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Oral communications to and by lower level supervision

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ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
TO AND BY LOWER LEVEL SUPERVISION

By

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of Science in Business Administration

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Richmond

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Preface

This book is a manual concerned with the principles and problems of oral industrial communications. The content is designed for use by the Maintenance Department, Spruance Plant, E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company, Richmond, Virginia. The focus of the writing is basically in the area of lower supervision which includes salaried engineers, scientists, foremen, and men in the two levels immediately above the foremen.

Book I is a brief summary of the principles of oral communication. The chapters deal with the principles, advantages, and value of effective oral transmission of information. This book is not intended to be a complete text on the subject. Merely, it points out the principles and benefits which would apply to the aforementioned organization.

Book II is concerned with specific problems of oral communications in the organization as they presently exist. The intention here is to define the problems, recommend remedial action, and discuss the results to be expected.

Free oral flow, which is referred to several times in this work, requires some explanation. It is the free flow of information up and down on a vertical axis and laterally on a horizontal axis. Actually, this flow moves in a total of four directions; it moves up and down in a straight line organization and moves to and from lateral staff organizations.

The term free oral flow, however, is intended to mean the flow of information to and from the following groups: one, top management; two, lowest echelons of the organization; and three, side or lateral staff groups.

Footnotes appear many times throughout this composition. One might wonder why this is so since the purpose of the work is to serve as a manual. Actually, the writing of the manual is serving a dual purpose. First, it is designed to aid in improving oral communications in a specific organization. Second, it is to be presented as the writer's thesis for a Master's Degree in Business Administration. It is in the second aspect that footnotes are deemed to be in order.

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Book I

Values and Principles of Oral Communication

Chapter I

Introduction to Oral Industrial Communication

1

Current Trends in Industry

During the last two decades the American economy has been growing at an accelerated rate. The population has been increasing rapidly and industry has been growing at a pace sufficient to satisfy the needs of the market. During this period of growth, certain trends have developed which are expected to continue in the foreseeable future. One, the number of unskilled jobs in relation to the number of skilled jobs has diminished steadily. Two, the ratio of the number of management people to the number of hourly people has increased. Three, in recent years, there has been a trend toward delegating more of the decision-making to the lower levels of an organization.

The growth expected in the future will continue to create a need for more employees with higher levels of skill, more management people with a higher level of competence, and more technically trained people who can work effectively with people representing specialties other than their own. Accordingly, progressive industry will be concerned more and more with the development among its workers of a broader knowledge and understanding, of higher levels of skill, and of attitudes conducive to cooperative accomplishment.

An increased interest in the development of people to the end that they become more mature, more cooperative, more competent, and more productive, has resulted in closer attention to an improvement in face-to-face relationships.

1. The Discussion of An Individual's Performance, Training Division, Employee Relations Department, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, 1957, p. 1-1.

Management Development

In order to develop people with a broader knowledge of organizational and technical problems, industry must necessarily improve its present management and develop its future management. The key here is leadership, or the art of getting things done through people.²

The development of management also includes training in the principal steps in solving problems.³ An analysis must be made of the situation which pertains to a problem. All pertinent facts should be secured. The method of accomplishment or correction should be organized. The proposed solution must be presented to those who will accomplish the work. Finally, direction must be provided during the period when the activities are pursued in order to implement the solution.

The Role of Oral Communication

Oral communication plays a vital role in three of the steps which management must follow in performing its tasks of solving industrial problems. As previously mentioned, all pertinent facts of a problem must be secured. If these facts are to be obtained from people, the manager must exercise oral communicative skills. Once the facts pertaining to a problem have been assembled and organized, and a method of solution chosen, the plan must be presented to those who will accomplish the tasks. Again, the manager must utilize oral communicative skills to present his plan. Finally, these same skills will be utilized in directing the activities associated with the solution.

² Phillips, R. F. and J. O. Dibbs, "How to Communicate," Product Engineering, XXIX (December 23, 1957), p. 64.

³ Marston, Everett C., Loring M. Thompson, and Frank Zacher, Business Communication (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 419.

Brief Account of the Developments in Communication

Interest in face-to-face communication skills was stimulated by research performed by Dr. Paul Rankin of Ohio State University in 1928. Rankin discovered that on the average in America seventy percent of our waking day is a verbal communication day. Of this verbal communication day, he reported that we devote forty-five per cent of our time to listening, thirty per cent to speaking, sixteen per cent to reading, and only nine per cent to writing.⁴ This research, which was widely published and circulated, awakened educators and others to the necessity of training in the principles of listening and speaking.⁵

Starting around 1940 one or two colleges replaced the freshman English course with a year of freshman communication training. By 1948 a similar change has been made in more than a score of our colleges. By 1954 at least four hundred of the approximately fifteen hundred colleges were offering freshman communication in place of freshman English.⁶

Today there is a fresh awakening to the importance of listening in the field of communication. The origin of this recent interest is traceable to research, performed at Columbia University in 1940, which concluded that ninety-eight per cent of all that a person learns in a lifetime is detected through eyes or ears.⁷ In the past decade several studies have revealed that listening effectiveness can be improved significantly by training in listening techniques.⁸

4. Rankin, Paul T., "The Importance of Listening Ability," English Journal (College Edition), (October, 1928), 17:623-30.

5. Nichols, Ralph G. and Thomas R. Lewis, Listening and Speaking (3rd reprinting; Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Company, 1957), p. vii.

6. Ibid., p. vii.

7. Ibid., p. 2.

8. Ibid., p. 5.

Various methods of oral transmission received extensive development during World War II.⁹ The armed services exploited the advantages of visual aids in teaching technical skills to millions of men. The military also developed the technique of the conference in its efforts to solve problems of great magnitude. These methods are presently finding increasing favor in industry. With reference to communications to employees, attention is being directed to semantics, the study of word meaning.¹⁰ In other words, widespread efforts are being made to phrase messages so as to improve their effectiveness through a better reception and understanding.

Recently, the telephone companies have made great strides in the improvement of their services. It is now possible to hold conferences in a room with one or more conferees taking part in another city through the use of a telephone and room speaker system. It is conceivable that in the near future some telephones will be equipped with television screens.

It must be noted that industry, in recognizing the superiority of visual over oral communication in transmitting thoughts, is beginning to recognize inadequacies in existing methods of oral communication. Further, industry is beginning to take steps to correct these inadequacies. Effective oral conversation is less expensive than the processing of written reports or the operation of mechanical communication aids such as radio and television.

9. Ibid., p. 108.

10. Chase, S., "Executive Communications; Breaking the Semantic Barrier," Management Review, XLVI (April, 1957), p. 60.

Management is becoming more aware of the fact that oral communication is a skill which can be sharpened by the employment of sound principles and techniques. Perhaps the most significant development in this field is the recognition and understanding of employees' needs, attitudes, and philosophy.¹¹ These feelings, on the part of the employees, must be considered in the development of policies and directives. To this end, oral communication must integrate the interests of the enterprise and the employee.¹² Perhaps any basic attack on the problem of communication must be made primarily in terms of face-to-face relationships.¹³ This in turn requires closer attention to attitudes, behaviors, and backgrounds.

Summary

Because of the technological advances of modern industry, more specialized managerial abilities are required. Management presumes leadership. More and more employees are being led rather than driven. Direct personal contacts are assuming greater importance. The fundamental objectives of these contacts are to promote ideas or gain intelligence from the employee's experience.

11. Du Pont, op. cit., p. 1-2.

12. Davis, Ralph Currier, The Fundamentals of Top Management (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 583.

13. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating with Employees, Studies in Personnel Policies No. 129 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1952), p. 40.

Chapter II

Scope of Oral Communication by Lower Supervision

Communication is a meeting of minds or an integration of interests.¹ The keypoint of communication is the message. In industry, the process of flow of information from top management down and laterally to all levels of the organization, and vice versa, is generally thought of as the scope of communication. The subject matter of this thesis, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the problems pertaining to communications in the area of lower supervision. In this context lower supervision includes salaried engineers and scientists, foremen, and men in the two levels immediately above the foreman.

Industrial communications, to be inclusive, must span the entire organization. Communication downward should flow to lateral or side staff levels as well as downward in the line organization. Communications upward should flow to lateral levels as well as to the top of the line.² Communications emanating from lateral levels should flow laterally to comparable organizations as well as upward or downward, as the case may be. This flow of information should involve, therefore, all line and staff sub-organizations under the jurisdiction of the parent management.

1. Davis, Ralph Currier, The Fundamentals of Top Management. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 583.

2. Ibid., p. 226.

Industrial communications are concerned with the transmission and reception of all messages and information which are of interest to the organization involved. The transmission of this information can be formal or informal, required or volunteered, solicited or spontaneous. The bulk of the subject matter transmitted or received is informal. However, there is in most organizations a hard core of transmitted information which is required in a specific form, such as status and progress reports. The paramount problem associated with industrial communications is the stimulation of the flow of information not covered by the aforementioned core or nucleus.

Effective industrial communication is not an "on again,
3
off again" program. To be successful, the desire and willingness to communicate must be cultivated every day of the year throughout the life of the organization. As with all techniques, it must be practiced continuously to maintain existing skills. Furthermore, it must be studied continuously to develop new skills which will serve management as aids in increasing efficiency. An industrial communication program can be likened to a newspaper: if it does not search for facts and remain abreast of changing conditions, the proceeds will not justify the cost of operation.

3. Newcomb, R., "Sins of Employee Communication," Duns Review of Modern Industry, LXIX (April, 1957), p. 44.

The bulk of all communication, industrial or otherwise, takes place face-to-face.⁴ The surest way to transmit a message is to talk directly with those who are to receive it. The supervisor or foreman, as the voice of management, is involved in a high percentage of oral industrial communication. Due to the part played by the supervisor in oral communication, his importance in the overall communication program is evident.

The major advantages of oral communication are its speed, adaptability, and low cost.⁵ It includes face-to-face relationships, telephone conversations, conferences, and meetings. It can be used wherever two or more people gather to receive or transmit information. The only cost involved is the value of the time of the persons participating. It must be emphasized that such time spent in oral communication is equal to or less than the time required for any other type of communication transmitting or receiving the same information.

The major disadvantage of oral conversation is its lack of opportunity for critique prior to transmission.⁶ Regardless of what may be said in evidence, defense or rebuttal, the effect of an original oral statement can not be totally changed. The best remedy for this disadvantage is sound training in good communicating practices.

4. Case Book, Employee Communications in Action (New York: National Association of Manufacturers), p. 4.

5. Marston, Everett C., Loring M. Thompson, Frank Eacher, Business Communication (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 367.

6. Philip, R. F., and J. O. Dibbs, "How to Communicate", Product Engineering, XXVIII (December 23, 1957), p. 65.

Chapter III

Effective Oral Communication

Oral communication is preferred in business because it is faster, easier, more economical, and more personal.¹ No function of business is carried on without it, no person in the organization untouched by it. There are many advantages which are peculiar to management, other advantages to employees, and still others which pertain to both management and the employees.

Values to Management

Crisp, clear, and concise messages at all levels of an organization are known to inspire deep respect toward management on the part of the employees.² An understanding and accurate presentation of the official word by supervision eliminates the need and temptation for the grapevine. Policies and rules presented in this manner receive acceptance and compliance in the minimum amount of time. In addition, any supervisor presenting a good message is identified with top management in the employees' minds, thereby strengthening the position taken by supervision when issuing other orders. This identification with top management aids the foreman or supervisor personally in developing his own managerial philosophy.

1. Marston, Everett C., Loring M. Thompson and Frank Zacher, Business Communication (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 367.

2. Jucius, Michael J., Personnel Management (3rd ed.; Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1955), p. 323.

The acceptance of a policy or rule by the employees does not necessarily entail their confidence. For instance, the average working man tends to be suspicious of changes or new ideas. If he has experienced adverse situations in the past resulting from the mishandling of policy messages, he views succeeding messages with considerable distrust.³ The distrust usually spreads to his fellow workers. To forestall such a situation, all messages should be clear and easily understood by all personnel. Messages simply stated and firmly and fairly backed reduce apprehension and create an atmosphere of trust. This atmosphere of trust will prevent various anxieties which could develop with any other simple order.⁴

Managers must constantly know the status and condition of their organizations in order to control and supervise their operations effectively. Some indices of condition can be developed by written status reports on such subjects as production, safety, disability, and research. However, a good manager should have the information contained in the reports generally in his mind long before the written word gets to him. In addition, he is interested in and should have information concerning employee attitudes, employee activities, the degree of acceptance of company policies, and the effectiveness of sub-organization operations. The prompt transmission

3. Cassels, L., "How to be Believed", Nation's Business, XLVII (April, 1959) p. 92.

4. Heneman, Herbert G., Jr., and John G. Turnbull, Personnel Administration and Labor Relations, A Book of Readings (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 306.

of this information to the manager can only be accomplished by the free oral flow from all organizational levels.

All industrial management has one paramount goal: to produce a product or service which can be sold at a reasonable profit year in and year out. Labor has a dual goal: job security and good wages. In reality, though viewed from different standpoints by the two groups, these goals are quite compatible and dovetail with each other. It is the long-range job of communications to explain, demonstrate, and promote this important concept to both groups. Without this understanding management runs the danger of striving for a high profit at the expense of labor and labor striving for high wages and job security at the expense of the enterprise. It sometimes resembles the case of the two mules pulling against each other in order to eat separate piles of hay.

The integration of interests in big industry is complicated due to a third interested party, labor unions, in addition to top management and labor. The following quotation, taken from *THE NEW SOCIETY* by Peter Drucker, exemplifies the obstacles which efficient communications must bridge between the three groups:

"Each of the groups sees the same thing, the enterprise, from a different viewpoint and within a different angle of vision. What one group sees as obvious and plain fact, the other simply cannot see at all. Each group,

though seeing only a part of the picture, fancies that it sees the whole. And each group, convinced that it sees the whole, is convinced that its viewpoint is logical and fair."⁶

If management can approach a unity of viewpoints by the three groups, acceptance of policy and operating instructions will be greatly enhanced.

A successful communication program cannot be organized and maintained without considerable cost. It is estimated that management spends over \$112 million annually on publi-⁷cations in this field alone. Of course, there are many mediums which can be emphasized and/or utilized, i.e., printed announcements, publications, telephones, auto-calls, recording equipment, television, radio, as well as oral conversation. Of this group, the oldest, most widely used, most economical, successful, and potentially effective⁸ medium is oral conversation. However, the high effectiveness in this medium cannot be attained without cost. This cost is derived in three ways. First, part of the cost is attributable to the value of the time of the person delivering the message. A second part of the cost is attributable to the party receiving the message. Third, the sum total of these two costs is decreased by training in effective-

6. Drucker, Peter, The New Society (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 191.

7. Doobler, H. Joseph, Effective Communication on the Job (New York: American Management Association), p. 16.

8. Marston, Thompson, and Zacher, loc. cit.

ness of receipt and transmission of information.

Training in oral communications is the bed rock of any communication program or system. The most effective receipt and transmission of messages is accomplished face-to-face.⁹ Any other medium is a supplement to oral communication. Therefore, dollars spent on training in oral communications are the soundest communication investment, and are not spent at the expense of any other medium.

