barrier
  - Receiver barrier
  - Feedback barrier

- Physical barriers
  - Devices and distance
Barriers to Communication

- Barriers to Communication (cont’d)
  - Semantic Barriers
    - Misinterpretation of the meaning of words and phrases by individuals.
    - Specialized occupational languages can create communication problems with outsiders.
  - Psychosocial Barriers
    - Different backgrounds, perceptions, values, biases, needs, and expectations of individuals can block communications.
Becoming a Better Communicator

- Effective Listening
  - Tolerate silence; keep listening.
  - Ask stimulating, open-ended questions.
  - Encourage the speaker with attentive eye contact, alert posture, and verbal encouragers.
  - Paraphrase what you have just heard.
  - Show emotion to show your sympathy with speaker.
  - Know your biases and prejudices.
  - Avoid premature judgments.
  - Summarize by reiterating what the speaker said.
Becoming a Better Communicator (cont’d)

- Effective Writing
  1. Keep words simple.
  2. Don’t sacrifice communication to rules of composition.
  3. Write concisely.
  4. Be specific.
Becoming a Better Communicator
(cont’d)

Running Meetings
- Prepare ahead of time.
- Have a reason for the meeting.
- Distribute an agenda.
- Give participants at least a day’s notice.
- Limit attendance and designate a leader.
- Have a specific start and end time.
- Encourage participation but keep to the agenda.
- Use visual aids.
- Follow up.
Teams: The Basics

- **What Is a Team?**
  - Two or more freely interacting individuals who share a common identity and purpose.

- **Types of Teams**
  - Informal groups: a collection of people seeking friendship and acceptance that satisfies esteem needs.
  - Formal groups: a collection of people created to do something productive that contributes to the success of the larger organization.

- **We will use the terms group and team interchangeably**
What Does It Take to Make a Group

- Two or more people
- Free interaction among members
- Common identity
- Common purpose
Implications for Individuals

- Individuals are committed to groups for one (or both) of two reasons:
  - Attractiveness: outsider-looking-in view; people will join groups that are attractive
  - Cohesiveness: tendency of group members to follow the group and resist outside influences
Roles & Norms

- **Role:** socially determined prescription for behavior in a specific position
  - A set of expectations concerning what a person must, must not, or may do in a position.
  - The actual behavior of a person who occupies the position.

- **Norms:** general standards of conduct that help individuals judge what is right or good or bad in a given social setting.
  - Norms are culturally derived and vary from one culture to another.
  - Are broader than roles
  - Those who don’t comply with rules may be ostracized…
Group Development (cont’d)

- Six Stages of Group Development
  - Stage 1: Orientation
    - Uncertainty about most everything is high.
  - Stage 2: Conflict and change
    - Subgroups struggle for control; roles are undefined.
  - Stage 3: Cohesion
    - Consensus on leadership, structure, and procedures is reached.
  - Stage 4: Delusion
    - Members misperceive that the group has reached maturity.
Six Stages of Group Development (cont’d)

- Stage 5: Disillusion
  - Subgroups form; diminished cohesiveness and commitment to the group.

- Stage 6: Acceptance
  - A trusted and influential group member steps forward and moves the group from conflict to cohesion so that it becomes highly effective and efficient.
  - Member expectations are more realistic.
Characteristics of a Mature Group

- Members are aware of each other’s assets and liabilities.
- Individual differences are accepted.
- The group’s authority and interpersonal relationships are recognized.
- Group decisions are made through rational discussion.
- Conflict is over group issues, not emotional issues.
- Members are aware of the group’s processes and their own roles in them.
Essentials of Team Process: Trust

- Trust: A Key to Team Effectiveness
  - Trust: a belief in the integrity, character, or ability of others.
  - The primary responsibility for creating a climate of trust falls on the manager.
  - Trust is the key to establishing productive interpersonal relationships.
  - Trust encourages self-control, reduces the need for direct supervision, and expands managerial control.
Trust & Effective Group Interaction

**Trust**
- A personal commitment to openness and trust
- A willingness to change if necessary

**Information**
Full disclosure of relevant information, feelings, and opinions

**Control**
- Reliance on self-control rather than procedural control
- Confidence that others will perform as agreed
- Mutual commitment to success

**Influence**
A willingness to be influenced by others concerning goals, procedures, and performance evaluation
Building Trust – Advice for Managers…

Six Ways to Build Trust

2. Support: be an approachable person.
3. Respect: delegate important duties and listen.
5. Predictability: be dependable and consistent.
6. Competence: be a good role model.
What Makes Teams Effective?

What Makes Workplace Teams Effective?

- Innovative ideas
- Goals accomplished
- Adaptability to change
- High person/team commitment
- Being rated highly by upper management
A Model of Team Effectiveness

Determinants of team effectiveness

**People-related factors**
- Personal work satisfaction
- Mutual trust and team spirit
- Good communications
- Low unresolved conflict and power struggle
- Low threat, fail-safe, good job security

**Organization-related factors**
- Organizational stability and job security
- Involved, interested, supportive management
- Proper rewards and recognition of accomplishments
- Stable goals and priorities

**Task-related factors**
- Clear objectives, directions, and project plans
- Proper technical direction and leadership
- Autonomy and professionally challenging work
- Experienced and qualified project/team personnel
- Team involvement and project visibility

**Effective team performance**
- Innovative ideas
- Goal(s) accomplished
- Adaptable to change
- High personal/team commitment
- Rated highly by upper management
Dark Side of Teams…

■ Conformity
  - Complying with the role expectations and norms perceived by the majority to be appropriate in a particular situation.
  - Following the Immoral Majority
    - There is a tendency for individuals to go along with the group (blind conformity) when faced with overwhelming opposition by the group.
Dark Side of Teams...

- **Groupthink**
  - A mode of thinking (blind conformity) that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members’ strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.

- **Symptoms of Groupthink**
  - Excessive optimism
  - An assumption of inherent morality
  - Suppression of dissent
  - A desperate quest for unanimity
Dark Side of Teams… (2)

- **Groupthink**
  - **Prevention**
    - Avoid using groups for decisions that have already been made by higher management
    - Urge each group member to be a critical evaluator
    - Bring in outside experts for fresh perspectives
    - Assign someone role of devil’s advocate to challenge assumptions and alternatives
    - Take time to consider possible side effects and consequences of alternative courses of action
Implications for Managers

- Competitive pressures driving the use of teams:
  - Need for greater flexibility
  - Need for quicker responsiveness
  - Need for improved service/quality
  - Need for reduced cost/increased efficiencies
  - Need for greater innovation

- Work will be organized very differently in the future
  - Managers need to understand how to make teams effective
  - A unique set of leadership and management skills becomes crucial
One Trend: Help Empowered Teams Work

Empowered work teams are more than just a management fad. The reason is that they work. One example, Northern Telecom, in just three years experienced a 63 percent increase in revenue, a 46 percent increase in earnings, a 60 percent increase in productivity per employee, and a 63 percent drop in scrap.

However, empowered teams are difficult to initiate and maintain. Here are ten tips managers who are considering the switch may want to keep in mind.
Help Empowered Teams Work

1. Seek complete commitment before beginning the process.
2. Don’t assume team competency.
3. Expect stress, fear, and chaos.
4. Trust must be earned over time.
5. There will be some employee fallout.
Help Empowered Teams Work

6. The team approach means new structures, not no structures.
7. Teams need an organizational support system.
8. Managers have to balance control and autonomy.
9. Create a positive work atmosphere.
10. Eliminate barriers and status distinctions.