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Effective Communication as a Component of Change: A Study on Select Firms of Odisha

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Abstract:
The dynamic business environment today requires frequent changes to meet the challenges of the competitive world. Traditionally static industries of India such as steel, refractories, textile, cement, mining etc. have also undergone many transformations to survive in the market in past two decades. Change has been an inevitable part of all the competitive organisations. The importance of communication during the change process has been emphasised by many of the researchers. Not only communication establishes to be one of the most vital tools in social life and business management but it is also regarded as an effective medium of organisational change. This study focuses on communication during change in three different firms from the state Odisha situated in India. The current study reveals that communication in the concerned firms of Odisha has got lot of scope for improvement to facilitate organisational change. Especially, for non-executive employees the communication process can be enhanced. At the same time, informal communication always helps to initiate discussions about the change process. These discussions help to create change readiness among employees.

Keywords: Organisational change, communication, change readiness

1. Introduction

Organisations today are operating in a frequently changing environment. "CHANGE" is one of the important needs of today's business world. Social, economic, technological, cultural changes have paved the path for rapid organisational change. It is the need for increasingly diverse markets, which have a wide variety of needs and expectations that must be understood if they are to become strong competitors in the market. Despite of the increasing significance of organisational change, sometimes the organisations fail to manage the change efforts. Inefficiently managed change communication is one of the major causes of false rumours and resistance to change.

2. Review

Skinner (1997) in a study entitled 'Managers' Perceptions of Strategic Human Resource Changes' investigated how strategic human resource changes are conceived, designed and implemented in organisations. The work also identified that ineffective internal communication is also a reason for failure of strategic changes in human resource.

Grange and Geldenhuys (2008), in the research work titled 'The Impact of Feedback on Changing Organizational Culture' to study the impact of feedback on changing organisational culture. The study also intended to know that how the benefit of feedback can be extracted to deal with people. The study confirms that feedback has a positive impact on changing organisational culture. It is recommended that line managers should be helped to understand how employees' perceptions to practice within the organisation (such as feedback) can have an impact on organisation's performance. It should therefore become a business imperative to ensure that the organisation's culture is aligned with its business strategy. The survey feedback process can be regarded as a powerful mean of creating changes in an organisation. The results are more beneficial if the organisation involves all its employees. Feedback interventions be combined and linked with other strategic basic interventions in any efforts to successfully change the culture of an organisation.

Pasch (2010) has conducted a study titled 'Merger and Acquisition: The Role of Managerial Communication in the Relationship between Changing Corporate Culture and Organizational Commitment' having objectives to investigate the influence of managerial communication on the relationship between a changing corporate culture and organisational commitment in merger and acquisitions. The study had also the objective to discuss about the downside of a changing corporate culture which employees often face such as identity problems, communication problems and intergroup conflicts. The study reveals that providing clear, honest and decentralised

communication during the whole merger and acquisition process makes the manager able to positively influence the relationship between changing corporate culture and organisational commitment.

Hartley and Bruckham (2002) in the book titled 'Business Communication: An Introduction' examined the role of effective communication at time of organisational change. The work states that effective communication is highly important in times of organisational change. It further emphasises that it affects how employees accept the change and the implementation. It is, in addition, explains that the organisation's management team must plan how to communicate strategically. If this fails, there is large risk that the planned change may also fail.

Clampitt (2005) in the research titled 'Communicating for Managerial Effectiveness' explained the importance and of communication in organisation change. The work explains that leaders must communicate why the organisation is changing, meaning that they need to clarify the motives behind the change. The study states that most change leaders understand the value of communicating, but not many of them create successful communication plan.

Herzing and Jimerson (2006) have conducted a research titled 'Middle Managers' Uncertainty Management During Organizational Change' to find out factors on inhibit middle managers experience of uncertainty management during organizational change. The research ended with the finding that at pre-implementation stage, uncertainty focuses on strategic concepts of change, whereas at implementation, uncertainty is related to appropriate producers to implement. Middle managers' uncertainty management is found to be important in assisting their employees in the change transition. The factors identified as being either facilitator or barriers to uncertainty management focuses on themes related to the design of change communication with both senior management, role conflict and peer interaction.

Johansson and Heide (2008) in the study titled 'Communication of Change'endeavoured to determine the role of communication among the employees during change. The study clarifies that communication among the employees during change is vital and has a large impact on how they handle the process. It also advocates informal communication among co-workers which leads to understanding of the concept. It emphasises that managers need to understand how important their employees and employees' role are during the change process. It creates involvement among employees in change process.