The spontaneous oral flow of messages can be extremely fast in operation. Information can be passed along without delays for the set-up time necessary for such media as printed announcements and reports, conferences, and formal personal interviews. It is evident that, if desirable, a foreman can orally transmit pertinent status information to a supervisor long before a daily written progress report can be initiated and processed. Also, it is evident that knowledge of union activities can be transmitted orally by a supervisor long before top management hears of the same activities and asks the supervisor for details. Of course, the speed of this medium depends largely on training in methods and subject matter desired.

Acceptance of messages in a desired manner depends a great deal on semantics, which has been defined as the

9. Case Book, Employee Communications in Action (New York: National Association of Manufacturers), p. 4.

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systematic study of meaning. It is generally realized that a person can change the meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence by a slight inflection in his voice. In addition, the meaning of a sentence can be changed by the rearrangement of its words or by its punctuation. Picture then the changes in the meaning of a message passed down from top management, through many levels, ultimately aimed at wage roll employees. The inadvertent changes in wording and the different interpretations of meaning by middle management can pyramid until the message finally delivered to the wage roll employees has a meaning quite different from that visualized by the originator. As a result, predispositions are sometimes difficult to overcome or erase when the true meaning of the message becomes available. ¹¹ However, a sound communication program, promoted by training, can go a long way in preventing circumstances which foster such misunderstandings.

Ideas for the betterment of the enterprise are not peculiar to management alone. In fact, more suggestions for improvement come from below any certain level of organization than above. It is true that not all the ideas are sound, so there must be an objective evaluation. Such an evaluation is

10. Chase, S., "Executive Communication, Breaking the Semantic Barrier," Management Review, XLVI (April, 1957) p. 60.

11. Harlow, R. F., "Looking Around, Art of Communicating," Harvard Business Review, XXXV (November, 1957) p. 145.

possible only if the ideas are presented and transmitted in the first place. This stimulation and presentation of new and different viewpoints is a valuable return on the communications investment.

The preceding advantages of sound description, presentation, and reception of information are but a few of the many values of effective communication. In every phase of the organization, there must be channels of information flow for managerial control. If this information flows freely, rapidly, and accurately, managerial control is simplified and its effectiveness is increased.

Values to Employees

The free, accurate, and rapid flow of information in organizational channels has a great deal of benefit for wage roll employees as well as management. First, all Americans have the right to be informed, want to be informed and usually live in an environment where the desire to remain informed is stimulated.¹² If, on the job, employees receive interesting information freely, a democratic atmosphere is created.¹³ If information is withheld, they become suspicious, emotional and uncompromising. This latter condition leads to accidents, dissatisfaction, and animosities toward

12. Harlow, R. F., loc. cit.

13. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating with Employees (New York: National Industrial Conference Board) p. 6.

employer and fellow employees.

The integration of interests, basically important to management as well as employees, cannot be discussed and directed unless a democratic atmosphere exists.¹⁴ Without the integration of interests leading to lower cost and higher efficiency, labor's goals of job security and higher wages cannot be attained.

Many companies have plans for rewarding employees for adopted suggestions leading to cost reduction or increased productivity. However, these rewards are not forthcoming if there are no open channels for receiving and discussing ideas of employees. Of course, the free flow of these ideas is not limited to cost reduction and productivity items. Working conditions can be improved and physical effort can be reduced by employees freely discussing conditions with management in a democratic atmosphere.

Most employees regard the rumor mill as their personal and generally reliable source of current information. Because this information quite often reaches the employee before the official word, it usually has a more lasting¹⁵ effect than the official word. As a result, misunderstandings are fostered which are usually damaging to the democratic atmosphere. Though the information concerns a benefit to the employee, the message can be altered by the rumor mill so as to cause animosity by the employee toward

14. Davis, Ralph Currier, The Fundamentals of Top Management (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 553.

15. Harlow, R. F., loc. cit.

the benefit. Although this is contrary to the original intent, a certain amount of irreparable damage has been done. As a result, the rumor mill is actually a detriment rather than a benefit to the employee. The only way the rumor mill can be controlled is to promote swift and reliable communications, thereby beating the rumor mill in time and accuracy.¹⁶

The overall advantages of good communication to the employees can be summarized in the creation of the democratic atmosphere. All specific benefits will not materialize to their fullest without the free interchange of ideas.

16. Doohar, M. J., op. cit., p. 122.

Chapter IV

Principles of Good Reception

Free oral flow of information emphasizes the receipt and transmission of messages along two axes: up and down and laterally. Transmission of information in either of these directions is no more important than the ability of the transmitter to receive the information in the first place. However, if all communication programs and systems were analyzed, most companies would probably find that they do not understand or practice the principles of good reception. Good reception depends a great deal on the ability of individuals to listen.¹

"Open Door"

The "open door," or the constant availability and willingness on the part of supervision to listen, receives more discussion than practice. Actually, it is the key to success for any program of receiving and transmitting spontaneous and informal messages. To be effective, supervision must have the desire to listen.² This desire must be exemplified not only in the supervisor's office, but in conferences and in the field with individuals who have a subject which they want to

1. Doohar, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on The Job (New York: American Management Association) p, 28.

2. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating With Employees (New York: National Industrial Conference Board), p. 7.

discuss. Quite often this is a difficult chore for the supervisor because he considers other duties more pressing. However, training in discussion leadership will relieve this difficulty to some extent.

Above all, the sincerity and willingness of supervision to listen must not be an "off again, on again" proposition.³ To be effective, they must be practiced continuously. Without them, a large portion of the democratic atmosphere disappears. The way to maintain the function of the open door is to keep subordinates continually aware that supervision wants to listen.

Most communications are usually delivered in a particular context or meaning and are designed to be received as such.⁴ It is up to management to accomplish this. However, too often receivers have their own ideas about the goals of the sender.⁵ As a result, some communications might not be transmitted with the proper objectivity. These conditions must be combatted. If the realization of the inaccuracy of transmission reached the originator, the "open door" atmosphere would be irreparably damaged. The success of the policy depends on the objective sincerity of supervision. It is evident that keen reception is costly in time, understanding and emotional control.⁶

3. Newcomb, R., "Sins of Employee Communication," Duns Review of Modern Industry, LXIX (April, 1957), p. 44.

4. McMurry, R. N., and R. C. Schaeffer, "Analyzing Your Communication Problem," American Business, XXVII (May, 1957), p. 17.

5. Loc. cit.

6. Habbe, S., op. cit., p. 40.

The "open door" implies that employees come to supervision with complaints, suggestions, and helpful intelligence. Mostly, the information received through the open door will be suggestions and complaints. These are very important. Supervision must not rely on pat answers in these cases.⁷ Answers should include evidence of understanding and some plan of action. Promises must be kept. Standard, meaningless answers and a lack of promised action will eliminate any future benefit of the policy.

Ability to Listen

The ability to listen includes much more than the hearing of words or noises. It includes a complete mental recording of the oral message delivered. In addition, it includes an analysis of the conditions that prompted the origin of the message.⁸ The conditions under which a message is delivered affect its meaning. Finally, listening includes the summation of all analyses of the conditions of delivery and the content of the message into the meaning of the message.

The cardinal principle in receiving an oral message is the accurate reception of all the words contained in the message. Too often, some words are assumed by the receiver, and thereby, the meaning can be misinterpreted. On the other hand, a transmitter might assume that he used a certain word

7. McMurry, R.N., loc. cit.

8. Doober, M.J., op. cit., p.148.

or words when actually he did not. Again, the meaning of the message transmitted and the meaning of the message received do not coincide. If time permits, the message verbally repeated to the transmitter will verify accuracy of wording.

Verification of wording accuracy does not include verification of meaning. Again, if time permits, repeating the message a third time but in different wording will gain a check on meaning. A further principle to follow in ascertaining meaning is the assumption of the originator's position in the situation. If the situation is not known, it should be investigated. Like any other skill, listening can be improved with practice.

Chapter V

Principles of Good Transmission

The transmission of oral reports, announcements, and directives requires much of the same thought and preparation required for written documents. The thoughts to be transmitted must be agreed upon and arranged in logical order. The accuracy of statements and supporting data must be verified. Wording of the message should be reviewed with reference to level of understanding, conciseness, coverage, and brevity. Time and place of delivery should be considered. Finally, the message should be reviewed to ensure completeness of content. The foregoing are logical principles of transmission, the knowledge and the practice of which are essential for efficient transmission of information.

Authenticity

Every message transmitted should be analyzed with reference to results expected from the message. With reference to policy, the true purpose of the policy should be thoroughly understood before the message is organized.¹ The transmitted meaning should be the same as that of the policy formulating body. Only then is the message authentic as to purpose.

Authenticity of messages in the process of transmission

1. Dooker, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on the Job (New York: American Management Association), p. 23.

requires that messages be re-transmitted in the same context in which they were received.² Again, this requires the analysis of the meaning of the message received.

The initiation of messages should always be withheld until the subject matter has been verified as to its existence. Authenticity includes statements as to whether or not there is doubt of basic assumptions or of subject matter reported. Accuracy, which is extremely important in a message, should be borne in mind when determining authenticity. It is indeed possible to report a condition or situation with only inaccurate figures as background, but the inaccuracy of the figures should be clearly explained.

Importance

Messages transmitted in either direction in an organization must have enough purpose to warrant the effort expended in transmission. This seems to be an obvious statement; however, there are many pitfalls associated with determining a messages's importance.

There are some messages which go up or down a line organization until they reach a level where action can take place. Quite often, this is not a pre-set level. It is up to the supervisors of the various levels who handle the message to determine which level qualifies for action. This action

2. McMurry, R.N., and R.G. Schaeffer, "Analyzing Your Communication Problem," American Business, XXVII (May, 1957), p. 18.

or decision should be made at the lowest level in the organization that has the requisite competence, authority, and prestige.³ The supervisor who makes this decision must determine whether further transmission of this information up the line for status reporting is required. A still higher supervisor determines the cut-off point for transmission of the status information. For efficiency of the communication system, these levels should be kept as low as possible, still maintaining the desired organizational control. If management will practice this principle, the channels of communication will remain free of obstacles for messages of primary importance.

Accuracy

Accuracy of transmission depends in most cases on accuracy both in reception and in the data to be transmitted. Once a mistake is made, it can be carried or compounded through many levels. The mistake may be minor initially, but if magnified through many levels, it can assume great importance.

Messages going down the line or to side staff levels should be no less accurate than messages going up the line. For example, the acceptance of a policy depends greatly on the initial presentation.⁴ If there is doubt in a supervisor's

3. Davis, Ralph Currier, The Fundamentals of Top Management (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), p. 307.

4. Harlow, R.F., "Looking Around, Art of Communicating," Harvard Business Review, XXXV (November, 1957), p. 146.

mind concerning the accuracy of a message he has received for transmission, he certainly should diplomatically request a verification. Supervision is paid to think; it, as well as employees, has a right to understand.

Completeness

Messages requiring transmission should be analyzed for requisite information. All pertinent facts should be included. Most important, facts believed but not known for sure to be pertinent should be mentioned. This latter principle, if not followed, can often nullify the work and decisions prompted by the message. If a message is not complete, it should always be so stated. If this is the case, the originator assumes the responsibility of ascertaining the remaining facts as rapidly as possible.

Analysis of a composition is more complete when the originator mentally takes the place of the receiver.⁵ As the receiver, how would I react to this information? Or, what answer would I pass back up the line in reference to this message? If these answers are not what the transmitter believes they should be, then he should review his message to see if it is complete in every detail.

Wording

Message composition should be undertaken with the characteristics of the receiver in mind.⁶ Again, taking

5. Doohar, H. Joseph, op. cit., p. 47.

6. Loc. cit.

announcements as an example, the wording of related messages should be such that every employee affected by the announcement should be able to understand the message and be familiar with all words used. This is not always easy. The combined works of economists, social workers and/or scientists must often be translated into messages to be understood by persons with grammar school educations. On the other hand, scientific, engineering and mechanical technology must be translated into meaningful words which can be understood by a generally well educated but non-technically trained management. Editing according to the level of understanding includes wording for many different levels of understanding. The recipients must be investigated as to which level they fall in, and then the message should be worded accordingly.

Semantics is an integral step in the editing of messages according to level of understanding. "The major principle of semantics is to stop, look and listen when a message comes in to be decoded by the brain and not let it trigger off an emotional response." ⁷ The following barriers to true meaning can be removed by an elementary application of semantics:

1. The confusion of words with things, i. e., co-operation, management and syndicate.

7. Chase, S., "Executive Communications; Breaking The Semantic Barrier," Management Review, XLVI (April, 1957), p. 60.

2. The careless use of abstract words, i. e., liberty, capital and labor.

3. The confusion of facts with personal opinion.

4. Judging people and events in terms of black and white, i. e., "The Russian communists denounce spying, some Americans denounce spying; therefore, some Americans are communists".

All messages concerned with industrial communication should be concise as possible yet still retain the intended meaning. This means that sentences and paragraphs should be kept short. Only information directly pertinent to the main theme should be included in the transmittal. The more words, phrases, and paragraphs a recipient has to absorb, the more difficult it is to grasp the intended meaning. Generally, it is more effective to disseminate several complete, short doses of information rather than a lengthy treatment of the over-all subject. This also is hard to do and still keep messages complete, yet related.*

Editing for coverage includes review of the scope of dissemination. Who should receive this information? Provisions should be taken, when originating a transmittal, to make sure that all persons who are to receive the message have a good opportunity to hear it. Care should be taken not to spend effort rewording for the benefit of persons not included in the intended coverage. Assurance of coverage

8. Harlow, R. F., op. cit., p. 146.

* Brevity of messages has been stressed in some circles, particularly engineering institutions, to the point of omission of articles. Often, these omissions, which are designed to improve clarity, actually make the message more difficult to understand.

can best be accomplished by use of check lists. These same check lists are useful in editing according to level of understanding.

Timing

Timing of transmission often can drastically influence the meaning, receipt, or effectiveness of an announcement or order. Timing has reference to a comparison of events which affect the general atmosphere of related dealings. The release or temporary withholding of announcements regarding a modification of old rules or an issuance of new rules aids in the enforcement or general acceptance of an entire body of rules. The release of information regarding benefits to individuals or groups can influence their choice of representation in future dealings with management.

One specific point must be emphasized. All official announcements are running a race against comparable unofficial announcements perpetuated by the rumor mill. The message which first reaches the common destination stands the best chance of acceptance.⁹ Maximum benefit is gained by the rumor mill in case of ties. Therefore, timing necessarily includes maximum speed of transmission.

9. Harlow, R. F., loc. cit.

Chapter VI

Motivation to Communicate

People are stimulated to communicate by extrinsic or intrinsic motivations, and the same person may be alternately affected by both motivations.¹ Generally, extrinsically motivated communication is forced in nature, rather than free and spontaneous.² It can be forced by the transmitter or it can be forced by the receiver. Messages forced out by the transmitter are usually done so in an effort to bring about some result which is considered desirable.³ For example, a foreman might keep his supervisor informed primarily because of the favor he wants to create in his supervisor's mind. Communications based on this motivation are apt to be one-sided, biased, or incomplete. Messages which are based on this ill-conceived idea can be hard to evaluate objectively. The best solution seems to be in the understanding of subordinates on the part of the supervisor.

