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Effective Communications: Critical factors in Health Alliance Success

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS: CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE BIRTH OF HEALTH ALLIANCE OF THE HUDSON.

THESIS PROJECT

Effective Communications: Critical factors in Health Alliance success.

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In loving Memory

Of

My Father

Edward Zirra Tikolo

(Teacher/Baba Tsofo)

For

Always stressing on the importance of Education to the young, I hope I've

Made you and my family proud and hope to continue doing so by

The lord's Grace.

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Abstract

This study examines the critical factors that make the Health Alliance so

successful. The Health Alliance comprises of two separate organizations in the past

(Kingston Hospital and Benedictine Hospital). These organizations like any other

organizations started from a scratch to grow to the height it did. They went through many

challenges and this study will discuss how Effective Communications played a role in the

success experienced by the two hospitals while independent, and it was the main

instrument behind the merger process, bringing the two together as one- HealthAlliance.

The Two Hospitals have served the region for over a hundred years. The methods

of communication that took place in the various organizations were significant for its

growth, blessed with good leadership and hard work. Therefore, a good research on the

effective communications used to this day can be a valuable resource to all kinds of

students- managers who want to understand how organizations work.

What makes HealthAlliance so successful? The answer is, in addition to hard work,

Effective communication. The definition of effective communication does not remain

constant; rather, it varies by company or industry, the people involved, and the culture.

(Eisenberg M.Eric & Goodall JR)

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Chapter 1

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Introduction

"You are never too old to set a new goal or to dream a new dream"

(C.S.Lewis)

The Communication that takes place in an organization is an important influence in the success of that organization. (Clampitt, Phillip G. 2005) Effective communication is essential to any organization's mission and success. The flow of information in any given organization should be conducted efficiently from top management, and across employee groups. Ineffective communication can render the best policies and initiatives useless. Most problems exist in organization as a result of poor communication (Hale, 1995). We discover who we are through our communication with others. Although collaborating with diverse others may be unavoidable, it is by no means easy. (Eisenberg, Eric M & Goodall, H.L. JR 2004)

Surveys have been used in the past by companies and organizations to determine the importance of different methods of Communications used in companies and organizations. The use of survey will continue to be relevant for the improvements and

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success of any company or organization. Although the objectives and methodologies of organizational survey have changed over the years, with experts noting a trend toward impacting the importance of effective communications in organizations, surveys that talks about communication skills continue to be the most widely used.

Many organizing challenges unfortunately are far more complex and ambiguous. For example what kind of communication characterizes a successful organization? We must admit that goals, rules, and roles are negotiable and open to interpretation. Particularly in modern societies (as opposed to traditional ones), there are a few givens in work places – almost everything is negotiable (Eisenberg, Eric M & Goodall, H.L. JR 2004) What the author tries to do is conduct a survey on the different methods of communications, based on fact story and experience that is original and interesting in the work place.

This research is fresh, as the Health Alliance is on-going. It is not going to be merely a report on the research about the topic, basic propositions and clarifications of some assumptions would be made. The author will point out some major areas of miscommunications in organizations, and suggesting what the readers would do about them.

Finally, some important areas that are often overlooked will be discussed.

If managers could communicate perfectly, organizations would change tremendously. The organization would be more productive. Employees would be more satisfied. For managers to succeed, it will be largely based on their communication skills. Are managers clear about what constitutes Effective communication? One of the greatest challenges in organizational communication is providing efficient methods of communication. Communication issues pervade every arena of life. When the

communication system breaks down, tragedy is often the result. A case in point: the space shuttle Columbia tragedy. (Clampitt, Phillip G 2005).

The interaction required to direct a group toward a set of common goals is called organizational communication. Nothing about this process is automatic or easy; certain knowledge and skills are required to succeed. Moreover, as we go about our lives we enter into one interaction after another, always in the shadow of multiple large organizations, whether at a hospital, a school, or a local fast food restaurant. In each of these interactions, we are occasionally satisfied but more often frustrated by incompetence, insensitivity, lack of coordination, and red tape, all of which result from ineffective organizational communication. A deeper understanding of communication permits us to better comprehend the factors that contribute to successful organizing, from the customer's/patients and employees standpoint. (Eisenberg, Eric M & Goodall, H.L. JR 2004) The author tries to survey ways to help develop this deeper understanding. Effective communication is crucial at every level of an organization. However, the ability to communicate effectively does not come easily to many people, and it is a skill that requires practice.

Benedictine Hospital History

Benedictine Hospital opened its doors in 1901 as "Our Lady of Victory Sanitarium and Training School for Nurses and Domestics." Staffed by four Benedictine Sisters of Elizabeth, New Jersey, the hospital was established in response to the needs of the elderly, indigent and chronically ill. The seven-bed hospital, which was set up in a small house on West Chestnut Street, soon gave way to a 1906 building at the present site on Mary's Avenue. The hospital building at that time accommodated 36 patients.

As of the time of the merger, Benedictine Hospital is a progressive, fully accredited 222-bed acute care facility serving the growing and ever changing needs of the Northern Hudson Valley. With numerous building expansions over the years, Benedictine has kept pace with countless medical advances and new health care challenges. The hospital remains faithful to its mission and proud tradition of Benedictine hospitality and holistic care.

Kingston Hospital History

On November 27, 1894, The Kingston Hospital, located in a two-story wooden building on Broadway, opened its doors to its first patients. In its initial year of operation, the City of Kingston Hospital treated 56 patients. The number of patients, staff and facilities continued to grow until the Hospital suffered a setback in 1926. On February 20, a fire destroyed nearly one-third of the original hospital, leaving just two fireproof wings and a rear addition standing. No one was hurt and an ambitious building campaign allowed the reconstructed hospital to re-open the following year.

In 1940, the name of the Hospital changed from the City of Kingston Hospital to The Kingston Hospital. The Hospital underwent major renovations and expansions in the 1950s and 1960s to provide the community with the most up-to-date medical services.

As of the time of the merger, The Kingston Hospital is a 150-bed acute care hospital specializing in medical/surgical care, ambulatory surgery, diagnostic imaging, emergency, obstetrics, and rehabilitation and acute and chronic renal dialysis services.

After 110 years of operation, The Kingston Hospital looks very different from 1894. Although the faces have changed, the medical technology has advanced, and the facility has grown in size, the hospital still operates under the same goals and purposes of its founders – to provide our community with the region's best healthcare. (http://www.kingstonregionalhealth.org/index.html).

HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley:

In 2006, the Commission on Health Care Facilities in the 21st Century completed its review of the state's healthcare capacity and issued sweeping recommendations to about restructure New York's hospitals and nursing homes. The report cited a dual problem in Ulster County – too many hospital beds and a large amount of out migration. In response, an historic solution was proposed that would result in a new model of community healthcare.

The Commission recommended consolidating Benedictine Hospital and The Kingston Hospital. This would:

- o reduce duplicate services and out migration;
- o provide access to specialized services and amenities while enhancing clinical technologies;
- o enhance recruitment and retention of medical professionals; and
- o enhance the financial viability of both organizations.

Both hospitals were proactive throughout the process. A year before the Commission published its report the hospitals had drafted a memorandum of agreement that would establish a unified governance structure but still allow each hospital to continue as separate and distinct corporations.

Rather than a conventional merger, the historic agreement established a realignment that created a parent corporation knows as HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley®. A locally governed healthcare network, the goal of HealthAlliance is to effectively integrate affiliated healthcare organizations and services across the continuum of patient care, and thereby serve the present and future healthcare needs of all people in the region.

The system of HealthAlliance of the Hudson Valley comprises of Benedictine Hospital, The Kingston Hospital, Margaretville Hospital, Mountainside Residential Care Center and Woodland Pond at New Paltz.

Health Alliance of the Hudson Valley® also ensures that each hospital maintains its individual mission and retains independent boards to address internal policy and issues.

Research Question

What are the critical factors that have made HealthAlliance successful? This study will

explore the key elements that made HealthAlliance successful, from the merger period till

date; namely, the different communication methods used. How can we reduce

miscommunication and misunderstanding in an organization?

Subsidiary Questions:

How should organization determine its level of communication

Effectiveness/proficiency?

How will enhancing communication impact the organization's strategic objectives?

Must it start with assessment that leads to the communication strategy, and culminates

in action?

What are the essential communication methods?

Will the outcomes and conclusions of the study be sufficient to further calibrate the

survey instrument for future use within organizations?

THE HEALTHCARE RENEWAL EXIGENT

Throughout the healthcare industry at every level, we hear the words "Merger"

"restructuring" and "downsizing". Although downsizing has unfortunately become a part

of everyday life for millions of Americans, this phenomenon did not until recently extend

to the healthcare industry. Healthcare institutes were insulated from downsizing by

financial reimbursement from the government, ardent community support, and a lack of

competition, all important factors in keeping healthcare institutions immune. This

however is no longer true. (Lombardi).

Today, healthcare institutes are looking more closely at restructuring to keep their

organizations stable. Although restructuring entails employee layoffs and a reduction in

services, which can ultimately affect the basic health of a consumer community, it can

allow a healthcare organization to address more effectively and pragmatically the needs

of that community. A healthcare organization that is structured more progressively as a

business entity, while embracing new technology and a larger spectrum of services, is

one that will not only survive in the future but actually thrive as customer/patient needs

grow and intensify. (Lombardi).

Mergers and acquisitions have become the order of the day, and hospitals that previously

competed against one another (Benedictine and Kingston) are now partners in the change

process (Health Alliance). Clinics and alternative healthcare organizations are now either

merging or becoming part of the larger umbrella provided by a major medical center or

larger community hospital. As this occurs, healthcare executives look to cut their human

resources budget to realize necessary savings and to eliminate duplication of services and personnel. This increase in competition has also evidenced itself not only in local mergers and acquisitions but in the emergence of several national healthcare entities. (Lombardi). Despite the fact that these pressures have been present for at least a couple of years in the healthcare industry, there exists an additional set of outside factors that make healthcare organizational renewal necessary. These factors include:

Fiscal austerity;

Community perception;

Elimination of services; and

Out-molding of services

The first and most visible factor is the need for fiscal austerity – the need to save money – as most healthcare professionals recognize that reimbursement is no longer automatic and that individual consumers are paying more for services than ever before.

