

# How communication affects organizational leadership assignment

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Such an organization is Southwest Airlines, whose company culture has been characterized over the years by unique leadership and communications styles (Schoenberg, 1992). Leadership Styles and Group Communication Heads of companies such as Southwest Airlines develop their own style leadership styles, and these styles greatly affect how communication is conducted within the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2007). The leader of any group, whether it is a small workup or a large firm, will put his or her imprint on that group from the very beginning.

This may be accomplished by making motivational speeches or by setting an example as the role model of expected work ethic. Robbins and Judge discuss several types of leadership styles, including charismatic, inspirational, and transactional approaches (2007). Each of these styles can be very effective, with some being more appropriate than others in varying types of organizations. For instance, a transactional leader exhibits a more traditional leadership style, where observation of rules and norms are emphasized, with punishment and reward being the motivators (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

This style of leadership may inhibit free expression amongst employees and within groups when immunization, as there may be no benefit seen in taking risks. Transactional leaders tend to be task-oriented and linear in their thinking, and may inadvertently discourage effective communication as a result (Beebe & Masters, 2006). This type of leadership may work well for some organizations, however, particularly those that rely on rules and chains-of-command such as within the military.

For a company that strives for innovation and creativity, a different type of leadership approach would most likely be more successful. Southwest Airlines was founded by Herb Keller in 1971, and from the outset he strove to develop a cultural philosophy different from other airlines through his leadership style (Southwest Airlines, 1992). He was a charismatic leader who was able to communicate his vision articulately as well as being perceptive of his employee's abilities and needs (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

This type of leader excels at bringing out the best in a group, as even the most reticent members will be encouraged to express ideas. Southwest was innovator in the industry due in large part to this charismatic leader ("How corporate culture helped Southwest Airlines become the best," 2005).

Organizational Power and Communication Power within an organizational setting can come from many sources, including the more formal legitimate and reward powers, as well as the less formal powers from referent and expert sources (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

Power is what a person uses to control or influence others, and varying types of power will affect group communication within an organization quite differently (Beebe & Masters, 2006). Legitimate power, for example, comes from the appointed leader of a group, such as a president of a company or manager of a department. This type of power can be a negative for effective communication, as this leader may also have the power to reward or punish others if performance is considered below par. Referent power comes to people who are admired and respected by others in the group; this power source can be a great facilitator of communication.

At Southwest Airlines, employees are encouraged to exhibit a friendly and warm attitude to not only customers but to each other (Yardage, 2006). This makes for all sorts of people with referent power, and as a result a healthy atmosphere for communication is created. Expert power is derived from knowledge or expertise, even if that person is not the appointed leader of the group (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Expert power can be a facilitator or inhibitor of group communication, with the latter due to others feeling inadequate thus contributing less to a discussion.

**Motivational Theories and Organizational Culture** One of the tasks of leadership is to motivate employees and inspire others to be productive, usually done in a way that is consistent with the values and mission of the organization. There are many conventional and contemporary motivational theories, each of which may be effective for varying types of organizations. These theories range from the well known Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory to more modern cognitive theories that focus on intrinsic needs and core values (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

Part of an organization's culture is defined by how it attempts to motivate its employees and create enthusiasm within them for achieving work-related goals. For Southwest Airlines, the motivational theories that would most likely be effective include goal-setting and expectancy theories. The former theory emphasizes when management sets clear and achievable goals that stretch employees to new levels, they will be motivated to attain these goals and work at higher levels of performance.

The expectancy theory plays into goal-setting as well, as it states that employees are more motivated when they believe that higher performance will lead to rewards such as bonuses and promotions (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Southwest Airlines has made a tradition of setting higher and higher goals for its employees and for its company as a whole, with the rewards of profit-sharing and bonuses a valuable motivating force. The Role of Communication in Motivation For any of the motivational theories described by Robbins and Judge, effective communication is the key to implementing an organization's motivational strategies (2007).

At Southwest Airlines it is likely that many of the goals set as a company are a result of groups meeting to discuss industry strategies and benchmarks for the future. Positive communication within these groups leads to a member "buy-in," and everyone's motivation is heightened to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. Good two-way, vertical communication between managers and employees also is an effective expectancy theory motivator, as the employee knows very well what to expect at varying levels of performance, including rewards for outstanding work (Beebe & Masters, 2006).

Workforce Commitment and Communication Effective leadership and motivation of the workforce within an organization will result in higher organizational commitment by managers and other employees. This type of commitment is defined by Robbins and Judge as "a state in which an employee identifies with a particular organization and its goals" and wants to remain a part of it (2007, Chi., p. 12). Organizational commitment is associated with higher productivity and job-satisfaction, particularly affective

commitment which is when the employee believes in the company's values (Robbins & Judge, 2007).

As discussed previously, effective communication of these values and goals within an organization is the key to binding employees to them. The leaders of Southwest Airlines have been very SUccessfUl in communicating their values of warmth, respect, and friendliness throughout its organization, something most of its workforce identify with strongly (Southwest Airlines, 2010) Summary Excellent communication is an integral part of developing effective leadership styles, motivational strategies, and organizational commitment of the workforce.