Another type of extrinsic motivation is caused by pressure to communicate exerted by supervision. Reports with deadlines and direct questions are examples. This motivation is not lasting. Usually it is directed toward a specific

1. Kahn, R. L., and C. F. Cannel, "Problems of Top Management, Nobody Tells Me Anything," Duns Review of Modern Industry, LXX (November, 1958), p. 36.

2. Loc. Cit.

3. Ibid., p. 37.

subject. It is effective only as long as it is pursued by the interested supervision or tabulating body.

Intrinsic motivation arises from the fact that it is a psychologically rewarding experience to talk with a receptive, understanding person on a topic of mutual interest.⁴ The speaker is possessed with a desire to transmit. Usually, messages delivered and based on this motivation are uninhibited and free from any external pressures. An example is found in the discussion between a maintenance mechanic and his foreman, initiated by the mechanic, concerning maintenance methods which would prolong the life of a machine. Barring the possibility of a suggestion award, this discussion would begin merely because the employee is interested in the machinery and the enterprise. To be truly effective, a communication system must be based to a great extent on this latter type of motivation.

Intrinsic motivations to communicate, on the part of groups of employees, are usually developed by the supervisor of these employees. It is done by developing strong personal relationships.⁵ However, until these relations evolve, the executive must depend on other means of extrinsic motivation. It must be reemphasized that extrinsic motivations should be utilized temporarily since their continued use commonly is accompanied by a decrease in efficiency. The key to guide the changing of motivations from extrinsic to intrinsic is one's ability to understand people.

4. Ibid., p. 37.

5. Ibid., p. 38.

Chapter VII

Techniques of Oral Communication

Oral industrial communication, as previously explained, pertains to the flow of information up, down, and laterally through a line organization. Despite its apparent informality, this conversation reaches its maximum effectiveness if it is systematically planned, organized, and delivered. Effective expression, like all other facets of good management, is a skill involving numerous techniques. Some of these techniques are basic while countless others are peculiar to specific situations. Like all skills, physical or mental, effective oral communication is developed with thought and practice.

Communications Downward

Communications downward, for the purpose of this thesis, are considered to include all steps in the preparation and delivery of messages from a higher level to a lower or lateral level. They are concerned with all principles of good transmission: authenticity, importance, accuracy, completeness, wording, and timing.

Preparation

The fundamental objective of most face-to-face communications on the job is to sell an idea. The arbitrary command

1. Doohar, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on The Job (New York: American Management Association), p. 75.

2

is rapidly disappearing from use. In order to gain support or acceptance of an idea, the idea must be adequately explained. Adequate explanation implies delivery in such a manner that all intended receivers understand the message. People have to understand in order to give their best support.

The wants and desires of the workers should never be forgotten. Remember, the average industrial worker is interested in job security and higher wages. Whenever these subjects are mentioned, his attention is immediate. Next in the line of basic desires comes family security, followed closely by recreational interests. Wants and desires can be used to command attention or stimulate interest. However, care must be exercised not to antagonize these interests because they are stronger and more deeply imbedded than the loyalty to the organization.

Recent experiences can be mentioned or can form the nucleus of a message. A person can visualize an experience and its meaning more rapidly than he can comprehend a totally new idea. Quite often it is necessary to remind a recipient of an experience. If an employee can recall a situation, even if reminded, it is more readily understood than a series of cold facts.

Facts having been gathered, goals established and recipients analyzed, it is now possible to organize and word

2. Ibid., p. 105.

3. Raube, S. Avery, Factors Affecting Employee Morale (New York: National Industrial Conference Board), p. 9.

the body of the message. The facts should be arranged in logical order. New points should be connected with old in a natural way.⁴ Every important related experience in the background of the recipient becomes a basis for interest incentive.

It is wise to state a case in terms of people rather than an abstract idea. People are interested first in individuals,⁵ then in things, and last in ideas. An effective approach is to personalize a message, that is, deliver a message in a manner which makes it obvious how it will affect the individual recipient.⁶ An example would be the comparison of the cost of an individual hospitalization plan with that of a company-sponsored group plan.

Information should be transmitted in small doses.⁷ If this is not possible, consideration should be given to spreading the transmission into several doses over a period of time. Care should be taken to make individual messages complete and satisfying, but still inter-related.

People retain meaningful information more rapidly than⁸ less well-understood material. They can be counted on to act only after they have decided as to the benefit to be gained or⁹ lost. Therefore, there is a tendency for material considered

4. Harlow, R. F., "Looking Around, Art of Communicating," Harvard Business Review, XXXV (November, 1957), p. 145.

5. Loc. cit.

6. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating With Employees (New York: National Industrial Conference Board), p. 40.

7. Jucius, Michael J., Personnel Management (3rd ed., Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1955), p. 324.

8. Harlow, R. F., loc. cit.

9. Loc. cit.

pleasing to stimulate action more rapidly than material considered unpleasant. It must be emphasized that alarming or distasteful information stimulates the desire to resist. Once established, a prejudice will attempt to prove or disprove arguments at will.¹⁰

The more completely people initially learn material, the longer they will remember it.¹¹ Therefore, it is advisable to restrict subject matter. Communicate within a context. Restrict each message to one subject.

In the case of persuasive messages, conclusions will be retained rather than argument.¹² Argument permits the access of ideas which could stray away from or completely abandon the original thought.

The advantages of the use of the aforementioned techniques are more or less obvious, and a lengthy, systematic analysis of every type of oral communication is impossible. However, skill in transmission can be attained through practice. Periodically, a supervisor should take time to reduce a proposed oral communication to a written outline.¹³ This act affords an estimate of the degree of usage to which the skills of oral transmission are placed. This written outline is particularly helpful in preparation for group meetings and conferences.

10. Loc. cit.

11. Harlow, R. F., op. cit., p. 146.

12. Loc. cit.

13. Kahn, R. L., and C. F. Cannel, "Problems of Top Management, Nobody Tells Me Anything," Duns Review of Modern Industry, LXX (November, 1958), p. 37.

Organization for Dissemination

The transmission of all messages follows the identification of intended recipients. Decisions have to be made as to which or how many levels should receive the information. In many cases it is advisable and preferable to establish a sequence of reception. For example, communications traveling straight down a line organization should start at the highest level and progress down. Another example is the informing of supervision, for prestige purposes, of a general wage increase prior to announcement to the union.

Most messages should be transmitted by the fastest practical means. Speed and accuracy of transmission enhance the prestige and authority of supervision.¹⁴ Also, speed and accuracy aid in formulating receptive and favorable predispositions. The rumor mill is thereby deprived of the interesting subject matter which it requires for its existence.

The bulk of information to be carried downward is processed through a line organization sequence, starting at the highest level and progressing downward through the next lower level. This procedure is generally correct and universally practiced. Usually, it is clear-cut and easy to follow. However, it is far from being the most rapid means.

The most effective compromise between line authority and¹⁵ speed of transmission is known as the modified line method.

14. Jucius, W. J. op. cit., p. 323.

15. Mussman, William W., Communication Within The Management Group (New York: National Industrial Conference Board), p. 9.

This method involves the informing of or transmission to several levels at one time. It is easily utilized through the mediums of conferences and group meetings. In addition to speed, it has the advantage of reducing the number of times a message has to be received and retransmitted before it reaches its destination. This aids in the maintenance of accuracy. One possible disadvantage involves the loss of prestige which a supervisor might feel when his subordinates receive information concurrently with him. However, training in the advantages of speed and accuracy of transmission can overcome this difficulty.

Care must be taken to cover all levels desired. Obviously, one break in a line organization method of dissemination halts the transmission. Increased control of coverage is available when using the modified line approach. The modified line method has further advantages in the saving of executive time, increased contact between the high and low levels of management and the opportunity for the direction of pertinent questions to authoritative sources.

Organization for dissemination should include plans for feedback, if desirable or applicable. Feedback is the reception and transmission of information back up the line in response to a message transmitted downward. In

16. Walton, Eugene, "Evaluating Feedback Channels," Supervision, XXI (March, 1959), p. 4.

other words, it is a monitoring of the ultimate effect of the transmittal. Feedback can be in the form of spontaneous replies, organized observations, questionnaires, and production or other status reports. Usually, feedback is informal, unorganized, and consequently lacking in conclusiveness. Feedback which is planned and stimulated results in a healthy interchange of information. Until immediate reactions or eventual results are made known to a manager, he has very little knowledge of the success of his directives and policies.

Many messages are issued for purposes of coordination. Some companies have two or more parallel lines of organization. In addition, there may be several staff sub-organizations apart from the main lines. It is desirable for all these groups to be so informed that they can utilize information gathered by others and thereby prevent duplication. The requirements for coordinated communication increase in a geometric progression as the size of the firm increases.¹⁷

Considerable status information concerning the company is carried to lower levels of management in order to aid them in making decisions peculiar to their scope of control. For example, the production forecast is a great aid to maintenance supervision in the scheduling of equipment overhauls. Also, the degree of competition, as noted to lower management, will color their attitudes toward cost reduction.

17. Davis, Ralph Currier, The Fundamentals of Top Management (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 307.

Similarly, safety statistics for an organization as a whole can flag certain safety attitudes or hazards which individual foremen might overlook.

The transmission of information concerning plans and policies is far from successful in many companies. This is probably caused in part by the large amount of detailed information involved. This lack of success is also due to a lack of appreciation of the principles of transmission, i. e., the information comes in large doses; the subject matter is difficult to understand; because of complications of understanding, transmission is slow; and because of slow transmission, the rumor mill gains the lead in the race to the last receivers. However, thought, the application of sound principles of transmission, and care can result in the desired effect. Since plans and policies form the basis for most other business decisions, they must be stated accurately and applied.

Successful downward communications can be based on the several principles previously covered. However, each message, like each individual involved, is different from the next. Therefore, the principles involved must be utilized to overcome many different barriers to the flow of information. The following list is but a sample of the obstacles which are commonly met and which must be overcome in the successful transmission of information,

Barriers To Communication Downward

Management Reasons

1. Lack of a well-considered policy regarding communications
2. Authoritarian climate in the company
3. Past record of insincerity
4. Timidity or indifference in management

Organizational Reasons

1. Decentralization
2. Poor definition of responsibilities and authorities
3. Excess echelons of management
4. Overloading of management personnel
5. Lack of training

Mechanical Reasons

1. Failure in meaning due to word construction
2. Lack of equipment, i.e., telephones and "inter-com" units
3. Incorrect use of media

Psychological Reasons

1. Lack of open minds
2. Jealousies
3. Fears and prejudices, i.e., the reluctance of a president to state his position, the fear of stirring up unrest and grievances with a union and the personal preference of one medium over another.

4. Hostility on the part of the union
5. Hostility in the grapevine
6. Failure to understand the real interests of employees

Communications Upward

Communications upward include all information originating at lower levels and transmitted to higher levels. In essence, they comprise all the facts, figures, and thoughts which management must consider in the operation of the business. Like communications downward, lateral levels should be included in the scope of dissemination. This phase depends basically upon intrinsic motivation to converse.

Limited usage can be made of extrinsic motivation in the form of mandatory reports, questionnaires, or question-and-answer sessions.

Types of Information

The information transmitted upward is sometimes summarized in five categories. They are: status information, unsolicited personnel information, labor problems, quality of production data, and information related to competition. Each of these types can make a significant contribution to the pool of knowledge required to keep an enterprise healthy.

Status information is concerned with the existing condition and operation of plant and personnel. The statistics

involving the effective work-force aid in establishing efficiencies, costs, and organizational structure. Production reports are vital status data which aid in establishing sales goals, aid in forecasting raw material requirements and are indispensable in establishing standard costs. The condition of plant information aids in establishing maintenance costs, depreciating premises, and determining the need for expansion or contraction. The status of personnel morale, as previously noted, is indicative of the degree of acceptance of plans and policies. ¹⁹ For the most part, status information is solicited through standard media rather than through intrinsically motivated sources. Its value, however, would be much greater if the reverse were true.

Unsolicited personnel information is obviously motivated from within. It comprises all intelligence gained from spontaneous oral conversation. Its outstanding contribution is enlightenment concerning conditions of morale. Because of the very nature of this type of conversation, the speaker's attitudes are revealed. Quite often the conversation on the part of one person is indicative of an entire group. Unsolicited discourse is the most reliable source of reaction concerning plans and policies. Grievances, which fall in this category, are indicative of the spirit of cooperation of the workers and the degree of control of morale by management.

19. Moore, Franklin G., Manufacturing Management, (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, 1954), p. 89.

Labor-problem intelligence refers to specific labor issues and enlightenment concerning union activities. This latter field includes the goals, desires, actions, and the power of the union and its leaders.

Competition information is concerned with all data on competitors which might be in the hands or minds of the inquiring organization. Correlation of such information also includes the employee's opinion of individual competitors and competition as a whole.

The quality of production information embraces all knowledge on the quality of a product. In addition, it includes suggestions and programs for an improvement of quality. Cost-reduction schemes, efficiency development, and standard or off-standard methods fall in this category.

Listening

The brief description of the foregoing categories of desired information is indicative of the wide fields of data which can and should be received, transmitted, and consumed. The progress of this information always begins with one or more parties listening and observing.

To be effective, listening must be cultivated and practiced. Periodic spurts of interest in the skill will not succeed in its efficient development. Sharp listening and observation must be continuous and to some degree systematic. The system pertains to steps which may be followed routinely to ensure a constant application of listening and observation skills.

A good listener remains alert during all conversations and considers the meaning of all words he hears. ²⁰ This requires an immediate evaluation of all statements. Good listening involves a good deal of self-control in that boredom must be checked and personal feelings contained. In addition, keen reception includes an analysis of the speaker, his goals, ²¹ his experience, and his background.

Listening must be balanced in that the listener must show interest in all subjects. If this is not done, the conversation will be narrowed in content to the point that it may exclude significant facts.

The evaluation of a speaker's point of view is extremely ²² helpful in determining the meaning of his words. This can be accomplished by taking the speaker's stand in an argument or taking his place in a situation. This is usually accomplished by timely questions. It is wise to realize that subjects do not always appear to subordinates as they do to supervisors.

If the superior maintains strong opinions concerning a subject, he does well to withhold them until the end of a ²³ conversation. Such opinions should not be evidenced by

20. Doohar, M. J., op. cit., p. 23.

21. The Discussion of An Individual's Performance, Training Division, Employee Relations Department, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, p. 6 - 2.

22. Ibid., p. 20-1.

23. Doohar, M. J., op. cit., p. 148.

physical actions or facial distortions. Management, in order to gain maximum benefit from the free flow of information, maintains an open mind about a subject until the final decisions are made. Even after these decisions are made, contradictory ideas should be accepted for consideration without condescension.

Successful listening will not evolve unless the listener has the desire to listen and converse. This earnest desire aids in the development of a democratic climate of free expression. The key to maintaining a democratic climate is the obvious demonstration of actions, to the benefit of the subordinates, as the result of the free interchange of ideas. In other words, prove with deeds the advantage of the spontaneous flow of information. Care should be exercised to process all promises. If there are no intentions concerning an action, implications concerning the action should not be made.

