



Virtual Communication an Emerging Instrument of Effective Business Communication

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Abstract

Business communication of modern day organizations has grossly changed as a result of technological advancements. Different type electronic and computer technology based gadgets are in use for making the organizational communication effective. Telephones, 3G-4G technology based mobile phones, text messaging equipments, Fax-machines, e-mail, internet, video conferencing, chat programme and multi-media as verbal (oral and literal) means of communication are in practice. Communication gadgets which are faster, compact, cheaper, small-sized, multi-tasking are considered as best by the users, manufacturer and inventors. The trend of wi-fi, communication through satellite, mobile phone multi-media application, and communication by using optical fiber, wireless technology and communication through intelligent machines have increased the effectiveness of communication. HDTV's, hologram simulators are the clues for possibility of image transferring or the transferring of matter at the speed of light in the future. People need to send their messages further away with a faster speed as the world is becoming global village and its population increasing at a very fast speed. Present time's technological development has influenced the style, mode and methods of communication. This study is a review based research to investigate the role of virtual communication in the changing paradigm of modern day organization's business communication.

Keywords: Communication, Technological Advancement, Virtual Communication, Business Communication.

Communication

Communication is the process of sharing information. According to Merriam-Webster, communication is a process by which information is transferred between people through common symbols. These symbols may be written, visual, or verbal. Need of communication arises because people would not be able to convey their feelings, emotions, ideas, thoughts and knowledge. They would lose contact with their families, friends, relatives, interpersonal groups, work, world and the universe. Communication helps people in trouble to contact each other, keeps businesses and factories running and also the process of decision taking and problem solving is fully dependent on the process of communication. Vital services like: railways, road transportation, aviation, banking, education, fire fighting, ambulance and medical are possible by using communication. Our military forces would be useless and government would cease to work in absence of communication. Transportation would reach to halt and food supplies would not reach as per needs of the people. Fate and future of entertainment industry like radio, television and movies would vanish. The social functioning would reach to a standstill and surely it would not be the same as it is now.

Present day man's survival is solely dependent on different type of goods and services which are required not only to address the basic needs of modern man but also to provide comfort, pleasure, taste, choice, freedom and luxury. Huge volume of such goods and services is in demand as every human being is in need of them. To meet out the voluminous demand, these goods and services are produced at mass level in the highly sophisticated industrial/ business organizations. Mass production is possible with the aid of intensive and comprehensive planning, mobilization, organization, execution and controlling of resources including human resource. Effective accomplishment of all such comprehensive and complicated business processes and activities is possible with the help of effective business strategies. All the necessary business processes and strategies like: planning, mobilization, organization, execution and controlling etc. would be totally ineffective in absence of the strategic business communication. Modern businessman is trying all the strategies and techniques for enhancing the organizational productivity, effectiveness and efficiency, so that the basic goal of profit and wealth maximization can be achieved. Effective business communication is one of the most significant techniques of managing high productivity and efficiency in business.

Business Communication

Any type of communication necessary and used to do the business is known as business communication. Communication in business is one of the most required and important function, without communication business cannot come into existence and run. Effectively doing business needs strategic working i.e. strategic financial, production, marketing, human resource management and yes strategic business communication also. Strategic business communication involves selection and blending of appropriate communication elements like: language (verbal/ written), body language, message development, selection of appropriate technology and mode of transmission of message etc. Now a day, advancement in technology has greatly affected the effectiveness of business communication. The use of Telephones, 3G-4G technology based mobile phones, text messaging equipments, Fax-machines, e-mail, internet, video conferencing, chat programme and multi-media as verbal (oral and literal) means of communication are in practice. Communication gadgets which are faster, compact, cheaper, small-sized, multi-tasking are considered as best by the users, manufacturer and inventers. The trend of wi-fi, communication through satellite, mobile phone multi-media application, and communication by using optical fiber, wireless technology and communication through intelligent machines have increased the effectiveness of communication. HDTV's, hologram simulators are the clues for possibility of image transferring or the transferring of matter at the speed of light in the future. Someday, there will be telephones like wrist watches or, televisions with only interactive 3D programming or, we will have mental connections with physical world so all we have to do is think, and intelligent machines will follow the commands to execute it and things will get done or, computers will be able to visually connect with anyone in the world, without cameras.

The communication has always been the crucial part of mankind's social life. The means of communication has changed according to the changes in people's living conditions and all other circumstances such as technological developments. Throughout history, the technology has had a huge impact on the means of communication. Communication begins with language, the distinctive ability which has made possible the evolution of human society. The history of communication is mankind's search for ways to improve upon shouting. Present study is an effort to understand, how virtual communication is emerging as an instrument of effective business communication.

