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COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE TRAINING
WITHIN MINORITY-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Communication Studies

by
Shirleena Racine Baggett
June 2020

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MINORITY-OWNED SMALL BUSINESSES

A Project
Presented to the
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ABSTRACT

Business ownership is imperative in correcting economic issues for demographic groups subjugated to discrimination, inequality, poverty, and other harmful disadvantages. This project supports the idea that building communication competence within minority owned small businesses and nonprofit organizations, will significantly increase achievement of long-term sustainability and success. The solution is not only creating communication training tailored for minority entrepreneurs, but to allow access in feasible and tangible ways. This study begins by defining communication and explaining its function to assist in moving past the narrative of communication interaction as “talking and listening,” but instead a concept rooted in logic, theoretical analysis, and practical application. Next, “competent communicator” will be defined based on effectiveness and appropriateness, both salient in the conversation. The theoretical lenses used to analyze this dilemma are social penetration theory and expectancy violation theory; the key constructs of self-disclosure and expectancies are critical to understand in organizational settings. As part of the efforts to provide a solution, the author selected five essential communication competencies for smaller organization success and created communication curriculum to be presented via training manual, recorded audio, and recorded video. Utilizing communication skill training will make successful business more than a dream but a reality for minorities.

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“John 15:16: You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.”

I first want to give honor to God for trusting me with the tremendous task of not only obtaining a master’s degree, but also setting an example for those determined to continue their education in their later years. Secondly, I want to thank my mother, sister, and friends for their continued support. In addition, I would like to thank Sean Maulding who has believed in me since we met in undergrad.

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Dr. Heisterkamp, thank you for your continued guidance and help as I reach my highest potential as a scholar. Thank you for taking a chance on me.

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Dr. Burquist, I will forever be thankful to you for stepping in when I needed you the most.

Lastly, with the utmost gratitude, I thank everyone who has contributed to the completion of this project and degree.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my ancestors who were enslaved, disregarded, and refused any type of education. I hope they see that their pain was not in vain.

To my fellow Black brothers and sisters, we are valuable, intelligent, and gifted. Let us continue to work hard and love one another as we grow and make global impact.

To the minority entrepreneur, you are valuable, you matter, and you are necessary. Continue to dream, learn, and create.

To my grandmother, "Papa," and "Brim," may you continue to rest in eternal peace and watch over us all and I pray I have made you proud. The dedication page is not required. If you do not wish to include it, simply delete this page.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Plight of Minority Entrepreneurs

All business owners face many of the same start-up challenges, such as creating a feasible and logical business plan, understanding market trends, finding their niche, and creating a loyal audience for product consumption. Minority business owners, however, face additional challenges and lack of opportunity stemming from foundational discrimination and racism.

Minorities, specifically Black Americans, have and continue to be subjected to racism and discrimination in American society. Racism is visible throughout numerous institutionalized forms of restrictions and exclusion. It takes the form of “white control”, making it an indisputable factor affecting the lack of sustainability in Black business enterprise (Yancy, 2005). The structure of Black American success in the marketplace has not been investigated completely and has been overlooked by the presence and facade of affirmative action and equal opportunity. Throughout recent years, there has been some progress in the conversation and improvement of political and social constraints but is minuscule in comparison to the industrial and commercial strength and support of White entrepreneurs (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2012).

From a business perspective, institutional racism has created irreversible damage. Minorities have less access to business development skills and encounter an increased rejection rate of business loans and higher financial rates

than Whites which are reflected in lower credit scores, and minimal collateral and capital. According to a published report by the Center for Global Policy Solutions in 2016, and data from the 2007 and 2012 U.S. Census, minorities lost approximately \$300 billion and nine million jobs because of the huge racial gap between minorities and Whites in business ownership. Minorities start businesses within the same timeframe as Whites, but their organizations are significantly different in size, profitability, and survival rates.

A major issue that Blacks face, is not being defined as a culture or ethnic group, but a race, creating the prevailing characterizations of low entrepreneurial rates and damaged cultural psychological perspective. This lens denies the full effect of racial inequality and its contribution to limiting Black entrepreneurial spirit (Gold, 2016). The power of the Black entrepreneur helps to alleviate societal constraints and institutionally based oppression that designates minority business owners to the end of the line when attempting to gain venture capital, access, and participation in American business. Discrimination has blocked Blacks out of professional training, business development, planning, and management. Dating back to the 19th century, the government has a long tradition of failing minority communities, by private sector creation, increased interest rates, and providing Whites with grants and other contracts, hindering successful black business expansion. When examining the issue, theorists neglect that the success of White business is heavily based on government support, or the “invisible hand” (Smith, 1966).

Preventing minority entrepreneurship hinders the United States in obtaining a competitive advantage in the global economy (Bates, 2006). The Kellogg Foundation published a report in 2018, outlining that strengthening the US purchasing power by closing the racial equity gap would equate to an increase of \$8 trillion in gross domestic product. With the rapid influx of international economic growth and competition, the leveraging potential of possible entrepreneurs of all ethnic backgrounds is momentous. As more conversations of closing the racial equity gap arise, there is hope in resources being formed at federal and local levels to serve these populations.

Historically and presently, Black business development has been minimal compared to Whites. Theorists believe there is a direct connection between a society or cultures ability to influence or promote entrepreneurship and cultural representation within the business market (Schumpeter, 1911). Issues of Black economic development should be scrutinized from the entrepreneur lens. Researchers like Schumpeter believe that the entrepreneur or the “creative capitalist” is innately liable for the economic and industrialized development within their societies (Wolfson, 1958).

Shapiro & Sokol (1982) defines entrepreneurial development, as an opportunity to self-renew, create, and promote diversity within commerce. McClelland (1961) found that societies and cultures who advocate achievement, enjoy accelerated economic development and greater levels of entrepreneurship. The self-determination necessary to succeed in Black

entrepreneurship is based on social economic reality and longevity. By increasing the presence of African American business owners in urban communities, the advantage to alleviating Black unemployment is great (Bates, 2006). The opportunity to generate, maintain, and expand economic stability is worth the risk that entrepreneurship entails. Black owners then create an image, that they too can live the American dream of financial freedom and economic wealth through business ownership.

The aim of this project is to provide insight on how to increase minority visibility in the marketplace. The author offers the solution of providing access to training and diverse learning mediums. To succeed, minority entrepreneurs at minimum, need to be skilled and capable of management and possess financial capital to have any competitive stance in the business market. By learning and developing communication skills, such as organization management, and interpersonal and intercultural communication, minority owners can gain leverage increasing their profit and business viability. Understanding these perspectives, the need for action is dire. This project stands as part of the solution by contributing to the research of viewing “communication as a skill”.as well as furthering knowledge and access of competent communication within the workplace (Salmon & Young, 2011). In Chapter 2, the author presents the historical context of small business in America. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical framework used to analyze the need types of communication training. Chapter 4 identifies and outlines five communication competencies needed for small

business owners. Chapter 5 discusses the types of learners and introduces a tangible solution to providing access of communication skills through a training manual, recorded audio, and video.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Small Business

“My country tis of thee, sweet land of liberty.” The American Dream of financial freedom, generational wealth, and equal opportunity is real to some, but a far cry for others. Small businesses are an integral part of the progress and change needed in America and plays an invaluable role in the renewal of economic evolution (Thurik & Wennekers, 2004). They are the catalyst for change for millions of minorities, immigrants, and women fighting the economic and social climate catered to the White demographic. Access to the American Dream for these communities fits into the fibers of America’s great democratic nation (Ács, Z., Armington, C., & Robb, A., 1999).

According to the Small Business Administration (SBA Office of Advocacy, 2008), small business and entrepreneurship is what drives The Great U S of A. In fact, since the 20th century, small business have been America’s major economic power. Small businesses invite social and economic mobility and represses inflation, promoting productivity, innovation, and employment opportunities much needed in underserved, underprivileged, minority communities (Simon, 2002). Before 1976, small business received little government attention and recognition. Congress then created the Small Business Administration (SBA) and Office of Advocacy to examine the role and

contribution of small business made to improving international competition and American economy.

Growing the Smaller Organization

Churchill and Lewis (1983), created five stages of business growth, that offers communication consultants and trainers a means to analyze business process and create suggestions and solutions to create a stronger organization: Existence, Survival, Success, Take-off and Resource Maturity. Stage I: Existence -The primary focus is creating niche, product, and services to bring a continuum of customers. The organization is running on an average competence with informal operating systems. The owner is the force driving the vision, manpower, and capital to continue. Stage II: Survival -This stage the owner is attempting to do more than just break even financially but have a strong enough customer base and product and services to grow revenue. The operation is most likely managed by a few staff and manager, usually friends and family with no training on running an effective business. In this stage the goal is to grow in business and profit. Most small businesses stay at this stage or fail completely. Stage III: Success-The owner decides what is best for the organization, to remain stable and profitable or to expand. Stage IV: Take-off- In this stage there is substantial growth in product demand and profit. This means the owner must use effective leadership, communication, and delegation skills to improve processes and performance. Stage V: Resource Maturity- here, the

owner is strengthening financial gains while maintaining the benefits of a smaller business. Management training is essential to eradicate inefficiencies and professionalize the business in the form of strategic planning, operating systems, and upskilling employees and management. At this stage, the owner is now a separate entity (no longer identified as the face) from their business which is now a successful force in the business market.

Using this model, effective training is the pedestal that can give small businesses rank, credibility, and visibility in the business market. Training correlates to sophistication of operation in planning and information, business-to-business and customer relations, distribution and manufacturing reputation, and personnel rapport (Rostow, 1960).

Organizational Process and Management Training

Currently, workplace problems derive from the blend of economic, ethnic, and technological demographic differences. With this, there is a rise in the need for training in teamwork, problem solving, listening, self-esteem, leadership to contribute to organizational effectiveness and development. Studies show 10 to 13 percent of Americans contribute their workplace skill learning from school. Americans who have only received a high school diploma are less likely to receive on the job training, those with Associate degrees 20 percent, Bachelor degrees 37 percent and Post-Bachelorette 50 percent. (Committee on Education and Labor Report, 2019)

A countries response to economic and technological change relies heavy on the integration of workplace learning. America typically relies on the investments made in formal education by white-collar and technically advanced industry elites than it does the working class. This creates a standstill in decision making and other tasks creating burden and added work pressure for executives and management personnel. Ineffective listening and communication skills cost hundreds of millions in profit and productivity because of simple mistakes. There is also emotional and physical stress to account for when human relationships in the workplace are interrupted (Lin, Kain, & Fritz, 2013).

Despite the knowledge of the need for communication skills, only 33 percent of organizations with 50 or more employees offer communication skills like listening as part of training (Gordon & Zemke, 2000). Having the ability to grasp material and to learn, synthesize materials, and find themes within information to identify issues are correlated to improved job performance. It is through communicating orally and active listening do these skills come across (Burley-Allen, 1982). This contributes to organizational success of conflict resolution, working in teams, facilitating meetings, negotiations, customer service, and on the job training. Those who are effective communicators are more willing to adapt to change, make fewer mistakes, and absorb direction and new ideas (Brynjolfsson, 1993).

Unfortunately, small businesses have significantly fewer resources such as lack of finances or access to training, creating a competitive disadvantage of

factors that influence consumer choice, such as brand awareness, product variety and price (Paharia et al., 2011). Establishing a training program can be quite costly, which often overshadows the many benefits. This challenge makes it hard, and company training or even only for executive members, become an unaffordable luxury and is often neglected. Still, it remains necessary to integrate communication training into daily work, that will benefit the company long term.

Customer service, teamwork, problem-solving, decision making, skills once only required by management are now seen useful in all parts of the organization (Shafritz & Ott, 2005). Organization training helps to cultivate an attitude of creativity, stimulates critical thinking, encourages teamwork, saves financial resources in the long run, and most importantly, retains employees. In small business, the loss of a single employee has a far greater impact than huge corporations, because they are not equipped to handle constant employee turnover. Employee's value job satisfaction, which includes work-life balance, opportunity for growth, employee development, and benefits to continue to stay with the company. These allow for happier and more productive employees. Not addressing these skills effect the bottom-line leaving employers to respond by replacement or training. With replacement becoming less of a practical solution, consultants are challenged to diagnose these issues. Developing communication skills leads to competency, group effectiveness, and productivity (Lieberson & O'Connor, 1972).