Additionally, new technology costs money. As healthcare organizations strive to keep pace with their competition additional financial investment must be made into the purchase of new equipment and the latest technology.

CHAPTER TWO

Organizational communication: An overview.

A definition and brief History

Communication is the transfer of information from one mind to another mind, or to a group of other minds. It can be in the form of an idea, a fact, an image, an emotion, or a story. It can be written, spoken, drawn, danced, sung, or mimed. (Arch Lustberg, 2008) Whatever the medium, if the message doesn't reach the other person, there's no communication, or there's miscommunication.

Everyone today, seems to be busy with palm-sized telephone and message center. The Blackberry, the iPhone, and all their clones, along with the laptop computer, are almost required pieces of carry-on luggage. The beeper makes civilized conversation nearly impossible. It seems that nothing is out of technological reach. I.T. Information Technology- is all the rage, whereas person –to person communication is rapidly going out of style. (Lustberg, 2008)

The keyboard, monitor, fax, email, and the aforementioned handheld message center – all tremendously valuable tools- have conspired to make spoken communication obsolete.

But somehow, there has never been anything to replace the hand shake, the hug, and the "hello." Face –to- face communication is still, and is likely always to be, irreplaceable. Whether it's one-on-one with a group, the personal touch is a powerhouse. The keyboard will never be a complete substitute for the human face, body, and voice. Yes, the machine can take us into new adventures, but if it ever actually replaces our

interpersonal relationships; we will have become machines ourselves. The danger is that, as we become more sophisticated at the keyboard, we're becoming almost helpless communicating by mouth. (Lustberg, 2008)

Although organizational communication officially commenced as a specialized area of speech communication in the early 1950s, (Putnam & Cheney 1985) Tompkins (in Press) marked the late 1920s as the preparatory stage of the field, when universities first began offering courses on business and professional speaking to train men and women to communicate effectively in the work place. Thus the area's conceptual foundation derive primarily from three sources: (a) traditional rhetorical theory (the study of formal, structured public discourse, with an emphasis on persuasion); (b) Human relations "models" of information interpersonal interaction; and (c) early versions of management organization "Piototheories" (Redding & Tompkins, 1988)

Effective communication is the key to get you to where you want to be in your life. Communication is an essential skill for successful business and personal relationships. 'Man is not an island' - communication has the power to destroy, or build relationships. Communication has an impact whenever it occurs - we can use communication to influence every interaction in a positive way, by developing the skills needed to communicate effectively.

The ability to connect and build rapport with other people is a foundation life skill, and should ideally, be actively developed from an early age. It is a learned skill, and can be learned and used at any age.

"To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others."

Anthony Robbin

Communicating strategically

Let's begin with an explanation of the basic theory behind all communication, whether individual or organizational in nature. Much of the theory comes from ideas generated thousands of years ago by Aristotle. More recently, communication experts have adopted these same theories to individuals as they communicate in writing and speech. Communication more than any other subject in business, has implications for everyone within an organization – from the newest administrative assistant to the CEO. Most Managers have learned to think strategically about their business overall, but few think about what they spend most of their time doing – communicating (Argenti)

Communicating Effectively

How should organization determine its level of communication proficiency? How would enhancing communication impact the organization's strategic objectives? How should the organization start to make changes in the communication system? These are questions of assessment, communication strategy, and implementation. We need to start with the assessment that leads to the communication strategy, and culminates in action. The process continues by returning to an assessment of results. Consequently, the communication strategy and plans are continually evolving as the organization changes, just as dancers adjust to a new rhythm. (Clampitt)

Communication and Organizational change

When you look at any corporate Web site or pick up any business magazine today, you're

very likely to see one or more articles focusing on organizational change. It is obvious

that organizations must change and they must do so constantly. Alvin Toffler predicted

this emphasis in 1970: "The acceleration of change in our time is…an elemental force."

(Alvin Toffler, 1970) James March reiterated the effect on discourse in 1995: "The most

conventional story of contemporary futurology is a story that observes and predicts

dramatic changes in the environments of organizations." (James G. March 1995).

A recent survey by the international consulting firm Bain and company found that 79% of

the more than 400 executives they surveyed responded that getting employees to accept

new ways of doing business is one of their major challenges. (Darrell Rigby, march 31st

2002.)

Organizations operate within an environment that is increasingly turbulent – changing

rapidly and unpredictably with the globalization of markets and increased competition.

Developments in technology contribute to the turbulence because they enable new

products and new ways of delivering services. The recommended response to these

pressures is to organize for continues change- to become a flexible organization that can

adapt quickly to changes in the environment. (George Cheney, et el 2004).This argument

for change has been repeated by popular management "gurus", such as Peter Drucker and

Tom peters as well as scholars.(Brad Jackson 2001) For example management scholar

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Edward Lawler suggests that: "The level of competition today requires high levels and continuous improvement of organizational performance in four critical areas: the quality of goods and services, the cost of producing goods and services, the speed with which products and services are brought to the market, and innovation in the development of new products services".(Edward E. Lawler, 1996). Similarly, changes can affect organizations by the kind of regulations by the government.

How do people in organizations engage with the discourse of change and flexibility? What conditions are creating the "Imperative" to change and to become more flexible? And how should managers communicate to foster change and flexibility? (George et el 2004)

Communication and change are connected in a variety of ways. Kurt Lewin developed a simple but useful model of the change process using the metaphor of water freezing. (Everett M. Roggers, 1972) Think about snow on the ground that partially melts in the sun, then refreezes into a different texture, such as ice, and takes on other shapes as temperatures change again. Lewin suggested that change is much like this, occurring in four phases: (1) recognition of a felt need for change (unfreezing), development of a change plan (vision),(3) implementation of the new way (moving), and (4) routinization of the new way (refreezing). Lewin's phases are to some degree reflected in this model. However, the emphasis is on several important communication features of the change process. (George Cheney ET el 2004)

First, communication is more than a tool of change; Communication constitutes change. As Jeff and Laurie Ford, maintain. "Change is a...process of social construction in which new realities are created...sustained, and modified in the process of communication.

Producing intentional change, then, is a matter of deliberately bringing into existence, through communication, a new reality or set of social structures. (Ford, and Ford). Change occurs as a result of people communicating. The popular practice of benchmarking is based on the idea that organizations can discover ways to improve by talking with members of other organizations who are known for having "best practices." Benchmarking is a process in which organizations attempt to compare their own systems or practices in a particular area to those of other organizations, thereby discovering ways to improve. (George Cheney, et el 2004).

Second, Organizational change occurs within a social – historical context. Change in general and particular kinds of changes are influenced by the discursive context in which organizations are embedded. (George Cheney, et el 2004)

Third, discourses related to change are bi- directional; they flow in and out of the organization. Changes initiated within the organizations are communicated to external audiences. Major changes are mentioned in annual reports, the business press. They are discussed by organizational members with friends and colleagues outside the organization. All of these mechanisms contribute to the proliferation of discourse regarding organizational change. (George Cheney, et el 2004)

Fourth, communication is central to the implementation of planned change. Once a change is decided upon, it must be communicated to others who are affected or who are involved in implementing it. This involves announcing the change, publicizing it, and persuading and negotiating with others to accept it. *How change is communicated is often central to whether or not it is successful.* (George Cheney et el 2004)

An important part of implementation is the process of responding to changes. People

affected by – and those who anticipate being affected by- changes often communicate

extensively with one another and with implementers

Emphasizing the importance of communication to the change process does not dismiss

the role that other phenomena play. Certainly equipment, funding, and other material

resources matter. However, the author's understanding of change is constituted in

communication, and communication is central means by which changes occur. Our

understanding of change means is critically important.

Dimensions of Change

Our understanding of what change means is critically important, that is what we mean

when we say that change is constituted in communication. Whatever examples of change

you have experienced in an organization, you can probably list some radically different

kinds of changes. Using the hospital as an example, there can be changes in staffing (a

new Doctor or Nurse is hired, New CEO) new procedures (a new web based

communication) and new structures (two hospitals merging, or a department being

eliminated), as well as many others. To be effective in managing and coping with change,

we need to understand what differentiates these kinds of changes. So what makes one

kind of change similar to and different from another? We can identify at least six

dimensions of change: degree, type (or substance), intentionality, timing, impetus, and

control. (George Cheney, et el 2004)

Degree: A good starting point for considering dimensions of change is to look at different

degree of change. Change can be major or minor…

Type: Organizational theorist Richard Daft suggested there are primarily four categories of organizational change: (technology; administration; products and services; and human resources, or the membership of the organization and how they are organized. (Richard L Daft 1987)

Intentionality: Some changes, like a change in corporate strategy, are conscious, deliberate, and planned.

Timing: Changes may very from short-term, sudden, abrupt, or immediate to gradual, on-going, or evolutionary change.

Impetus: The impetus for change may come from a variety of sources. Change can be initiated externally; an example would be a regulatory change by the government to which the organization must respond, (as the case of Kingston and Benedictine) or it may be initiated internally.

Control: Approaches to implementation of change vary. The implementation can be controlled by top management, or it can be evolutionary- allowed to emerge and adapt. That is, implementation may vary from programmed to adaptive. (C Erik Timmerman, 2003)

What makes organizational change efforts successful?