Listening to and agreeing with information known to be false or misleading is as bad as transmitting unreliable data in the first place. Regardless of the difficulties involved, erroneous intelligence should be corrected as soon as possible. Even if the corrections result in additional arguments, the advantages of commonly understood premises will hasten a successful completion of an interchange of thoughts.

24. Heneman, Herbert G. Jr., and John G. Turnbull, Personnel Administration and Labor Relations, (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 308.

25. Doohar, M. J., op. cit., p. 148.

26. Habbe, S., op. cit., p. 7.

Special opportunities for listening aid in providing situations where conversors are free and stimulated to convey their thoughts. Foremen's meetings provide occasions when several foremen on a certain level can voice their individual opinions and conclude by organizing a joint opinion. Conferences provide occasions for hearing many diversified opinions about specific subjects. Outside the confines of the business facilities, picnics, dinners, and dances provide occasions for hearing many ideas and opinions free of any real or implied organizational pressure.

Considerable intrinsically motivated information can come from a union which feels that a democratic atmosphere exists. This information source can be cultivated by striving to cooperate with reasonable union desires. ²⁷ This does not mean that any and all union requests should be granted. However, it does mean that all requests and statements should be heard and action taken based on merits set forth in the hearing. In this respect, the organization, operation, and aims of the union must be thoroughly understood.

Transmission Upward

Once information is gathered by listening or by observation, only half the communicating job is done. The intelligence, to be of benefit to any person other than the recipient, must be correlated and transmitted upward or

27. Habbe, S., op. cit., p. 39.

laterally. The listening and correlation is an individual problem of the recipient. The transmission, however, can be organized and procedures established.

Procedures for the oral transmission of messages specify who is to receive, where the reception should take place, and when the reception should take place. The responsibility of carrying out the procedure lies jointly with the supervisor and the subordinate. The lead in discharging this responsibility, however, should be taken by the supervisor.

The portion of the procedure which specifies who is to receive the information is developed around the organization. The subordinates must know their supervisors and must be familiar with comparable lateral levels of supervision. Further, those who should receive specific information depends, in many cases, upon what the information is about. For example, a manufacturing foreman, when announcing mechanical difficulties concerned with his operating machinery, should inform both his supervision and the representative of the maintenance organization which can help him with his specific problem. If the philosophy of the organization permits, the announcement to supervision should be a notification only and the announcement to maintenance should be a demand for action. This makes clear the necessity of supervision thoroughly understanding the organization and knowing the personnel on lateral levels who can be of assistance. Further, it is obvious that the speed of action

is greater if the communication flows freely to the lateral levels rather than up to higher levels before the cross over is made. ²⁸ Chart A illustrates this point.

Consider A as the president of an organization. B, C, D, E, and F in one line, and G, H, I, J, and K in another line, are line supervisors reporting to A. Further, assume that F wants to transmit information to K. If he were to follow the conventional line method, the message would be received and retransmitted ten times before it reaches K. If the message were transmitted laterally, only one transmission and one reception are involved. Thus, by following the straight line organization method, there are twenty chances of error. The modified line method allows but two chances of error.

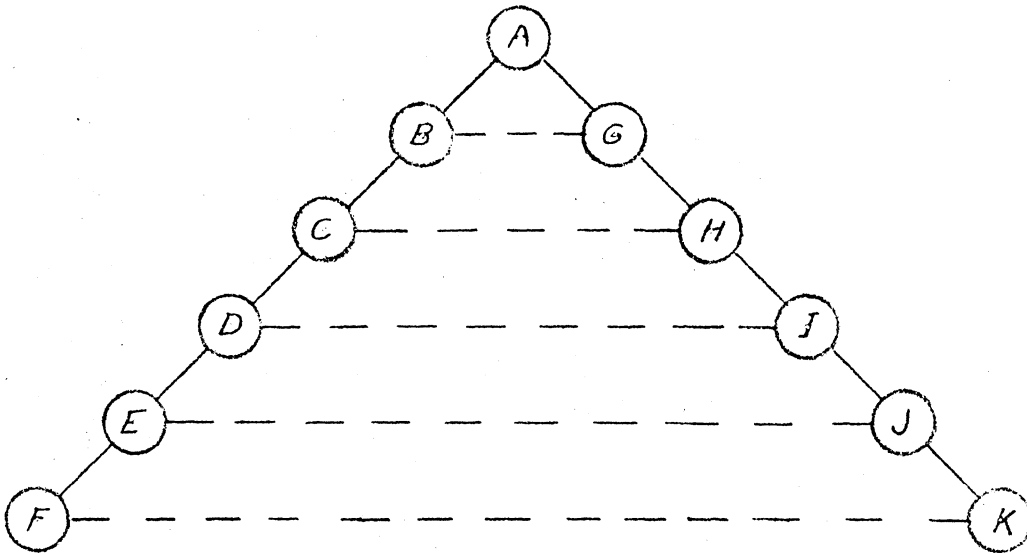
Emphasis must be placed on the fact that frequently E should receive the information for status or control purposes. The height to which the transmission upward should reach should be the lowest level in the organization which has the requisite competence, authority and prestige to make or ratify the decision. ²⁹

The where and when concerning reception of communications are of necessity determined largely by the availability of the person who is to receive the message. This person could be a higher supervisor or a member of supervision on a lateral level. At the outset it should be

28. Davis, R. C., op. cit., p. 230.

29. Davis, R. C., op. cit., p. 307.

CHART A



——— Chains of command
 - - - Lines of cross-contacts

Fayol's Bridge^a

^a Fayol, Henri, Industrial and General Administration (New York: Pittman Publishing Corporation, 1949), p. 28.

emphasized that non-availability of a supervisor should not be allowed to halt the flow of information.³⁰ Procedures should be specific in pointing out next higher levels of reception if the standard level cannot be represented. In many cases some levels of supervision may resent this because they view it as a threat to their job security. The elimination of this fear is a managerial problem which must be solved in order to keep the channels open.

Supervisors should establish times and places for face-³¹ to-face contact with subordinates. These contacts should be routine and practiced faithfully. In addition, supplementary contacts should be made on a non-scheduled basis to ensure that the spirit of the communications program is perpetuated. These supplementary contacts, though not on a regular schedule, should be continuous and regular in number over a period of time. There is no way of determining when or where required information or news is going to break.

Supervision on lateral levels should establish routine occasions where information can be exchanged. This is best accomplished through faithful daily contacts even if there is no specific message to transmit. These daily contacts could be summarized in periodic conferences.

30. McMurry, R.N., and R.G. Schaeffer, "Analyzing Your Communication Problem," American Business, XXVII(July, 1957), p.29.

31. Doohar, M.J., op. cit., p.143.

Summary

The techniques of free oral flow are numerous. Communication programs cannot be successful unless supervision knows and understands the organization. Particularly, the portion of the organization immediately above, below, and to the side should be thoroughly understood. Once the arrangement and needs of the organization are appreciated, supervision is then in a position to receive and analyze applicable information. Reception includes accuracy of hearing, an analysis of backgrounds and events, and an appreciation of many points of view. Transmission includes the organization of the message, organization for dissemination and evaluation of results. Finally, these principles and techniques must be faithfully practiced in order to develop desired effectiveness.

Chapter VIII

Occasions for Oral Communication In Industry

Several occasions for oral communications are discussed in this chapter. These talks are the most commonly occurring situations in industry which require oral conversations. Traits, techniques, and pitfalls are discussed and illustrated.

Normal Instructions and Order Giving

The bulk of oral communications issued by supervisors involve instructions and directives. The first step is to determine what is desired.¹ Second, the method of accomplishment must be outlined. Third, responsibilities and tasks must be divided among the employees who will work on the job. Fourth, standards of time and performance must be established.

The fifth step is to repeat steps one through four to the employees. The sixth step is to explain why the job is being done. Finally, the last step is to answer questions which the employees might have or pose questions to them to ascertain their understanding of the assignment.

The supervisor should know and thoroughly understand the job in question. His assignments should be based on the capabilities available or need for training of less capable people.² Assignments must be made impartially. It is unfair

1. Marston, Everett C., Loring M. Thompson, and Frank Zacher, Business Communication. (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p.485.

2. Docher, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on the Job (New York: American Management Association), p.100.

and demoralizing to overload willing workers.³ Instructions should be limited to jobs which can be reasonably accomplished.⁴ A serious pitfall is to assume that workers understand instructions without making adequate checks on their comprehension.

5

All orders fall into one of four classifications:

1. The call for volunteers
2. The implied order
3. The request
4. The direct order

The call for volunteers has comparatively little usage in industry. In most cases people have assigned duties which prevent them from being volunteers or give them excuses behind which they can hide. A typical use would be a call to a group for some of the group to perform a job of limited duration together. Example: The time is close to the end of a work day. Several employees are standing together talking. The foreman in charge wants to unload a hand truck so that the vehicle will be available to the nightshift. He addresses the group. "It would be a great help if some of you would unload this hand truck before you leave."

The implied order, which suggests that something be done, usually gets best results from an experienced, depend-

3. Ibid., P. 103.

4. Loc. cit.

5. Ibid., p. 105.

able and above all, willing worker.* The supervisor, in this case, does not give complete instructions or set standards of performance. In the case of conscientious employees, this type of order is the most effective since it compliments their ability to comprehend, reason, and perform. Example: A supervisor desires to standardize the location of a movable part on a series of machines. He addresses John. "John, I believe our quality of production would be improved if we jig drilled and doveled this part to all of the machines." Many capable workers would take this suggestion as an order to act.

The request is the most widely used form of order in industry today. It does not offend a sensitive worker when a direct order might antagonize him.⁶ Often it can partially mellow the hard-boiled man and is always worth trying before the direct order is given. Example: "Frank, I would appreciate it if you would wipe up the oil under number six machine."

The direct order receives only slightly more usage than the call for volunteers. In most cases, the order is reserved for emergencies and special situations where certain workers require some forceful direction.⁷ The direct order shocks most workers out of lethargy and prevents further reprimands.

6. Loc. cit.

7. Ibid., p. 106

* The implied order involves exceptions to the principles of good transmission. This technique, used on certain individuals, sometimes promotes better cooperation.

It is appropriate for a chronic violator. If prior orders, issued as requests, have been violated or not carried out, the direct order might be utilized to ensure results. It is not advisable to use direct orders on any person continuously. If possible, direct orders should be reserved for emergency situations since the mere hearing of a direct order will indicate a severe urgency to act.

Any order, regardless of the four types, should be followed by an adequate reason for its issuance.⁸ Workers want to know why they are performing a certain task. The explanations should be the basic reasons, not the fact that the order was passed down to subordinates. Also, enthusiasm aids in the promotion of reasoning.

Over the Desk Speaking

Though over the desk speaking is usually very informal, preparation can be very helpful. The goals should be the complete transmission and reception of the subjects discussed in the least amount of time. Discussions should be objective and aimed at developing ideas and thoughts of the subordinate. The following traits are applicable:⁹

1. Attendance for discussions should be prompt
2. Conversation should not be allowed to wander
3. Subordinate should feel welcome
4. Courtesy is indispensable

8. Ibid., p.100.

9. Marston, E.C., L.Thompson, and F. Zacher, op. cit., p.435.

5. Decisions must be made forcefully
6. Ability to compromise should be used when desirable
7. Emotional control should be maintained
8. Ideas developed in conversation should be discussed and analyzed.

Telephone Conversations

The telephone is a helpful instrument in increasing the speed of communications. Basic training in its use includes all of the principles and techniques of oral conversation in addition to several which are peculiar to the use of the telephone itself.¹⁰ These techniques are listed below.

Preparation for Outgoing Calls

1. Determine why the call is to be made.
2. Determine who is to be called.
3. Organize message, interrogation or request.

Handling Outgoing Calls

1. Announce who is calling.
2. Announce subject.
3. Give background.
4. Make request or deliver message.

Receiving Incoming Calls

1. Try to answer before the end of the second ring.
2. Announce name and position.
3. Talk directly into the instrument.

10. Ibid., p. 491.

4. Make notes during conversation.
5. Record messages for others.

Announcements

Announcements, to be effective, are thoroughly organized as to content and coverage. All the principles of transmission should be applied. Announcements are difficult because they usually deal with change, such as procedures, policies, and regulations.¹¹ The effect of these talks could be far-reaching since they can alter self-confidence, status, earnings, sincerity, privileges, and plans. The prerequisite of this type of conversation is that it be complete in scope and coverage, authentic, and properly edited in content. It is probable that more announcements are mishandled in industry than any other form of oral communication.¹²

Recognition

Talks of recognition can be in the form of introductions, commendations, and messages of appreciation. The most important trait here is sincerity. These talks become more meaningful if facts, places, and dates are used in the body of the message.

Reprimands

Occasionally, every supervisor faces the necessity of administering a reprimand. Reprimands are difficult because

11. Ibid., p. 462-463.

12. Ibid., p. 463.

there are different reasons and situations which prompt their requirement. The various reasons and situations arise from the fact that every employee is different from the next.

The basic premise of a reprimand is that most employees are conscientious and want to be fair.¹³ They have a desire to take pride in their jobs. The reprimand should therefore be more than an admonition; it should include a discussion of causes and suggested cures. The supervisor should begin by stating the reasons for the criticism followed by words to the effect that officially the employee is being reprimanded. After the employee thoroughly understands the reasons for the action, the remaining portion of the interview should be devoted to discussion of what can be done to improve the situation. This discussion should include suggestions by both parties. The interview should be concluded with a statement of what is expected in the future. If possible, it is advantageous to gain the subordinate's agreement to the statement and willing cooperation to improve.¹⁴

The setting of a reprimand should be completely private. The supervisor must maintain composure at all times. It is wise to allow ample time because rushing will make the employee feel that he has not had time to state his case.

13. Doohar, op. cit., p. 108.

14. Ibid. p. 110.

Foreman-Employee Meetings

The foreman-employee meetings, if regularly scheduled, can serve as a core of an oral communications program.¹⁵

This meeting allows employees, as a group, to listen to announcements and discussions by their immediate supervisor. There are several strong advantages to management associated with these meetings:

1. Foremen, as first line supervision and potential managerial material, are taught by practice to stand on their feet and speak to a group.
2. Foremen are taught to think under pressure in front of a group.
3. Foremen are stimulated to maintain their organizational and job knowledge because they have to demonstrate this knowledge in front of their subordinates.
4. These meetings are stimulating to management because hard to answer questions are passed up the line until answers are received.

Employee-foreman meetings have other advantages peculiar to the employees. The meeting is an assembly of the unit in which the employees' primary interests lie.¹⁶ What happens in an employee's work unit determines largely how he adjusts to his job and how he regards his supervisor and company.

15. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating with Employes (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1952), p. 23.

16. Loc. cit.

The employee looks to the supervisor for help and guidance. When an employee attends these meetings, he realizes that he is in association with this supervisor and that the supervisor is interested in keeping him informed.

Chart B is a simplified outline of the methods of conducting employee-foreman meetings.