CHAPTER THREE

THEOREICAL FRAMEWORK

Using Effective Communication Skills as Tools

How do we communicate effectively to reap all its benefit? For the past three decades the concept of communication as a skill has been critiqued by several research perspectives, including humanistic and linguistic (Denniston, Molloy, Nestel, Woodward-Kron & Keating, 2017). These critiques offer that, communication is merely the tasks of forming connection, expressing concern, and conversational behavioral skills (Makoul, 2001).

Cox (2008) believes that teachers and researchers of communication still face skepticism on whether communication has the value of a skill, believing that it cannot be formally taught because it is imaginative and individual. To negate these beliefs, there must be understanding that since communication behavior has been reduced to intuitive and imaginative, to be useful, it must work parallel to creativity and technical skills to satisfy communication needs. Communication is not limited to the act of speaking; but a tool and when used effectively and appropriately, can influence others, bring change in perspectives, and can transform and maintain personal and workplace relationships (Cheney, Zorn Jr., Planalp & Lair, 2008).

But what is communication defined and is it really a “skill?” Deveugele (2015) states that the communication concept needs to be unraveled. We

communicate to provide and seek information as well as express our emotions. Calhoun (2011) believes that we should not think of the communication discipline as a kind of apparatus, but instead a strategic analytical process, that provides its users with opportunities to develop a continuum of frameworks that will guide decision making in business, social, political, economic, and cultural development.

The term communication is complex, with many tenants, umbrellas, and concepts. Identifying which communication function is central to its existence, would rely on its vast situational variability and huge array of related cognitive and social abilities (Rickheit, Strohner, Vorweg., 2008). Spitzberg (2003) proposes the following definition of skills:

“Skills, therefore, are generally thought to be manifestations of some underlying ability, which is a capacity for action. This capacity is typically conceptualized as a function of numerous motivation (e.g., confidence, goals, reinforcement potential, etc.) and knowledge (e.g., content and procedural knowledge, familiarity, etc.) components” (p.95).

Deveugele (2015) says, “Skills can build complex behavior, and skills are complex behavior” (p.286). Burlson (2003) supports this idea and identifies many communication behaviors as residing between, fundamental, functional, and specifying communication interaction skills. Each skill is labeled by their sensory-motor behavior, emotion, and knowledge. Behavior within the fundamental interaction scope are, nonverbal communication skills, impression

management, message production and reception, discourse, and conversation skills. Functional skills were identified as specific to the personal and professional contexts, informing, explaining, arguing, and persuasion. Communication behaviors used to analyze, assess, or intervene are specifying communication skills. Competent communication understands that communication skills are not independent and are based on context, functional and situational influences.

Establishing communication behaviors as core skills to be learned, are of fundamental importance within the workplace. This research supports that certain communication behaviors (skills) should be adapted by small businesses and non-profit organizations to overcome communication challenges they may face internally or with external stakeholders. Incorporating communication skills into the procedures and culture of these organizations, would involve deepening the understanding on how core skills such as cultural competence, listening, awareness of nonverbal behaviors, conflict management, and delivering messages, function within the organizational setting. The ability to understand and use these skills effectively and appropriately is imperative to obtaining the best and desired outcome for all parties involved.

Why is Communication Competence Important?

It is important to know which, when, and how to use which skill. Rickheit et.al (2008) defines the concept 'skills training' as a series of individual elements that can build complex behavior, that can lead to, or help build a

relationship. Building communication skills will increase communication competence.

Competence is an individual's ability to show knowledge by demonstrating situationally appropriate behavior; whereas, communication skill is to show ability to perform situationally appropriate behavior (McCroskey, 1982). Communication competence is having the knowledge of skills and knowing when and how to use them to result in a positive outcome (Hymes, 1964). Communication competence can be developed and is measured by effectiveness and appropriateness.

Communicative competence was introduced by Hymes in 1964 to highlight the notion that grammar did not suffice for defining communicating and using language. Communication competence is complex and has a dense internal and external construction. Internally, the concept is comprised of measuring effectiveness and appropriateness and externally, is inclusive to theory.

Effectiveness and Appropriateness

Ability of skills alone does not equate to communicative competence. Applying the situational context and then selecting which skill to use based on the rules and expectations. Conversation is a platform for social interaction and a way people exchange information verbally. Thornbury and Slade (2006) state "it establishes rapport and mutual agreement, engages in phatic communication, maintains and modifies social identity and involves interpersonal skills" (p.17). Immersing into conversation relies on including

listening, non-verbal communication cues such as eye contact, posture, paralinguistics, and facial expressions.

The authors also state, "Conversation can be defined as a multifaceted construct..., this complexity derives from conversation being so ubiquitous in our daily language usage" (Thornbury & Slade, 2006, p. 5). Engagement in any form of communication is a necessity for daily interaction in the workplace. In some situations, it is appropriate to modify existing rules or norms and establish new rules that are conducive to a group. Spitzberg and Cupach (1989) stated "appropriateness reflects tact or politeness and is defined as the avoidance of violating social or interpersonal norms, rules, or expectations" (p. 7).

Spitzberg (2003) concludes:

"However, combining appropriateness and effectiveness provides a framework that most competence theorists accept as generally viable. Competence, according to the dual criteria of appropriateness and effectiveness, is the extent to which an interactant achieves preferred outcomes in a manner that upholds the emergent standards of legitimacy of those judging the interaction" (p. 98).

Effectiveness relates to the outcome either negative or positive of communicative interaction. Appropriateness relates to the connection of the situational conditions of an actual social interaction and competence. Appropriateness is then seen as what behavior is expected from a specific communication interaction (Spitzberg, 2003).

Hymes (1972) proposed four questions, whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible; whether (and to what degree) something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available; whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate (adequate, happy, successful) in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; whether (and to which degree) something is in fact done, actually performed, and what it's doing entails. These questions are a developmental framework for understanding communication competence.

Weimann's (1977) model of communication competence is centered on interaction management. The theory describes the importance of individual and relational goals and what motivations and strategies are used to achieve these goals. The model has five dimensions: "(1) affiliation/support, (2) social relaxation, (3) empathy, (4) behavioral flexibility, and (5) interaction management skills" (Weimann, 1977, p.197). Weimann's model is a continuance of Goffman's (1959) approach, which describes humans as actors that can play various roles for various audiences.

"Competence is a social concept, a comparative judgment about the worth of performance" (Gilbert, 1978, p.29). We determine competence by appropriateness and effectiveness. Appropriate meaning socially or organizationally acceptable and effective meaning accomplishing the intended communication interaction goal. It is important to remember direction, channel, motive, and significant interaction effects when determining if a behavior is

deemed appropriate or effective (Westmyer, DiCioccio, & Ruben, 1998). We will use these concepts as a foundation to define and identify a competent communicator.

The Competent Communicator

Also defined in Weinmann's model, is the T-group or human-relation approach (Argyle & Robinson, 1962; Bochner & Kelly, 1974). Here, the competent communicator shows empathy, descriptiveness, owning feelings and thoughts, self-disclosure, and behavioral flexibility. Argyle's (1969) social-skill approach defined "skill" as an "organized, coordinated activity in relation to an object or a situation, which involves a whole chain of sensory, central and motor mechanisms" (p. 180). Further research from Argyle advanced communicative competence into specific dimensions (1) extroversion and affiliation, (2) dominance-submission, (3) poise-social anxiety, (4) rewardingness, (5) interaction skills, (6) perceptual sensitivity, and (7) role-taking ability. Argyle (1969) found two interaction management skills center to communicative competence which are, "the ability to establish and sustain a smooth and easy pattern of interaction" and (2) the ability to maintain control of the interaction without dominating (p. 327– 328).

Weimann (1977) concluded from the three approaches that, "the competent communicator is one who is other-oriented, while at the same time maintaining the ability to accomplish his own interpersonal goals. This other-orientation is demonstrated by the communicator being "empathic, affiliative and

supportive, and relaxed while interacting with others. [...] It is this communicative competence which enables a person, in a very real and practical way, to establish a social identity” (p. 211). The competent communicator understands their ability and is successful in communication interaction by effectively and appropriately navigating through communication skills to achieve their desired outcome. Understanding competence, effectiveness, and appropriateness, we can discuss two theoretical perspectives to see how self-disclosure and violations of expected behaviors are correlated to small organizational success.

Social Penetration Theory

To explore self-disclosure, is important to look at social penetration theory and how it is shaped in the workplace. Social penetration theory is often referred to as, “The Onion theory” because the authors, Altman, and Taylor (1973), identify the layers of the onion, as the process of self-disclosure which possess both breadth and depth. “Breadth” refers to the wide array of topics or facets of a person’s life, such as family, school, work, religion, hobbies, and skills. “Depth” refers to the levels of details concerning each facet. The outer layer of the onion refers to the superficial, or obvious information about a person. As the layers are pulled back, thoughts, feelings, and other intimate information are exposed, to essentially reach the core nature of a person (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

Social penetration theory explains the process of creating intimacy in relationships through self-disclosure. From their perspective, relationship

development "progresses from superficial non-intimate areas to more intimate, deeper layers of the eyes of the social actors" (Altman & Taylor, 1973, pg. 6)

Stages of Self-Disclosure

The five stages of intimacy that Altman and Taylor (1973) outlined the as the process of self-disclosure:

1. Orientation- Communicators exchange information that is non-intimate, adhering to social norms, contributing to the conversation with "small talk," and observe mannerisms.
2. Exploratory Affective Stage- Individuals reveal more of themselves, increasing the breadth of topics discussed, but deeply personal information is withheld. Most relationships and casual friendships stay at this stage.
3. Affective Stage- This stage develops romantic relationships and close friendships. There is disclosure of personal and private matters. There is a comfortability to express critiques and use personal idioms.
4. Stable Stage- Communication is comfortable and open, and willing to self-disclose any information. Individuals can even predict a reaction to certain information exchanged.
5. Depenetration- When one or both communicators, withdraw from the relationship because they believe that the cost of self-disclosure outweighs its benefits.

Researchers of this theory believe that the five stages are linear in the beginning of a relationship but have opportunity to become iterative. This means that intimate relationships shift through the different stages at anytime.

Insecurities, reservations, uncertainty can cause relationships to move from the stable stage to the exploratory affective stage, and then back again.

Understanding the importance of adapting the use of self-disclosure with help with daily interactions for small business owners.

Interpersonal communication refers to initiating and maintaining relationships and is important to understand interorganizational and external workplace relationships. This is because in these relationships, communication is influenced by power differential (Sulkowicz, 2007c). These differences can affect negotiation skills, building rapport, balancing professionalism and social support in the workplace (Sulkowicz, 2007a, Sulkowicz, 2007b, Sulkowicz, 2007c).

These means of communication interaction is heavily revolved around self-disclosure. Social penetration theory helps to gauge how much or how little, self-disclosure is appropriate within the workplace context and expectancy violation theory highlights the effectiveness of the self-disclosure in the interaction.

Managing self-disclosure is crucial in the workplace because it can shape the opinions and evaluations of individuals and organizations. Within the organization, there is an expectation of certain behaviors, that social obligations and norms govern. There is always an expectation in the workplace to treat

others with respect and kindness and to protect the organization's brand and representation.

Not all self-disclosure is the same, and not all types of self-disclosure will affect individual relationships the same (Laurenceau et al., 1998; Laurenceau, Rivera, Schaffer, & Pietromonaco, 2004). Certain self-disclosure types create togetherness or intimacy while disruptive disclosure can cause individuals to reassess their workplace relationships (Russo, Shteigman, & Carmeli, 2016; Dutton & Carlsen, 2011; Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009). Either way, self-disclosure impacts the quality and frequency of communication interaction. Within and interpersonal communication interaction, individuals play two roles, the "discloser" and the recipient of the disclosure. Looking at disruptive self-disclosure, when disclosure is expressed with content outside the expected or established norms of the workplace, the result leads to likely altered behavioral responses from the recipient.

Expectancy Violation Theory

Burgoon (1978) created expectancy violation theory (EVT) to explore what takes place when an individual comes into an interaction with expectancies of behavior of the other individual. When these expectancies are violated, what reactions to the experience take place. Burgoon (1978) said these experiences cause an arousal, from what is likely to occur (i.e., predictive expectancies based on previous interaction) or what should have occurred (i.e., prescriptive expectancies according to the contextual norms).

Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) proposes that people maintain expectations of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others experienced from previous interaction (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000). This is key when understanding self-disclosure. When the presumed expected behavior differs from what is expected, this provokes a sense of violation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988). Originally, EVT explains the behaviors within interpersonal relationships, but can also be used to investigate how contextual factors affect relationship development (Burgoon & Hale, 1988).

The central tenet of EVT is that the arousal can be negative or positive in valence. Afifi and Metts (1998), describe violation as, "any behavior that falls outside a range of expected behaviors is theorized to produce cognitive arousal and trigger an interpretation-evaluation sequence that helps individuals cope with unexpected outcomes" (p. 367).

Expectancy violations not only impact message evaluations but also social evaluations (Floyd & Voloudakis, 1999). Within this context, mismanaged perceptions of an organization can lead to poor corporate image and lack of customer loyalty. In the workplace, expectancy and violation are operationalized as how we believe a company should act, based on societal roles. Using the lens of expectancy violation theory, assists to support how communication skills in the workplace help to form, evaluate, and respond to violated organizational expectations of employees and stakeholders.

Expectations play an important role in stakeholders selecting between two competing organizations. Even on the employee level, job satisfaction relies on the expectation of valued work experience, opportunities for advancement and some degree of work-life balance (Brack & Kelly, 2012; Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010).

Also central to EVT, are our human expectations to unexpected communication encounters and our response. Burgoon (1993) defined expectations as repetitive pattern of anticipated human behavior based on societal norms. They frame and define interactions and represent the understanding and rules within the communicative interactions. Burgoon also believes we plan our communication according to our expectations; this influences how social information is processed. Understanding expectancies as perceptual filters is important before further exploring how violations of expectant behavior predict communicative situations (Burgoon, 1993).

Expectancy Violation Theory predicts that interactions are normative, and we hold expectations to social interactions. Any deviation (positive or negative) from a held expectation (Burgoon, 1978) results in a violation. Negative violations can lead to increased levels of uncertainty, and suffer consequences such as a change in or reduced future communication (Afifi & Burgoon, 2000).

Violations of expected behaviors, trigger what Burgoon calls an arousal, which leads to the interpretation and evaluation stage of EVT. Individuals interpret what they experience and then evaluate how it was a violation. In this phase

individuals assign a valence; meaning determine whether or not the violation is negative or positive (Burgoon, 1978).

Valence helps to determine outcomes of an interaction and decide how to respond to a violation, either according to the norm or would it be beneficial to deviate from (Griffin, 2011). This includes considering the communicative consequences, and then placing a communicator reward value on the proposed behavior. Communicative reward value is the idea that individuals maintain characteristics that influence what communicative behaviors they find rewarding (Burgoon, 1993). Typically power, intelligence, and physical attractiveness are perceived as rewarding traits (Burgoon, 1993).

With 11 axioms, EVT's core is to explain how people develop expectations within communicative interaction and how individuals evaluate and respond to those behaviors (Burgoon, 1978). In the business setting, there is an expectation from society on how businesses should operate. When those expectations are violated, individuals assess whether or not to apply a negative (i.e. writing a bad review or negative word of mouth) or a positive consequence.

According to Axiom 11 of EVT, positive evaluations are determined by the degree to which the communicative interaction is perceived as rewarding, such that (a) positively valued messages from a positively regarded source are rewarding, (b) negatively valued messages from a positively regarded source are punishing, (c) positively valued messages from a negatively valued source are not rewarding and may even be punishing, and (d) negatively valued messages

from a negatively valued source are not punishing and may even be rewarding (Burgoon, 1978).

Within the organization, Carvajal et al. (2000) noted that when job experience in expectation was not valued as positive, this created the lack of job satisfaction, and evoked feelings of failure and discontent. This will affect the positive evaluation of an organization. Having training on communication interaction management will assist in increasing positive evaluations for an organization.

Violating Organizational Expectations

Similarly, to vulnerability, not all violations are negative. Positive violation such as learning that a coworker shares similar interests is likely to lead to positive outcomes. Negative violations seem to have different impact on relationship development considering its significance. Regarding corporate image and consumer-brand relationships, violations of perceived brand personality (Aaker, Fournier & Brasel, 2004) and relationship norms (Aggarwal, 2004) also negatively influence evaluations and intentions of purchase.

To create and maintain a consumer base, small businesses create warm and trusting relationships with stakeholders, value customer needs, and build brand loyalty (Malone & Fiske, 2013). Larger companies on the other hand, have control over critical resources such as, money, market knowledge and supplier relationships, creating power with no obligation to consider consumers or their

competition (Scherer & Ross, 1990; Schmalensee, 1989). Business size has become a significant factor in decision making to buy for many consumers.

So, what are the different expectations put on smaller business organizations that are not present for huge corporations? What do consumers “allow” giant corporations to bypass? Small business and nonprofits are viewed as possessing low power compared to their larger counterparts; lower power assumes communal behavior (Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996). Consumers expect smaller organizations to be communal by nature (Rucker, Galinsky, & Dubois 2012). When lower communal behaviors take place, smaller business are faced with disproportionately greater expectancy violations, causing detrimental consequences of decreased buyer and purchase intent, evaluations, and public ratings.

Literature on power uses the terms “communion” and “agency” (Rucker et al., 2012), while literature on stereotypes use the terms “warmth” and “competence” (Fiske et al., 2002) but, are used interchangeably in many research areas (Abele et al., 2008). Rucker, Hu, and Galinsky (2014), research examines how power formulates expectations of human behaviors, and highlights how perceived power shapes consumer expectations of companies. Research also shows how personal beliefs and values influence purchasing from a small versus large company (Paharia, Avery, & Keinan, 2014), as well as brand reputation and corporate identity (Thompson & Arsel, 2004).

Recent literature suggests that high communal behaviors are associated with low power organizations and high agency relates to high power organizations due to organizational structure. Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) define power as the ability to influence others by controlling critical resources. Bakan (1966) defines communion as considering other needs and ideas based on interpersonal and emotional orientation, and agency as effective, determined, productive behaviors reflecting and assertive, and instrumental orientation. Past research suggest that low power organizations reflect the communal orientation because it lacks independence with little control of their outcomes and recognizes the needs of others to survive (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Keltner et al., 2003). High power organizations that maintain agency are independent remain independent and not swayed by outside influences creating freedom to pursue their goals (Kipnis, 1972; Rucker et al., 2012).

Agency is the one factor that is evaluated that is not affected by company size and perceived power. Agency is connected to core values and attributes of an organization (i.e competence and effectiveness) and is expected from all companies. Therefore, agency- related expectancy violations; How consumers perceive company brands and corporate identities, are how people are perceived within social contexts. Other important factors of agency are ambition and persistent, characteristics of the underdog mentality, for small businesses to stand out in competitive markets (Hoch & Deighton, 1989). Understanding this

frame, small businesses and nonprofits can obtain perception of high communal behavior, which is positive, but any communication interaction that violate these expectations will have a substantial negative impact (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Suitner & Maass, 2008).

Using EVT as a theoretical approach in this study will support how understanding the expectations of small business and non-profit will help to reduce violations and allowing for sustainability and support of creating accessibility of communication skills. Using agency and high communal behaviors will strengthen the power of smaller organizations, creating positive violations. Using self-disclosure to build viable relationships needed for the organization's success, effectively and appropriately will display communication competence.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTIVATING COMPETENCE

Technological advances and the strong demand for cross-cultural relationships has caused a significant shift in communication within and around businesses, creating a need for communication competence on multiple levels. This means understanding how technology is functioning within society, and how to meet the different demographics and cultures support organizations. Current communication research is limited on identifying specific competencies essential for sustaining within the professional and business environment (Bell, 1995). Communication competence in the business setting goes beyond speaking and listening and is central to individual participation within these environments.

For this project, the author identifies five communication competencies that will significantly benefit small businesses and non-profit organizations. These concepts are based on the theoretical frameworks of social penetration theory, expectancy violation theory and the interpersonal communication scope of examining effectiveness and appropriateness. The skill set of the competent communicator is intricate yet, viable, teachable, and learnable (by anyone), and necessary for the survival of these organizations.

Competency 1: Self-Disclosure

Understanding and observing work relations, highlights the power of work relationships that can contribute to positive outcomes, not only for the discloser and recipient but colleagues and work culture and atmosphere (Russo,

Shteigman, & Carmeli, 2016; Dutton & Carlsen, 2011). Recipients of disclosure have critical positive or negative relational consequences (actions and reactions), that can unknowingly alter how the relationship function and communication in the future (Schore, 2003; Siegel, 2012).

Employees within an organization all have unique in personalities and identities, and should only make them public, by using caution. Disclosing too much information about one's personal life can hinder upward mobility. Many people are unaware of their invisible stigmatism towards groups of people. These populations include religion, sexual orientation, health, age, and politics. This can cause tension and conflict in the workplace, affecting job performance, organizational climate, and work satisfaction (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003).

Self-Disclosure in the Workplace

Understanding self-disclosure in the workplace is a relevant and necessary phenomenon to research. Self-disclosure research is focused mainly on relationships outside of work, primarily personal friendships, and intimate relationships. Communication literature on self-disclosure leads to that the idea that sharing personal information can have a positive impact in workplace relationships (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003; Phillips et al., 2009). The reason being, research on self-disclosure supports that being vulnerable and sharing personal information provides feelings of liking, closeness, and belonging (Collins & Miller, 1994; Cozby, 1973; Worthy et. al., 1969). Self-disclosure is necessary in small business and nonprofits since they can operate to some degree as a family

compared to their corporate competition. Understanding personal information or situations about a fellow employee (i.e., being a parent, being in school prefers music while working, sick parent they are taking care of) can create bonding and make for an amicable and supportive workplace. Self-disclosure from employer to employee can humanize the leadership team, and can be a great asset to building trust, encouraging collaborative efforts, and increase likability. Within organizations, positive impacts regarding self-disclosure will reduce turnover, promote positive citizen behaviors, and enhance team performance (Harrison et al., 2002; Jehn & Shah, 1997; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Iverson & Roy, 1994).

But how much disclosure is too much? Self-disclosure in interpersonal relationships increases the quality of intimacy between the two parties (Collins & Miller, 1994), but self-disclosure at work provides new challenges not present in personal relationships that are not always beneficial to positive, efficient, or appropriate workplace culture and environment. Self-disclosure can change the nature of a relationship (Phillips et al., 2009), against existing norms and values. Organizational leaders must communicate the organization's culture so that appropriate self-disclosure can be outline.

With the age of technology, work and personal life now live on blurred lines (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000), with coworkers having access to personal sides of their coworkers on social media, divulging superficial personal information can be acceptable and appropriate (Klaus, Ekerdt, & Gajewski, 2012;

Ollier-Malaterre, Rothbard, & Berg, 2013). LinkedIn and CensusWide conducted a survey that asked 11,500 full-time professionals and found that 67% of millennials are willing to share traditionally taboo subjects with their coworkers, such as family issues, relationships, and salary (Baum, & Fisher, 2014)

Blurring lines and blending professional and private spheres may create constraint on what employees choose to post on online (Fieseler, Meckel, & Ranzini, 2015). Research points to the cause being, uncertainty, of an imagined or invisible audience and their perceptions (Marwick & Boyd, 2011). This uncertainty is linked to impression change. Though workplace relationships are voluntary, they can develop with increase depth and breadth of self-disclosure and information exchange (Lee, Im & Taylor, 2008). At work employees typically withhold information personal information to maintain a self-image suitable for the work environment (Webster, Brown, Zweig, Connelly, Brodt & Sitkin, 2008). But now with access to social media it is becoming increasingly hard to separate the two worlds.

Often, when higher status coworkers disclose weakness, this influences the perception of the discloser. The individual who receives the disclosure (“the receiver”) creates immediate consequence impacts not only the relationship but the organization. Tiedens, Unzueta, & Young (2007) suggest that in task-oriented relationships, having hierarchical differentiation is not only beneficial, but desirable amongst employees. Negative consequences of self-disclosure in the workplace include mistrust, betrayal, and uncertainty of relationship status. This

now puts the discloser in a position of vulnerability, and the actions and reactions of the disclosure is out of their hands. Individuals in relationships, specifically workplace relationships should constantly consider these factors, prior to disclosing personal information. If the perceived gain is greater than a foreseen loss, self-disclosure will continue (Baack, Fogliasso, & Harris, 2000).