The answer to this isn't at all clear. There is a lot of practical advice about successful

organizational change, as well as extensive research on the subject. However, there are

several criteria one could use in analyzing the results of change. For a change to be

considered successful, it is accepted by key stakeholders rather than rejected. Accept-

reject is often too simple a criterion to be useful, as organizational communication

scholars Laurie Lewis and David Seibold argue. (Laurie K Lewis and David R Seibold,

1993) Common sense might suggest that a successful change is one that has high fidelity

and uniformity. (George Cheney et el 2004)

Finally, to judge the success of change efforts, we should also consider the unintended

consequences of the changes. A systems view of organizations suggests that a change in

one part of the system will prompt changes in other parts. Some of these will be

anticipated, and some will not be. (George Cheney et el 2004)

Communicating and Managing Change Effectively

Because of the complexity of determining when change is successful or effective and in

part because of the variability of change, it is difficult to identify a single set of principles

for change management. Perhaps the best strategy for developing your skill in managing

and communicating change is to become familiar with a variety of strategies that have

been successful and to understand which strategy would be most effective in a particular

situation. (George Cheney, et el 2004) We will talk about three very different approaches

for managing and communicating large- scale organizational change.

Managing Change: An Adaptive Approach

Beer and his colleagues studied large- scale change efforts at six U.S. companies. They

found that programmed change was the norm but argued that it was often unsuccessful.

More successful was what they called a "task alignment" approach (similar to adaptive

approach), which typically was initiated in the grassroots of the organization and led by

the general managers of those parts rather than by the CEO. Other research has generally

supported this claim. (Lewis and Seibord)

Communicate Change to Employees

Bottom-up or adaptive change implementation is generally more effective than top-down

or programmed implementation. Still, while we are tempted to argue for ethical and even

practical reasons that change should rarely be purely top- down, there is little doubt that

many change initiatives is mostly just that. (George Cheney, et el 2004). Once a change is

decided upon, how should it be communicated so that it gets the results- such acceptance,

commitment, and productivity- that the planners desire?

Larkin and Larkin caused quite a stir when they proclaimed in a Harvard business review

article that most advice about communicating change is wrong. (T.J Larkin and Sandar

Larkin 1994) They then provided an alternative recipe for success that many

communication professionals since have embraced. There are three major components to

their strategy: "Communicate only facts; stop communicating values. Communicate face-

to –face; do not rely on videos, publications, or large- scale meetings. And target

frontline supervisors; do not let executives introduce the change to frontline employees.

(Larkin and Larkin)

Communicating change to stakeholders

Communication scholars Laurie Lewis, Stephanie Hamel, and Brian Richardson Studied the change communication strategies of nonprofit organizations to identify the variety of strategies used, as well as their advantages and disadvantages. They identified six separate approaches. (George Cheney, et el 20040.

To effectively communicate a complex idea, however, requires skills beyond elementary conversation. There are two golden rules to remember and follow.

Golden Rule #1: Organize thoughts in your mind before sharing them with others.

One idea often prompts a torrent of others. In order to share your ideas, you must first shape them coherently. Organization is important, because it creates a pattern for your listener, allowing him or her to grasp the larger picture intuitively. This allows the listener to focus on the details of your message, without struggling to understand how you went from Point A to Point B.

As a thought experiment, imagine that a colleague has asked you for directions to the airport. Write them down. Your directions will probably look something like:

Drive west half a mile on Aurora.

Take a left on Madison.

At the third light, turn right and follow Dexter for 2-3 miles.

Get on the interstate, heading south.

Etc.

Now, with a pair of scissors, cut each line of instructions into a small strip of paper. Jumble the strips up and arrange them in a completely random order, then give them to your colleague. Even with mixed-up directions, s/he should have no trouble reaching the

airport, right? After all, your directions are complete and accurate. Not a single step is missing.

The problem, of course, is that your directions are also completely unorganized, rendering them useless. Your colleague will find it impossible to focus on your message itself, because he or she will struggle to follow your message's structure (or lack thereof).

Golden Rule #2: Communication is collaborative, not competitive.

Thrusting your idea on others mars the beauty and integrity of conversation.

Communication is in some ways like a dance; each partner plays off the other, basing his or her steps on the other person's, while simultaneously maintaining a certain amount of individuality.

Communication is a two-way process involving an exchange of ideas. If you try to make it one-way, you prevent this exchange and will eventually frustrate the other person. You may also frustrate yourself, if you read the other person's lack of verbosity as disinterest in the conversation, rather than an inability to get a word in.

The hallmark of effective communication is the coherent verbal projection of your ideas, so that your listener receives the message that you intend to send. By observing these two rules, you will reduce miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Effective communication in an organization

Effective communication plays a very important role in the organization because it assists the members of the organizations to better understand themselves. It helps to understand the needs and the expectations of the others. Effective communication enhances the effectiveness of the message. It is also important when you communicate with the customers because it develops an image and expression in the mind of the customers. Effective bottom-up and up-down effective communication enhances the coordination among the members. Moreover, the conflicts are reduced through the effective communication. Therefore, effective communication is considered very important for an organization to improve its culture and internal environment.

Organizational Communication Effectiveness

How should organization determine its level of communication proficiency? How would enhancing communication impact the organization's strategic objectives? How should the organization start to make changes in the communication system? These are questions of assessment, communication strategy, and implementation. We need to start with the assessment that leads to the communication strategy, and culminates in action. The process continues by returning to an assessment of results. Consequently, the communication strategy and plans are continually evolving as the organization changes, just as dancers adjust to a new rhythm. (Clampitt)

Communication Theory

Most theories associated with communication are based on notions that can be traced back thousands of years. In ancient Greece, the subject we now refer to as communication was called rhetoric, using language to persuade whoever was listening to do something. Practicing the art of rhetoric was highly regarded by the Greeks. (Argenti) Aristotle who studied under Plato and taught in Athens from 367-347BC, is most often associated with the development of rhetoric as an art. In Aristotle's major work, The Art of Rhetoric, we can find the roots of modern communication theory. (Aristotle, 1975) Whether an organization is trying to enhance its reputation through corporate advertising, to communicate effectively with employees about merger or the rising cost of health care,

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will deal with Methodology. It will also include research procedures and

participant selection. The review of the Literature focused on several themes that reflect

how Effective communication can enhance organizational performance. To further test

these conclusions, the author will conduct quantitative research using survey that will be

administered to both Benedictine Hospital and Kingston Hospital Staff and some external

audience that are affected by the merger.

The survey involves acquiring information about the respondents' opinions by asking sets

of questions and tabulating their answers. It will consist of fifteen questions; eleven

substantive and four demographic. The survey administered asked each respondent, using

a scale of one to five which closely defines one's feeling: "Strongly Agree" "Agree"

"Disagree" "Neutral" "Strongly Disagree" The substantive questions were designed to

elicit responses about how to Effectively communicate, by realizing that we are all

different in a way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our

communication with others: Communicating strategically, communicating effectively,

communicating and managing change effectively, communicating change to

stakeholders. The demographic questions seek to clarify the subjects' gender, educational

levels, age and department.

The author believes that the content of the survey will answer the research question

"What are the critical factors that have made Health Alliance successful?", as well as the

subsidiary questions:

How should organization determine its level of communication

Effectiveness/proficiency?

How will enhancing communication impact the organization's strategic objectives?

Must it start with assessment that leads to the communication strategy, and culminates in

action? The process continues by returning to an assessment of the results. Consequently,

the communication strategy and plans are continually evolving as the organization

changes.

What are the essential communication methods?

Will the outcomes and conclusions of the study be sufficient to further calibrate the

survey instrument for future use within organizations?

An additional consideration in survey research is that we are relying on self-report data.

People are telling us what they believe to be true or, perhaps, what they think we want to

hear. People's memories for events are often distortions of reality: What they think

happened isn't always what did happen. Furthermore, people's descriptions of their

attitudes and opinions are often constructed on the spot- sometimes they haven't really

thought about a certain issue until the researcher poses a question about it – and so may

be colored by recent events or the current context (Schwarz 1999). An additional problem

is that some people may intentionally misrepresent the facts in order to present a

favorable impression to the researcher. (Leedy and Jeanne 2008)

Giving the respondents flexibility in answering questions is essential in order to gain as much information as possible. Asking for similar information in a different context will ensure that the information is at least more accurate. Giving the respondents' time to reflect on previous answers and then re-answering the same question within a different context will either reinforce what was already said or digress from previous statement. Field observations will be conducted after the survey to either support what the respondents said or contradict it. The field observation will allow the researcher to see what is happening in the Hospital, if communication is effective and vital. This will provide greater debt and dimension, thereby enhancing the accuracy, credibility and reliability of the study. These field observations will help corroborate certain facts that the researcher may already think has been established.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

A letter of permission (see Appendix A) was sent to the Hospital Executive that is to conduct this survey. Following the Hospital Executive approval (see Appendix B).
Description of the participants
The participants are the executive staff of both Benedictine Hospital and Kingston Hospital, the Staff and the patients who are served by both Hospitals and are directly affected by the services rendered by the "HealthAlliance".

Summary

Ultimately, ensuring that the information is clear, precise and dependable is paramount. Today, healthcare institutes are looking more closely at restructuring to keep their organizations stable. Hope this helps the readers navigate the complexities of effective communication in Organization.

Obviously, there are more approaches in bringing about an effective change management, but the Researcher feels- "Effective Communication" Stands out.

CHAPTER 1V

RESEARCH RESULTS

Results of the Survey

Within the two weeks after distributing the Survey, "Effective Communication: Critical factor in the birth of HealthAlliance of the Hudson," One hundred questioners were passed out between the two Hospitals, Kingston and Benedictine (50 each) during winter 2010.Staff were the respondents- The senior executives and managers were not served questionnaires.

Respondents filled out the questionnaire (Appendix A) in their various departments. Each respondent received a booklet consisting of: (1) a cover sheet explaining the purpose of the survey; (2) the 15 statement questions; (3) the demographic questions.