Conferences

The planned conference is a means to a definite end providing for an orderly attack and cross discussion of a problem or plan by a limited number of select conferees under the guidance of a leader. ¹⁷ It does not begin with an affirmative or negative side. No one is expected to force his points. At the end of the conference, however, it is expected that a decision or plan of action will have been reached and agreed upon by a majority of the conferees.

Most conferences fall into one of the following three categories:

1. The Line Supervisor Type. The line supervisor type of conference is one held by a line supervisor as the leader and his subordinates as the conferees. This type allows the supervisor to strengthen his organization. There are several disadvantages, however. The line supervisor might not be a good conference leader. The best experience is not provided because the conference is always conducted with the same people. Conferees might be hesitant to discuss

17. Marston, Thompson, and Zaehner, op. cit., p. 512.

CHART B^a

HOW TO CONDUCT FOREMAN-EMPLOYEE MEETINGS

- I. Foremen to Conduct Meeting
 - A. Invite speakers only on special occasions
 - B. Be informal
 - C. Answer all questions
 - D. Be sincere and discuss matters frankly

- II. Be Ready for The Meeting
 - A. Remind employees of appointed time
 - B. Establish an agenda prior to meeting
 1. Production figures
 2. Schedules
 3. Equipment
 4. Repairs
 5. Procedures
 6. New employees
 7. Suggestion awards
 8. Recognition for jobs well done
 9. Discussions on improvement of performance
 10. Announcements
 11. Quality
 12. Safety
 - C. Review notes of previous meeting
 - D. Make notes if helpful

- III. Schedule Meetings Regularly
 - A. Daily or weekly
 - B. Schedule during the paid working day
 - C. Hold at a convenient time
 - D. Hold in familiar surroundings

- IV. Follow Up
 - A. Correct improper conditions and information
 - B. Give answers as soon as they are learned
 - C. Take action promptly

- V. Benefits to Foremen from Meeting
 - A. Confidence in speaking before and leading a group
 - B. Increased job interest
 - C. Closer contact with men
 - D. Opportunity to review objectives
 - E. Cooperation within unit crew
 - F. Opportunity to observe employee reactions

matters which are favored by or irritating to the leaders. Finally the time required removes a complete sub-organization from the job site.¹⁸

2. Head of Organization Approach. This type of conference is one conducted by a high echelon or top member of supervision. Its purpose is to compress as many levels into the conference coverage as possible because the resulting advantages are great if the messages are applicable, the total number of meetings is kept smaller, and the executive time is saved. In addition, the message is clearer due to the fewer number of repeats, and the lower levels of management are afforded contact with higher echelons. The greatest disadvantage is that the meeting is necessarily large and a great percentage of supervision must be away from the job site at one time.¹⁹

3. Staff Conferences. Staff conferences tackle problems requiring the specialized services of staff groups. The senior line organizational member is not necessarily the conference leader. The member having the best understanding of the problem or situation should be the leader. The major advantage is the diversified aid from the staff groups. One possible disadvantage would be the efforts of a staff member to win support of his program which might

18. Mussman, William, Communication Within The Management Group (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1947), p. 7.

19. Ibid., p. 9.

not be to the best advantage of the area. The goals of the area, usually production, are paramount. From time to time staff groups lose sight of this principle. The staff type conference enjoys great success in manufacturing areas.

Supervision should receive specific instruction on methods involved in conducting conferences. Using proper skills and techniques, a conference leader can establish high standards and goals.

Discussion of Performance Interviews

A discussion of performance interview is an occasion when a supervisor reviews and discusses the performance of a subordinate. These contacts are extremely important as all the activities, goals and attitudes of the employee are summarized and graded. ²⁰ In the case of members of supervision, this rating could determine advancement or increase in pay.

The preparation for a discussion of performance interview should be thorough, often requiring several days to accomplish. All available information concerning the em-
²¹ployee should be accumulated. A place for the interview should be chosen which is completely private. The rating applied should be outlined with reasons for decision.

20. The Discussion of An Individual's Performance (Training Division, Employee Relations Department, E. I. du Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc., Wilmington, Delaware), p. 1-1.

21. Ibid., p. 10-2.

CHART
Three Conference

C
b
Situations

Conference Situation	Conference Objective	Leader's Approach
1. Discussion of a current problem, either of a single department or a broad problem of the company.	To get the best thinking of those who have an interest in the problem and knowledge and experience to contribute to its solution.	a. Lead group to recognize and isolate the problem. b. Assemble facts and evaluate them. c. Uncover available solutions. d. Select the solution which seems best to the group.
2. Discussions of problems of supervision.	To raise the standard of supervisory performance by examining the best existing practices, either among members of the group or exemplified by industrial supervisors elsewhere.	a. Draw out experience of group as related to the topic; encourage group to back points by specific examples. b. Discuss and analyze the effects of one course of action in relation to other possible actions. c. Get agreement as to what seems to be the best principles to be followed. d. Provide or have someone else provide authoritative information or background essential to sound conclusions.
3. Discussion of policy or related administrative procedure.	A. To assure common understanding of policy and procedure by management personnel. B. To examine policy and procedure to see whether it is equitable and workable.	a. Get group to examine critically the policy statement to determine its fairness and workability. b. Get group to recommend changes that would strengthen the policy or related procedure. c. Get agreement concerning recommendations to be submitted to other segments of management for their consideration. Failure to have recommendations accepted no reflection on group.

b. McFeely, Wilbur M. and William Mussman, Techniques of Conference Leadership (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1946), p.13.

During the actual interview the atmosphere should be as informal as possible. The summary of performance, with strong points, should be read or stated followed by a pause. This pause allows for employee's reactions. The weak points should then be itemized followed by another pause. The employee should be given adequate time to state his opinion of the rating. Care should be exercised to restate employee's answers or comments to make sure that they were received in the intended context. The remainder of the interview should be devoted to a discussion of future improvement of performance.

Grievance Interviews

A prerequisite in handling a grievance is knowing and understanding the grievance procedure applicable to the situation.²² During the interview the employee should be made to feel at ease. He should be allowed ample time to state his case. The supervisor should control his temper and not reveal it through facial expressions. The aggrieved employee's story should be restated in different words so that his meaning can be checked. It must be borne in mind that the interview is not over until the employee has talked himself out.²³ It is desirable to make a settlement or form a plan of action as soon as possible. If this

22. Docher, M. J., Op. cit., p. 214.

23. Loc. cit.

is impossible, plans for investigations should be explained to the employee and times and dates fixed for future meetings concerning the problem.

Protection of Confidential Information

Part of what every supervisor knows is confidential. There arises a problem of what to do when a person asks a direct question about a confidential subject. There are several possible correct ways to handle the question, but there is no single best way. The answer depends on the situation, the question, and the person.²⁴ The problem is to change the subject without offending the interrogator and without stimulating his curiosity. The following possibilities can be explored:

1. Change the subject as though you did not hear the query. Bring up another matter.
2. Pleasantly say, "No comment". This conceals facts but does not ridicule or chastize the questioner.
3. Raise the time element; i. e., "Still up in the air. I am sure there will be an announcement soon".
4. Ask questions yourself rapidly. It tells him gently and gradually that you are not going to answer his questions.

24. Shepherd, W. G., "How to Conceal the Facts Gracefully," Textile World, CVII (September, 1957), p. 64.

5. Give a qualified "No", but indicate an announcement will be made in the near future.

6. Inform him that he is out of line, but in a tactful way. "You know what? You sound like someone who does not have enough headaches of his own and wants to take on someone else's."

Chapter IX

The Grapevine

The grapevine is an informal system of receiving and transmitting information in an unauthoritative manner to and from personnel, some of whom deserve access to the information and some of whom do not. It carries information which is personally interesting to individuals and groups. Without this interest there is no basic drive to perpetuate its activities.

The basis of a grapevine is usually attributed to inadequacies in the official communication systems.¹ Interesting news, once released on any level, tends to find its way to other levels even if no official provisions are made for the transmission. The form the information is in when it reaches its final destination might not, however, resemble the original ideas. Whenever it is desirable to transmit information correctly and rapidly, the initiative must be taken by an official communication system. Also, this system must be accurate and effective. The point is to control the formation of rumors by distributing the facts before rumors can materialize. A company usually is entwined in the kind of grapevine it deserves.²

1. Doobler, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on The Job (New York: American Management Association), p. 113.

2. Loc. cit.

The grapevine indicates that employees have more than a routine interest in their jobs.³ Rumor travels only when the story has importance both for the speaker and the hearer, and the true facts are shrouded in some kind of ambiguity. If people are anxious about the outcome, they may accept the version that serves to confirm their fears. If they are hoping for better things, they will snatch at any thing that colors the world to a rosier hue. If they are resentful, they will be all the more receptive to ideas that "fix the blame" on a person or group they dislike.

In analyzing a grapevine consideration should be given to the different persons involved. Some can be considered as liaison individuals while others are pas-⁴sive. The liaison individuals should receive detailed scrutiny. Their actions and thoughts are constantly observed and imitated by fellow employees. These people, with their natural desire and sometimes ability to hear and converse, form the backbone of this informal system.

Many authorities consider a grapevine entirely bad. To be sure, it creates many disadvantages and problems.⁵ On the other hand, it can be used to advantage. Any individual who has a right to receive certain information but for some reason does not, is justified in exploiting the rumor mill to his personal advantage.⁶ Normally, it

3. Loc. cit.

4. Loc. cit.

5. Spornoff, B. J., "Grapevine Helps Pick Supervisor," Personnel Journal, XXXV (December, 1956), p. 258.

6. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating with Employees (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1952), p. 18.

is a joint responsibility of supervision and subordinates to keep each other informed. If one of these parties drops the responsibility, it does not necessarily relieve the other party of the same obligation. If he does not receive official messages, he is duty bound to exploit the grapevine.

Rumor mills have other peculiar uses. They can be exploited experimentally to test the effect of a pending policy or plan. Of course it is desirable that the scope of the experiment be controlled as to the number and status of individuals receiving the information. Also, a relief valve or stop device must be available to stop the rumor if it goes out of control.

Rumors have been used to combat plans of groups or unions. Consider a company which has a union beset with jurisdictional problems. Basically, these jurisdictional problems are internal union affairs. Due to their existence, however, personnel are interested, agitated, and upset. It is to the company's advantage if the problems are solved because the agitation and disturbances are causing both a loss of time from work and a loss of product quality due to inattentiveness. A possible solution is to start a rumor that all work causing the jurisdictional arguments will be contracted outside the company if the problems are not rapidly settled.

The disadvantages of a grapevine usually outweigh the
7 advantages. The rumor mill is not careful to check the

validity of stories. Usually, the information transmitted is sensational and gossipy. No one assumes responsibility for origination, wording, coverage, or transmission. Many types of messages do not enjoy comparable success of transmission. There is no control as to ultimate coverage and no assurance that all interested and deserving parties are reached.

Sometimes hostile grapevines can be turned in an advantageous direction. Many companies operate informal rumor clinics where rumors are actively sought. The clinic, which can be one or more members of supervision and one or more wage roll employees, analyzes the rumor and the supervision seeks the facts. The rumor is thereby credited or discredited. If applicable details are missing, they can be filled in. Later, the supervisory members should reanalyze the rumor for the cause and cure of the original leak. Like all plans, however, the clinic must benefit both supervision and labor if it is to survive. If it is used only as a tool by supervision to put out fires, its success is doomed.

The harsh effects of a rumor mill can be minimized by meetings and contacts with natural leaders. These meetings should promote an interest in honest communications. This

8. Loc. cit.

9. Loc. cit.

involves the care which must be taken to make sure that these individuals receive and understand authoritative messages. Finally, the last-ditch stand to minimize the harsh effects is to squelch ill-advised rumors as fast as they are received or overheard.

10

Chapter I

Training in Oral Transmission

As already stated, every business utilizes and depends on efficient oral communication. Yet, this means of communication receives less development than other media, perhaps because it is assumed that everyone knows how to talk.¹ Little analysis is made of the effectiveness of conversation. Like the cost of operation of the medium itself, the cost of training in oral conversation is less than the cost of training for any other system. The reason for this is that adequate oral conversational skill must be developed prior to the effective use of any other medium.

Advantages of Training

In brief, training in oral communication teaches individuals to talk less and say more.² People who can talk effectively are believed and followed more readily than persons lacking in oratorical skills. Speaking, as a skill, is learned by speaking.³ Performance improves as confidence is gained. Confidence is developed by continued practice and by analysis of results.

1. Spence, L. H., "Communications Training, A Neglected Approach", Personnel, XXXIV (November, 1957), p. 65.

2. Marston, Everett C., Loring M. Thompson, and Frank Zaehner, Business Communication (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 363.

3. Loc. cit.

Goals of Training Program

The development of confidence in oral conversation should be the primary goal of the training program. Once self-reliance is developed, the speaker has no reason to hesitate in applying the other traits and techniques of oral conversation which promote the operation of a sound overall communication system.

To gain confidence, the trainee should be taught to look for opportunities to share messages. This means that every opportunity to speak must be exploited. These occasions can be supplemented with assigned talks on various subjects. Novice speakers should be required to give talks periodically throughout the course as new principles are learned. As the course progresses, the principles of oral transmission should be stressed and followed by a discussion of the actual tools which can be used. The course should follow three stages of progression:⁴

1. Release - the speaker learns to relax and forget self.
2. Confidence - the student begins to gain confidence in his ability to transmit an idea.
3. Persuasion - the speaker gains skills in promotion and selling ideas through the unconscious use of conversational tools.

4. Lee. cit.

Critique of Efforts

Training in communications should result in less errors of operation, less misunderstanding, less clarification of questions, and higher morale. It is difficult, however, to measure progress in communicating abilities with a firm yardstick. The resulting advantages, regardless how great, are slow to mature. The best check on progress is to observe the actions and listen to the comments which are stimulated by the communications. Supplementing these observations, studies can be made of over-time hours and jobs completed on schedule. This data usually shows a trend of improvement as communication effectiveness increases. A questionnaire about some message recently received or transmitted can be utilized on occasion. This questionnaire should ask for facts, times, dates, and situations. It can be utilized for any message at any level of the organization. The questionnaire, compared with the results expected from the transmission of the message, will give an indication of the effectiveness of the communicating system.

BOOK II

Study of Oral Communications Within Area Maintenance

Spruance Plant

E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company

Richmond, Virginia

Chapter I

Scope and Purpose of Study

The maintenance organization at the Spruance Fibers location serves a multi-plant facility which is composed of one rayon plant, one nylon plant, and one research laboratory. The objective of the maintenance group is to maintain the operation and housekeeping of the plant production machinery, factory buildings, and plant service machinery and buildings in a safe and orderly manner. This objective is accomplished by approximately three hundred mechanics and craftsmen, the majority of whom are available for work in any of the three plants.

All maintenance supervision reports to higher supervision within the maintenance organization. The highest maintenance official, the maintenance supervisor, reports to the Works Engineer. Organization Chart D, page 76, illustrates the plant line organization. Organization Chart E, page 77, illustrates the Works Engineering organization. A further, detailed discussion of the organization and its duties will be covered in Chapter II.