Basset (2010), has conducted a research on 'Developing Commitment Towards   Change in Bureaucracies: The Case Study of the Egyptian Civil Service Sector' to identify (i) the main problems of the Egyptian Civil Service sector for its poor performance and inefficiency; (ii) the best way(s) to manage change in the Egyptian Civil Service and (iii) how to develop civil servant's commitment towards those change initiatives. The research findings clearly confirm the distinction made by the participation between the Egyptians civil service as an employer, on one hand and as a service provider on the other hand. The findings reveal that civil servants would still consider the Egyptian civil service sector such as attractive employer despite dark side of bureaucracy. Better communication process, training and performance evaluation are required to manage change in the Egyptian civil service sector.

Jonnes, Watson, Hobman, Bordia, Gallouis and Callan (2010), in a study on 'Employee Perception of Organizational Change: Impact of Hierarchical Level' to examine the subjective experiences of major planned change of employees from different levels of an organizational experiences and to investigate how perception of the positive and negative issues differed across non-supervisors, supervisors and executives. Findings reveal that supervisory and non-supervisory staff refer more to conflict and divisions, and express more negative attitude towards change, than did executives. Executives and supervisory staff focus more on planning challenges and potential outcomes of change than non-supervisory staff. Finally, compared to other staff, executives focus more on participation in the change process and communication about change process.

3. Methodology

To have a clear base about the application and role of communication in encouraging organisational change in the concerned firms a structured questionnaire was prepared. The first theme of the questionnaire consisted about the demographic profiles like age, designation/ position, executive/non executives etc. The theme questions were on communication processes, systems and dimensions in the organisations at the time of organisational change.

The survey was conducted in three different private firms situated in Odisha. The first one is a paper mill (Firm 'A'), the second one is a construction unit (Firm 'B') and the third one is an alloy steel company (Firm 'C'). 20 respondents from each firm participated in the study. So, the total numbers of respondents were 60.   The quantitative data Likert scaling was given to the respondents in each statement. The Likert-type scales questions were given weight 1 – 5. So, the study reveals that, the higher the score, better the communication. Data gathered through the questionnaire were transcript into the computer in the form of excel (MS office, `07) data sheet. The study was conducted within the time duration of 45 days. It was in the months of August and September in the year 2015.

4. Analysis and Findings

The analysis of data has been displayed in Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3.

Statements	All Level Mean	SD	Executive Level Mean	SD	Non-Executive Level Mean	SD
1. Changes at my organisation are communicated properly.	2.95	0.852251	3.33	0.766965	2.78	0.82057
2. Decisions about change are freely shared with all employees.	2.766	0.673132	2.66	0.594089	2.8	0.706696
3. Information about change is communicated to me at appropriate time.	3.01	0.85354	3.22	0.942809	2.98	0.808276
4. Any type of changes that affect my job or work environment is shared purposefully.	3.4	0.847729	3.66	0.840168	3.28	0.834784
5. Changes in training and development policy for employees are communicated well.	3.66	0.773867	3.33	0.840168	3.66	0.754391
6. Modifications in performance appraisal system are communicated with employee prior to the appraisal.	2.766	0.810245	2.66	0.907485	2.8	0.772645
7. Changes in organisational structure are communicated to employees.	2.71	1.106095	2.72	1.274434	2.71	1.042645
8. Changes in the technology being followed in the organisation are communicated with the employees.	3.45	1.032112	3.55	0.921777	3.4	1.083345
9. Cultural changes in the organisation are attempted in a planned manner by communicating effectively with the employees to participate in it.	3.33	0.795467	3.5	0.785905	3.26	0.798154
10. My colleagues share information about changes in my organisation.	2.4	0.867492	2.22	1.003263	2.47	0.8033592
11. My colleagues really listen to what I have to say about changes.	3	1.164445	2.94	1.349171	3.023	1.092951
12. My manager really listens to what I say about the changes.	2.86	1.156656	2.94	1.258955	2.83	1.124379
13. My management provides opportunity to us to communicate our opinions about change.	2.55	0.998728	2.5	1.043185	2.57	0.991251
14. My management uses communication as an effective tool to convey the message of organisational change.	3.26	1.071458	3.27	1.074055	3.26	1.083345
15.I feel that communication plays a vital role to convey and convince employees at the time of change.	3.28	1.106095	3.33	1.028992	3.26	1.148902
16. I feel that there is enough scope for improvement of communication process to initiate change in my organisation.	3.43	0.955103	3.11	0.900254	3.57	0.966332
SD= Standard Deviation						

Table 1: communication during organisational change: comparison between executives and non-executives

It is clear from the Table 1 that executive level employees are more satisfied with the communication process regarding change at their organisation than the non-executive employees. The non-executive employees also feel that any kinds of organisational change are not communicated to them at proper time. Changes that affect the job of the employees are shared less purposefully to the employees. Changes regarding training and development policy are communicated in a better manner to the non-executive employees. Modifications in performance appraisal system, organisational structure and technology are being communicated to the both the executive and non-executive levels of employees nearly in a similar rate. But cultural changes are communicated to the executive employees in a more effective manner than the non-executive employees. It is visible from the Table 1 that the informal communication regarding organisational change is more among non-executive employees than the executive employees.