Competency Two: Conflict Management

Workplace conflict is best described by the type of conflict: procedural conflict, interpersonal conflict, or conflict of interest. These conflicts often stem from ineffective delivery of work messages, one's inability to change, or the perception of being treated unfairly. Conflicts in this context, interfere and obstruct the intended actions of an individual, creating incompatible activities (Deutsch, 1973; Tjosvold *et al.*, 2014, p. 547; Roloff, 1987). Waldeck, Durante, Helmuth and Brandon (2012) believe that avoiding unnecessary conflict, creates civility and encourages positive connections.

To be considered as conflict, a minimum of two parties are needed, with one perceiving incompatible activities or interference behavior. This perception can be intentional, or the other individual can be completely unaware. Within an organization, status, individual interest, and threats to normal and comfortable procedures, can stir vulnerability and cause negative emotions (Waldeck, Durante, Helmuth & Brandon, 2012).

One concept to managing workplace is conflict is understanding the various communication styles (Small, 1995). There are four basic styles of communication, action-oriented, process-oriented, people-oriented, and idea-oriented communicators and each contain an individual set of language, body language and symbols. Individual experience conflict with others when values, styles, or experiences are conflicting (Jung et al., 1964; Boyatzis, 1982; Harrison & Bramson, 1983).

Action-oriented communicators are results, decision, and achievement driven people. They are energetic, direct, impatient, and have short attention spans. People-oriented communicators are selfless, refraining from expressing themselves through vocal cues, body language not to impose on the other feelings. They are motivated, by values, teamwork, feelings, and personal needs empathetic and take in consideration the human side. People-oriented communicators talk about needs, motivations, teamwork, values, feelings, and beliefs. Idea-oriented communicators thrive on the possibility of new ways and concepts they are full of ideas and challenge stiff rules. They are expressive in their nonverbal behavior (Small, 1995).

When styles intertwine values are exposed and rapport is essential. Communication conflict occurs when styles contradict and personal values are tested (Wolvin & Coakley, 1982). Symbols are ambiguous and not the same for various message sender. What we communicate about ourselves tells more about our inner selves than our external reality (Mehrabian, 1972; Knapp,

Wiemann, & Daly, 1978). We express how we act or perceive. Similar interpretation of symbols measures the outcome of the communication effort (Lesikar, 1976). It is also worth mentioning that people process information based on filters of the senders: 1. Color of skin 2. Gender 3. Age 4. Appearance 5. Facial expression 6. Eye behavior 7. Movement 8. Personal space 9. Touch (Eisea, 1986). Looking past these filters or at minimum recognizing their presence, will help to alleviate conflict.

Lastly, the concept of the value of emotion that both parties incorporate into the conflict, causing social interdependence (DeDreu & Weingart, 2003; De Wit *et al.*, 2011). This social interdependence affects, how an individual values themselves, or their self-worth. Self-worth is the value individuals place on themselves based on the values within society (Ayers, 1984). The feelings of rejection or disrespect can alter self-worth. This threat to our self-worth contributes to conflict because it interferes with our need for inclusion status and belonging (Blincoe & Harris, 2011).

The takeaway from this competency is, "ability to build rapport, and to initiate, sustain, and withdraw from relationships competently is critical" (Waldeck, Durante, Helmuth & Brandon, 2012, p. 8). Kawasaki (2007) noted, "it is much easier to make a sale, build partnerships, create joint ventures ... if you establish a relationship before you need it. And the key to that is mastering the art of communication" (p. 46).

Competency Three: Cultural Sensitivity

This competency relates to intergroup communication which observes how communication within and among other groups shape and affect social relations within their groups (Hoff, 2006). Specifically, cross-cultural communication skills, team effectiveness, and intergenerational communication skills.

As the diverse workplace expands, there is a desperate need for culturally sensitive communication skills if organizations want to be successful. It is projected by the U.S. Census Bureau that by 2042, minorities will contribute to more than half of the American population (Dougherty & Huyser, 2008).

Emphasis on intercultural competence within the workplace will help to abstain from ethnocentric attitudes and behaviors. The construct of cultural competence is defined as, *'a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations'* (Cross et al., 1989). Cross et al. (1989) offers the definition of culture, 'integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group', and with various cultural identities within an organization it is important to take account these identities based on ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, sexual orientation etc. (Ely and Thomas, 2001). For this paper, cultural competence will be defined as the attitudes, knowledge and skills that

are used in a cross-cultural interaction that will result in the desired behavioral outcome (Deardorff, 2006; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004).

Culture

Over the years, scholars focused on workforce diversity have emphasized the need for organizations to create inclusivity for culturally diverse individuals. Turnbull and Pirson (2010) believes there are two types of diversity competencies- *interacting with difference* and *valuing difference*. Interacting with difference refers to the ability to use communication skills such as active listening and self-monitoring to not respond with judgement and or unfair treatment due to differences. Valuing differences refers to embracing diversity in the workplace by encouraging and creating diversity, appreciating differences as an asset, and implementing practices, procedures, and systems within the organizational culture that values diversity. At the organizational level, it is important that employees work together and build their individual communication skills and cultural competence. Respecting other opinions, values, and beliefs within an organization can build both communication and cultural competence.

A culturally competent individual utilizes knowledge, attitudes, and skills to incorporate compatibility, sensitivity, and communicate with others who are different than themselves. Johnson et al. (2006) says that beyond understanding and awareness of our differences, we must step out our comfort zones “to make the strange familiar and familiar strange” (p. 529).

Knowledge of cross-cultural differences found in the workplace when encounters and potential conflicts arise (Chapel, 1996). Hofstede (2005) believed there are four dimensions of cultural differences collectivism vs individualism, femininity vs masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. Cultural competence and sensitivity are essential skills to be effective when dealing with clients and coworkers of different cultures. Collectivism vs individualism refers to the connection of individuals and their immediate families and community and basing their decisions and their effect to the whole. Americans are individualistic in nature, which in the workplace causes them to be competitive and sometimes insensitive or unaware of their behavior's consequences on others. Femininity vs masculinity deals with what traits and behaviors we believe represent assertiveness or nurturing (van Oudenhoven, Mechelse, & De Dreu, 1998).

In the workplace, we find that men who provide firmer handshakes, possess deeper voices, and command without explanation are more effective as leaders, specifically women who engage with their employees, show empathy, and are good listeners. In the organization, when we are unsure of a coworker, do we approach? Most Americans would have been direct. Power distance is the willingness that less powerful members of a society accept unequal power distribution (Mulder, 2012). We can see this in the workplace, when employees feel they have no values are discouraged to suggest new ways of thought in an organization.

Awareness, understanding, and appreciating cultural orientations will lead to understanding work patterns, decision making and learning styles within members of an organization.

But how do we determine if one is culturally competent? Developing these skills, will result in the “ability to function or work effectively in culturally diverse situations in general and in particular encounters with people from different cultures” (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 2006, p. 15).

It is learned through professional and personal development and organizational standards for working with diverse populations.

Self-Concept

Alder, Rodman & du Pre (2016) define self-concept as the relatively stable set of perceptions each individual holds about himself or herself. This is the term of how individuals view themselves, their emotional state, talents, likes and dislikes, what they value and their role in life. In defining our individuality, some identify by religion, social role, gender, and age. When addressing issues of self-concept, it is vital to mention self-esteem (Belk, 1988). Self-esteem is our evaluation of self-worth and strongly influences how people see us and how we communicate. Those who have high self-esteem are typically more confident in their perceptions of themselves and not as likely to be swayed into peer pressure compared to their counterparts with low self-esteem (Govier, 1993). They are more likely to approach conflict collaboratively and reflect a sense of confidence and belonging in the workplace. On the other side of the spectrum, people with

low self-esteem communicate and behave in ways that cause others to doubt them and who they are trying to portray. Self-esteem alone cannot guarantee success in personal and professional relationships, however developing self-esteem can give a great impression and improve workplace relationships.

Another idea that influences our self-concept is personality. Personality is defined as a set of enduring characteristics that a person's thought processes social behavior and temper (Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008). Personality is developed through cultural experience and can change overtime (McAdams, 1996). Personality is partially determined for us with researchers supporting this by saying 40% of our personal traits come from our DNA (McCrae & Costa Jr., 1995). Even though we may not agree or want to admit some of our personality traits we can learn how to control them.

External influences on self-concept affects how individuals communicate with others. This develops identity, and is what researchers call as, "reflected appraisal" (Felson, 1985). We try to obtain people's impressions of us both negative and positive early on. We internalize any of the messages received from those that are close to us, often family members or significant others whose opinions we hold valuable. This causes us to behave and impact how we see ourselves, others, and individual's outside our culture (Felson, 1985).

The cultures and co-cultures we choose to identify with, also affect our self- concept in subtle and obvious ways (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Western cultures are more individualistic meaning they value independence and

individuality. Other cultures such as, Asians tend to be more collective and value group identity. This concept can play a major part in how individuals interact with in the workplace when working with teams or interaction with management. Culture also plays a part in communication interactions with others, whether we are nervous around authority figures or willingness to confront our peers or colleagues when we have an issue. It is important to understand one's self-concept because it will identify how we perceive others. Understanding this and its effect in the workplace will make better for organizational culture.

Competency Four: Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is important in the workplace because it either supports or negates our verbal messages (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013). Specifically, appropriate dress, use of space, time and scheduling, and physical arrangement of workplace. Nonverbal communication are messages expressed through non-linguistic means. Due to the nature of nonverbal behavior, it is it virtually impossible to not communicate. As such, it is important that we understand its communicative value (Wiener, Devoe, Rubinow, & Geller, 1972). Though nonverbals are not always intentional, a competent communicator is aware of the cues being sent. It is important to recognize verbal communication as being primarily relational and ambiguous simultaneously (Wiener, Devoe, Rubinow, & Geller, 1972). Nonverbal communication helps us to manage our identities, set boundaries, and add, takeaway, or create messages (Ruesch & Kees, 1956). Most of our nonverbal behaviors are learned

by our culture. The functions of nonverbal communication are shown in many ways, such as repeating, substituting, complementing, accenting, regulating, contradicting, and a verbal message (Knapp, Hall, & Horgan, 2013). Traum, Swartout, Marsella & Gratch (2005) believes that effective body language can build trust and win negotiations. Top leaders succeed by displaying specific “power poses” (Cuddy, 2012).

In the workplace, the display of communication is largely dependent on nonverbal communication. It reflects our thought process and instantaneously impacts our verbal messages. It is important to understand how to interpret nonverbal cues and their suggested message (Cesario & Higgins, 2008). Nonverbal communication is unconscious and involuntarily in most cases but communicates true attitudes and emotion through gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and posture (Mehrabian, 1971). Body language or kinesics as defined by Birdwhistell (1952), the study of relationship between body motion and interpersonal communication, believing that all body movements have specific meanings. Mehrabian (1971) created the 7%-38%-55% rule, exploring the three elements to face to face communication—7% words, 38% vocal tone and 55% body language. Understanding the use of nonverbal communication and how it affects communication interactions will be beneficial to small organizations.

Facial Expressions, Body Language, and Paralanguage

Face and eyes are important in business because they are the most noticed parts of the body. The human face attracts the most attention and is

mostly used to read messages beyond verbal utterances. There is great research that implies that people are quite accurate at judging facial expression (Schmidt & Cohn, 2001). Eye gestures, lip, eyebrow, cheek movement all display different moods. In the workplace, where there are many emotions, feelings of dislike or annoyance can be seen in eye movement. Darting from side-to-side, blinking repeatedly, rolling or rubbing the eyes all can be perceived as disinterest, falsifying, or simply not being attentive (Borg, 2009). It is suggested that in the workplace, eye contact that is maintained to emphasize credibility of the organization and the product or service.

Oculesics is the study of eye contact and is categorized by social, power, and intimate gaze (Hamdan, 2016). Social gaze is perceived as non-aggressive and friendly and is focused on the eye and nose region. The power gaze sends energy of authority and power and concentrated on the forehead and eye region. Intimate gaze should be avoided at work because it focuses on the face and lower part of the body. Social gaze is appropriate for the workplace and provides a calm and welcoming environment. The lowering or raising of the eyebrow can send messages of liking, confusion, disbelief, astonishment, jealousy, etc. Being aware of eyebrow movement is important in interactions (Bancroft, 1995).

