

Importance of supportive communication



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Communication is an everyday activity. There is nothing that can be done without communication. However this essential of life can be very damaging if not use it properly or accurately. It is every body's wish that all people behave, act, think, response, move, learn and communicate just as he/she was made off. As a result of inequalities and imperfection of human nature, all of us cannot act the same. It is often and always easier to communicate good news and happy moments to our love ones, work mates, school mates, family members etc. however the moment of truth is when to communicates the opposite to those that are close to us, colleagues, family members etc. and when not handled properly can ruin a hard fought relationships cultivated over the year. This is because we are inclined by nature to receive good news than the bad news though it might be the fact. Therefore cultivating the skills of supporting communication an inevitable tool for every person irrespective of the level of responsibility one finds itself.

Supportive communication seeks to preserve or enhance a positive relationship between you and another person while still addressing a problem, giving negative feedback, or tackling a difficult issue with such person. There are numerous benefits associated with companies which ideologies the concept of supporting communication that companies who does not as carried by various surveys. In such context one can be an asset to a group, work environment, family when he/she is able to communicate supportively to the up build of the group, work and family and in this direction I chose to work on my supporting communication skills.

Before I read and participated in the classroom on this skill, my skill assessment score was below the mean quartile in comparing with 5000 students who undertook the same assessment. My score after reading and class participating almost threepuled above even above the highest quartile. This does not mean that I can skillfully applied supportive communication. Practical steps have been put in place to apply this knowledge into full use. These steps includes; by asking two same case study group to assess my reaction when giving counsel on performance of a group member, a planned friendship with those who their attitudes and behaviors I disguise so much and finally being asking my children to note down whenever I get angry in the process of giving the feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an everyday activity. And is the ordinary interaction that occurs between coworkers, friends, acquaintances, or intimates on daily bases. Communication comes in different forms. Verbal communication which includes sounds, words, language and speaking whiles non-verbal communication involves physical ways of communication like, tone of voice, touch, smell and body language.

The quality of communication and how communications are evolves and is maintained are the basis of whether a relationship amongst individuals are stable, become more intimate when appropriate and if additional information is shared between individual reflecting trust between the both parties in every facet of human life. Ineffective communication may lead individual to dislike each other, be offended by each other, lose confidence, refuse to

listen and disagree to each other as well as causing a host of other interpersonal problem. (Whatten & Camaron, 2011)

Normally positive interpersonal relationships results when always things are going on well and people do what they are expected and suppose of them. However, when communicating to an individual who has a negative attitude, such as a personality conflict with coworker or hasn't perform up to expectation, the risk of putting the employee on the defensive is very high. Individual often react defensively if they feel they are being punished or threatened by communicating, and thus they devote attention to identify counter arguments rather than listening. Thus communication is more productive when it is done constructively or done supportively.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

Supportive communication is interpersonal communications that help individuals to communicate accurately, especially in difficult situations and times. Supportive communication seeks to preserve or enhance a positive relationship between you and another person while still addressing a problem, giving negative feedback, or tackling a difficult issue. It allows you to communicate information to others that is not complimentary, or to resolve an uncomfortable issue with another person but, in the process, strengthen your relationship. Supportive communication builds and strengthened relationships when delivering negative feedback or when you have to point out few shortcoming of another person. It thus seek to preserve or enhance a positive relationship between two people whiles still

addressing issue. It allows communicating information to others that is not complementary but rather that strengthen the relationship.

Companies fostering supportive communication enjoy higher productivity, faster problem solving, higher quality outputs, and fewer conflicts and subversive activities than groups or organizations where relationships are less. (Robbins & Coulter, 2007) it goes on to present a survey conducted with conclusion, that companies with presence of good supportive communication between managers and subordinate were three times more powerful in predicting profitability in major cooperation's over a five year period than the most powerful variables – market size, firm size and sales growth rate-combined.

There are arguably eight attributes of supportive communication of which all other research shared the same thought as far the scope of this research is concern. This indicates that to communicate supportively one must adhere to these characteristics when communicating.

ATTRIBUTES OF SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

Problem oriented, not person oriented. Problem-oriented communication focuses on a problem that can be solved rather than the person who is responsible for the problem. Person-oriented communication puts the listener on the defensive and focuses the attention on blame rather than on avoiding or solving future problems

Congruent, not incongruent. Congruent communication conveys what the speaker is thinking and feeling. There are definitely situations where

discretion is a more appropriate choice than full disclosure of what we think and feel. However, in most communication situations, we communicate more effectively when we're candid. If we aren't honest, listeners won't trust what we say.

Descriptive, not evaluative. Evaluative communication expresses judgment of the listener, or his or her actions. To be an effective constructive communicator, we should objectively describe problems rather than speak in an evaluative manner. Evaluative communication puts the listener on the defensive.