Statements	All level Mean	SD	(Age 21-40) Mean	SD	(Age 41 and above) Mean	SD
1. Changes at my organisations are communicated properly.	2.95	0.852251	2.94	0.924104	2.95	0.750604
2. Decisions about change are freely shared with all employees.	2.766	0.673132	2.77	0.637455	2.75	0.73721
3. Information about change is communicated to me at appropriate time.	3.01	0.85354	2.88	0.820375	3.2	0.883627
4. Any type of changes that affect my job or work environment is shared purposefully.	3.4	0.847729	3.36	0.899294	3.45	0.779028
5. Changes in training and development policy for employees are communicated well.	3.66	0.773867	3.61	0.766356	3.75	0.793999
6. Modifications in performance appraisal system are communicated with employee prior to the appraisal.	2.766	0.810245	2.88	0.8873	2.58	0.653863
7. Changes in organisational structure are communicated to employees.	2.71	1.106095	2.55	1.054093	2.95	1.160179
8. Changes in the technology being followed in the organisation are communicated with the employees.	3.45	1.032112	3.44	1.02663	3.45	1.062367
9. Cultural changes in the organisation are attempted in a planned manner by communicating effectively with the employees to participate in it.	3.33	0.795467	3.27	0.547723	3.41	0.717282
10. My colleagues share information about changes in my organisation.	2.4	0.867492	2.52	0.877858	2.2	0.832971
11. My colleagues really listen to what I have to say about changes.	3	1.164445	3	1.095445	3	1.285369
12. My manager really listens to what I say about the changes.	2.86	1.156656	2.66	1.242118	3.16	0.963087
13.My management provides opportunity to us to communicate our opinions about change.	2.55	0.998728	2.41	0.937321	2.75	1.073394
14.My management uses communication as an effective tool to convey the message of organisational change.	3.26	1.071458	3.3	1.064208	3.2	1.102533
15.I feel that communication plays a vital role to convey and convince employees at the time of change.	3.28	1.106095	3.38	1.049565	3.12	1.190999
16. I feel that there is enough scope for improvement of communication process to initiate change in my organisation.	3.43	0.955103	3.63	0.866941	3.12	1.034723

Table 2: communication during organisational change: comparative analysis between different age groups

Among the two age groups given in the Table 2 (21 years to 40 years; 41years and above), there is negligible difference between the responses. Both the age groups feel that organisational changes are being communicated in equivalent manner to them. But the older group feels that they are communicated about changes regarding their work environment and training and development policies in a more effective way than the younger group is communicated. In case of alteration in performance appraisal system the younger group feels that it is conveyed to them in better manner than the older group. Structure and culture related changes are communicated well to the senior age group than the junior ones. In case of technology change in organisations it is communicated in an equal manner to all age groups of employees. Informal communication during organisational change is more among the younger group people. But the results in the table show that managers give more priority to the feedback of older employees than the younger employees. Both the age groups feel that communication is being used by the organisations in an effective manner during change. But the younger generation employees emphasise that as communication plays a vital role in conveying and convincing the employees regarding organisational change the scope for it should be made broader to facilitate organisational change.

Statements	All level mean	SD	Mean Of firm 'A'	SD	Mean of firm 'B'	SD	Mean of firm 'C'	SD
1. Changes at my organisations are communicated properly.	2.95	0.852251	3.4	0.753937	2.9	0.640723	2.55	0.944513
2. Decisions about change are freely shared with all employees.	2.766	0.673132	2.7	0.571241	2.95	0.68633	2.65	0.74516
3. Information about change is communicated to me at appropriate time.	3.01	0.85354	2.55	0.604805	3.65	0.812728	2.85	0.74516
4. Any type of changes that affect my job or work environment is shared purposefully.	3.4	0.847729	3.15	0.587143	4.25	0.55012	2.8	0.74516
5. Changes in training and development policy for employees are communicated well.	3.66	0.847729	3.8	0.615587	4.1	0.640723	3.1	0.615587
6. Modifications in performance appraisal system are communicated with employee prior to the appraisal.	2.766	0.773867	2.85	0.812772	2.6	0.820783	2.85	0.718185
7. Changes in organisational structure are communicated to employees.	2.71	0.810245	2.2	0.894427	3.61	0.801315	2.8	0.812728
8. Changes in the technology being followed in the organisation are communicated with the employees.	3.45	0.106095	4.25	0.638666	3.6	0.820783	3.1	0.910465
9. Cultural changes in the organisation are attempted in a planned manner by communicating effectively with the employees to participate in it.	3.33	1.032112	3.35	0.74516	3.65	0.74516	3	0.794719

