

Importance on construction projects

[Business](#), [Industries](#)



Introduction

Communication is a medium in which information is transferred from one point to another like a conversation between people or signals sent between machines. It is fundamental aspect of human interaction as without it no meaningful activity can take place. Communication is difficult to define as it can have different meanings, contexts, forms and impacts and so will mean different things to different people. This is heavily true within the construction industry for example looking at two different cases:

- a) A conversation between a project manager and an architect regarding how a complicated design should be constructed on site.
- b) Consider the communication of an organisation in the construction industry portrayed by an article highlighting the faults and putting a negative spotlight on certain type of builders.

Both above cases are examples of different forms of communications with varying context. There are several important qualities of the concept of communication which is listed below.

- Communication in the process in which information is transferred.
- It can also be referred to bridge some description between people.
- It can also be a social skill involving good interaction between people.
- Other types of communication such as interpersonal usually involves passing on feelings, opinions and facts.

When it comes to construction, communication is usually between:

- Communication between consultant and client.

- Communication between the consultants.
- Communication between consultant and contractor.
- Communication between engineers and builders.

The different perspectives on the term communication all indicate that it is the transfer of information or some form of knowledge between people.

After reading several articles, one similarity that they all share is that the members of the construction team all agree that communication is key to great construction projects. A Harvard business review article about a study in MIT's laboratory showed that communication was once again the number one factor for success above all other variables such as education and experience.

Communication is not as simple as some would think. Its only effective when ideas and goals are achieved. In the construction industry, it is very important that whatever happens, it's a team effort including client, engineer, consultant, specialists and contractors.

On a construction site, communication helps strengthen and builds relationships. This is important as relationships is the lifeblood of any business transaction. It is therefore important to communicate openly and be honest and follow through as this helps build trust and form good relationships. It is proven that communication helps build confidence and strengthen teams. Strong teams are the result of clear and good communication. A good team can overcome challenges because it is developing solutions by closely communicating with one another. Their

success makes them even stronger and they gain confidence in their abilities going forward.

Managing a team of employees becomes a lot easier when you have effective communication. A good manager can effectively articulate the aim of the project. A group of employees can recognise a manager who is good at communication by the ease at which they are able to understand by what the project manager is trying to illustrate to them thus they learn from it as this drives results.

In the construction industry, feedback from the workers are quite important. Communication creates feedback loops. In the top companies, the leaders will often let their staff members know how they are performing and what they can do in the future to further improve their performance.

Finally, are the results. Effective communication delivers results which everyone is looking to achieve. The more people discuss openly of any challenges the greater the chance that these challenges and issues can be overcome and moving forward will be vastly easier.

Main methods of communication

There are various ways to transmit information from one person to another, from organisation to another and this can be done formally or informally.

In the construction industry, the main ways are listed below:

- Drawings – these are often drawn on cad (software) and illustrates what the clients wants. These also communicate the technical and physical aspect of the project.
- Photographs – these could be pictures of the site. Photographs are also very important because they hold very useful information as in the future they can be used as evidence in the case of legal action.
- Face to face – face to face meetings usually takes place between engineers, consultants and contractors. When communicating face to face, especially on site, it should be clear and calm and full of confidence.
- Computers- Using computers saves a lot of time as email and key information as well as highly confidential material can be sent from long distances and can be received by the recipient within a very short time period.

Common causes of miscommunication

In the construction industry, there are many causes of miscommunication, some of which will be discussed below.

Contractors and clients often communicate through drawings or documents. In some cases, these drawings might be of bad quality, incomplete or even wrong which could lead to something terrible as these may not transmit the correct idea of the designer leading to an unsafe environment.

When working on site, the workers are sometimes in situations where they must take notes or write down numbers for instance when surveying.

Therefore this information that they have written down could be wrong or

written unclearly as mistakes could happen, or this information can be written down unprofessionally.

Poor leadership and lack of confidence is also a barrier to effective communication. Mistakes are bound to happen if the leader who is communicating is not composed and is nervous.

The workers could also be not trained to use the latest equipment and technology therefore there could be a huge learning curve for them and this could be an issue and cause delays which could cost a lot of money if working on a big project where time is very crucial. The lack of competent workers could also lead to mis-interpreting data and results.

In some companies, site operatives have poor level of English as they are not well educated therefore they have difficulty understanding reports, drawings or much technical information and most of the time a verbal explanation is required.

Main areas affected by miscommunication

Within the construction and civil engineering industry there are various areas that are hit harder due to miscommunication than other areas.

One of the key issues in that industry is making sure a project is not delayed as delays can cause chaos and cause a loss of money. A delay that is caused by lack of effective communication on a project on the critical path will cause major damage and should be avoided at all costs. If a project is delayed,

then this could lead to fines and more costs which both the contractor and client would want to avoid.

Quality is also very important. A client who has hired a contractor would want the final product extremely well built with excellent quality. As mentioned earlier, mistakes could happen on site and can lead to errors and this can lead to lower quality products which is not good for both client and contractor.

Its common that conflicts could happen between client and contractor and if escalated, it could lead to both parties bringing in an arbitrator to resolve this dispute and this could lead to additional money and time being wasted. This conflict could happen due to lack of effective communication.

Methods to improve communication

Sometimes things are not going too well, and a lack of communication is often the root of the problem. There are many ways however to improve this. In some work environments and design offices, the project manager could turn to devices and technology such as using specialised software to communicate and relay their ideas and vision across to other members of staff.

When it comes to construction site environment, the labourers may have not much technical knowledge and to ensure everyone is getting the message clearly it is important to reinforce the message by conveying it in different ways to ensure everyone understands properly.

In some cases, lack of communication can cause chaos. This can be avoided by establishing clear lines of command for messages and information.

Having documents correctly written down in simple and clear formal English without any use of slang is often helpful to easily communicate a message to someone who might find it hard to comprehend the message.

When working on construction site, it is very important for the person who is in charge to organise continuous training on new equipment and provide regular health and safety training, so workers know and understand what is going on. This is also a form of communication which is often underestimated and given little importance despite its huge importance.

Communication can also be improved by recruiting qualified contractors and this makes communication between everyone much easier and effective as they are qualified, thus they will understand and communicate better than someone who is less qualified.

Advantages of having effective communication

Within the construction industry, having an effective communication between everyone will vastly increase rate of productivity and health and safety. For example, if the drawings are well drawn and detailed correctly, then there will be no problem for the contractors when it comes to interpreting these drawings and setting out. Since there will be no confusion, alterations would not be needed and works will begin and end as planned.

Having a good client and contract relationship is vital as this will ensure that the project will run smoothly and will decrease the chance of conflicts and

legal actions taking place. These relationships are also important for the clients brand as if the relationship is not great then other contractors will hesitate to work with them hence damage the overall business.

Effective communication also leads to the duration of the project being completed very quickly therefore allowing no room for liquidated damages or any other costs for both parties and this is something that will be appreciated by both client and contractor.

A contractor will be extremely happy if they can make the maximum amount of profit from a project and likewise a client will be extremely satisfied by the work carried out by the contractor. This will happen if no arguments or disputes takes place between the both parties as both will have good relationships with one another.

Summary

Having discussed communication in general then having looked in depth the types of communications that takes place within the construction and civil engineering industry it can be concluded that effective communication plays a big role. As many projects have failed due to bad communication as they were not able to portray key information to the correct person whether it's by email drawings or by word of mouth. It therefore also concluded that any organisation whether client or contractor should invest and make it a top priority to have effective communication as this will save money, time, reputation along with other implications.