The mouth is also used in nonverbal communication. This could be placing objects such as pens, pencils, and toothpicks show nervousness and unsure about the message received. Smiling radiates positive energy and

feelings, valuing those in interaction and contributes to a positive work environment. Frowning on the other hand creates negative emotions if done frequently (Ekman, Friesen, & O'sullivan, 1988).

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Gestures are movements by the rest of the body, head, hands, arms legs, and fingers. Throughout the day, many gestures are noticed but not clarified, and often their meaning and context is misinterpreted (Crais, Douglas & Campbell, 2004). A relaxed hand is seen as confident and assuring. Open hand gestures represent the presence of trust and interest in the other individual. A clenched hand is shows stress, irritation, or anger. Pointing of the index finger, should be avoided because it symbolizes threat and is seen as offensive. Folding of the arms signifies a protective wall and shows a close mind, not ready to be fully present in an interaction with another. It is important that nonverbally assertiveness, not aggressiveness is shown. Arms slightly back show self-control and will power (Givens, 2006).

Haptics describes behavior that involves touch. Touch in the workplace can be a handshake, pat on the back, hand over the shoulder when talking. How

we use touch in an organization is important. Employees who are approachable are more often to shake hands increasing job satisfaction (Paterson, 2007).

Posture is a channel an organization to convey nonverbal information. Folding of the arms or lack of eye contact all signs that can hinder our message. Sitting up straight in a chair with feet planted on the ground, and hands resting in lap or on the side, shows assurance and interest while, shaking a foot, leaning forward can mean impatience and urgency (App, McIntosh, Reed, & Hertenstein, 2011).

Voice is another form of nonverbal communication. Researchers use the term “paralanguage” to describe our nonverbal and vocal messages (Burton, 1993). This influences behaviors such as stammering or using the use of um or er and so on. Nonverbal behaviors can either reinforce or contradict the messages are words convey. Active listeners often pay attention to the vocal message and its delivery rather than the content of the message. Listeners who are distracted by these nuisances, are less likely to appeal to the speaker's attitude and intention but evaluate their credibility based on these behaviors (Wu & Shaffer, 1987).

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are distracted by these nuisances, are less likely to appeal to the speaker's attitude and intention but evaluate their credibility based on these behaviors (Wu & Shaffer, 1987).

Time and Space

In the contemporary workplace, chronemics, and physical space dictate how effective is one's, time management. How we use our space is defined as proxemics (Ballendat, Marquardt, & Greenberg, 2010). Hall (1963) defines the four differences of space that has been adapted in American culture. Brown, N. (2001) He says we use these space zones to define our relationships. Intimate distance ranges from skin contact to about 18 in. This context is used for interaction with people who we are emotionally close or in a private situation. A good space to maintain in the workplace is personal distance which ranges from 18 in to four feet this is what we are comfortable with or uncomfortable with depending on the relationship. This distance is seen as adequate for personal and should not be entered without invitation. This is typical in the workplace because interaction is somewhat personal but safe and appropriate. Appropriate uses of the space in the workplace will be in an elevator or when a confidential or important message needs to be related between two people that is not meant for other ears to hear. The third space is social and usually occurs between clients and customers and people who work together. This is a distance we spent usually tend to sit down or separate ourselves from the boss. Typically, people 7 to 12 feet away, are for more formal and impersonal situations. This is typical in

business situation. The farthest zone is the public zone which is 12 ft and above teachers use this distance in the classroom or in a business has received seen at a lecture or training in an office. Choosing the optimal distance has a powerful effect on how others respond to us and dictates a lot about how we feel about others.

Chronemics which is defined as time and how we structure our lives around it (Ballard, 2007). We used time to express both intentional and unintentional messages. In the United States, culturally time is important, and waiting is considered an indicator for status (van Eerde & Azar, 2020). Those who have status are seen as more valuable than others or important, may be seen by appointment, not to interrupt or intrude on theirs busy lives, and they expect for others to make changes at the drop of a dime for them. This can be seen with CEOs, calling urgent meeting or coming in late or not choosing not to come to the office at all because of their power status. The other side is that low status or employees never make important people during an interview it is customary to show up early to show significant or important. Some cultures North American Swiss or German tend to be monochronic which emphasizes punctuality and completing one task at a time but we must recognize other cultures cut it as Southern American Arab or Mediterranean who are polychronic which have flexible schedules and multiple tasks can be completed at the same time (Lewis, 2014). understand me cultural differences will help us achieve the correct number of messages we also need to pay attention to the different time

zones when working with different clients so that time is not wasted in time is still opposed to be valuable.

Increasing competence with nonverbal communication is of top 10 of the speaker's language. This will help develop the skills from recognizing on verbal cues of a person. Competent communicators are skilled in deciphering the various possible interpretations of nonverbal communication. The silent language of nonverbal communication aides in supporting verbal messages to inform, remind, and persuade (Burgoon, & Hoobler, 1994). Competent communication breeds bonds between employee-employer, employee-customer, organization and stakeholders.

Competency Five: Listening

This competency primary focus is the importance of active listening. This helps in facilitation of discussion and meetings, public speaking, simply the ability to manage conversation to express ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Understanding how to listen to members outside of the physical organization when dealing with others, such as customers and stakeholder is critical for sustainability within the business market (Lenssen, 2006).

Listening is one of the most neglected aspects of organizational communication; effective listeners are taken for granted (Brownell, 1994). According to Brownell (1994), most individuals entering the workplace have little or no training on effective listening. Against popular belief, effective listening can be taught even though it is an intricate, multi-dimensional behavioral

skill (Cooper, 1997). Hirsh (1986) defines listening as containing both hearing and cognition and assumes the ability for individuals to understand, perceive, interpret, assign meaning, and react. One of the main misconceptions is that hearing and listening are the same. Hearing is defined as, “the process in which sound waves strike the eardrum and cause vibrations that are transmitted to the brain.” (Adler & Proctor II, 2016, p. 126). Listening on the other hand is the process where in the brain reconstructs electrochemical impulses generated by hearing and two representation of the original sound and give them meaning (p. 126). Listening has several different stages (Kim & Phillips, 2014). The first step is paying attention to the sender’s signal and acknowledging that the sender’s message was received. This can be done verbally or nonverbally. The next step is understanding (how we make sense of the message delivered). Researchers use the term “listening fidelity” to describe space between the ability of the listener to understand the intended message the sender was attempting to communicate (Powers & Witt, 2008). The next step of responding is the ability to make feedback to the speaker. Feedback provides clarification the speaker's message to show the concern or interest. Feedback represents the individual having regards towards the speaker's content within the message (Fonata, Cohen & Wolvin, 2015). Good feedback is reflected when the respondent makes eye contact, uses appropriate facial expressions, paraphrases, and exchanges relevant ideas or questions. The final step in listening is the

remembering. Remembering is recalling the previously introduced information (Thomas & Levine, 1994).

Effective listeners understand the importance of being mindful or active when listening. This involves being fully “present” by, paying close attention to the speaker’s mannerisms and gestures. Active listening requires a certain degree of commitment to understand speaker’s perspectives without being defensive or judgmental (Chapman, 2012).

Within the workplace, there are many reasons for poor listening (Ayako, Ikeno & Hansen, 2007). This includes message overload, when we are bombarded with different mediums of communication (emails phone calls or constant messages). Other reasons for poor listening include rapid thought, psychological noises and physical noises. In the workplace, this concept takes shape in distractions, coffee machine, other people talking, and thinking of the long to-do list. Another reasonings of poor listening is cultural differences and media influence (Imhof, 2003). How we were raised or the cultures we identify with, directly influence how we choose to listen (Noguera, 2003). As previously stated, being a culturally competent communicator includes being empathetic to others.

Open communication climate within organizations enables active listening. Open communication is a safe space where members of the organization feels respected and valued. The benefits of open communication according to (Helms & Haynes, 1992), are increased productivity and creates feelings of self-worth

resulting in motivation of employee involvement (Flynn, & Faulk, 2008). Employee identification with the organization and execution of the company's strategic mission will contribute to the long-term success and visibility. Employee involvement will improve efficiency, improve customer service and enhance productivity increasing their competitive advantage (Helms & Haynes, 1992). Stakeholders who are concerned with the internal communication climate within an organization, will consider the organizational climate that values active listening and management that facilitates listening and feedback, and developing strong leaders (Flynn, Valikoski, & Grau, 2008).

The challenge that small businesses face, specifically minority owned is access to this information and availability of resources. The complexity lies in the expected performance of a small business and the potential of the organization if given the opportunity to integrate learned and developed communication skills. This expectancy of behavior and the real outcome be seen through analyzing expectancy violation theory.

Within the organizational setting, listening is seen as a powerful tool (Helms & Haynes, 1992). Effective listening is a highly desirable workplace skill dating back 50 years or more according to many business professionals (Cooper, 1997; Husband, Cooper, & Monsour, 1988; Nichols & Stevens, 1957; Sypher, 1984). With the ever-changing innovative culture that surrounds our world, Diane James, senior vice president of Commerce One, believes that effective members of an organization must spend their time wisely and precisely, and would benefit

from and need to possess “extraordinary listening and coaching skills.” Effective listening in the workplace is not solely responsible on the individual but also the culture shaped by the organization (Liefoghe, & Mac Davey, 2001). This environment then breeds employees that can effectively listen and contribute to the success of the organization. Campbell and Foster (2007) believe that effective listening enhances employee relationships and reduces conflict through better understanding. Listening improves worker productivity resulting in overall organization satisfaction. (Cooper, 1997; DiSalvo & Larson, 1987; Lobdell, Sonoda, & Arnold, 1993; Sypher, Bostrom, & Seibert, 1989).

Two ideal types of listening that will help an organization will be task-oriented and analytical listening (Alder, Rodman, du Pre', 2016). Task-oriented listening is defined as listening to accomplish a specific goal. Task-oriented listening is mainly concerned with efficiency and accuracy, so the individual looks for key ideas, asks questions, paraphrases and takes notes. Analytical listening is listening fully to understand the message and provide evaluation. Analytical listeners listen to the information and separate the message from the speaker to evaluate the message and find its value (Alder, Rodman, du Pre', 2016).

These skills were identified to help prepare people to succeed in the contemporary workplace. Small businesses and non-profits are expected to thrive in a competitive market, which is constantly pressured to deliver the best, and meet customers ever-changing demands. These organizations must be strategic if they want to survive. Employees must create and collaborate

effectively. This put a strain in the internal environment, causing employees to monitor verbal messages.

Using these competencies will pivot smaller organizations to the next level in business. Thinking long term, implementing these concepts will enable owners to be able to attach positive evaluations and competent communication to their brand identity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CREATING CHANGE

Within the other chapters the need for communication competence for small business owners was explored. Chapter 1 provided insight of American history on why there is limited access of communication skills training, networking, and mentoring for minority business owners. Chapter 2 gave significance and importance to why small businesses should adapt communication skills as part of their day-to-day training. Chapter 3 gave theoretical perspective to support the need small business workplace training. Chapter 4 outlined five communication competencies needed for small business.

Due to the current state of minority business ownership and the lack of immediate resources and knowledge of what skills are needed to sustain catered to small businesses, the author believes it is necessary to contribute aide immediately. This next chapter discuss ways to apply communication skills within smaller organizations, highlighting the importance of creating curriculum for different learning styles and introduces three ways that communication skills can be applied. Lastly, a conclusion of future implications for this project.

Developing Communication Skills

Smith says "Learning how to learn involves possessing, or acquiring, the knowledge and skill to learn effectively in whatever learning situation one encounters (1987, pp. 137-138). Learning is acquired by three factors: 1. Learners needs - the capacities in which knowledge can be understood. 2.

Learning Style- individual preference and understood influences to learn 3.

Training -instruction or activity that advances competence. The research of

James and Galbraith (1985), identify seven perceptual preferences 1. Print-learning from traditional texts and pencil - and - paper activities (reader/writer) 2.

Visual- prefers picture, film, and PowerPoint slides (observer) 3. Aural - enjoys

lectures and recordings (listener) 4. Interactive- Prefers discussions and group

question and answer spaces (talker) 5. Tactile/manipulative - is stimulated by

hands on activities (toucher) 6. Kinesthetic/psychomotor- this learner enjoys role

play, physical activity and games (mover) 7 Olfactory - relates smells and taste to

learning (smeller/taster). Approaches to workplace learning include, reading, on-

the job training, hands on learning, coaching, self-development and lectures

(Rae, 1985). Neither approach is the right way and many learners use a

combination. Learning is a process, a self-rewarding and organizationally

beneficial (Baranek, 1996).

