Internal communication tools in textile industry

Internal communication is an " essential element in business mix" (Mounter & Smith, 2008). The effective channels of communicating with employees and supervisors are significant in realizing the business goals and establishing a harmonious work environment. It may be linked with ' change management', ' transformation' or ' reputation management' (Quirke, 2008). The paper will making comparisons among different internal communication tools and analyze he feasibility, functionality and effectiveness in the background of textile industry.

Considering the textile industry is a labor-concentrated and a rather older industry, some new strategies will be put forward to merge communication tools into the industry. In the later part, the future perspectives of the communication channels in the field of textile will be predicted based on some assumptions and the observation of the current trends. Textile industry is a labor concentrated industry which is prosperous in areas of large populations. For the reason that textile materials are low cost but intensive labor involved, the industry pursues " quick returns and small margins" (Lee & Harvie, 2002).

In recent years, the boom of new technologies brings a lot of multifunctional textile machines which take the place of many manual labors. These machines are adept in system work such as production, waste water disposal, quality control and automatic packaging; some of them are computer based (Hayes, 2008). Thus, a new layer of workers exist to operate the machines and analyze the statistics. Like Avondale Mills, a lot of textile companies and factories have claim bankruptcy during the recent economic

recession (Anandjiwala, 2007). Many employees and unions stand out to resist the cutting down of wages and lay off plans.

As a result, more than some mergers and goals alterations, many companies decide to enhance the effectiveness of communications inside the organizations to help restructure the management. Moreover, the industry is still using some old communication methods like meetings and phone calls which involves a considerable cost. As a former student of Donghua University, the most famous textile institutes in Asia, I have been exposed to the business and dug deeply in the research of textile organizations (Appendix A-1). Otherwise, my family is running business in textile industry.

Although they are not operating as a family firm, the members serve in supply, sales agency, marketing, relevant government departments and some correlating industries like apparels. I have the access to the business plans and generally understand the background and environment of the industry. Last year, my friends who graduated from Textile University continued their study in Washington D. C and Sacramento majoring in business and textile. They provide me with some examples of case studies, new introduced technologies and some intern experience of the textile industry.

Generally understand the management structure of textile industry * Compare the functions of different media tools * Understand the use of media tools in real cases on the ground of textile industry * Combine and improve the media tools to select the most effective tools suitable for textile companies * Develop the strategy of how to use media tools into different

situations and in different scales of organizations. Meetings are the most convenient ways to transfer information directly and to reach consensuses.

The form of meetings can be one-to-one meeting, group meeting and staff meeting. The context of meetings ranges from individual purpose to organizational decision. For example, the layoff and promotion should always be a small discussion between the supervisor and the employee, which is an individual purpose. The other example for organizational decision is that " the new product to bring on the market". It should be a proposal in the senior level meeting. Every attendant is usually required to finish a proposal to show their attitude on supporting or opposing the idea.

If the CEO agrees to carry out the plan, he will need to persuade the opponents as well as the employees about the specific influence of benefits on welfare, salaries, positions and the future development of the company. As an extension and broadening of Mary Munter's audience approach model, Tannenbaum and Schmidt have developed the " Modes of Decision Making" (Hampton, Summer, & Webber, 1978). As the new element, " Test mode" is encouraged to be a process before " tell or sell" the plan. It tests the feasibility and profitability of the plan which can minimize the risk of loss and thus improve the plan.

The mode is always used in meetings to strengthen the persuasiveness and credibility of the CEO. Patrick Lencioni, the author of an interesting book" Death by meeting", mentions that most of the leaders will like their jobs more if they do not have to go to the meeting (Lencioni, 2004). It somehow reflects that meeting is not the most favorable form of communication for

managers. On the other hand, however, meeting costs a lot. The time to arrange meeting, the consequences and the opportunity costs should be taken into account.

Kathy Mill, a middle level manager of IGNA IT Consulting Agency, has made an interesting calculation on the opportunity cost of holding a one-hour meeting with twenty attendants. The components of the cost are the wages of the employees ($300), the amount of products sales during the time of meeting ($2200), the overwork wages paid to other employees who take the place of the attendants of meeting ($600). The total cost is $3100 for the meeting. If the meeting ends with unexpected results, it means that $3100 will be the spent (Curry, 1998).

In addition, the meeting always has another following meeting to deal with what is assigned and the problems remained to be solved in the former one. Moreover, the time to arrange the meeting is another problem, especially to hold a stockholders' meeting. Each stockholder may have different preferable time period and they may change it frequently. The absence of some critical roles may constitute to a great loss. Electronic communications Electronic communications manipulate abundant information in the smallest cost and shortest time which includes email, blogs, online chat and teleconference through mobile phones.

The emergence of the new communications tools almost merely depend on how advanced the technology is. Along with the existence of the 3G, the teleconference on mobile phone appears which reduce the absence of the meeting (Holland & Cahill, 2009). Considering that people are almost 24

hours paying attention to cell phones. A survey held in New York City on 1000 people aged from 20 to 55 suggests that, 762 out of 981 respondents who have cell phones reveal that they never turn off (Priest, 2009). Email is regarded as a traditional media for it is widely used in our daily life.

It is easily send and collect while many employees in textile companies still rely on face-to-face talk rather than emails. They do not check with emails frequently because they are doing to labor jobs. Compared with the while-collar who is sitting in front of the computer in the office, the labor workers only open the computers when they are back at homes. However, " the economic communications would amount to the negligence to forget the social and pragmatic aspects of communication between organizations" (Hammerli & Lopez, 2008). Phone calls are frequently used to make announcements or give urgent notice inside the company.

However, people subconsciously spend much more time on phone conversations; normally half of the time is off topic in a business phone call (Tracy, 2007). If making phone calls are allowed on the job position without certain permission to enhance the time efficiency, then it is hard to prevent private calls unrelated with business. And the surveillance on the call is sometimes an infringement of personal right (Lyon, 2007). Some IT company even chat online which can share abundant materials like pictures, video and some statistic analysis problems through software.

Letters are still popular in some organizations, but not in labor concentrated business. An interview on James Williams, a senior operator of water loom, indicates that he is willing to look on facebooks and videos rather than read

the letters especially after the exhausted work (Shih, 2009). People are more likely to accept passive information when they are tired (Zanna, 2008). Another disadvantage is that it may cost few weeks to send and response. Grapevine is high risk for its inaccuracy. Words are changed dramatically after the interpretation of few people. The inexpediency will lead to big loss (Spiker, Daniels, & Papa, 2007).