Scope of Study

The oral communications most frequently used by maintenance supervision will be examined. Included in

CHART D
LINE ORGANIZATION

Plant Manager

Assistant Plant Manager

Manufacturing Superintendent

Area Supervisor - Nylon

Shift Supervisors

Area Supervisor - Nylon

Shift Supervisors

Area Supervisor - Rayon

Shift Supervisors

Area Supervisors - Rayon

Shift Supervisors

Works Engineer

Maintenance Supervisor

Engineering Supervisor

Power Supervisor

Process Superintendent

Process Supervisor - Nylon

Process Supervisor - Rayon

Mechanical Process Supervisor

Process Control Supervisor

Personnel Superintendent

Accounting Superintendent

Planning Superintendent

CHART E
WORKS ENGINEERING ORGANIZATION

Works Engineer

Maintenance Supervisor

Area Maintenance Supervisor - Nylon

Area Maintenance Foremen

Area Maintenance Supervisor - Rayon

Area Maintenance Foremen

Area Maintenance Supervisor - Rayon and Tech. Lab.

Area Maintenance Foremen

Shops and Crafts Supervisor

Shops and Crafts Foremen

Shops and Crafts Supervisor

Shops and Crafts Foremen

Engineering Services Supervisor

Engineering Supervisor

Design Supervisor

Engineers

Project Group Supervisor

Foremen

Power Supervisor

Power House Supervisor

Foremen

Electrical Supervisor

Foremen

Power Services Supervisor

Foremen

this scope will be the following communications to the foreman level:

1. Communications from superiors to foremen.
2. Communications from lateral organizational levels to foremen.
3. Information directed to wage roll personnel through the foremen.
4. Information from wage roll personnel to foremen.

Also included in the scope will be communications from the foremen directed up the line:

1. Briefings for superiors.
2. Briefings for lateral levels of the organization.

Purpose of Study

The maintenance organization (under study) has been in service for many years. Its accomplishments are well known and respected highly within the company. Any organization, however, must improve its methods and procedures to remain competitive. This study is designed to locate existing deficiencies in oral communications within the maintenance organization and to suggest improvements. The writer's belief is that the overall control of the organization can be strengthened by the adoption of some of these suggestions. The writer realizes that not all of the recommendations are new; nevertheless, a re-application of the ideas can result in tangible benefits, the nature of which is explained in the concluding chapter.

Limitation of Study

Maintenance at the Spruance Plant implies maintenance to three producing facilities, as mentioned previously. This study, however, is concentrated on the segments of the maintenance organization which serve the Nylon plant. Except for a few minor differences dictated by the type of product produced, the principles of oral communications as discussed are universally applicable to all three plants.

Chapter II

Organization of Maintenance Department

The objective of the Maintenance Department, as mentioned previously, is to maintain all plant machinery and factory buildings in a safe and orderly manner. This work falls into two categories, routine and non-routine. Routine maintenance is that which is performed on a repetitive cycle or established schedule. Non-routine maintenance includes occasional repairs resulting from mechanical breakdowns, the modifications of existing equipment, and the minor installation of new equipment.

Organizational Arrangement of Maintenance Department

The maintenance organization is subdivided into five sub-organizations which report to the Maintenance Supervisor. ¹

These are:

1. Nylon Area Maintenance
2. Rayon Area Maintenance
3. Research Laboratory Area Maintenance
4. Shops and Crafts Group #1
5. Shops and Crafts Group #2

The three area maintenance sub-organizations have the responsibility for all maintenance within their respective plants. Each of these area sub-organizations has crews of mechanics who perform maintenance jobs in their assigned

1. Refer to Organization Chart E, page 77.

plants only. These jobs include the daily adjustment of machinery, housekeeping of equipment, limited overhauls, and the minor installations of new equipment. The aforementioned crews are supervised by area foremen who have the responsibility for all maintenance in a particular area of the plant.

Each area foreman's duties, in addition to the supervision of men who report directly to him, include the coordination of all works engineering services performed in his particular area. These services include those by the electricians, the instrument group, the power group, the plant design section, and the project group.

The shops and crafts groups form a pool of craftsmen and mechanics who are available for use in any or all of the three producing facilities. The work of these craftsmen is scheduled according to the requirements of the three area maintenance groups. Approximately one-third of the mechanical maintenance man-hours are supplied to the area maintenance groups from these two shops and crafts groups. The coordination and scheduling of this effort is also a responsibility of the area maintenance foremen. The shops and crafts supervisors handle the administration of their men and follow the details of their jobs in the field.

Maintenance Coordination with Line Organization

The plant line organization is the body of people who actually operate the equipment manufacturing the product.

Maintenance is a staff service to this line organization. In order to render efficient and satisfactory service, maintenance must cooperate with and serve the manufacturing groups. This means that each area maintenance group must cooperate with and serve the corresponding manufacturing groups.

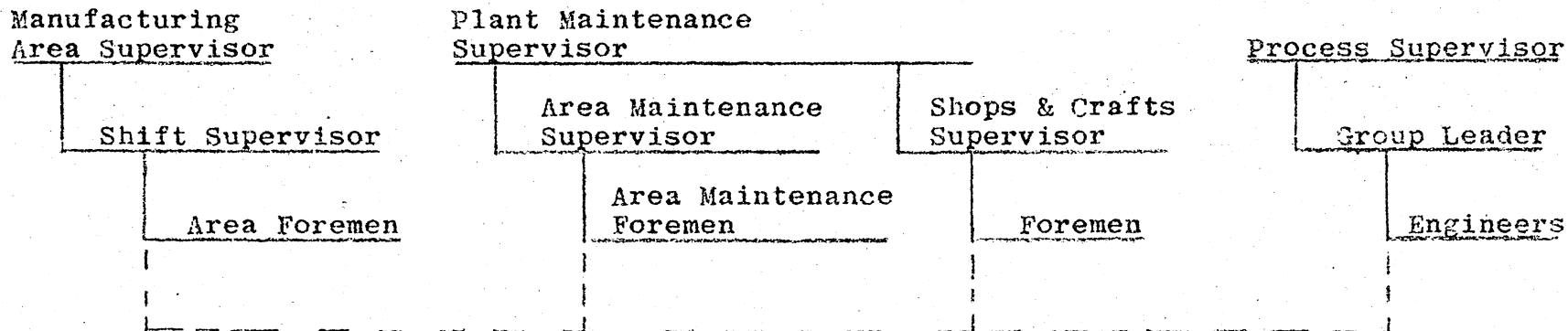
Manufacturing supervision within the Nylon plant is divided into two areas, each with a supervisor reporting to the Manufacturing Superintendent. Each manufacturing area supervisor has four shift supervisors reporting to him. Each shift supervisor, in turn, has two or more foremen reporting to him.

The area maintenance group in the Spruance plant has an area maintenance supervisor who reports to the Maintenance Supervisor. The area maintenance supervisor has three area maintenance foremen and two area engineers under his jurisdiction. Two of the area maintenance foremen and their crews and one area maintenance engineer serve one of the manufacturing areas and the other foreman, crew and engineer serve the remaining manufacturing area. The area maintenance supervisor oversees all of the maintenance within the plant. The area maintenance foremen supervise and coordinate the specific maintenance activities in their areas. The coordination between the area maintenance foreman and the manufacturing area supervision is the major link between the two groups.

3. Refer to Chart F, page 83.

4. Refer to Chart F, page 83.

CHART F
 LINKS BETWEEN MANUFACTURING ORGANIZATION
 AND STAFF GROUPS



——— Line of accountability

- - - Lateral level contact line

This chart illustrates the levels of cross contact which foremen and engineers most frequently utilize in their cooperative effort to maintain effective communication. For the purpose of simplicity, this chart does not list all plant staff groups which maintain contact at the foreman level.

Chapter III

Existing Methods of Oral Communication

Suggestions for Their Improvement

Some of the oral communications within the maintenance department, including conversations between foremen and supervisors and between employees and foremen, were reviewed as to degree of effectiveness. The grand total of all types of communication presently in use is so great in number that full and accurate description of them would require many pages of explanation. There are, however, several methods regularly in use which could be improved in effectiveness. These methods and their weaknesses are discussed, and recommendations are made to strengthen them.

Oral Communications to the Foreman Level

Oral communications to the foreman level include messages from higher supervision, from supervision on lateral levels, and from the employees whom the foreman supervises. The content of these messages can be official or unofficial, authoritative or hearsay. Regardless of the nature of the information, the foreman must be able to receive and transmit the message.

Supervisor to Foreman

The supervisor is the foreman's source of most of the official information which comes from the top of a line organization. ¹ Also, he is the foreman's source of most of the departmental information which is transmitted downward. Whether or not the foreman acts in the manner desired by higher management will depend on the supervisor's reception and transmission of the messages.

Supervisor's Indirect Sources

All communications from the staff level directed to employees flow down to the lower levels of maintenance as follows:

The message is developed by the Works Engineer, who is a member of the plant staff. He, in turn, briefs his staff (the Engineering Supervisor, the Power Supervisor, and the Maintenance Supervisor). This latter briefing takes place in the Works Engineer's office, which is over one-fifth of a mile away from the maintenance supervisor's office.

1. National Association of Manufacturers, Case Book, Employee Communications in Action, New York, p. 5.

The maintenance supervisor usually holds his staff meeting in his office unless the information is extremely urgent in nature, in which case, he utilizes the telephone. This meeting is attended by three area maintenance supervisors, the shops and crafts supervisors, and the maintenance engineering supervisor. The maintenance supervisor's office is one-eighth of a mile away from the Nylon area maintenance supervisor's office.

The area maintenance supervisor transmits information gained from his superior's meeting to his foremen the following day unless, of course, the information is of an urgent nature. Finally, the foremen retransmit messages aimed at wage roll personnel the next morning.

The current procedure for the transmission of routine information progresses through four levels before it reaches wage roll personnel. The information is received four times prior to reception by the employees. The information necessarily must be transmitted four times, making a total of eight possibilities for misinterpretation or error. In the course of the procedure the message is carried over one-third of a mile, requiring two and one-half days before it reaches its destination. Information from the staff level which is to be stopped at any intermediate level takes proportionately as long.

The foreman's source of this information can be improved

by combining two levels of reception.² The works engineer could include the area maintenance and shops and crafts supervisors in his staff meeting for the purpose of increasing the speed of transmission. By so doing, one day and one-quarter of a mile of distance are saved in transmission. In addition, two chances of error due to misinterpretation are eliminated and the lead over the grapevine is increased.

Items not discussed in the works engineer's staff meeting which the maintenance supervisor wants to cover with his staff could be covered by another meeting of short duration or could be discussed by telephone. The advantage here is an increase in speed and accuracy of oral messages to the foremen for their benefit or for further transmission to the employees.

Methods of Transmission to Foremen

The previous section dealt with delays in transmission from the staff level. The problem was one of both the number and delays of transmission, since the plan of disseminating a known message had been established. There are cases, however, where information is not transmitted in a logical direction to the point where it can do the most good. The case in point is the biweekly quality meetings which discuss all the indices of product quality. Quite often these

2. Nussman, Willian W., Communication Within the Management Group. (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1947), p.9.

indices are influenced by factors which maintenance could alter. Although the meetings are open to all supervision, attendance by maintenance is irregular. Usually, the transmission of the information pertinent to maintenance is accomplished by a member of the manufacturing area organization. If the information were noted by the manufacturing area supervisor, it would probably be transmitted by him to the area maintenance supervisor who in turn would pass it on to the area maintenance foreman. The foreman, in turn, would probably have to discuss the problem with his area engineer. This involves three levels and four members of supervision. Quite often the magnitude of the problem is reduced by attendance at the quality meeting by the area maintenance supervisor. The difficulty here, however, arises from the fact that the area maintenance supervisor is not so familiar with current process details as an area maintenance foreman or area maintenance engineer. Established, clear-cut, methods of transmitting the data concerning maintenance do not appear to be in constant operation.

Information concerning the quality of production could be transmitted to the foremen in a more direct manner by requiring area foremen or the area engineers to attend the biweekly quality meetings. This procedure could eliminate two levels of reception and transmission, one by the manufacturing area supervisor and one by the area maintenance supervisor. It is not intended that area foremen or area engineers attend the quality meeting in lieu of the area maintenance supervisor,

but rather that the foremen or engineer attend in addition to their superior. The area maintenance supervisor must maintain control and knowledge of his organization's responsibilities. If this system were to be established, its practice should be faithfully followed.

Employee to Foreman

Considerable information which is helpful, and sometimes necessary, in the management of a business is transmitted to foremen by wage roll employees.³ These messages do not have the preparation which messages from management have. As a result, these messages are sometimes difficult to recognize. Recognition and appreciation of this type of information must be cultivated if the foremen intend to perpetuate the free oral flow of intelligence.

Use of Feedback

Feedback is the term applied to information reaching a communicator in response to a message presented by the communicator.⁴ Usually, feedback serves two purposes. First, it can serve as an indication of reception, understanding, and

3. Robinson, C., "Needed, More Sell In Employee Communications," Management Review, XLVI (February 1957)p.24.

4. Walton, Eugene, "Evaluating Feedback Channels," Supervision, XXI (March, 1959), 4-6.

effect of a message. Second, feedback may contain specific, sought-after information which is desired by management. Generally, an analysis of feedback provides a good indication of communication effectiveness.⁵

Little use is made of feedback. This lack of use is probably attributable to a lack of understanding on the part of the foremen as to the advantages of this technique. Its most frequent use could be in the ascertainment of understanding of issued instructions as illustrated in the following examples:

Example 1: After issuing instructions concerning how a job should be done, the instructor-foreman could request a demonstration by the workers. If the job is not adaptable to a demonstration, the progress and the procedure could be observed. The procedures followed, as indicated by the observation, would be indicative of the effectiveness of the initial instruction.

Example 2: During a meeting of his crew, an instructor-foreman could explain a revision of a plant policy. Later, after the conclusion of the meeting, the instructor could ask an employee to state his understanding of the revision. This description and meaning of the policy change would indicate the clarity of the foreman's transmission of the message.

5. Ibid., pp 4-6.

Example 3: A foreman could assign a mechanic to maintain a particular area of a plant. The mechanic could be instructed to maintain housekeeping, check the operation of all equipment in the area, and report items to the foreman which must be handled by other craft groups. A comparison of the reports turned in by the mechanic against actual observations by the foreman would indicate whether or not the mechanic understood his job.

This latter case assumes that the mechanic has the requisite initiative and qualifications.

Transmission of Status Information

Maintenance foremen, like other managers, must keep abreast of all activities in their respective areas of responsibilities.⁶ This is per se a difficult task, but it could be greatly simplified by means of a system of receiving status information on a repetitive schedule. Reporting of this nature is sparse due primarily to a general lack of understanding of its need on the part of the employees. As a result, maintenance foremen either seek the information out themselves or remain ignorant of current conditions.

Maintenance foremen have responsibility for the maintenance of many different types of machines and systems. Since the equipment is scattered out at different locations, some of which are relatively inaccessible, the foremen cannot check

Job 6. Doohar, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on the (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p.131.

each item daily. However, the employees in the foremen's crew can usually check the machinery on a desired cycle. Once such a cycle is established, the problem of reporting the status of the equipment comes into focus.