There is a need for training specifically in communication for minority

business owners to be able to sustain in the business market. The research

indicates that the problem cannot be solved by one single solution. Solutions to

providing access to minority business owners communication skills to be

effective in their businesses. Understanding the five competencies mentioned in

Chapter Four will positively affect the organizational culture and sustainability for

small business owners. The author understands that each learner is different and

created three training deliverables to meet the needs of reader/writer, observer, toucher, talker, and mover type learners.

Training Deliverables

The training manual in Appendix A, is designed as an applied approach for trainers to incorporate and introduce communication skills within the smaller organization. The training manual discusses competence and communication and its relation to communication skills. In each section, the five competencies (self-disclosure, conflict management, cultural sensitivity, nonverbal communication and listening) will be individually explained.

In each section there is an overview with objectives as well as assessments, lessons, materials needed and resources. Each sectioned is designed to be an hour of activity, including introduction, evaluations, presentations and discussion. The training manual is designed for any communication coach or consultant to be able to use within an organization to provide services based on assessment process. The link to the audio recording in Appendix B will cover the listening competency. The transcript of the recording is available. The link to video recording in Appendix C will cover cultural sensitivity. The transcript of the recording is available.

CONCLUSION

This project contributes to bringing awareness and knowledge of the need to further study of communication and minority enterprise. The deliverables serve as a foundation to establishing training that is relatable to the times and demographic, and future research can use to build upon to influence instructional and intercultural communication theorists consider the structure and needs of learners outside of the classroom setting. This project also advocates making entrepreneurial support organizations more inclusive and encourages these organizations target minorities to increase retention rates and business survival of entrepreneurs of color. The hope is that these tools will make a difference for all minorities to be included in the American dream, of financial independence and wealth created through small business.

APPENDIX A: TRAINING MANUAL

SUSTAIN. SURVIVE. THRIVE.



5

WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION

**FOR
THE SMALL BUSINESS OWNER**

SHIRLEENA RACINE BAGGETT

5 Ways to Improve Your Communication Competence

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this training manual is to assist learners in becoming confident, effective, and competent communicators. This course was designed for the beginner learner outlining the basics as well as the advanced as a refresher.

This training manual was written to provide accessibility of communication skills to smaller organizations and create:

- Understanding of communication skills
- Build competence and confidence
- Assist in developing long-term sustainability
- Create effective communicators
- Build rapport and relationship between owners, clients, and stakeholders
- Increase competitive edge

This training manual will cover 5 competencies needed for business success and development. Understanding their function and application will assist in practical application within your organization. The goal is to provide basic insight into communication and provide strategies for improving organizational processes through communication. Through completion of this training, learners will have developed a clearer understanding of their communication style, understand how to adapt to situations, become more self-aware of their own actions within communication interactions, and be able to communicate effectively, appropriately, and completely within the workplace.

GETTING STARTED

As a facilitator of this training, please review each lessons overview, outcome, summary, resources, and suggested activity and discussion. The lessons in this manual are organized to provide some review of the topic and suggestion for activity. Supplementary research is highly recommended. The sequence of lessons is to ensure flow and clarity, as the training progresses. In order to reach all types of learners, please feel free to create PowerPoint slides, allow time for discussion, and use video and audio from other sources. Each lesson will run about an hour including discussion.

LESSON ONE: WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides a brief overview of the communication process. It also identifies the role of communication in the workplace.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Understand the importance of workplace communication.
- Define the communication process.
- Identify barriers that affect communication.
- Develop communication skills to improve communication interaction.

Resources Needed

- Communication Skill Survey on page

Adapted From <https://louisville.edu/ombuds/surveys/>

Lesson Agenda

- Administer Survey (Discuss answers during discussion section)
- Review Lesson
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

The Importance of Workplace Communication

Workplace communication is the transmitting of information between one person or group and another person or group in an organization (Sanchez & Guo, 2005).

Workplace communication is fundamental to organizational processes and vital to

productivity and job satisfaction. It increases the rate of goal achievement and contributes to the overall sustainability of an organization.

Every organizational process involves some form of indirect or direct communication (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2010). Whether it be leading, supervising, customer and stakeholder relationship, organizational morale, understanding communication or providing guidance and feedback, communication is necessary (Yate, 2009).

Communicating effectively is a skill that must be developed.

Understanding Communication

Keyton (2011) believes communication is common understanding between individuals and groups. It is the expression and exchange between sender(s) and receiver(s) of ideas, thoughts and emotions. It is necessary for relationship maintenance.

The two important components of communication exchange are the sender and receiver (McShane & Von Glinow, 2003). The sender initiates the communication exchange, forming words and symbols with information for the receiver. In the workplace, the sender is the individual, department, group, customer, or stakeholder with a need to convey an idea to others. The message is an outcome of words and symbols which form into verbal, nonverbal and written language. The receiver then decodes the message and gives meaning to the information. The key is to ensure that the sender's message is clear, and the receiver translates the message accurately. Feedback occurs when the receiver responds to the message (Keyton, 2011). Feedback allows for the receiver and sender to know if the message was understood correctly.

There are three concepts for feedback: type, form, and timing.

Type- can be negative or positive. Studies show that when employees receive positive or positive and negative feedback instead of all negative feedback, there is an increase in productivity and organizational morale is higher (Skinner, 1953).

Form- can be verbal, nonverbal or a combination of the two. Competent communicators understand how to modify their feedback based on the recipient. Some people respond better to body movement, like smiling, firmness of handshake or a touch on the shoulder. Others receive better to words, wither written or verbal.

Time- can be immediate or delayed and is based on each situation. Knowing when to provide feedback is important in maintaining smooth operations within the workplace.

Communication Channels

A communication channel carries the information from the sender to the receiver. To exchange messages, whether unintentional or internal we use channels. The channel can be verbal, nonverbal, electronic, or written in the workplace. Selecting the correct channel is important depending on the context of each communication interaction. Verbal communication or words includes the pattern of ideas, word choice, arrangement, only makes up 7 percent of communication. (Mehrabian, 1972). Words can be used to regulate the conversation. Examples of verbal channels can be face-to-face, by telephone, video conferencing, in person meetings.

An important message channel is nonverbal communication or paralanguage. This is our tone of voice, volume, pitch, articulation, rhythm and pauses. In face to face interactions voice language transmit as much as 38 percent of meaning and 70 to 90

percent during telephone conversation (Elsea, 1986). Nonverbal channels include body position, facial expressions, and gestures. Studies show that when there is a contradiction between our words and nonverbal cues, we most often believe the nonverbal message. An example would be if we noticed a coworker, slumped in chair, not focused and quiet not making eye contact, and we asked them if everything is okay, they say yes everything is great in a slow somber voice, most likely we would believe that something is wrong, regardless if the message. (Mehrabian, 1972; DePaulo & Rosenthal, 1979). Written and electronic can be letters, memos, training manuals, emails and so on. Based on the channel, receivers determine how to decode information (Keyton, 2010).

Barriers in communication

Sometimes the intended message was not received correctly. There are many reasons or barriers that can affect the communication process. This is called noise or interference. Interference can distort the message. Barriers can also be the lack of clarity and understanding. Shaw (2011) believes assuming that communication was established is a barrier.

Longest, Rakich and Darr (2000) identify barriers as belonging to one of the following categories: personal and environmental. They block, distort, or filter the receiver from accurately receiving the intended message. Environmental barriers relate to the physical space. It can be lighting, sound, seating etc. Time or lack of time can prevent the sender from forming thought correctly or the receiver not being attentive to the message. Other barriers can include the status relationship between sender or receiver or managerial likability and philosophy (Sranchez & Guo, 2005). This can be

an employee afraid to communicate with their supervisor because of fear or retaliation, becoming the topic of workplace gossip, or feeling like their feelings are not a concern. Terminology that is unclear or complex is also a barrier.

Economic background filters messages by unconsciously or consciously being influenced by jealousy or fear. Examples would be filtering the message for only information for self-promotion or gain or to harm someone else.

The Status quo barrier is when individuals will refrain or postpone communication in order to keep smooth operation. This happens when someone is getting fired. Instead of telling them when they walk in to work, an employer waiting till the end of day not to disrupt the flow of the rest of the operation and evaluating the sender prematurely.

Personal barrier is the lack of empathy or insensitivity to the emotional state of sender or receiver. Empathy is allowing one's self to see the world from the other person's eyes. Lack of empathy is a major obstacle in workplace communication (Eisenberg, 2010).

Becoming aware of barriers can help minimize their impact on others. Longest et al (2000) believe that spending time to listen, being empathetic can positively impact workplace communication.

To improve communication in the workplace, communication theorists (Cheney, 2011; Keyton, 2011; Tourish, 2010; Lunenburg, 2010) suggest these guidelines:

For the sender:

1. Clarify ideas before communicating (i.e. brainstorming)
2. Be aware of the purpose and intent of each communication interaction
3. Consider physical environment

4. Consult with other if needed, and appropriate in planning communication
5. Be mindful of content of message, tone, and expression
6. Convey value to the receiver
7. Follow-up on communication interaction
8. Communicate for immediate situation and further interactions.
9. Make sure actions support communication

10. Seek not only to be understood, but to understand and be an active listener.

Kneen (2011) recommends the following to improve receiver skills:

1. Stop talking
2. Be welcoming and open
3. Listen to understand
4. Remove distractions
5. Use empathy
6. Be patient
7. Hold judgement
8. Refrain from argument and criticism
9. Ask questions

Conclusion

Workplace communication is necessary to promote innovation, organization, and building loyalty and trust. Without it can lead to negative impact in work culture and organization productivity.

Discussion

Open the floor for participants to share their answers from the survey.

Ask:

- Who thought before testing, they had adequate communication skills? Do the answers from the survey confirm?
- Do you feel that the communication channel processes within your organization can improve?
- What communication skills do you feel you can work on?

Allow trainees time to discuss and listen to feedback from others.

COMMUNICATION SKILL SURVEY

Please answer each question using the following scale:

1) Never 2) Not Often 3) Sometimes 4) Often 5) Always

1. When someone makes me angry I deal with them while still angry. _____
2. I become impatient with people who do not express their thoughts and opinions clearly. _____
3. I can get to the solution of the problem without regard to underlying interests or motivations. _____
4. When I'm negotiating with someone I view them as an opponent. _____
5. I believe the words I choose in communication with another person convey most of my message. _____
6. When I listen carefully to what someone is saying to me I can predict what their conclusion will be. _____
7. When I'm not sure about what someone is saying to me, rather than ask questions, I'll wait to learn more. _____
8. When someone gives me instructions and asks, "do you understand," I say "yes" even if I'm not entirely sure. _____
9. Effective communication can be achieved simply by taking turns talking. _____
10. When I'm locked in an argument with someone I view them as an opponent, and I think in terms of win/lose. _____

Please answer each question using the following scale:

1) Never 2) Not Often 3) Sometimes 4) Often 5) Always

11. When I initiate a discussion of something important to me and want to be sure it makes an impact, I invite the other person to explain their viewpoint before I present mine. _____

12. I ask for more information about why a particular demand is being made to explore for underlying interests and ask why a position is important. _____

13. I listen fully and affirm that I understand what the other person has said as a sign of respect to the speaker. _____

14. When I ask questions for clarification, they tend to be open ended and cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no” response. _____

15. The best way to get the listening I need is to make the other person feel listened to first.

16. In negotiations I try to direct the focus away from stated positions and explore for interests and common solutions. _____

17. I practice direct communication by using “I” statements, such as, “ I think...,” “I feel...,” “I need....” _____

18. I look past a person’s opinion of what solution is necessary to solve the problem to get to their needs and underlying interests. _____

19. When someone says something I’m not sure about I ask for clarification. ____

20. I restate the essence of the speaker’s message in my own words as a way of checking on the accuracy of what has been heard. _____

Questions 1 -10 Evaluation: What number came up most? Whatever number is more than any other, that is an indicator of your current communication habits or ideas.

1 - 2—needs improvement

3 – average communication skills

4- 5 – above average communication habits

Questions 11 -20 Evaluation: What number came up most? Whatever number is more than any other, that is an indicator of your current communication habits or ideas.