During the past time, smoke was used as a means of communication from one mountain to another. But only a few simple messages could be sent and received with this primitive method of smoke signals. Carrier pigeon was another means of communication to send messages further away. The pigeons were trained for this two way communication method of

letter carrying. Drama, street theatre, puppetry, dance, storytelling, song, music, painting, motifs and symbols were also being used as medium of communication. Then the letter, which was replaced with fax and e-mail consecutively, used to be a common means of communication as well.

Present Trend of Communication Media

Life is changing faster than can be envisaged. Technology is changing the way one lives and works every day. Offices are going paperless and 'green' and the distances are getting lesser with each passing second. Time zone differences do not stand in the way of being productive in any work environment. Cultures are coming together and people of varied color, creed and race are part of one large workforce. In this environment, communicating in an effective, yet proper manner following business decorum becomes extremely important. Earlier, business communication was about sending memos, writing business letters and so on. With technological changes, contemporary business communication is much more than that. Now, workforces interact via Emails, Teleconferencing and Videoconferencing. It becomes imperative for everyone to know how to communicate with their peers in the industry they work in, to follow current standards of business communication.

Cellular Phone

Development of the cellular phone is one of the biggest reasons for advancement in business communication. Communication with employees was possible only when they were at their work place. Now just by providing mobile charges to the employees, they are reachable no matter where they are, during the working and non-work hours. Furthermore the development of smartphones has revolutionized the process communication for execution of different activities employees can contribute even while they are out from their workplace.

The Internet as mode of communication

The Internet has multilaterally contributed in the effectiveness of business communication, statically by communicating through Web pages, and dynamically by communicating through exchanging information. Information related to product, services and other business issues may be uploaded and posted on the web page to provide instant access to the concerned for receiving the information instantaneously anywhere in the world. Static communication makes the company resources free, which would otherwise be used in constantly repeating the same information, whereas online product orders is a dynamic type of communication and tedious in nature in maintaining the real-time inventory.

Email as mode of business communication

Email mode of communication has revolutionized the business communication by replacing all paper memos, minutes of meetings and all other official communication including financial transactions.

Wireless Communications

As a result of delimitation by the government on the wireless devices and their use, now the business communication has become capable of doing everything from telephonic communication over a “walkie-talkie” to using the Internet or company network to run applications and conveying other mode of communication. Computer technology blended with wireless technology is evolving at a faster pace, with the introduction of highly advanced electronic products like the iPad, iPhone and Blackberry etc and these gadgets are taking the place of paper and writing utensils, distributing information immediately from one location to the other.

Cloud Computing mode of communication

Cloud computing has evolved the new dimensions of networking, now the documents and programs can be stored in “virtual” drives or computers, and authorized organizational people can have access by just using the ordinary internet connections. Cloud computing provides the facility of just like a real-time communication and interaction as otherwise managed by the network, with access extended to global level. Cloud computing helps in prevention of data loss as a result of system crashes and also avoids problems with network downtime. Cloud computing also provides the ability for the software up-gradation to be performed network-wide by upgrading a single instance of an application. Google Docs is an example of cloud computing where multiple users can interact on document production in real-time.

Teleconferencing as Mode of Business Communication

High-speed data connections allow for the use of teleconferencing, virtual meetings held over audio and video links. Teleconferencing can save substantial amounts of money otherwise spent on travel by connecting important employees in far-flung branches together to share ideas and information. The use of virtual whiteboards, communal data-sharing platforms where remote users can interact as if around the same table, further increase the possibilities of the virtual workplace.

Social Media Communication

Social media have been a revolution in how people plan events and communicate with one another. Rather than talking to their friends in person, they can post a comment about their life. The revolution of social media has allowed people to rekindle friendships, make new friends and gain new interests. Social media is used by some people to connect new

relationships in person, while others serve their purpose by visiting the web sites of the companies. Cyber bullying is one of the problems with social media. The content posted, though personal, can be used to fire or deny people work and promotions. Social media can help you stay in touch with friends, but it can be dangerous to your career and life. The amount of information you put out on the internet over social media, intended or not, affect you in the real world.

Impact of Technological Advancements on Communication Styles

Technological advancement has significantly improved the lifestyle. Technology has greatly affected all the spheres of communication. Technological advancement has remarkably improved the process communication i.e. starting from the codification of subject matter of communication to the latest digital mobile equipments and computers. There is no change in communication, rather the mode and means, which are used to communicate have greatly changed. Emergence of new technology results in the new manners of association with the new method of communication.

