

Example of challenges in communication term paper

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



It is acceptable that effective communication is the greatest asset that an organization can ever have. This is because the communication helps in coordination and management activities within the organization, making everyone more accountable, transparent and productive. However, there are times when communication becomes quite a challenge. Below is an illustration of how this can happen.

Challenges in Communication

In this case scenario, it can be seen that Songsri has a challenge in managing the virtual team. This is not out of the ordinary since the many organizations face similar challenges. The key to the solution is in understanding the problem clearly, and then coming up with means of solving it. In this case, it is important that the communication challenges associated with communication with the virtual team be addressed. These are as indicated below.

Challenges with Virtual Communication

The first main challenge that she would have to deal with is the issue of trust within the team (Kirkman et al (2002)). As it has already been indicated, Songsri has to work with people from different organizations and who are in three different time zones. On the other hand, Kirkman et al (2002) are of the idea that most organizations are built on the notion that people cannot be trusted to handle even the simplest of tasks. As such, people tend to trust only those of their kind. The only way that the barrier can be broken is by making sure that the people interact more often on a face-to-face basis so that they can learn to trust and rely on each other. However, this is only

possible with the traditional method. Technology has brought about virtual communication which enables people to communicate over long distances without physical vicinity to each other. Faced by such a prospect, it is quite difficult to dissolve the distrust that exists between persons unknown to each other. As such, the people might remain to themselves, fail to interact much and hence fail to deliver as per their potential. Breaking this barrier to create cohesiveness and oneness in the team is one of Songsri's greatest challenges.

Secondly, it is quite evident that the people in the project are from different companies brought together by a common interest. However, it cannot be denied that right from their company of origin; every individual has a way in which they are used to handling issues, based on their organizational culture. This brings about a clash of the organizational structure. It is well known that people tend to stick with their organizational cultures. More often than not, the people in the teams will try to do things as they are done in their organization. This can be a challenge for Songsri as she has to make sure that she coordinates all the people and gets them to do the task at hand as one team. The main challenge in this case is that the people might be on different wavelengths depending on their company of origin. As such, even though Songsri tries to bring in synergy in the team, there is a likelihood of failing. As Kirkman et al (2002) puts it, the organizational structures can make the people in the team have stereotypes, power, personality and political conflicts. In the long run, all these factors lead to the disintegration of the team. This happens because the people do not have a

forum where they can come together as a team, discuss the matters and come up with a way forward. With the traditional teams, this might be possible since the communication can be done in the meetings and the people can be brought to see the idea from the perspective of the one giving the message. Without such an opportunity, there will always be a possibility of the people taking messages and interpreting them differently depending on how they are used to handling issues. As such, the challenge of bringing about synergy in the team could be one of the greatest barriers to effective communication.

The third problem that Songsri might have to face is the geographical challenge. As it has already been indicated, the teams are located in different time zones. As such, it might be very difficult to have a time convenient enough for all the people for the virtual communication to take place. In this case, Songsri might be forced to take two options. First of all, she might decide to set a specific time for the virtual communication where every team member has to be on-line. This can be a very effective method. However, the only problem would be that such a strategy would definitely be an inconvenience to some of the people, those who are forced to come online at the odd hours so that they can have the communication, this can lead to dissatisfaction with the work. On the other hand, she can decide to have communication with different members of the team when it is convenient, and then relay the information to the other members who missed out. This comes with two major disadvantages; first of all, the communication process would be very long and ineffective. This is because

the ideas of some members might not make sense to another. If these members are communicating with the team leader at different times, there is no time that they would come together as one. This can make it quite a lengthy process in decision making. The second problem is that if the ideas of an individual are accepted at one time, then after communication with a different team member the ideas are discarded or revised, the proponents might feel that their contributions are not appreciated or accepted. This can create detachment from the project and reduce the level of commitment (Kirkman et al, 2002). Looking at the above scenario, it is evident that the difference in geographical locations is an automatic barrier to virtual communication as it makes it hard for people in the different time zones to find a common, convenient time for the communication to take place.