1-2 – needs improvement

3 –average communication skills

4 - 5 – above average communication skills

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LESSON TWO: THE COMPETENT COMMUNICATOR

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides a brief overview of the characteristics needed to achieve communication competence. Next, the chapter discusses the need for effectiveness and appropriateness of communication skills in the workplace. Lastly, the chapter introduces communication styles to the learner and gives insight on demonstrated behavior.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Understand the characteristics of a competent communicator.
- Recognize the use of effective and appropriate communication skills in specific contexts.
- Become aware of their communication style and its strengths and weaknesses.
- To increase individual value to organization.

Resources

- The Measurement of Interpersonal Skills Communication Skills, Inc.'s Self-Assessment Exercise.

Adapted by Adapted from B. H. Spitzberg and H. T. Hurt, "The Measurement of Interpersonal Skills In Instructional Contexts," *Communication Education*, January 1987, pp. 28–45

Lesson Agenda

- Review Lesson
- Activity
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

Being communicatively competent is understanding how and when to use certain communication skills to achieve a desired outcome in communication interaction.

Within the workplace, this means being effective- achieving the intended communication goal and appropriate- organizationally acceptable (Westmyer, DiCioccio, & Ruben, 1998).

Communication is often defined as a transactional process, because as the sender and receiver are attempting to assign meaning to the message. Communication is affected by both the senders and receivers age, gender, cultural upbringing, political and religious beliefs, sexual orientation, educational history, work experience, self-confidence, environment, and so much more. The person can also just be having a bad day. The more information the receiver has about the sender, the more effective is the communication interaction.

Learning which communication skills can aid in making the senders message effective is important. Being appropriate relates to understanding the context, situation, or time to choose to communicate or which type or channel to operate in. Being competent is being able to adjust your communication efforts, to how others want to be treated to reach the best or positive outcome.

How we respond to the four message channels defined in lesson one, verbal, nonverbal, written, and electronic relies on culture, gender, physical response, context, and power in status (Ekman, 1985; Ekman, Levenson, and Friesen, 1983). Flexibility and adaptation to interpret the communication needs of others results in a competent communication. When the communication channel is appropriate, then the intended message is more likely to be the center of focus.

Communication is also affected by interference or noise. This noise also causes the message not to be received as intended by the sender. These barriers or noise can be the senders age, ethnicity, gender, nonverbal cues, or status, etc. Interferences such as bad ventilation a crowded workspace, interruptions, loud background noise, all of which can cause poor and unintentionally, ineffective communication.

Understanding How We Communicate

Another crucial factor is developing competence in communication is understanding our own communication style. This creates awareness to understanding how other perceive us in communication interaction, and whether it creates a positive or negative outcome in our communication efforts.

Theorists believe that there are four dominant types of communication and we tend to use only one majority of the time. Each of these have their own style of verbal language and nonverbal cues (Jung, 1964; Klein, 1970; Boyatzis, 1982; Harrison & Bramson, 1983).

The four communication styles are:

Action-oriented

The action-oriented type of communicator is direct, energetic, quick, results driven, and concerned with producing results and achieving goals. Their nonverbal cues and paralanguage are often accurate reflections of their feelings. They also are known for interrupting others in conversation, have trouble focusing for long periods of time and prefer not to waste time.

Process-oriented

The process-oriented communicator comes off as logical, systematic, careful, unemotional, and is concerned with policy and procedures, facts, planning, and analysis. They incorporate minimal body language, can focus for long periods of time, and like structure.

People-oriented

The people-oriented communicator is concerned with the feelings, values, needs and beliefs of others. They provide empathy and seek fairness and tend to have open nonverbal communication.

Idea-oriented

The idea-oriented communicator is always thinking of possibility, innovation, and change. They can be ambiguous in their communication and withdrawn during times of creation. When it is time to express a new idea, they have an increase of energy and use a significant amount of nonverbal communication.

Conclusion

To be effective we must understand our own communication style. Identification of your style can lead to common ground and rapport which is necessary for effective

communication. To build relationship, credibility, and trust one must master adjusting their communication style to work well with others (Wolvin and Coakley, 1982; Elsea, 1986). Understanding that others communicate differently and adapting to communicate naturally and effectively. The good thing about communication is that it is comprised of many skills that anyone can learn.

Activity

Have participants complete The Measurement of Interpersonal Skills Communication Skills, Inc.'s Self-Assessment Exercise.

Discussion

After participants complete the quiz, go over answers of self- assessment. Ask for volunteers.

Comparative Norms: Total score of 12–24= Low communication competence; Total score of 25–47= Medium communication competence; Total score of 48–60 = High communication competence.

Interpreting the Results

This test measures how well you communicate, as well as the quality and extent you participate in in communication interaction. Lower scores indicate significant improvement is need in your communication. Medium or moderate scores indicate a good position to improve skills in which you possess. A high score indicates a highly effective communicator. Nevertheless, we should always seed for more knowledge and skill training.

Have participants think of ways they can improve their skills. The author recommends the following action steps, study, reading, taking courses, observation, and practice.

The Measurement of Interpersonal Skills Communication Skills, Inc.'s

Self-Assessment Exercise.

Instructions: The following survey was designed to assess your communication competence. Consider your everyday conversations at school, work, and home when completing the survey. There are no right or wrong answers to the statements. Circle your answer by using the rating scale provided. After evaluating each of the survey statements, complete the scoring guide.

1. During conversations I often use eye contact.....1 2 3 4 5
2. I often initiate new topics during conversations.....1 2 3 4 5
3. During conversations I do not feel the need to interrupt the person speaking.....1 2 3 4 5
4. I try to regulate the speed of my speech based on the audience..1 2 3 4 5
5. While speaking I rarely fidget or play with things (e.g., pencil, rings, hair, etc.).....1 2 3 4 5
6. While speaking I avoid pauses, silences, uses of “uh,” and so on.....1 2 3 4 5
7. While speaking I try to exude vocal confidence — I am not too tense or nervous sounding.....1 2 3 4 5
8. During conversations I ask follow-up questions.....1 2 3 4 5
9. I try to encourage the people I am speaking with to join in the topic of conversation.....1 2 3 4 5
10. I try to include the use of humor or stories in my conversations..1 2 3 4 5

11. During conversations I try to not talk too much about
myself.....1 2 3 4 5

12. I try to control the volume at which I speak (neither too loud nor
too soft).....1 2 3 4 5

Scoring:

Total score for all items _____

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'LESSON THREE: NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides a brief overview of the nonverbal communication. This lesson discusses the use, expectations, and effects on nonverbal communication in the workplace.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Define nonverbal communication.
- Understand nonverbal gestures and cues.
- Develop skills to adapt nonverbal communication according to context and situation.

Lesson Agenda

- Review Lesson
- Activity
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

As mentioned in lesson one, nonverbal communication is conveyed through body language, paralanguage, and gestures or cues. In this lesson we will take a closer look at the types of nonverbal communication. It is important to remember that nonverbal behaviors often display what our unconscious mind is thinking, regardless of the words we are expressing. It assists in sharing true emotion and information. Nonverbal communication can regulate, assist, and reveal within our interactions.

Here are some types of nonverbal communication:

- Facial expression- formations of the face to express different emotions
- Body posture- How posture, position, attitude, and various parts of the body conveys a message
- Gestures- The use of body parts to convey meaning. Should be used with caution based on the various meanings and connotations around the world.
- Eye contact- The way we look at others in communication to convey attention or interest.
- Touch- How we use touch (handshakes, hugs, taps on shoulders and more) to reveal affection, emotion, and help aide verbal communication.
- Space- How the physical distance or closeness between two people communicates power, intimacy, and interest.
- Paralanguage- How tone, rate, speed, hesitation of speech contributes to the verbal message

It is believed that more than half of the meaning we put on a received message is based on body language and appearance. (Mehrabian, 1972; Knapp, 1978). Nonverbal communication does not always translate to its original meaning because of our cultural differences. Being aware of our nonverbal communication is essential in the workplace. Eye contact, posture, tone of voice, facial expressions can cause a positive or negative reaction. Within the workplace, it shows how engaged, how well you interact with others.

Effective nonverbal communication strategies:

- Make sure nonverbal communication doesn't contradict verbal message

- Do not interpret signs as having only one meaning, be sensitive to other cultures
- Learn which gestures, cues, and communication are acceptable in the organization

Working to improve nonverbal communication in the workplace requires observation, education, and similar views on what is acceptable in the workplace. Without these steps, confusion and mistrust can take place.

Activity

Nonverbal Telephone

Have participants make one single line facing a wall and ask them to stay looking at the wall until they are tapped on their shoulder. You go to the end of the line and tap on the last person's shoulder. Once they turn around, silently show them a nonverbal sequence of gestures (dance moves, arm movement, rolling eyes etc.). Once you are done, they are supposed to turn around and tap the person in front of them and imitate the sequence. This keeps going until all participants have completed. Once complete, show them the original sequence and ask the last person to demonstrate what they were shown.

Discussion

Ask for feedback about activity. Ask if there are any questions and what was the process like. Ask if there are ways to increase awareness of nonverbal behaviors.

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LESSON FOUR: LISTENING

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides a brief overview of the listening and its important relationship to communication. This lesson discusses ways to improve listening skills to create effective and active listening within the workplace.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Understand of the importance of listening.
- Improve listening skills needed in the workplace.
- Increase participation in active listening.

Lesson Agenda

- Review Lesson
- Activity
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

Listening is much more than “just” hearing. Listening is a complex and intricate process that leads to understanding. Listening is also challenging because it involves a simultaneous effort from the sender, receiver, message, and environment. Listening abilities are affected by age gender, culture, attention span, intelligence, fatigue, experience, motivation, reading level, and apprehension rate (Nichols, 1948). It is important to remember that listening is filtered by preconceived ideas, bias, culture and

reference. It is rare that a message is interpreted how you imagined you it was delivered.

The sender's role is very important. Communicating the message depends on the degree of attractiveness, credibility, trust, pitch, tone, likability, fluency, and facial expressions of the sender (Watson and Barker, 1984, pp. 184-185). Understanding the audience, using clear and explicit word arrangement and being mindful of the environment, also influences retention of the message.

Arnold (1988) believes we listen for information or building of relationship. We listen to obtain information, join a conversation, request for clarity, engage in problem solving and provide evaluation.

There are two most common ways of listening social or conversational listening or active listening (Lynch, 1985). We spend most of our time engaging in social listening in the workplace to share information, conduct interviews, and socially to build relationship between stranger, coworkers, acquaintances and stakeholders. In these conversations, there is direct eye contact, open body language, smiling, nodding, and appropriate touch as well as approving and encouraging sounds, and a more pleasant and polite experience.

Active listening is more extensive which involves not just listening with eyes and ears but also being aware of the way words were spoken (Elsea, 1986). This often means reading "between the lines", observing nonverbal cues such as speed, hesitations, and tone. Active listeners formulate ideas and do not easily defense or quickly jump to conclusion or judgement. They provide accurate and timely feedback, display appropriate facial expressions, ask questions, and even paraphrase for clarity

(Ekman, 1985). They wait to understand point of speaker instead of being offended by trigger words and try to find common ground. They try to eliminate all communication barriers, noise, or interference, physical environment, cultural differences, stress and fatigue levels. Competent active listeners adjust their communication style as deemed necessary based on situation and content of message (Elsea, 1986; Barker, 1971).

Strategies to develop listening skills (Elsea,1986):

- Separate the words from the person, reacting to ideas not person
- Find or create a reason to listen
- Resist judgement and evaluation
- Do not react to language and style
- Reduce Barriers or Interference
- Environment- close door, forward phone calls go into a private place, adjust lighting, arrange seating to liking

Conclusion

Listening is for comprehension and retention. Effective listeners in the workplace can go between the different modes fluidly customer service, teamwork, evaluation and supervision. Active listeners understand the need for being flexible and adapting an appropriate communication style.

Activity

Participants are put in teams. One is the talker, the other is the listener. The talker shares with the listener for five minutes the details for their day at work. The listener is no allowed to ask any questions, but only use positive words to continue the conversation. After the time is up, the partners switch roles.

Later participants talk about their experience. How was it like to be listened to? Did you feel the need to interrupt? How can you improve your active listening skills?

Discussion

Have participants recall time where they felt someone wasn't listening to them. How did they feel and what was the result? Discuss ways and opportunities they can challenge themselves to be better active listeners.

- For further discussion, please use audio recording in Appendix B.