The success of reporting status information rests on basic procedures. All mechanics within a maintenance foreman's crew, if not working directly in front of the foreman, should be instructed and have the opportunity to report the status of his job or area. Initially, the mechanic should be instructed to report the results of his routine checks of machinery. The value of these reports should be explained to the mechanic in terms of how the information is actually used. For example, the mechanic should know and understand how his reports affect the scheduling of major maintenance on his equipment. The mechanic should have some appreciation of the status information, pertaining to his area of responsibility, which the foreman must report to his superiors.

Effective reporting of this intelligence, once the mechanic learns what is desired, depends on a systematic pursuance of the report. Adequate time and encouragement must be provided. The scope of the information can gradually be increased to cover any area activity of interest to the foreman. Care must be taken by the foreman periodically to review the area itself, the content of the reports, and a summary of the desired information with the mechanic. This review maintains a check on accuracy, scope, and interest. Use of this status reporting will save a foreman valuable time and energy.

Transmission of Personnel Information

Personnel information, in this context, includes information concerning the thoughts and activities of workers, individually and collectively. Knowledge of these ideas and actions is required in order to appraise the collective morale status of an organization.⁷ Also, this information is indicative of the degree of employee acceptance of company plans, policies, and rules.

This intelligence is commonly hard to gain primarily because of a lack of trust between the workers and management. A member of supervision is not considered "one of the boys", and rightly so.⁸ For this reason he is not admitted to "bull sessions".

Personnel information is much easier to collect if employees trust their supervision than it is in a situation where employees are suspicious of every question or statement issued by management. For the free and spontaneous flow of personnel information to exist, a democratic climate must be established.⁹ A foreman can aid in the creation of such a democratic climate by treating each of his men equally. Impartiality can be demonstrated by a systematic rotation of

7. Moore, Franklin G., Manufacturing Management (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1957) p.89.

8. Ibid., p.89.

9. Habbe, Stephen, Communication with Employees (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1952), p.6.

job assignments. If each employee has the opportunity of sharing in the desirable and undesirable jobs, he feels that his opportunities to demonstrate his skills are equal to those of his fellow workers. Also, there is no reason for an employee to feel that he receives more than his share of "rough" jobs.

A further effort to maintain impartiality can be demonstrated by a daily conversation with each employee. Such a conversation may be in a light vein or may occasionally become quite serious. The light conversations are best reserved for periods when the foreman is rushed. Also, a light conversation can be used as a foreman is issuing an order. An example of the latter occasion would be in asking a few questions about an employee's hobbies while the foreman is making a safety check of the employee's tools. Care should be exercised by the foreman not to allow all his conversation with any one employee to be light in nature.¹⁰ Occasionally, the foreman should initiate and participate in conversations in deeper subject matter such as politics, municipal affairs, civic affairs, church affairs, or family problems of major import. These more meaningful contacts indicate to the employee that the foreman honestly wants to converse with him. Employees have been known to regard a foreman's constant use of light conversation as another part of the foreman's daily methodical

10. McMurray, R. N. and R.G. Schaeffer, "Analyzing Your Communication Problem," American Business, XXVII (May, 1957), p.17.

routine, and accordingly, respond to it with little sincerity.

Regular conversations with each employee help dispel reasoning on the part of the men that one employee associates with supervision more than another. This system allows employees to express themselves freely without fear of ridicule from fellow workers. This ridicule, if partiality exists, usually comes in the form of accusations of "apple polishing" by other employees.

A foreman's sincerity in conversation can be further demonstrated by the foreman's linking past conversations to the present one.¹¹ In other words, the foreman's interest and understanding can be proved to the employee by the foreman's recollection of subjects, facts, and figures previously discussed. The following is an example of this technique: A foreman recalls that last month one of his employees was concerned about the marks his son was making in a college engineering course. The foreman approaches the employee and asks, "John, was your son able to improve his grade in Principles of Electrical Engineering?" The foreman, by his question, has proved that he was listening to and interested in the prior conversation.

In conversations with employees a foreman is wise not to make promises unless he is sure he can keep them.¹² Often

11. Harlow, R. F., "Looking Around (Art of Communication)," Harvard Business Review, XXXV (November, 1957), p.145.

12. Docher, M.J. op. cit., p. 149.

it is difficult not to make a promise on the spot. A procedure to avoid making immediate promises is to give assurance of further discussion of the subject. If the foreman can assure that he will discuss a subject again in the near future, it allows him to organize his thoughts and proposals and to request any necessary authority for commitments to the employee or employees.

A situation may arise, which is extremely frustrating to management, when supervision strives to seek information from employees concerning union activities about which the employees are honestly ignorant. Usually, it is to management's benefit for employees to be aware of union actions. This condition will prevent decisions and conduct by union officers which might irritate employees, thereby causing disturbances on the job. Appreciation of this reasoning is not felt by all maintenance foremen.

Foremen who supervise unionized employees do their best to remain abreast of union activities. Unless there is some plant or area-wide movement in opposition to the union, a foreman should be free to cooperate with the union in subjects of mutual interest.¹³ This cooperation does not imply submission to all union requests. It does, however, mean that the foreman cooperates on any subject which does not set a precedent for other areas. This sincere cooperation on the part of the foreman will usually cause some employees to mention

13. Habbe, S., op. cit., p. 35.

current or proposed union activities. If this intelligence is worth transmitting upward, care must be exercised not to divulge the source in a manner which would allow the employees to pinpoint its origin.

Quite often management finds itself in a position of understanding an official union action which is a mystery to many of the union members. If such a move has a potential for causing future controversies, it is wise to drop comments about it and its significance to employees, who may be trusted to pass the word along to other employees. The total disturbance caused prior to the union action might be less than the disturbance engendered by a union action taken without the employee's understanding.

Limitation of Opportunities For Discussion

The amount of information received from wage roll personnel is obviously restricted by the amount of time devoted to the task. Maintenance foremen are generally busy with many problems and activities. Quite often the desire to solve or control these problems causes maintenance foremen to spend little time with their men. The result is a smaller number of contacts and less time per contact.

This situation is particularly true of maintenance foremen with technical background. Technical problems stimulate their minds and challenge them to solutions. The solutions commonly consume much more time than the non-technically

trained members of supervision would attempt to devote to problems in the first place.

Technically trained foremen should realize that their primary responsibility is to maintain the administration, safety, and efficiency of their crews.¹⁴ In many cases this primary responsibility should prevent them from attacking a problem requiring their technical skill. The assumption by the foreman of responsibility for the solution of these technical problems might be due to one of two reasons. First, the foreman may desire to work on the problem because of his professional interest. Second, the problem may be assigned to the foreman by a superior because the superior recognizes the foreman's technical qualifications. In either event the foreman should make an effort to refer the problem to a staff group which specializes in this work. When specialist help is not available, and the foreman's professional skills qualify him as management's choice to work on the problem, efforts should be made to relieve the foreman temporarily from his primary responsibilities. If these procedures are not followed, the foreman will probably find that he is losing valuable contact time with his employees.

Information from wage roll personnel, on the other hand, can also be restricted by the duties assigned. The best-informed mechanics - those with initiative and sound

14. Husband, Richard W., Applied Psychology (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 208.

job knowledge - are assigned to critical jobs which keep them relatively busy compared with other men. As a result they have less time available for discussions. This condition is particularly true in areas where machinery operating continuously has a high maintenance rate. The problem can be partially solved if the recommendations concerning daily, systematic conversations are followed. The practice of maintaining an "open door" policy can also be of great value in this connection.

Lateral Levels to Foreman

Many manufacturing areas have committees composed of works engineering, manufacturing, and technical representatives who discuss and seek solutions to problems within an area. Generally these committees meet on an established schedule, perhaps weekly or biweekly. Based on the combined experience and knowledge available, many area plans are formulated and projected action is coordinated. These committee meetings have been extremely successful in achieving coordination in the solution of problems. Prior to the meetings the coordination was not so effective. There is a tendency, however, to combine more than one area into a committee's agenda. Also, there are efforts to increase the length of time between meetings. These two moves reduce the total number of meetings but increase

the duration of each meeting. Maintenance foremen, in addition to serving in a staff or service capacity, must supervise their men in order to maintain their safety and effectiveness. This latter responsibility is the more important of the two. ¹⁵ As a result, there are many occasions when maintenance foremen miss these meetings because of the primary responsibility to their crews. This situation causes the area to lose the coordination of the maintenance group.

Area maintenance foremen should be encouraged to make a point of attending area committee meetings for their complete duration. In an effort to facilitate such attendance the meetings should be kept as short in time as feasible. Quite often it is overlooked that the maintenance foreman is the only member on the committee who actually supervises wage roll employees. Limiting the scope and increasing the frequency helps shorten the duration of the meetings, thus leaving more time for the area maintenance foreman to supervise his crew of men.

In a chemical plant each maintenance foreman maintains close contact with two members of supervision on

15. The Discussion of An Individual's Performance,
Training Division, Employee Relations Department, E. I. du
Pont de Nemours & Co., Inc., Wilmington, Delaware, Section 1.

his own level, the area manufacturing foreman and the area process engineer. These three men form a supervisory team which maintains the continuity of area production. Contacts between and among the three should be frequent. The manufacturing foreman and process engineer should have knowledge of all maintenance jobs, in addition to daily routine, which are in progress. In most cases the manufacturing foreman has this knowledge. On the other hand, contacts between the maintenance foreman and the process engineer are limited to area committee meetings and discussions on specific, individual problems. The activities of these three groups are not thoroughly understood by one another. Again, optimum coordination is usually not achieved.

The area process engineer and the area manufacturing foreman should develop procedures whereby they assure themselves of daily contact with each other. The burden of making this contact should be assigned to one of them as agreed upon. It is wise to continue the practice even though there may appear to be nothing specific to discuss. Maintaining a workable procedure is the most difficult task. Once in operation, however, such a system encourages closer teamwork.

Modern industry is constantly expanding and modifying its existing facilities. On large plant sites there are engineers designing and arranging for the installation of new machinery. This effort must be coordinated with

existing operations in order to maintain continuity of production and to secure the benefit of field experience. The contact between the design engineers and maintenance foremen is usually restricted to interviews concerning specific problems. In the writer's opinion this type of coordination is altogether unsatisfactory. The maintenance foremen should be aware of the progress of the design of all new facilities or modifications of equipment in his area. This knowledge should be used in the scheduling of maintenance on existing facilities, observations concerning shortcomings in existing facilities which can be corrected during future installations, and in scheduling the installation of new facilities.

The contacts between area maintenance foremen and engineers coordinating new installations should be scheduled according to the tempo of the jobs requiring coordination. If possible it is an aid for one engineer to maintain a knowledge of all projected installations for a certain area. Such being the case, this engineer and the area maintenance foreman could establish a schedule of meetings for the purpose of informing the area maintenance foreman of forthcoming construction or new installation activities.

Oral Communications by Foreman

Oral communications by foremen include all oral messages which foremen transmit to employees, superiors, or side staff levels. These messages are transmitted every hour of the day. The vast number of such messages, and the rush of business, tend to discourage foremen from applying the requisite principles and techniques of transmission. The suggestions discussed in this section are designed to show how better to apply the principles most frequently overlooked.

Foreman to Employee

The effectiveness of oral communications between foremen and employees is directly proportional to the use of the principles discussed in Book I, Chapter V. The following is a brief discussion of the frequent lack of application of some of these principles.

Misunderstanding of Purpose of Message

Many messages are transmitted through the foreman level to the employees without the clear understanding of the foreman. This misunderstanding could be due either to inaccurate transmission to the foreman or lack of pursuance of the facts. In either case the message is inaccurate and the desired results are difficult to obtain.

The foreman cannot transmit an accurate message if he
 16
 does not possess an accurate background for the message.

There are two simple ways to make a check on one's personal reception. One way is to ask the person delivering the message to repeat it. The second way is to repeat the message to the person from whom it was received. Either method should be utilized if there is any doubt as to the clarity of the reception.

Misunderstanding of the Employee's Needs

Many foremen, particularly those with a college education, lack an understanding of employees' backgrounds and philosophies. The misunderstanding is in most cases due to a lack of probing on the part of the foreman. A study of these factors usually reveals that the employees' background, environment, and philosophies are quite different from those of the foreman. Therefore the foreman's messages should appeal as often as possible to the employees' needs. If the message tends to satisfy a want or necessity, the chances of good reception are notably enhanced.
 17

Incomplete Planning

Every message to employees should receive some planning on the part of the foreman.
 18
 Where initiated by the

16. Docher, M. J., op. cit., p. 23.

17. Harlow, R. F., op. cit., p. 146.

18. Docher, M. J., op. cit., p. 23.

foreman, the planning may take the form of arranging the facts and objectives of the message. On the other hand it can assume the shape of a logical reorganization of a message transmitted from higher management and intended for employees. Many messages of both types are transmitted with limited authenticity, limited accuracy, incomplete coverage, inadequate timing, and ambiguous wording. Naturally, reception of the desired interpretation by the employees is far from perfect.

All outgoing messages can be refined and improved with increasing degrees of planning.¹⁹ The amount of planning which can be undertaken depends, of course, on the particular situation. It is not difficult or particularly time-consuming to review mentally and satisfy²⁰ the following requirements for adequate transmission:

- a. Define the purpose
- b. Gather the facts
- c. Check the authenticity of the facts
- d. Organize the message
- e. Outline the classes of recipients
- f. Outline the results expected

19. Marston, Everett C., Loring M. Thompson and Frank Zacher, Business Communication (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 377.

20. Ibid., p. 367.

Absence of a Stated Purpose

Decisions and orders are transmitted more often than not without an explanation as to why the decisions were made. This is particularly noticeable among foremen with long service who have progressed up from the ranks. The work which is done by the mechanics in response to such a foreman's order might contain errors which could have been eliminated if the broad reasoning were understood. Also, orders without reasons seldom stimulate the desire for accomplishment.

Most authorities agree that employees react to orders more favorably, on the average, if they are supplied with a reason for the order. ²¹ Of course there are exceptions when employees disagree with the reason. However, the continued use of the stated purpose will probably stimulate more interest and enthusiasm in doing a job than any other factor. This principle should be applied to any order, no matter how large or how small. Stating the purpose of the order generally makes the job take on more importance in the employee's mind. The following examples illustrate the use of the stated purpose for a minor and a major order:

"Tom, I would appreciate your sweeping the trash from under the bench so that we can maintain our high house-keeping standard." Tom, in carrying out this order, feels that he is doing more than merely pushing a broom: he is

21. Exton, W., Jr., "Taking The Double Talk Out of Communicating," Factory Management, CMV (April, -1957), pp 114 - 120.

helping to set a high standard of performance for a shop group.

"Joe, I would like Dick, Jack and you to change the drive motor on Number 2 machine. Work on the job until it is complete, even though it takes you past your lunch hour. The reason for the rush is that all production from Number 2 machine will be lost until the motor is replaced. Also, six men will be idle until the machine is in operation. I'll see to it that the cafeteria serves you when you complete the job." These men, knowing the importance of the job, will be less apt to complain about missing their lunch schedule. Also, they will probably be inclined to perform the job in the least possible time.