Sixty eight respondents chose to complete the questionnaire. Of these, eight questionnaires were omitted because they were non- legible or partially completed. Finally, of the sixty remaining questionnaires, fifty were selected for this study because they met the criteria of having no missing data for any specific question.

The respondents returned the surveys in a variety of ways, they either replied by Inter-departmental envelops through which I served most questioners or mailed, or hand delivered them.

After gathering all the surveys, the responses were counted and tabulated, incorporating the 5-point Likert scale: "Strongly agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The results were then tabulated in an Excel spreadsheet in order to compare the results. (Appendix B).

STATEMENT 1

Effective Communication is vital in my department.
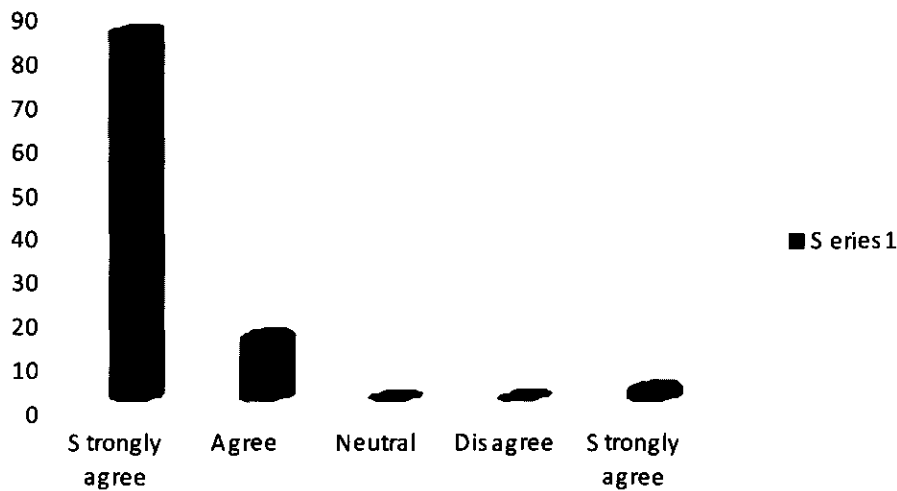
Statement one Data

The result for this statement reveal that almost 100 percent of the individuals agree that

Effective communication is viatal in their various departments. Specifically, 84 percent

strongly agreed. Another 14 percent agreed. Only 2 percent strongly disagree. This goes

to confirm the opinion of the author of the imporatance of communication in any given

organization. As a matter of fact, with it- the organization can hardly survive.

STATEMENT 2

Employee concerns and suggestions seem to be taken seriously by the organization
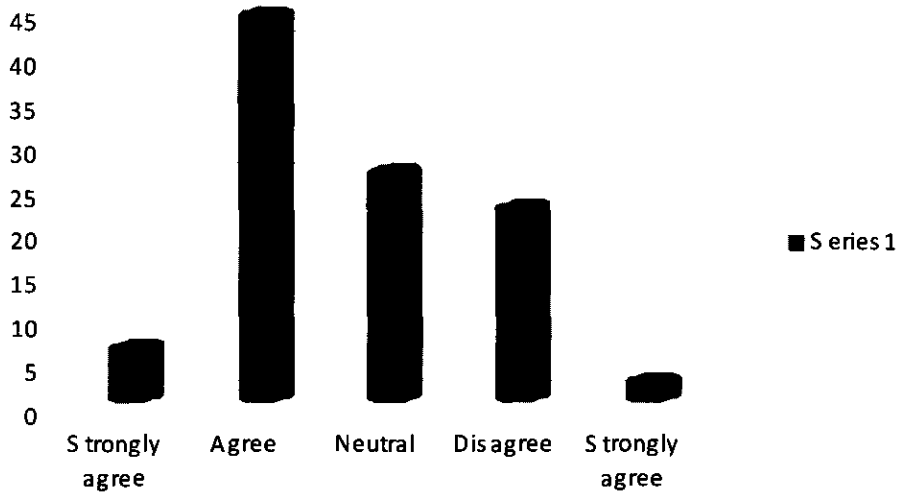
Statement Two Data

The survey data states that Employee concerns and suggestions are taken seriously by their organization. 50 percent either strongly agree or agree. 24 percent disagree or strongly disagree with the statement and 26 percent were neutral. While a great majority did agree to the fact that effective communication is vital to the organization- it seems a good number of staff do feel their concerns/suggestions are not taken seriously. This as a matter of fact is not healthy for the entire organization's successs, as team work is always encouraged.

STATEMENT 3

In my organization, communications are timely and meaningful
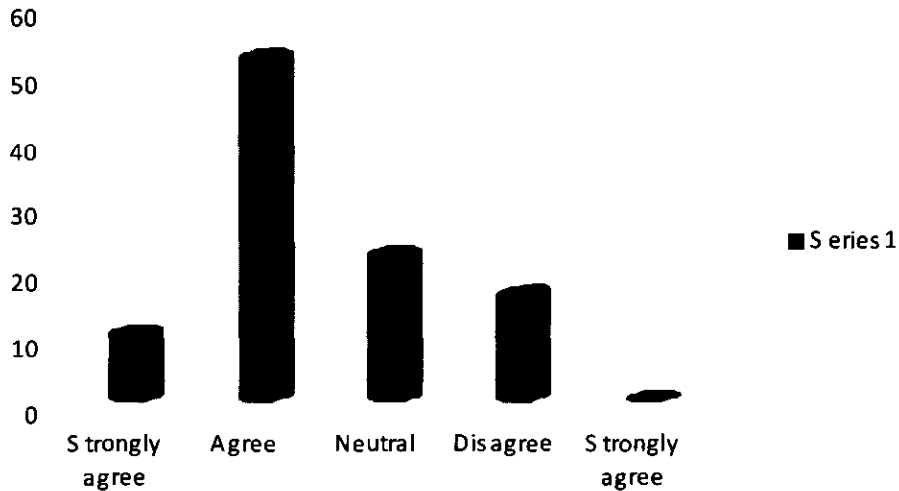
Statement Three Data

In evaluating statement three, one finds that in response to the statement that

communications are timely and meaningful- 62 percent of people polled either strongly

agreed or agreed. Only 16 percent strongly disagree or disagree and 22 percent are

neutral.Comparing this with question 13 that states:"I am very proud of the progress and

achievements that the Health Alliance has attained to date." This indicates that while a

great percentage of staffs do appreciate their internal/departmental communication, they

seem not yet know/appreciate what is going on. This is generally expected of a new

change in organizations.

STATEMENT 4

People affected by – and those who anticipate being affected by mergers need to communicate extensively with one another and with implementers
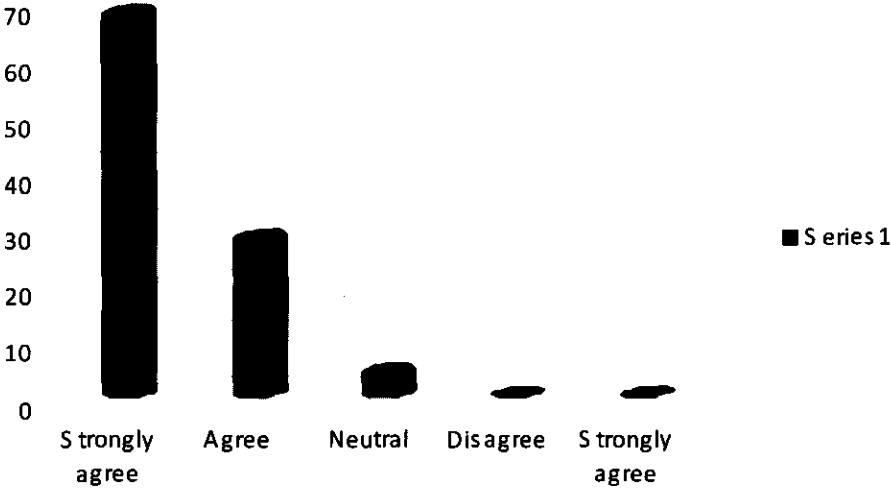

Statement Four Data

The results of survey four reveals, 96 percent of surveyors strongly agreed or agreed that

intensive communication is essential in merger process. O percent of the respondents

disagree with the statement. Four percent of the respondents felt neutral about the

statement.

STATEMENT 5

The team involved in the merger resolved the most critical issue (Moral/Abortion) and communicated it effectively to employees.
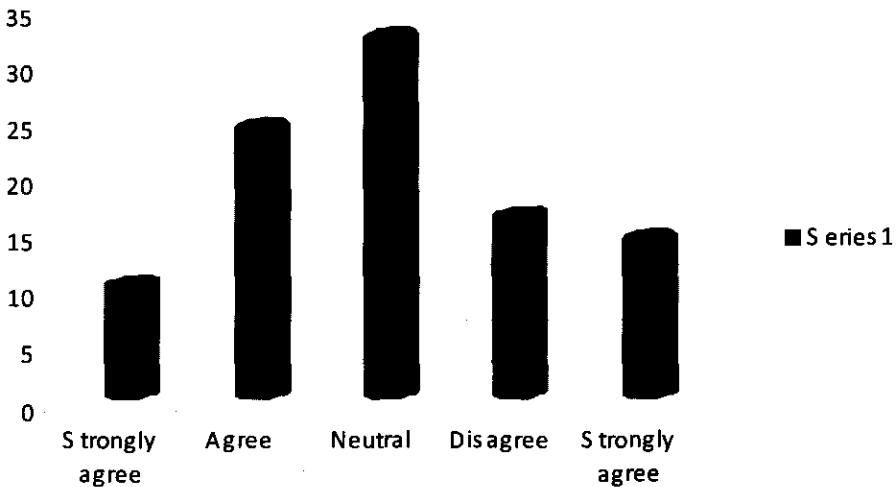

Statement Five Data

In response to the question whether the most critical issue Moral/Abortion was

resolved and communicated effectively to employees-The survey data states that

34 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. 16 Percent disagree and 14

percent strongly disagree.Twenty percent are neutral.

