

# Organized communication in handr block

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



H&R Block has been a leading chain company of tax preparation for over 50 years. Today, there are over 11, 000 stores throughout the United States ([www. hrblock. com](http://www.hrblock.com)). With being such a large company, communication is a key aspect for the company to be successful, but there are many aspects of communication and leadership that are not being followed. In this study, theories and functions will be explained with an effective way for any organization to solve their communication dilemmas.

### Overview of the Organization and Case Study

H&R Block was established in 1955 to give a cost efficient way for people to have their tax returns prepared. Since 1955, H&R Block has grown and established new products to help keep up with the technological changes and demands of the IRS ([www. hrblock. com](http://www.hrblock.com)). For the people that still want the one-on-one tax interviews, H&R Block has established offices all over the United States. These offices are divided into regions and then districts. Each district contains approximately ten offices, and they have one district manager. There is also one office leader that runs each individual office. With being such a large company it is very easy to have communication barriers. Personalities of the managers also have a negative effect on the offices.

The district manager is very passive, and does not like confrontation. He does not spend a lot of time at each office and uses email as his main form of communication. This has led to miscommunication and a loss of employee morale. There are many communication theories involved. By using these theories and establishing values, skills, and policies; H&R Block can learn better communication and leadership skills which will help employee morale and give customers a more accurate tax return. The following case study will

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discuss ways for the managers and employees to open the lines of communication, and give everyone a greater experience.

### Identify and Describe the Situation or Problem

#### Knowledge

The major problems are considered internal communication dilemmas (Shockley, Ch5). There is a lack of communication from the district manager to the offices. There are not set guidelines and improper training on company policies. Minor issues are also created by these major issues. Minor problems consist of managers not being engaged with their employees. They give very limited positive feedback and constructive criticism. The office also has a few “ know it all” employees that refuse to listen or pass along pertinent information. The major and minor problems have led to dissatisfaction of employees and clients. To help improve these issues H&R Block has incorporated a few different communication theories.

The theories that have been applied have allowed some employees to overlook the real issues within the office. One communication theory that has been applied is the Hierarchy of Needs, by Abraham Maslow. According to Maslow, the theory is “ individuals focus attention on needs that are not met and are motivated to seek satisfaction of those needs (Shockley, Ch. 5).” An example of this is paychecks. Most people love their paychecks and the yearend bonuses. They seem to put other needs and wants behind the need and want for money. A second communication theory that is applied is the Motivation-Hygiene Theory by Frederick Herzberg.

“ The theory proposes that satisfaction and dissatisfaction is not polar opposites and that what produces dissatisfaction with work when corrected will not necessarily produce motivation (Shockley, Ch. 5).” A great example at H&R Block is the Customer Service Professionals (CSPs). The CSPs are not paid very well. H&R Block offers low cost training for them to advance and achieve these higher levels or become tax preparers. On the CSPs achieve these higher levels they tend to be more motivated. They have a higher skill level and are making more money, but still have dissatisfaction in the lack of organization and communication throughout the company. A third theory that is present is the Rewards Theory by B. F Skinner. Employees at H&R Block are rewarded with end of year bonuses. These bonuses are based on performance (number of clients, marketing, amount of sales, etc.). The bonuses are extremely important to the employees and help reinforce positive behavior. H&R Block has three main organizational groups to carry-out their procedures and guidelines.

These groups consist of a task force group, steering committee, and directional group. The task force group is employees brought together from different backgrounds and professions to create set rules and procedures in each office. The steering committee is a diverse group of employees that exist to prepare tax returns and follow through with the rules and procedures setup by the task force group. The directional group then helps to establish the policies, and make sure they are being followed by the offices correctly. These groups create the theory of bureaucracy, there are set rules in which everyone is to follow, there is an office hierarchy, and office managers require training. This system helps to provide accountability, responsibility,

and consistency (Shockley). The information that is missing is that the system is set in place, but does not seem to be followed. With bureaucracy, human needs tend to be ignored and individual needs are not accounted for. With H&R Block's current system, employees are not given the attention and information that they need in order to perform their job correctly and appropriately. Their need for money is being met, but communication and social needs are not being met. With this information missing, assumptions are made that H&R Block has the ability and resources to be a great organization. They are lacking strong leaders to make sure these resources are put into place. Employees at H&R Block are given money and bonuses for performance level. This is great for some people, but there are also individuals who look for more, such as achievement and training. The leaders seems to be autocratic, they make the decisions without asking employees' point of views. Policies change from year to year, but suggestions from employees are never heard.