Employment of Physical Aids

Routine discussions between foremen and employees usually lack the advantages of physical aids. The most apparent reason for the absence of these aids is the time required and the difficulty to locate and display the aids. The burden of explanation, therefore, is carried by the foremen's words.

The usual pattern for issuing orders to maintenance crews centers around a morning safety or line-up meeting. After discussing the safety program or some other subject directed to the employees, the foreman issues the first or daily work assignments. These meetings increase in meaning

and interest if large easel-type pads are utilized. ²² Material to be shown on these pads includes the following:

1. Work assignments
2. Diagrams of equipment to be overhauled
3. Key points of the safety program
4. Key factors in a plant policy

Other physical aids which can be of service to a maintenance foreman in talks with his men include:

1. Blue prints
2. Equipment demonstrations
3. Charts
4. Posters

Expectancy of Routine

Many foremen organize their patterns of communications to employees on a firm routine. It is possible for many messages to lose effectiveness as a result of too close an adherence to this established routine.

It has been the writer's experience that employees desire a certain amount of routine procedure in order for them to feel secure in their jobs. In other words, if an employee expects certain things to happen every day, and these things do happen every day, the employee feels that the situation is normal and nothing new is threatening his

22. Dunbar, W. R., "Engineering Briefing, A Communication Medium," Aero-Space Engineering, XVIII (March, 1959), 26.

security. If this routine is perpetuated indefinitely, however, it is possible to dull the employee's sense of reception since he assumes that the routine will follow. In an effort to stimulate reception by the employees, it is wise to make a temporary change periodically in method and time of transmission. If these methods are explained as being temporary, the employees' sense of reception will be stimulated by the change, but the knowledge that the change is temporary will prevent any feeling of insecurity.

Distracting Setting

Wage roll employees are easily distracted during a meeting or conversation. Messages from maintenance foremen to employees are commonly transmitted in active or noisy surroundings. For this reason attention on the part of both listener and speaker is constantly challenged.

Morning line-up or safety meetings should be held in a setting which is quiet and private if possible. The foreman should make it known to his associates that he prefers not to be disturbed while he is conducting the meetings. If a telephone is close by, one employee should be delegated the responsibility of answering the telephone and taking a message with the least amount of distraction to the crew.

When a foreman is in the field issuing orders or conversing with employees, he should make an effort to seek

the quietest spot in the vicinity for the conversation.

Reception by either party is adversely affected by surrounding noises.

Foreman to Supervisor

Messages from foreman to superiors are hampered by psychological barriers and also by the failure to employ the most effective techniques.²³ The following suggestions, designed to improve the flow of information from foremen to superiors, deal with the psychological and actual barriers encountered in foreman-to-superior communications.

Lack of Opportunity

The vast majority of maintenance foremen and supervisors have many problems and interests. These problems and interests are usually in greater supply than the time available for solutions and satisfactions. There are cases, therefore, where the desire for solutions and satisfactions on the part of the supervisors and the foremen prevents their meeting for transmission of information upward.

Obviously, there can be no conversation between maintenance supervisors and foremen if there are no opportunities for contact. However, arrangements can be made and must be made to ensure the occurrence of these contacts. The foreman's primary responsibility is to his men and similarly, a supervisor's

23. Dooker, M.J., op. cit., p. 146.

primary responsibility is to the foremen and engineers under him.²⁴ Usually, the time and occasion for foreman-supervisor contacts can be established by the supervisor. If this is not true, the initiative should be taken by the foreman. It is the foreman's duty to pass the information along whether the supervisor specifically asks for it or not.

One generally practiced procedure is for the supervisor to hold a weekly meeting to discuss items of general interest to his foremen and engineers. Care should be exercised not to prolong these meetings so as to hold the foreman out of circulation for abnormal lengths of time.

The aforementioned meetings are group affairs. Usually, the information is flowing in one direction, from the supervisor to the foreman. There is a need, therefore, for other meetings between supervision and foremen in order to facilitate the two-way flow of ideas. The opportunities and systems for these meetings are numerous, each depending on the peculiar conditions surrounding the supervisor and foremen. The key point, however, is to utilize a system which will ensure adequate contact between the two. An example of a simple but satisfactory method follows:

Early in the shift, prior to the foremen's assignment of daily tasks to his men, each foreman could check individually with his supervisor. This short, informal meeting would provide the foreman the opportunity of enlightening his

24. Husband, R.W., op. cit., p.208.

supervisor as to happenings during the period between shifts. Also, near or at the end of the shift, the foreman could check with the supervisor again to inform him of happenings during the shift. However, arranged, the routine must be firm. If the foreman does not appear for the meeting, the supervisor should seek the foreman out to ascertain the reasons which prevented the opportunity for the usual contact.

Knowledge of a Supervisor's Needs

Every foreman should have a general understanding of the information required of him by his supervisor.²⁵ Knowledge of existing and future requirements quite often is not explained to foremen with any repetition. If a foreman knows what is desired by his supervisor, the chances of the supervisor gaining the information he needs are measurably enhanced.

Wise supervision will take the opportunity to make these requirements known to the foremen. In other cases, foremen might have to take the initiative to find out what is needed by the supervisor.²⁶ The supervisor's needs include status reports on the work force, progress status on all special jobs, and out-of-production time on equipment shut down for maintenance. The supervisor should be aware of decisions and recommendations made by area committees. Further, he has

25. Doohar, M.J., op. cit., p.131.

26. Loc. cit.

a need of maintaining an insight into the general morale of the foremen's men.²⁷ Periodically, these needs should be reviewed with the foremen to ensure the coverage of all desired information. Some foremen will never get a complete idea of what a supervisor wants from them unless the supervisor outlines these wants explicitly.

The Fear of Open Association with Supervision

Not a few members of supervision are prone to the same fear of association with superiors as are wage roll employees. The result is that the superiors are required to take more time to gather required information than they would if foremen voluntarily came to them for discussions.

This fear is as real as it is difficult to overcome. Usually it stems from two circumstances. First, there is the fear of ridicule by fellow supervisors or foremen in the form of accusations of "apple polishing". Second, there is the fear that the higher supervisor might regard repeated routine contacts as "apple polishing". These fears can be lessened by frequent and equally apportioned meetings between a supervisor and all his subordinates. Also, if the supervisor is aware that this fear is prevalent, he can openly discuss it in a group meeting, emphasizing the subordinate's responsibility to contact and converse with the superior.

27. Moore, F.G., op. cit., p.89.

Personal Self-Confidence

Foremen with self-confidence furnish an inspiration to their men. This self-confidence is admirable so long as it does not preclude help from supervision or other sources. Apparently there are times when foremen rely entirely on self-confidence in an effort to maintain respect by their crews. This condition can be harmful to an organization because it limits the superior's control and restricts the effectiveness of the foreman.

The results of over-confidence of foremen can usually be controlled by the supervisor, once he is aware of the situation. This control can be exercised by requiring foremen to outline their various decisions on matters after the fact. The supervisor can determine the grounds of the decisions. If these decisions are weak, the superior can begin to exercise a closer supervision coupled with guidance. In addition, the supervisor should constantly emphasize to all foremen the advantages of securing specialized or experienced help in the solution of their problems.

Foremen to Lateral Levels

The maintenance foremen have as many problems in processing their communications to lateral levels as they do in receiving comparable information.

Communications Within Maintenance Department

The coordination of effort by area maintenance and the shops and crafts groups is a responsibility of the area maintenance foremen. However, the area maintenance foremen have no authoritative control over the shops and crafts crews. The headquarters for these crews are distant from the manufacturing areas which ultimately benefit from their services. Because of the distance involved, and the total number of jobs in progress, the contact between the craft foremen and the area maintenance foremen is limited. The result is less than optimum coordination between the two.

Communication with the headquarters of each of the shops or crafts crews should be available to the area maintenance foremen. This is difficult to achieve satisfactorily because the shops and crafts foremen cover the entire plant site in an average day. With the existing organizational structure, it appears to the writer that the best way to provide opportunities for oral conversation with shops and crafts foremen is through the use of a call system. Considering the size of the plant involved, the system must be extensive in coverage of area and personnel. The mechanical operation of the call equipment must be flawless for optimum usefulness. The use and importance of the system should be reviewed periodically with all personnel who participate in its operation.

The problem of contacts between area maintenance foremen and shops and crafts foremen can be simplified by the partial integration of area maintenance and shops and crafts crews. Some area maintenance organizations have repetitive need of

services by a certain number of shops and crafts mechanics. These shops and crafts mechanics perform small, miscellaneous jobs in the manufacturing area. As the situation presently exists, the area maintenance foreman must contact the shops and crafts foremen daily to arrange for these jobs. Many of these contacts can be eliminated by having the shops and crafts mechanics report to the area maintenance foreman in the morning on a firm schedule. For example, one or two painters, sheetmetal workers, and pipe fitters could report to the area maintenance foremen for daily assignments. This system eliminates the need of transmitting the assignment twice, i.e., from area maintenance foremen to shops and crafts foremen to shops and crafts mechanics. This system need not be limited to daily situations. Shop millwrights, welders, and carpenters could report to the area maintenance foremen on certain days of the week for miscellaneous assignments. It is proposed that shops and crafts mechanics report to area maintenance foremen for assignments only and that they be reassigned by their own foremen to opportune or emergency jobs as the situations arise. Further, it is expected that these shops and crafts mechanics would report to their own shops and crafts foremen for all needs other than direct work assignments. In short, although a complete integration of area maintenance and shops and crafts crews is not advisable, it is worth while to reduce foreman contacts for small miscellaneous jobs by the partial integration of selected crafts and area maintenance.

Chapter IV

Measuring and Summarizing

The Benefits of Effective Oral Communications

The numerous benefits of effective oral communication are, for the most part, intangible in nature.¹ It is difficult to place a dollar value on the conditions arising from the advantages of a fast and accurate free oral flow of information. The benefits can be recognized even though they cannot be measured precisely.

Measuring Effectiveness

Measuring the effectiveness of oral communication can be accomplished by several methods. The results of these methods are not absolutely accurate or completely conclusive because the methods involve an analysis of employees' thoughts. No study of a person's thoughts or attitudes is 100% reliable, but grouped together the results of a study can provide the basis for a conclusion.²

1. Habbe, Stephen, Communicating with Employees, (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1952), p. 8.

2. Raube, S. Avery, Experience with Employee Attitude Surveys, (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1951), p. 14.

Survey of Employee Awareness

Surveys can be initiated concerning information which has been passed down through an organization. In the case of information transmitted to wage roll employees, the survey may consist of a questionnaire directed to all or a selected group of maintenance mechanics. The questionnaire would contain questions concerning company benefit policies, company rules, and subjects of general plant interest. The questionnaire would be presented with an explanation of its purpose, i.e., an explanation that the sole purpose of the survey is to investigate the effectiveness of the oral transmission of information. Above all, care should be taken to assure the anonymity of each employee participating in the survey.³ If this latter requirement is not met, participation will be difficult to obtain and answers might not be objective. Wording of the questions should be as simple as possible, requiring answers in only one or two words. One or two questions should ask for an opinion of a subject, the answer to which could be used as an indication of attitude or morale.

Once the survey is completed and the answers to the questionnaires tabulated and analyzed, conclusions can be formulated as to the effectiveness of the program.

3. Ibid., p. 14.

The results of the survey could be analyzed for the purpose of checking the application of each principle of transmission outlined in Chapter V, Book I. This analysis will almost certainly reveal weaknesses which can be corrected by training or by a renewed emphasis on the application of the principles. Fortunately, surveys of employees' attitudes are flexible in scope. They can be designed to cover a plant, a department, or an individual crew. Supervisors can use them to check on their ability to communicate with foremen.⁴ Foremen can use them to check on their ability to converse with mechanics. In any event, the proposed use and content of any survey should be reviewed with higher levels of supervision in an effort to avoid the possibility of arousing dissension within the level being surveyed.

Tabulation of Completed Jobs

A supervisor or foreman usually keeps a check or tabulation of the progress and completion of major jobs in his area. This tabulation could be broadened in scope to indicate which jobs were completed on schedule. An analysis of the jobs not completed on schedule could be made to see which ones were hindered by inadequate communications.

4. Nevis, E. C., "Personal Side of Engineering; Improving Communications," Machine Design, XXX (April 17, 1958), p. 136.

This type of analysis would in all probability reveal weaknesses in the existing systems of oral communication. This analysis could also be utilized as a check on the progress in improving communicative skills.

Tabulation of Overtime Hours

Many maintenance jobs require overtime hours outside of the regularly scheduled workday because of ineffective coordination. Quite often this ineffective coordination is due to misunderstandings between supervision and the mechanics or among the members of supervision. An analysis of these overtime jobs can be made to tabulate the ones due to ineffective or inefficient communications. This latter analysis would indicate a weakness in a system, group or an individual. Once the deficiency has been defined, training or emphasis on the principles and techniques can be applied. A running record of overtime jobs due to lack of coordination would help indicate progress or regression in communicated skills.

Tabulation of Grievances

Many grievances result from misunderstandings between foremen and wage roll workers. These misunderstandings stem from cloudy explanations of rules, policies and work assignments.⁵ Also, the duration of a grievance often depends on

Job 5. Doohar, M. Joseph, Effective Communication on the Job (New York: American Management Association, 1956), p. 210.

the ability of supervision to present its case and to understand the employee's point of view. All of the principles of transmission and reception are involved. A tabulation of grievances, and their progress, could serve as an indication of supervision's understanding and practice of the aforementioned principles.

Summary of Rumors

The rumor mill, as pointed out in Chapter VIII, Book I, is an alternative to the prompt, authoritative flow of information. The existence of rumors often indicates the violation of the principles of good transmission of messages. A summary and analysis of rumors will serve as an aid in detecting deficiencies in existing methods and skills of oral communications. It is recognized that many rumors are the result of leaks of information rather than of defects in communicating skill. These cases, however, can be determined and noted when studying the problem from the point of view of improving communicative methods.

Summary

This manual deals with the techniques and principles of oral communications which are necessary for the proper performance of their duties by supervisors and workers. In this respect both groups are involved in doing the work necessary to the effectiveness of the organization. Each

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group depends on the other. Supervision depends on the workers for the satisfactory carrying out of the duties assigned to them. The workers depend on supervision for direction, guidance, judgment of work performed, and help. To be effective, both groups must be able to understand the other through the medium of oral conversation.

This manual is divided into two books: Book I, Principles and Techniques of Oral Communication by Lower Supervision and Book II, Study of Oral Communications Within Area Maintenance. Book I deals with principles and techniques of oral communication which apply to any industrial organization. The effectiveness of reception depends on the ability to listen. The effective oral transmission and reception of messages together prove to be of real value to both management and labor.

Book II, A Study of Oral Communications Within Area Maintenance, is designed to reflect existing methods of oral conversation which can be improved in usefulness and effect. Not all of this organization's communication efforts are discussed. The writer has aimed to select the methods and techniques most susceptible to improvement. Finally, it is emphasized that communicative efforts can be measured as to general effectiveness. Although such measurements are not all-conclusive, they do serve as valuable indications of weakness or progress.

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