STATEMENT 6
I feel there is a good level of interaction and communication between department members.
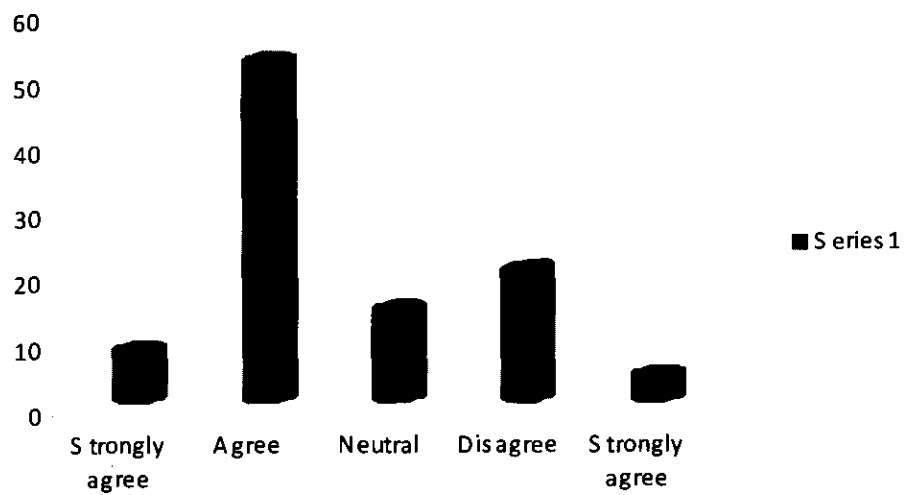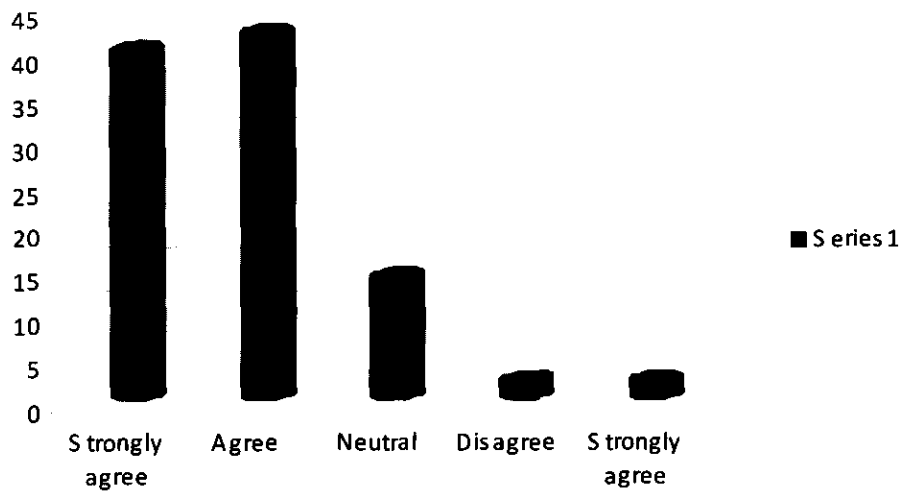

Statement Six Data

The data in statement six reveals that 60 percent of people surveyed strongly agreed or

agree that there is a good level of interaction and communication between department

members. Twenty four disagree or strongly disagree. Fourteen percent were neutral.

Statement 7

The face –to- face meetings is a strong tool in the process of a merger.

Statement Seven Data

In evaluating statement seven data reveals that 82 percent of respondents strongly

agreed or agreed that the face –to-face meetings is a strong tool in the process of a

merger. Only 14 percent of the people surveyed either disagree or strongly

disagree. Moreover, two percent were neutral with this statement.

With such an outrageous number, 86 percent of people surveyed strongly agreed

or agreed.

Statement 8

I feel that employees are generally working hard together to succeed.
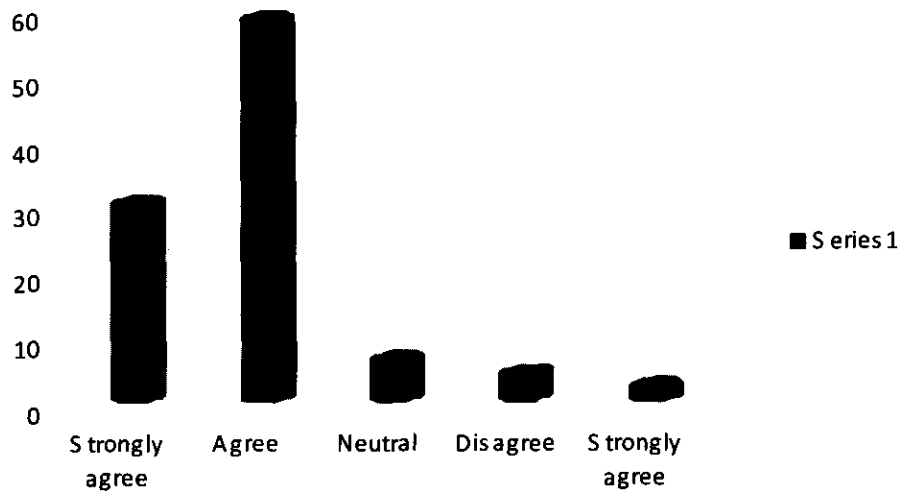
Statement Eight Data

The survey data states that 40 percent of surveyors strongly agreed that they feel employees are generally working hard together to succeed and 58 percent agreed. Six percent of respondents strongly disagree or disagree. Six percent seem to be neutral.

Statement 9

Communication is more than a tool of change, Communication constitutes change.

60

50

40

30 ■ Series 1

20

10

0

Strongly   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly
agree   agree
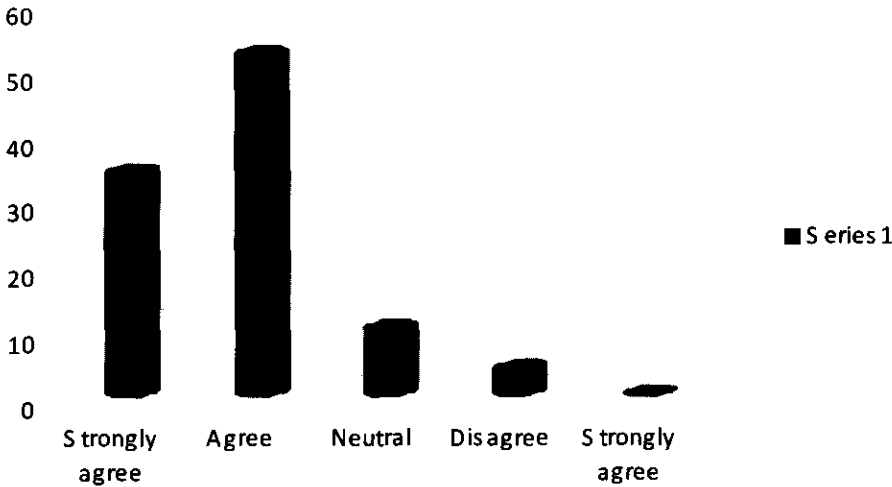
Statement Nine Data

In evaluating statement nine more than half, 86 percent, of respondents strongly agreed or

agreed. Only four percent disagreed with this statement. Ten percent of surveyors were

neutral about the statement that communication is more than a tool of change,

communication constitutes change.

Statement 10

I receive adequate guidance and feedback on my performance from my immediate supervisor

45
40
35
30
25
20   ■ S eries 1
15
10
5
0
S trongly   Agree   Neutral   Dis agree   S trongly
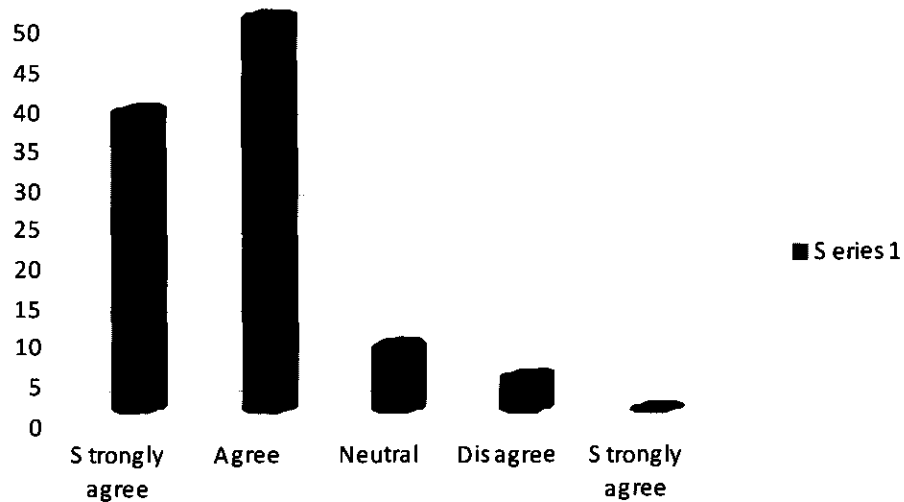agree   agree
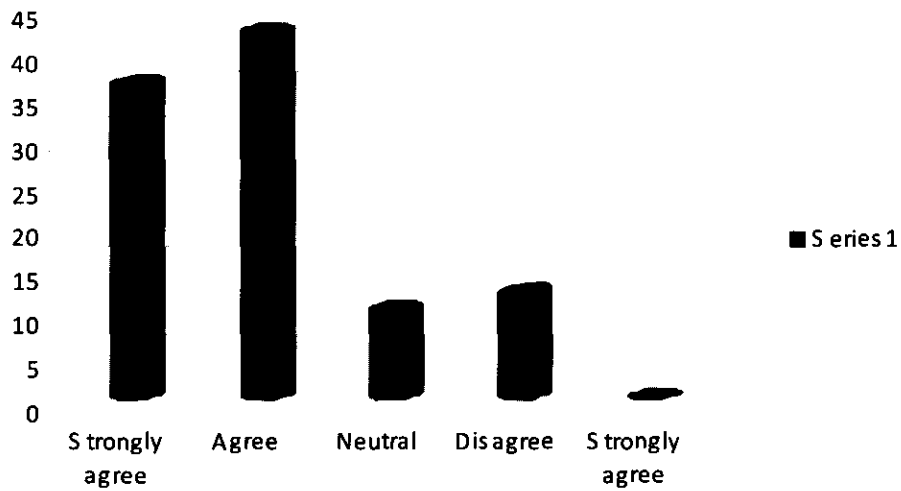
Statement Ten Data

When asked if they do receive an adequate guidance and feedback on their performance

from their immediate supervisor.The results of survey ten reveals 78 percent of

respondents strongly agreed or agreed. Twelve percent disagree or strongly disagree. Ten

percent of surveyors were neutral with this statement.