### Sensitivity

The biggest problems are with the communication issue at H&R Block comes from the district manager and the office manager. The shared realities are that we need better communication and leadership skills in the office. These issues are going to lead to employee and client dissatisfaction, which leads to loss of money for all parties involved.

The district manager and office leader have the potential and resources to be great communicators. A plan needs to be put in to place to teach them the skills they need. They are both missing from the office most of the time,

and it is very hard with the only communication being email. Once an email is sent it could be a week or longer to hear a response, if one is received at all. The manager and office leader are not assuming responsibility for the lack of communication. Blame is placed on the employees for not listening, when the information was never originally passed down.

### Skills

The skills that the principals' exhibits are tax knowledge. They are very educated and up to date on tax law. They are also great with company policy. They help with most questions that are asked, and if they do not know the answer they will get the answer. They need better communication skills and time management. It is extremely important to get the information back to the employees in a timely manner. Positive feedback would help a lot of the employees to know that they are doing a great job. The managers could answer the employees in a timely manner, and give more positive feedback. This would help the employees' morale and make sure they are satisfied with their employer. Organizational skills that are lacking are leadership skills, communication skills, creativity and collaboration, and suppressing differences of opinion and conflict. These strengths are that H&R Block values diversity. They evaluate all the information and make rational decisions with the information given. H&R Block attempts to set policy and give yearly bonuses to help employees excel in their work.

### Values

The most important aspect to H&R Block is to prepare accurate tax returns and give an outstanding customer experience in the process. Both managers

share similar values. They work hard to make sure all clients are happy, and they work with their employees to make sure clients have a great experience, allowing us to retain our clients and earn more money. The culture of the office is very diverse. There are employees from all backgrounds that come together for a common goal.

The individual and organizational goals are compatible. Everyone shares a common goal, of preparing accurate tax returns, and giving clients the best experience possible. Once clients have a good experience they will return to H&R Block, and refer their friends and family. The more clients that H&R Block retains the more money they make, and the larger bonuses the employee receives.

#### Develop Alternatives and Test Possible Solutions

Alternatives to the communication and leadership barriers start with a plan. The first thing that needs to be done is an analysis of the situation. The organizational groups need to be put back into place. This will set specific tasks to each individual so that all employees are involved with the changes. These groups need to create policies and make sure that they are communicated with all employees.

The managers should be given classes on communication and leadership. They need to be forced to spend a certain amount of time at the office. This will make sure they are present when employees have questions or issues. This will eliminate some of the emails, and miscommunication through email. An award system can be established. If an employee is having a great week, send them a Thank you card, recognizing what they did well. Employee

evaluations can also be provided throughout the year. This would help give employees motivation and let them know what they need to work on to meet their end of the year goals.

There are many alternatives that can be generated to help the communication and leadership issues at H&R Block. The company can create a SWOT analysis. This will be a detailed plan of action, which will assist them with recognizing the current issues throughout the company. H&R Block can also ask employees opinions, and see what employees feel changes need to be made. To establish these ideas, the managers can hold periodic meetings, and have suggestions boxes, or even establish open door policies.

#### Propose Solutions and Suggest Implementation Plans

After completing the SWOT analysis, H&R Block can develop a plan that works best for the company. Making sure that the managers are more involved and the lines of communication are open among the employees will help with employee retention and morale. The district manager needs to communicate better with the offices, and make sure that company policy is established and being followed in each office.

This plan should take effect immediately. The analysis should be completed and actions done. Then classes should be offered to everyone explain company policy, and communication and leadership training. If this takes place, within two years, communication among H&R Block should improve drastically. Most employees will agree and be excited for the changes. Some employees do not want change and are happy being able to do as they please with no repercussions or consequences to their actions. Everyone will



be more relaxed when everyone is on the same page and follow the same rules.

### Summary

H&R Block has the ability to be a strong organization with great communication and leadership skills. Once the plan is implemented and all employees and managers are on the same page, everyone at H&R Block will be able to achieve their goal of, giving the clients the best experience possible. The plan will allow the managers to communicate better with the employees and make sure that company policies and tax information is passed down and implemented. The employees will feel more comfortable and the morale and welfare of H&R Block will improve.