Last but not least, there is the challenge of difference in skills in the team. In this case, the difference applies to both the technical and interpersonal skills (Kirkman et al, 2002). It is conventionally agreeable that a team gets its name from the fact that different people with different skills come together for a common reason to accomplish a given mission. This is the kind of a team that Songsri has. However, the main challenge is that the people do have different abilities. Being human, some people might think or feel that they are more important to the project than others. This can bring in conflicts which can lower the efficiency of the teams. Far from the technical skills, there are the communication skills. The progress of a virtual team progresses faster when everyone in the team can communicate effectively. This makes it easier to report on individual progress which can then help in

ensuring group progress. Different people communicate differently and the ability to communicate effectively is one of the main qualifications for being in a virtual team. Looking at the manner in which Songsri's team was selected, the members were picked with the main parameter being their technical skills. This is a mistake that many organizations do make when constituting virtual teams (Kirkman et al, 2002). This is a problem that Songsri has to be prepared to face.

Solutions to the Problems

Having identified the different challenges, it is possible to derive ways through which Songsri can still communicate effectively with her virtual team. She has to be well equipped in the communication skills as an individual as this is the only way that she can lead the team to being effective on the same. Some of the methods she can apply are as follows.

The first challenge identified is on how to make the team develop some kind of cohesion, be open with each other and learn to trust each other. Of course, this cannot be achieved through virtual communication. Greiner and Metes (1995) argue that rather than try to solve this problem using virtual communication, it would be better if a face-to-face meeting is held. This can be done at the beginning of the project where the people come together. Songsri can plan for a moment when all the team members would report physically at the headquarters. At this meeting, the main agenda should be making the people know and understand each other. With such an initial meeting, there is a high possibility that the members, though working as a virtual team, would have the feeling that they are in a real team. This would

help in creating cohesion, understanding and making the members trust each other the more.

The issues of structures and organizational management can also be easily addressed in a way that can make communication more effective. Greiner and Metes (1995) are of the opinion that having a code of conduct can be the best way to go about this problem. This code can have principles appreciating the request for information by a give team member within a specified time period. Definitely, the response might not be prompt but with the acknowledgement, the members who requested the information could rest assured that their queries will be addressed. This can make it much easier for the communication process to flow smoothly without major hitches. However, for this to happen, all the members have to know that they have to leave their organizational cultures aside for the duration the project runs. They understand that they are on a different team with its own dynamics and a manner in which issues are handled in the team.

Acknowledging this can make the communication process such a smooth one that nothing goes wrong.

The geographical problem could, not by far, be the hardest to address since the team leader nor do the members have control over it. It can be said to be the natural barrier to communication for which the only solution is for some of the team members to make sacrifice for the success of the entire team. Grenier and Metes (1995) suggest that a way of addressing this issue starts by creating trust within the team. As such, the team members get to know that though they might at times be called to go out of their way for the sake

of the project, there is no malice behind it. as such, if they are called for a virtual meeting at a time which is not very convenient for them, they would understand that this happens for the good of the overall project. This can help the team hold meetings and communicate even at times which might not be convenient for every one. However, to ensure balance, Songsri has to make sure that it is not just one team that gets inconvenienced all the time. The meetings should be held in such a manner that the group to be inconvenienced on one day due to the differing time zones is not the team that is to be inconvenienced the next time a meeting has to be held. This can make the members feel comfortable and considered in the meetings. In the long run, communication would have run smoothly with no hitches.

All along, this essay has focused on communication in the virtual team and how to make it more effective. However, it cannot be denied that there are some people in the team who just have the technical skills but no communication skills. For such people, breaking the barrier to communication could be an uphill task. However, Songsri can solve this issue by having a reporting and communicating tool that can be easy to use and understand (Greiner and Metes, 1995). This can be a progress report, weekly or monthly report or another method that shows the progress of an individual. The technology used during the virtual meetings could also make the communication more effective. For instance, a video-conferencing can make the people seem to be together. They can interact with each other and ask questions where necessary. Though quiet expensive, communication

channels which create a sense of physical meetings can bring about real time interactions which can make the people communicate more effectively.

Looking at the above account, it cannot be denied that there are many communication challenges that face virtual teams. However, with the right leadership and proper selection of the technology applied in the communication, communication in the virtual teams can be made more effective and productive.

References

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