Statement 11
Multiple forums should be used to communicate the vision and new strategies.

Statement Eleven Data

The results of Staement eleven reveals 88 percent either strongly agreeing or agree. Four

percent disagree and eight percent prefer to remain neutral.The majority of those

surveyeed are of the opinion that multiple forums should be used to communicate the

vision and new strategies. This result goes in line with the author's mind about the

importance of communication in bringing change to an organization.

Statement 12

You will always be more successful in business by sharing information with the people you work with than by keeping them in the dark.
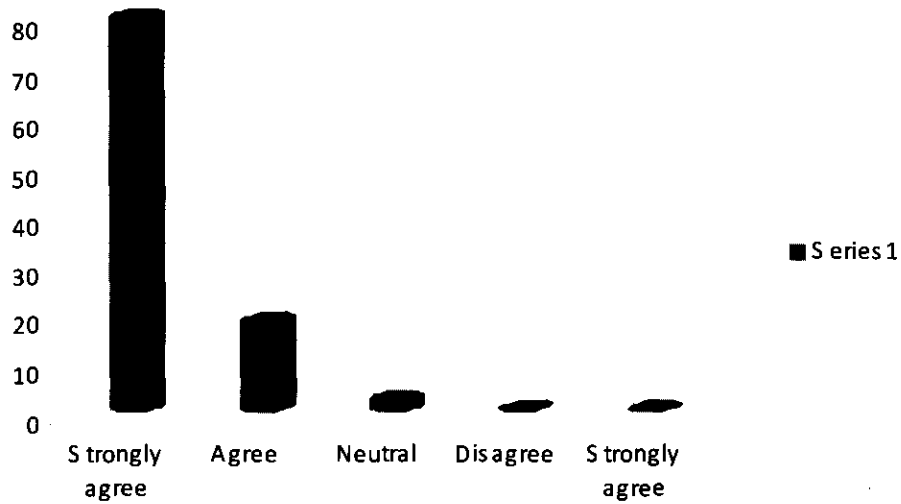
Statement Twelve Data

The result of this statement reveals that almost 100 percent of the individuals agree.

Specifically, 80 percent strongly agree. Another 18 percent agreed. Only two percent are

neutral and nobody disagree nor strongly disagree. With such result the author's

presumption holds true that it is better to "Overcommunicate" than to

"undercommunicate". When the staff are aware of what is happening, then they can be

part of it and contribute as well. "Two heads are better than one".

Statement 13

I am very proud of the progress and achievements that the Health Alliance has attained

to date.
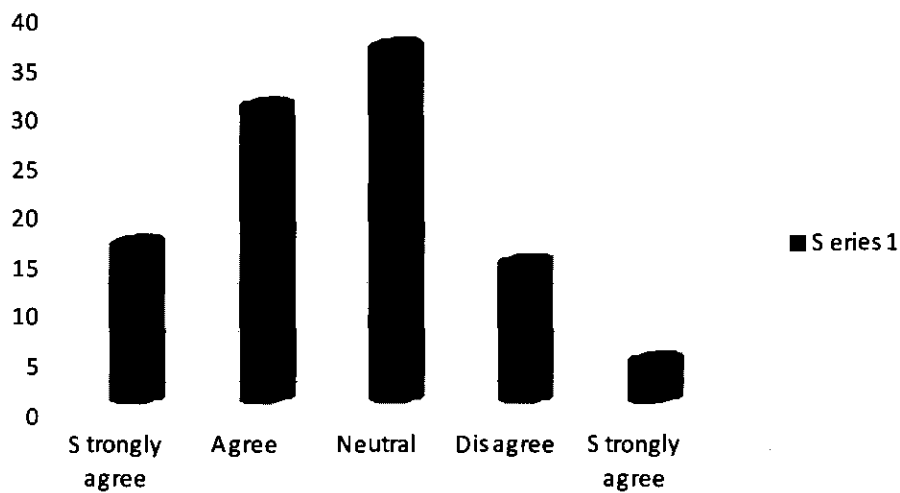
Statement Thirteen Data

The survey data states that 46 percent of people polled agreed or strongly agreed.

Eighteen percent either disagree or strongly disagree. Thirty- six percent are neutral.

The author is supprised to discover that while a great percentage of staff do agree that

they are pleased with the communication that goes on in their departments as stated in the

responses in question 3. A great number seem to be neutral on this statement. This is

considered as being negative by the author.

Statement 14

I have the opportunity to offer suggestions and express concerns regarding my job.
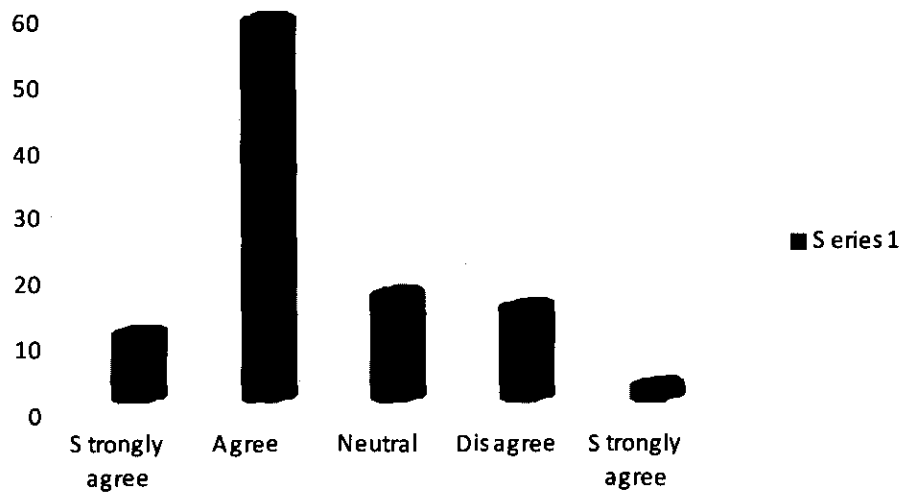
Statement Fourteen Data

In evaluating statement fourteen, one finds that fourteen percent strongly agree, 58

percent agreed. Sixteen percent of the surveyors eitehr disagree or strongly disagree.

Sixteen percent of the people surveyed remained neutral.

Statement 15

Overall, I have confidence in management's ability to lead the organization
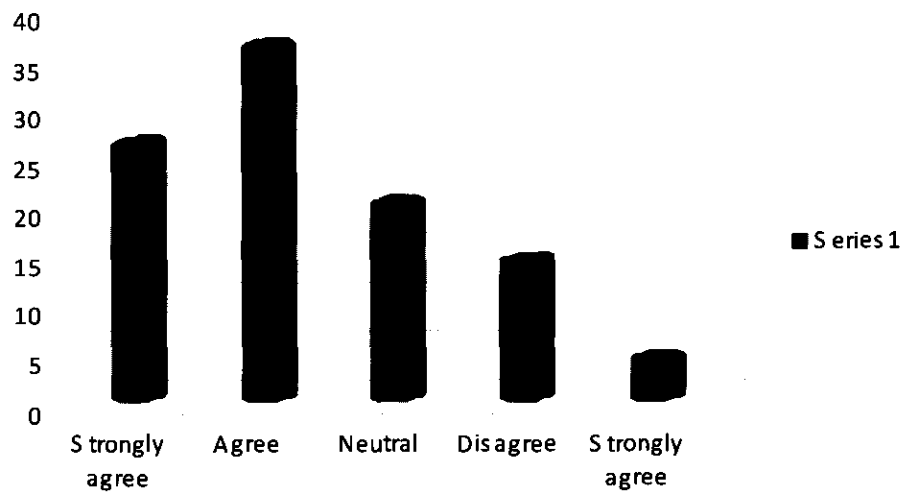
Statement Fifteen Data

When asked about their general feelings about their confidence in management's ability to lead the organization-The results of survey fifteen reveals, 26 percent strongly agree, 36 percent agree. Eighteen percent either disagree or strongly disagree. Twenty percent of respondents felt neutral about the statement

Hospital/Department:

Chart Title

Hospital chart

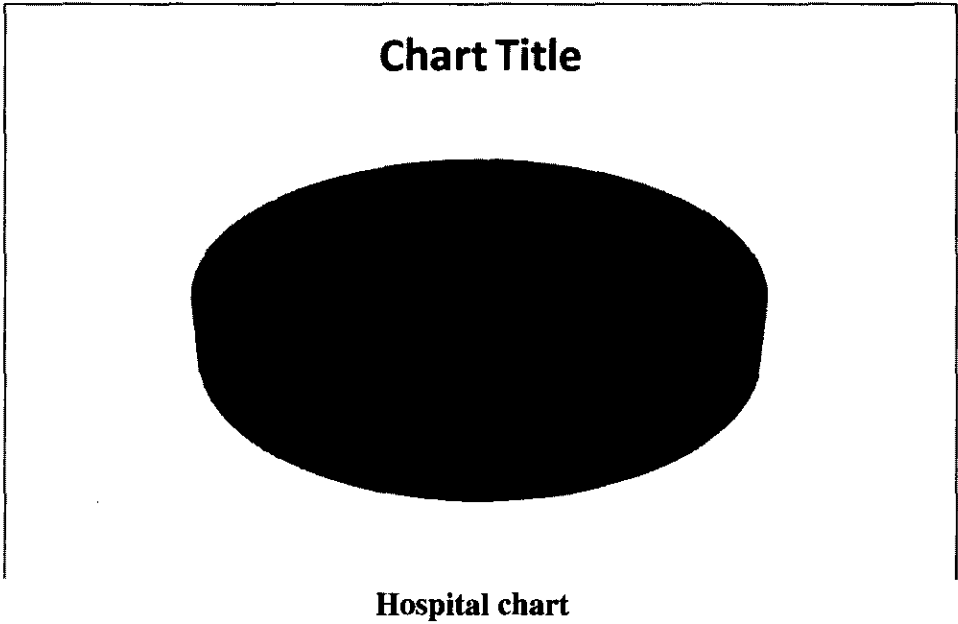Examining from which hospital a respondent is, 26 of the respondents, which

represents 52 percent are from Benedictine while on the other hand 21 of the

respondents, which represents 42 percent belong to Kingston Hospital. Although

there is a provision for respondents to indicate their various departments,

majority seem to overlook it. As a result of that the author chose not to reflect

departments in analysing the demographics. In general the response from both

hospitals is very impressive.