There's been a movement away from face-to-face meetings / communication. Instead, people and businesses use video conferencing, Illuminate (incorporates chat and presentation conferencing facilities) and virtual conferencing. Technology is more portable and people have and expect constant access to the internet. Communication is virtually instantaneous and is less rigid and less inclined to conform to traditional standards and rules. It is less formal. The most affected dimensions of business communication are as under:

Expediency/Time

Developing technology has speed up not only the business communications but also business itself. Money can be saved because it's much quicker to move information around. Now a day, there is no need to wait for money in the form of drafts and other time consuming modes. Just a few clicks of one's mobile phone or PC can transfer the money from one account to other at any time round the clock. Purchase orders for products, services and raw materials can be placed and processed online preventing employees to save their time for other work.

Specialized Employment

An ancillary advantage of the continued improvement of technology in communication is the many jobs that never before existed that have been created. Skilled professionals are required to install, operate and maintain new information technology tools.

Cost

It feels free to send an email and certainly cheaper than phone calls. Video conferencing saves money on flights and accommodation. Tasks that once took large sums of money may now be completed with a touch of a button for pennies. This has allowed small businesses to better compete with larger organizations in the global market.

Education

Online education is accessible and lot of free information is also available on various educational websites. Services like video-conferencing has made possible to give best education to students via expert faculty through web.

Accessibility

Technology has greatly increased accessibility in business communication. Because of things like smart phones, email, text messaging and instant messaging, information can be sent very quickly to anyone, anywhere. People can work or communicate from anywhere and at any time. While this can expedite business communication, it can also cause work to be all encompassing, potentially having a negative impact on personal lives.

Global Partnerships

Technology has made the world a lot smaller, especially in the context of business. People from different cultures interact on a frequent basis. Global partnerships have become much more feasible as things like video conferencing have facilitated meetings that cost much less to conduct than flying halfway across the world. This has also forced business communication to become more dynamic, as individuals from different cultures learn to accommodate for the cultural and communicative differences in their business relationships.

Market Access

The advent of social networking sites has allowed companies to target demographics that are already interested in their products and services with advertisements. Moreover, active fan bases and groups have been developed to allow companies to actively communicate with their most loyal customers about company and product developments and potential special offers. It's available 24 / 7. People can do shopping / banking / chat at any time they like. They can communicate with people on the other side of the world while everyone in their own country is asleep.

Relational Dynamics

The relational aspect of business communication has been changed definitively by the evolution of technology. Online communication brings families / friends together across distances.

With email, text messaging, social networking sites, and cell phones becoming more and more popular, face to face communication is become far less frequent. It has reduced isolation and provides support systems for people who need it.

Issues Related to Use of Advanced Communication Media

1. Reliance on technology – people don't bother learning to spell because they use spell-checker etc.
2. Loss of face-to-face may mean loss of some communication skills and loss of the personal touch.
3. There are risks attached to the unknown / hidden elements on the internet (you don't necessarily know to whom you are talking).
4. Reliability of information –Something is on the web does not mean that it is reliable.
5. Viruses, fraud and identity theft are all risks for people using the internet.
6. There are costs associated with maintaining equipment and keeping equipment up with contemporary software.
7. Addiction – some people get addicted to web / games etc. which increases their social isolation and can cause health problems.
8. Health issues can also emerge because of excess use of electronic communication media.
9. Interruptions – because people don't tend to turn off technology, they don't focus or concentrate for uninterrupted periods as much. There is a trend towards multi-tasking that can have benefits but also impacts productivity.
10. There are potential risks relating to cancer and fertility associated with regular exposure to mobile phones.

Conclusion

Communication is one of the very important elements of organizational success. In comparison to past, presently we have many ways and means to communicate than there had been a few years ago. Use of latest communication devices has become necessary and almost universal in all type of business may be small, medium or large one. Present day businesses use a variety of communication methods to receive and share the information and data to keep people informed and processes operating smoothly. People involved in business understand the importance of clarity, accuracy, time-worthiness and effectiveness of communication while interacting with employees, customers, other stakeholders and public. But simultaneously there are some side effects of this change. Everything has both a positive

and negative impact and the impact of technological advancement on communication process also have positive and negative sides. Communication is now easy with no barriers and technology has made it easy to strengthen relationship by social networking sites. It has brought the world closer and promoted exchange of thoughts to find better solutions to any problem. On the other side, most prominent negative effect is lacking in interpersonal relationship because of less face to face interactions. But, even then the latest technologies, such as cloud computing are being used to allow businesses to operate globally without sacrificing security or limiting user access. In conclusion, communication today is alive, efficient and reliable unlike in the past in which the means of communication were inefficient, ineffective and unreliable and in making the present day communication so effective the virtual communication, computer and electronic based communication has played a significant role.

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