Validating, not invalidating. Validating communication helps people feel understood, valued, and accepted. In contrast, invalidating communication treats people as if they are ignored, worthless, or alienated. Invalidating communication is superiority-oriented, rigid, impervious and/or indifferent and its avoid treating the listener like a lesser person.

Specific, not global. There are two key drawbacks to global statements of problems; they're often too large to be resolved and they tend to oversimplify and misrepresent problems.

Conjunctive, not disjunctive. Disjunctive communication takes at least three forms; not letting the other party speak, long pauses, and switching topics. Disjunctive communication can result in the other party thinking that their input is not being considered.

Owned, not disowned. When we "own" our communication, we take responsibility for our statements and acknowledge that we are the source of

the ideas conveyed and not someone else. We “disown” communication when we search for third parties to attribute our comments to.

Listening, not one-way message delivery. Explains, effective listening is actively absorbing the information given to you by a speaker, showing that you are listening and interested, and providing feedback to the speaker so that he or she knows the message was received. Effective listening is often taken for granted, but it's a valuable managerial tool.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT – SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

In order to be sincere and able to know my managerial shortcoming in this skill area, I assessed myself based on the following questionnaires before and after reading and participating during lectures. The evaluation of these questionnaires is as a result of weakness observed when learning this skills and much effort is needed to overcome these shortcomings as comparing myself to 5000 students who also took the same assessment.

Rating Scale

1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Slightly disagree 4. Slightly agree 5. Agree 6.

Strongly agree

Assessment

Pr Pos Questionnair

e t es

3 6 When I give

feedback to

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others, I
avoid
referring to
personal
characteristi
cs and focus
on problems
or solutions
instead

I always link
negative
feedback to
a standard

2 6 or
expectation
that has
been
violated

2 5 When I try
to correct
someone's
behavior,
our
relationship

is almost
always
strengthene
d.

I am
descriptive
in giving
negative
feedback to
others. That

1 6

is, I
objectively
describe
events, their
consequenc
es, and my
feelings
about them

3 6

I always
suggest
specific
alternatives
to
individuals

whose
behavior I'm
trying to
correct

I reinforce
other
people's
sense of
self-worth

3 6 and self-
esteem in
my
communicat
ion with
them.

2 5 When asking
questions of
others in
order to
understand
their
viewpoints
better, I

generally
ask “ what”
questions
instead of “
why”
questions

I don’t
dominate
2 6 conversatio
ns with
others.

I hold
regular,
private
meetings
1 6 with people
with whom I
work and
with whom I
live.

2 5 I strive to
identify
some area
of

agreement
in a
discussion
with
someone
who has a
different
point of view

Table # 1: supporting communication questionnaires and responses.

SKILLS ASSESSMENT INTERPRETATION

The first five questionnaires are in respect of how I can effectively communicate negative feedback, the higher the scores the better for one to communicate effectively negative feedback than the lower scoring. Whereas the last five questionnaires are also in respect of how I can be effective in communicating supportively, and again the higher the scoring the better than the lower scoring.

The total scoring before the reading and class participating as shown above was 21 scores as compares to an average 5000 student mean quartile scores of 45 out of possible 60 scores and my score after was 57 out of possible 60 scores.

This indicates better understanding and knowledge on how I can effectively communicates negative feedback to someone in a supportive manner.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION – SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

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The above after reading and acquiring the knowledge does not make me a better person to be effective in supporting communication, is just acknowledgement of how critical supporting communication is in every facet in one's life. It takes several practices and on the field application of this knowledge that one become effective communicating supportively. However since practice make man perfect; the following are planned practical steps activities to help me to communicate supportively.

First in the MBA program, working in groups are integral part of the program, hence supporting communication is very important at all level of group activities. That is from group formation, sharing of responsibilities, embarking on assigned group assignment and holding rehearsal presentations within the group. To put supportive communication into practice, I have asked two group members to assess me whenever is my turn to communicate feedback to a group member who has presented during group rehearsals on his/her weakness as well as whenever is my turn to be counseled after my presentation. Two different will let me know objectively about the assessment. I will also purchase a voice recorder so that I can listen to it after group discussion.

Secondary I have planned to be friend with those who generally I don't associate better due to their character traits, race, culture and religion. Trying to form friendship with such people will always help me to improve on my supporting communication skills. The reason being that since I have a perceived mind already regarding them, accepting them as friends will be a real challenge, however that will also help me improve on not always

dominating but also welcoming others viewpoint in discussions which is one of the eight attributes of good supporting communication.

Finally in the house since children are active when ever decisions goes their way, I will ask each of them to count the number of times I get angry and why when am having discussions with them or in dealing with each individuals in the house. This will help me to work on my anger level since it will be difficult for someone with high level of anger to be supportive in communication especially when communicating negative feedback.

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