What is your age range?

Chart Title
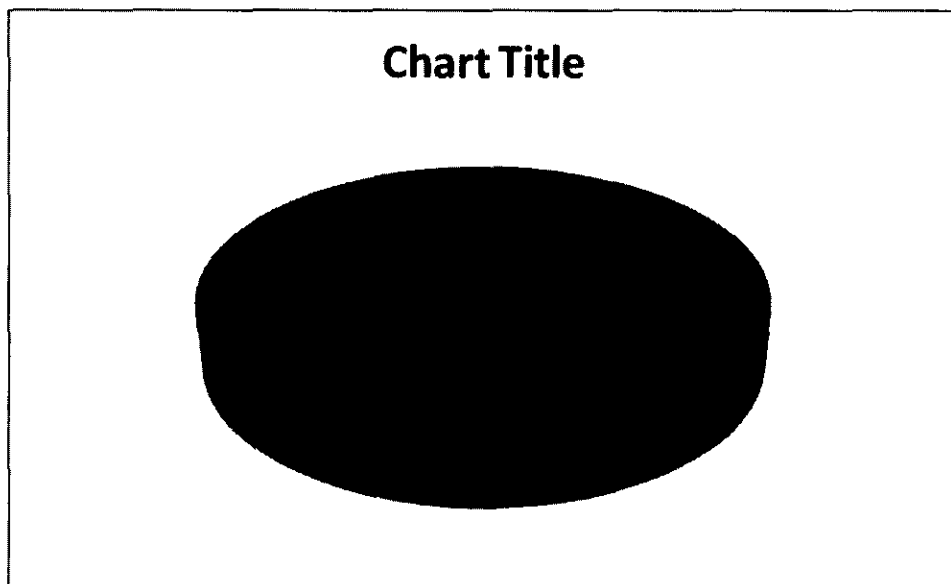
Age chart

Age: Examining the age category, 10 percent fall between the ages of 18-30

years old age group, 26 percent were in the 31-40 years old age group, 29 percent

were in the 41-50 years old age group and 35 percent were in the 50plus years

old age group.The majority of the respondents to the survey were in the ages of

40- 50+, Only 36 percent are below.

What is your gender?

Chart Title
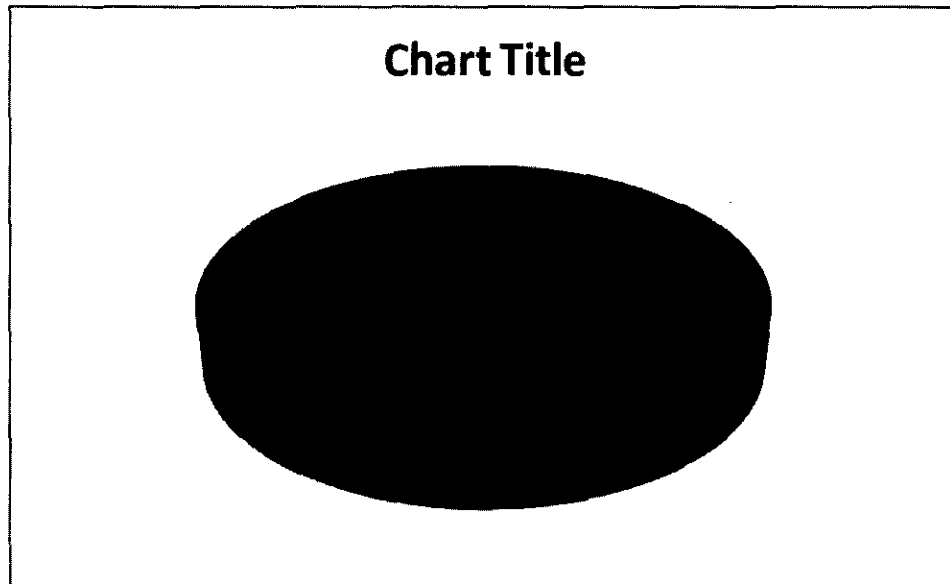
Gender Chart

Gender: Analyzing the Gender of the respondents 42 respondents , which
represents 84 percent were female, while only 8 which reflects 16 percent were
male. There is a clear indication therefore that the great majority of those
surveyed were mostly female in both Kingston and Benedictine. According to the
National sample Survey of Registered Nurses, approximately 5.4 percent of
American RNs are men. The number of male students in Nursing school is on the
rise, however, which should allow greater numbers of men to enter the Nursing
Profession in the future.(http://www.allnursingschools.com/faqs/men).

Family income.

Chart Title

Income 100,000+ 13% Income 25,000 12%
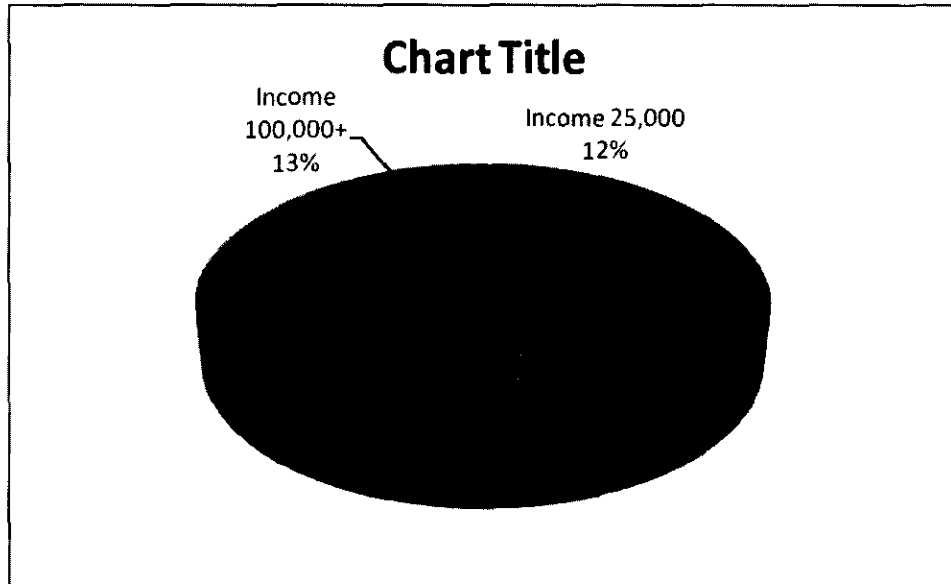
Income Chart

Family Income: In reviewing the results provided for the level of family

income,12 percent of the respondents receive an income of the range of 25,000 or

below, 33 percent make 25,000-50,000, 42 percent fall within the category of

50,000- 100,000, while 13 percent make 100,000+. How much does the typical

American family make? The median household income in the United States is

$46,326. (http://fedupusa.org/2010/01/07/how-much-does-the-average-american-

make-breaking-down-the-u-s-household-income-numbers). In a recent Census

report there are 110,000,000 households in the United States. What this data tells

us is that 55,000,000 households are living on $46,000 or less a year.

What is your level of education? If you are currently working on a degree, include that

degree as your level of education.
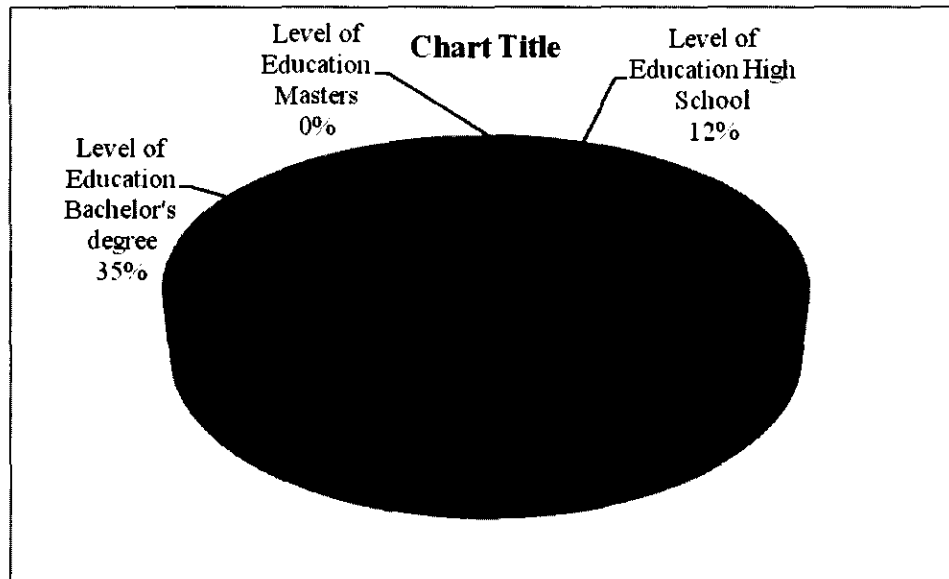
Educational Level Chart

Level of Education: Examining the level of Education, 12 percent were High school

level, 53 percent have Associate Degree, 35percent have Bachelor's degree, while 0

percent seems to have masters degree. Generally speaking, jobs that require high levels of

education and skill pay higher wages than jobs that require few skills and little education.