SD= Standard Deviation

Statements	All level mean	SD	Mean of firm 'A'	SD	Mean of firm 'B'	SD	Mean of firm 'C'	SD
10. My colleagues share information about changes in my organisation.	2.4	0.867492	2.6	0.994723	2.55	0.759155	2.05	0.759155
11. My colleagues really listen to what I have to say about changes.	3	1.164445	2.6	0.88258	4.25	0.638666	2.15	0.67082
12. My manager really listens to what I say about the changes.	2.86	1.156656	2.25	0.850696	4	0.725476	2.35	0.933302
13. My management provides opportunity to us to communicate our opinions about change.	2.55	0.998728	2.15	0.850966	3.3	0.923381	2.2	0.833509
14.My management uses communication as an effective tool to convey the message of organisational change.	3.26	1.071458	3	0.794719	4.4	0.502625	2.4	0.680557
15.I feel that communication plays a vital role to convey and convince employees at the time of change.	3.28	1.106095	4.25	0.786398	2.55	0.944513	3.05	0.825578
16. I feel that there is enough scope for improvement of communication process to initiate change in my organisation	3.43	0.955103	3.6	0.753937	2.7	0.732695	4	0.917663

SD= Standard Deviation

Table 3: Communication during organisational change: Comparative study of three different firms of Odisha

It can be derived from the Table 3 that Firm 'A' has got better communication process than Firms 'B' and 'C' during organisational change. Respondents from Firm 'A' opine that changes in their organisation are communicated properly to all levels of employees. According to the results of Table 3 Firm 'B' communicates very effectively about the changes which affect job environment and training and development policy to the employees as compared to Firms 'A' and 'C'. In case of communicating modifications in performance appraisal system all the three firms are in an equivalent level. Even Firm 'C' has shown much positive response in this particular area. Regarding the structural changes Firm 'B' communicates in a better manner to the employees. Contrary to the other results Firm 'A' has got a low positive response in the particular area. Rather responses from Firm 'C' are more than Firm 'A' in communicating structural changes. Changes in technology are conveyed more effectively in Firm 'A' than the rest of the two firms in the study. But the performances of Firm 'B' and Firm 'C' are also satisfactory in communicating change in technology to their employees. Cultural changes are communicated in a more planned way to the employees in Firm 'B'. Even Firm 'A' and Firm 'C' are communicating cultural changes to their employees. As shown in the Table 3, all the three firms are not having considerable informal communication among the employees at the time of organisational change. Firm 'A' has got some extent of informal communication which is more than Firm 'B' and 'C'. In Firm 'B' colleagues share feedback on change much more than the employees of Firm 'A' and Firm 'C'. Management also gives priority to the views of employees on change in Firm 'B' than the rest of the two firms. The employees of firm 'B' feel the most that their management is using communication as an effective tool to during change. But the employees of Firm 'C' think that their management is using it very rarely at the time of change. Employees of Firm 'A' agree the most that communication plays a vital role to convince employees during change. But the employees of Firm 'B' do not feel much like Firm 'A'. But the employees of Firm 'C' feel the most that there is enough scope in their organisation to implement communication process in an effective manner during organisational change. Even respondents of Firm 'A' think that there is much scope for improvement in communication in their organisation while implementing any types of change. Respondents of Firm 'B' also believe the same but not as much as Firm 'A' and 'C'.

5. Conclusion

 The current study reveals that communication in the concerned firms of Odisha has got lot of scope for improvement to facilitate organisational change. Especially, for non-executive employees the communication process can be enhanced. At the same time, informal communication always helps to initiate discussions about the change process. These discussions help to create change readiness among employees. But the firms in the current study are lacking it at the time of change process. Informal communication must be encouraged to support organisational change. In case of structural and cultural changes the younger generation employees should also be provided with more information. As cultural changes require more involvement of employees, communication helps as a motivating tool to convince the employees.

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