Statistics from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) validate this

viewpoint by revealing that the unemployment rate among people who have a

professional degree is significantly lower than that of people who have a high school

diploma or less than a complete high school education. In addition, earnings increase

significantly as a worker's degree of education raises.

(http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/wages/educational.htm).

Analyzing the Survey Results

The survey results in the previous chapter illustrate some interesting and notable results. In general I would say the survey provided valuable insight into this study. While many facets of the research findings proved accurate, there were also some surprising revelations in the survey responses. The results also provide an interesting look at the issue from the staff members of both Kingston and Benedictine hospitals. Many people offered their own comments and personal experiences, which gave the study additional dimension. The issue of effective communication in the workplace, and how it consequently affects the success of an organization is a very relevant and significant for all organizations. That relevance is reflected in the response of the survey. Most of the individuals had very strong feelings about the different points being discussed. "The rightsizing effort must have at its root comprehensive communication. This becomes important not only in dealing with various community entities, but perhaps more importantly between managers and staff personnel throughout the healthcare organization." (Lombardi 1997) This was the idea the author believed before embarking on this research. The increase of formal communication throughout the organization by the CEO that usually provides an open dialogue and the monthly updates are highly noticeable and appreciated by most staff. While it is true that management must have to communicate with confidentiality in discussing, who is being right sized, fear seems to be in most employee as they are not so sure as who is been laid off. Some were saddened by the fact that a lot of staff had their job terminated on a day notice, no plans, no usual farewell. Some are angered by at the going projects on between the two Hospitals while at the same time they have not received any raise over the years. The differences in Staff

salaries of the Kingston Hospital and Benedictine Hospital were also a source concern for many. In all cases, it is essential for manager to err on the side of over communicating rather than under communicating. This obviously extends itself to the dimensions of listening, perceiving, and observing employee behavior closely during the merger process. By ensuring that the organization is effective and efficient, the institution demonstrates that it is acting with urgency, fortitude, and speed in the best interests of the customer/patient. This is also been recognized by all the staff members as seen in the Benedictine New entrance and Kingston Hospital New Emergency Room. This is been recognized by staff members and are truly motivated by it. The entire HealthAlliance effort is progressive, that is, it is centered towards gaining more grounds in terms of resources, patient's service provision, and other measurable gains.

While majority of staff do believe in the importance of communication in an organization, most however did say that they are not been listened to by the management. They did not however specify what area they are not been listened to. On a general level, staffs are comfortable with the communication in their departments. On the average, half the population seems not to be sure if they clearly know or understand the direction HealthAlliance is headed. According to Lombardi, the renewal organization must place individual employee at the focal point for implementing change. A mistake commonly made by executive is assuming too much responsibility for the success of the merger. As a result, any failures are perceived as the executive's fault. Lombardi believes that in a progressive healthcare organization, all of the members of the organization share the credit – as well as the blame, if any during the transformation.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS

A state commission on health-care facilities has ordered the two Kingston hospitals to merge, saying the hospitals both have too many beds, too few patients and are losing money. If they don't merge by the end of 2007, the state has to close one of the hospitals. (http://www.recordonline.com). For over a decade, Kingston Hospital and Benedictine Hospital have been trying to find some common ground. The author sets out to find out what went on to give birth to the new "HealthAlliance"- Effective communication. People who have not been through difficult, painful and not very successful change efforts often end up drawing both pessimistic and angry conclusions. (Kotter, 1996). They worry that major change is not possible without carnage. After watching dozens of efforts to enhance organizational performance via restructuring, reengineering, quality programs, mergers like that of Kingston and Benedictine and acquisitions, cultural renewal, downsizing, and strategic redirection, I draw a different conclusion. From the research conducted, it is evident that most public and private organization can be significantly improved, at an accepted cost.

The challenges we now face are different from say, fifty years ago. A globalized economy is creating both more hazards and more opportunities for everyone, forcing firms to make dramatic improvements not only to compete and prosper but also to merely survive.

While the author feels that Effective communication is one of the methods used in the success of the birth of the HealthAlliance, there were other factors too. It is definite the Hospitals were under pressure of being shut down. Some felt the status quo is unacceptable, some never felt a sense of urgency; some feel the change is being pushed. The important thing discovered in these studies is that it was communicated and explained why the organization had to be merged. Though it has not been clear how to get there for the past decade, but through various meetings/communications it has now been made clear. It is obvious that the key players have not been on board, never understood nor believed in that vision. The author wasn't surprised to discover that many others either don't understand the concept of the merger or don't entirely believe in the whole merger process especially in regards to the stand on Moral/Abortion issue.

Successful change of any magnitude goes through different stages, so did the HealthAlliance. Most major change initiatives are made up of a number of smaller projects that also tend to go through the multi-step process. While some departments/services are been shut, transferred between the two hospitals- some physical developments are been seen going on, like the New Emergency Entrance at the Kingston Hospital, The New Entrance at Benedictine etc. The end result of this is complex, dynamic, messy and scary.

John P. Kotter do believe that Leadership needs to play a role, defines what the future should look like, aligns people with the vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles. Unfortunately some of those surveyed don't have the confidence that things are headed towards the right directions. The author feels that in an organization, the people who are making effort to embrace the future are a happier lot

than those who are clinging to the past. Change is not easy, but people who are

attempting to grow, to become more comfortable with change, are more inclined to be

driven by a sense that they are doing what is right for themselves and their organizations.

That sense of purpose spurs them on and inspires them during rough periods.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY LETTER

Dear Sir or Madam:

I thank you for taking a few moments to complete the following survey. This research is being done in order to fulfill requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Strategic Communication at Seton Hall University.

My research deals with how Effective communication has helped in the creation of the Health Alliance of the Hudson. The questions are designed to find out what role effective communication has played in the merger process and if Communication is still vital.

Your participation in this survey is purely voluntary; your input will be vital to the fulfillment of this requirement and highly appreciated. The results are completely anonymous and will be stored on a USB that will be securely kept. The survey should only take about five minutes of your time, which is instrumental to this assignment and enormously appreciated.

By filling this survey, it is presumed I have your permission to make my findings public. I will be more than happy to share the results of the survey with you upon your request. I thank you in advance for your time.

Benjamin Zirra
Graduate Student
Seton Hall University

APPENDIX B

SURVEY

For each of the following fifteen statements, please indicate the response that most closely reflects your feelings.

1. Effective Communication is vital in my department.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

2. Employee concerns and suggestions seem to be taken seriously by the organization

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

3. In my organization, communications are timely and meaningful.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

4. People affected by – and those who anticipate being affected by mergers need to communicate extensively with one another and with implementers

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

5. The team involved in the merger resolved the most critical issue (Moral/Abortion) and communicated it effectively to employees.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6. I feel there is a good level of interaction and communication between department members.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

7. The face –to- face meetings is a strong tool in the process of a merger.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

8. I feel that employees are generally working hard together to succeed.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

9. Communication is more than a tool of change, Communication constitutes change.

   Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

10. I receive adequate guidance and feedback on my performance from my immediate supervisor

    Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

11. Multiple forums should be used to communicate the vision and new strategies.

    Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

12. You will always be more successful in business by sharing information with the people you work with than by keeping them in the dark.

    Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

13. I am very proud of the progress and achievements that the Health Alliance have attained to date.

    Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

14. I have the opportunity to offer suggestions and express concerns regarding my job.

    Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

15. Overall, I have confidence in management's ability to lead the organization

    Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

----

16.   Your department? ....

Please check the most appropriate answer.

17.   What is your gender?

Male ( )   Female ( )

18.   What is your age range?

(a) 18- 30   (b) 31- 40   (c) 41- 50   (d) 50+

19. Level of your family income.

-----Under $25,000   ------$25,000 TO $50,000   -----$50,000 to $100,000   ----

$100,000 plus

20. What is your level of education? If you are currently working on a degree, include

that degree as your level of education.

(a) High School   (b) Associate's Degree (c) Bachelor's degree (d) Master's Degree

(e) Doctoral Degree

APPENDIX C

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION PERMISSION LETTER

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January 29th 2010

David W. Lundquist,
President & CEO
HealthAlliance of the Hudson

Dear Sir,

I am conducting a research which is being done in order to fulfill requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Strategic Communication at Seton Hall University.

I would like your permission to distribute 100 copies in both Kingston and Benedictine, 50 copies each.

My research deals with how Effective communication has helped in the creation of the HealthAlliance of the Hudson. The questions are designed to find out what role effective communication has played in the merger process and if Communication is still vital.

Staff participation in this survey is purely voluntary; their input will be vital to the fulfillment of this requirement and highly appreciated.
I will be more than happy to share the results of the survey with you upon your request.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Zirra
Graduate Student
Seton Hall University

APPENDIX D

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION APPROVAL

Dear Benjamin

Congratulations, am pleased to inform you that your request to distribute copies of survey in both Kingston and Benedictine Hospitals has been approved by our management.

As an employee, you know best how to send them out. You may wish to consult with Sr Mary Feehan, Sr VP Mission Effectiveness or the Human Resources Department for more assistance.

Once again, Congratulations, this is a high achievement for you and you worked hard to successfully earn a degree of Masters of Arts in Strategic Communication.

I look forward to share the results of the survey with you. As always, thank you for all your continued support and great work in providing care to our patients and their families.

Regards,

David W. Lundquist,
President & CEO