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LESSON FIVE: SELF-DISCLOSURE

Lesson Overview

This lesson defines self-disclosure and outlines appropriate ways to communicate self-disclosure within the workplace. The lesson also highlights guidelines determining what is appropriate for the learner's organization.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Define and understand the two types of self-disclosure.
- Distinguish appropriate self- disclosure for the workplace.

Lesson Agenda

- Review Lesson
- Activity
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

Self-disclosure is “the process by which people reveal personal information about themselves to others” (Sprecher & Treger, 2015, p. 460) Self- disclosure is needed to transfer information, build relationship and rapport, and cultivate a productive organizational environment. Self-disclosure between supervisory and non- supervisor roles leads to motivation, increased job satisfaction, and perceived leader effectiveness. Effective self-disclosure helps to humanize people in authority and empathize with others who are struggling to interact within teams. Coworkers should disclose some information because engagement and interaction foster a cohesive relationship contribute to a better work environment.

It is important to understand the risks of self-disclosure and its effect in the workplace, because too much can have detrimental effects. Too much self-disclosure between coworkers can lead to the silent treatment, negative remarks, and gossip. Too much self-disclosure can make others uncomfortable, breaks rules of confidentiality, and lead to termination or suspension. Things that can harm effective self-disclosure are lack of reliability, consequences, and lack of trust.

How to use self- disclosure

- Ask yourself, why am I choosing to disclose this information? Is it for knowledge sharing, to provide a solution, to gain social support, building relationship or gaining trust or to maintain or create a positive self-image? Acknowledge your motive and intention and then decide should you continue
- Think about the organizational norms. Will disclosing the information have a positive or negative response. Does this fit in into the organizational culture, rules, regulations, or norms
- Connect the disclosure to a task or goal. Determine if your disclosure aligns positively with work productivity.

Examples of appropriate disclosure:

- Problems understanding or completing job assignments
- Conflict between other employees or customers or stakeholders
- Scheduling issues
- Improvement of process suggestions
- Accomplishments
- Similar goals and interests

- Relatable life experiences
- Work related ideas/conflicts

Examples of what not to disclose:

- Personal or family relationship problems
- Social life
- Politics or religion
- Actively searching for a new job
- Unprofessionally or rudely discussing issues with or about a supervisor and/or coworker.

Conclusion

Self-disclosure is essential to building relationships in the workplace. It influences accessibility, inquiry, and reciprocity. Competent communicators understand appropriateness and can identify the type and time to do so.

Activity

Have participants create scenarios of self-disclosure within workplace, negative or positive. Examples, are reason why they are late for work, getting a raise, making an excuse to leave early, weekend plans, etc. Decide potential responses and outcomes (i.e., notifying manager, email blasts, video recording of social media). Choose most effective and appropriate. Act out scene in front of total group. Allow time for feedback.

Discussion

Have participants identify when and what type of self-disclosure is appropriate for their organization. Make lists of risks and benefits of self- disclosure within their workplace. Examples are decrease or an increase in stress, possibility of the whole organization

finding out, evaluation of relationship and rapport, relief, insecurity, team building, education, etc.

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LESSON SIX: CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides a brief overview of cultural sensitivity in the workplace. Learners will be able to identify their individual strengths and areas to improve competence in cultural communication.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Define cultural sensitivity.
- Explain the importance of cultural sensitivity in the workplace.
- Enhance communication within a multicultural environment.
- Demonstrate self-reflection of their own cultural biases.

Resources

- Youtube link from Appendix C.

Lesson Agenda

- Review Lesson
- Activity
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

Diversity is very important topic in today's workplace. The new workplace has various demographic groups contributing to organizational success (Perkins, Thomas & Taylor, 2000). Diversity fosters innovation, creativity, and adds value to other ways of thinking (Janis, 1972). With diversity, comes a responsibility to being culturally sensitive.

In the workplace cultural values should be able to be expressed without feeling less important than another (Bhawuk, Sakuda, & Munusamy, 2008).

Cultural sensitivity is a set of skills that allows us to better understand and add value to the belief, concepts, and opinions of others different from ourselves (International Communication Association, 2010). Misconceptions occur when ideas, words, or gestures from two or more groups do not share the same connotation. Examples would be using the nonverbal themes from lesson three, there is no universal definition of space, time, touch, and so on.

Ways of establishing culture sensitivity:

- Be respectful
- Do not reflect your own beliefs on another
- Minimize power differences
- Do not diminish, demean, or disempower through individual or group actions

Cultural competency is the ability to effectively interact with people, different than you (Deardorff, 2004; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004). We have to be mindful not to engage in generalizations of people from other ethnicities, religions, and backgrounds. By doing so, we are continuing the cycle of negativity. Being able to self-reflect on thoughts and feelings of ethnocentrism –(judging another’s culture by values and standards of one’s own creating a hierarchy or superiority complex) and stereotyping- (judging a group different than your own without knowing or communicating with members of that group) help to create cultural sensitivity competence (Brewer & Campbell, 1976).

Diversity Training University International (DTUI) created four concepts to increase cultural sensitivity in the workplace.

- Awareness- Being aware of the reaction you have of others that are different. Changing your inner thoughts and reactions can increase positivity in the workplace.
- Attitude- Self reflect on any cultural biases you may have against another culture. Attitudes affect our work relationships.
- Knowledge-Instead of holding on to stereotypes, it is best to ask for clarification of other groups. Creating a healthy discussion to better understand one another increase productivity and cohesion
- Skills- Learn to adapt your communication style to work effectively in communication with other cultures. Implementing active listening and appropriate nonverbal skills are necessary.

Conclusion

Values and beliefs of the dominant culture usually shapes the ideas of the whole. Within the organization we must be aware and create value to all cultures. Understanding diversity and being able to self-reflect are key to becoming competent in cultural sensitivity (Bean, 2006). Through education, discussion, teamwork, and celebration of diversity individual and organizations will be able to work cohesively with diverse groups.

Activity

Have each participant create two columns on a piece of paper. Each participant will introduce themselves to the group. The first column will be an item that the participant

finds in common with the speaker, the other column is something they don't have in common. The person with the most names after all the introductions wins.

Discussion

Show Youtube video from Appendix C. After, discuss similarities and differences of participants. Create lists on how they will remember these common grounds at work though differences during conflict. Think about how these would apply to other contexts like, dealing with customers, stakeholders, or other entities.

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LESSON SEVEN: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Lesson Overview

This lesson provides a brief overview of the conflict management within the workplace. It provides strategies for communicating during conflict and how to be effective in managing conflict.

Lesson Outcomes

After completion of this lesson learners will be able to:

- Identify sources of conflict within the workplace.
- Describe conflict resolution skills based on the different communication styles.
- Identify and demonstrate conflict management techniques.

Lesson Agenda

- Review Lesson
- Activity
- Discussion

Lesson Summary

Managing conflict is crucial to the existence of organizations. Conflict is present in both internal and external organization communication. Workplace environments who are more accepting and value diversity produce better products, cohesiveness, comradery, and higher morale (Hoerr, Pollock, and Whiteside, 1986; Waterman, 1987).

Conflicts arise for various reasons within the workplace. Conflict can be defined as dynamic process of interaction between two or more interdependent parties who have a certain degree of differences (Barki & Hartwick, 2004).

Conflict can be between individuals, an individual and the organization, groups of employees, or groups and the organization. However, not all conflict is negative (Balasubramanian, & Bhardwaj, 2004). When managed effectively, conflict can improve decision making, create cohesion and involvement, gives opportunity to interchange ideas, and build organizational culture. Negative conflict can reduce loyalty and commitment between employees, customers, and stakeholders, sabotage or mislead employees, and create job turnover (Balasubramanian & Bhardwaj, 2004).

There are two types of conflict, substantive and personal (Knutson & Kowitz, 1977). Substantive conflicts relate to the concerns of process and policy, work and task requirements, or viewpoints, strategy, and interpretation. Personal conflict deals with frustration, personality clashes, or friction, that is revolved around personal relationships, concerns, emotions, or social issues between employees or organization (Knutson & Kowitz, 1977).

Understanding and valuing differences is an essential skill in conflict management (Rahim, 2010). Workplace conflicts can be easily resolved through open and effective communication (Blackard, 2001). Competent communicators understand that some words have more power and authority than others. Resolving workplace issues is significantly related to understanding how our communication styles are expressed through voice, verbal language and body language (Guo & Sanchez, 2005). Ask yourself, "What do I look like? What do I sound like? What do I say?" Again, this is important because they represent more than half of the message. Thinking back on the communication styles in lesson one, here are some strategies to answer these questions. Videotaping is one of the fastest and accurate ways of learning how one's

communication style is perceived. Audio Recording can answer what do I sound like. Role-playing, simulations, group problem solving, and assessments are great instruments to develop cultural understanding (Deveugele, Derese, De Maesschalck, Willems, Van Driel, & De Maeseneer. 2005).

How to problem solve (Eisea, 1988a):

- Identify and define problem that allows for solution
- Analyze problem to allow for appropriate data
- Based off data, formulate a solution
- Implement
- Evaluate results

Conclusion

Improving conflict management skills will help organizations improve their processes and management. Competence in conflict management in the workplace requires that we step outside of our comfort zones and work with other to achieve a goal and build healthier rapport and relationships.

Activity

Working in groups assign a common problem within the workplace (i.e., not agreeing on a project idea, overhearing confidential information, team building). Discuss general facts around problem. Develop potential causes of problem. Based on potential causes develop a corrective action plan. Create instructions to implement corrective action. If that doesn't work use the next cause and corrective action.

Discussion

As a total group, discuss how each corrective action plan affects members of the different communication styles. Discuss ways to alleviate conflict in their organization.

Examples are,

Can you tell me more about that?

What about this situation is most troubling to you?

What would you like to see happen?

What would it take for us to be able to move forward? ...

What ideas do you have that would meet both our needs? ...

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APPENDIX B: AUDIO RECORDING

Audio Transcript

Hello.

My name is Shirleena and today we will be discussing a very important topic in workplace communication.

Today, we will be discussing listening, or specifically active listening.

Listening is a word we hear every day, and our everyday meaning is simple. It's like, how can we not listen/ We hear birds, the sounds of the streets, the laughter in the break room, the meetings with our supervisor, and the voices of our customers.

Sounds simple right? Well what if I told you, that to actively listen, there is a deeper level, a more complex level (King, 2002). We want to shift from that everyday definition of listening, which is hearing, to understanding and wanting to be as engaged and active in our listening as we can.

There is a lot that is required of us when it comes to active listening, but the reward is great.

More than ever, employers are seeking new employees and members of leadership that are good listeners. They want someone on the team that can think critically, ask those questions, and produce results for a positive bottom line (Dess & Picken, 2000).

Good listening skills are not just for the workplace. This is for our home relationships. Our romantic and spiritual relationships. Effective listening is not only a big deal but an essential skill for our lives (Steil, 1997).

This lesson today will cover the benefits of listening, define active listening, identify frequent blocks that interfere with listening, and then conclude with skills to build on to improve our listening.

Now we will discuss the benefits of active listening.

To start, I want you to close your eyes and think about the last time you truly heard. During this time, you probably felt as if the person really got you. That you were understood, and that you both were in tune and present in that moment.

Now I ask for you to think about how did that support you and your emotions in that situation? Perhaps you were having a bad day. Or perhaps a good day. How did it make you feel? Do you now have a higher regard for that person? I know when I think of the last time I was truly listened to, I felt respected, I felt understood. I felt accepted. I felt as if my thoughts and ideas were truly valued. Now think about how you are able to remember that time so vividly. What was said? What cues did they pick up on? What sticks out to you? Now open your eyes.

Keeping in mind that scenario,

The first benefit to good listening is trust (Salem, 2003). Being able to build trust between you and another person. When you are really listened to, we feel respected, we feel valued and that allows us to trust that person. We feel comfortable disclosing more information and see them as a credible and reliable source. It's the same if the roles were reversed. We want to be the one that that person and people find trustworthy and reliable. In our workplace, we want our

customers to feel appreciated, we want our teams to know their voice matters, and as an organization we want to create that culture of safety, and healthy relationships with good rapport.

Another benefit of active listening is the increased sense of our own personal awareness of how we listen and respond to others. Active listening is about creating a deeper understanding, we want to make sure that our message represents our true feelings (Ramsey & Sohi, 1997).

When someone is engaged in our conversation, asking probing questions, and requesting feedback, it makes us more mindful and intentional with our word choice. It makes us motivated to provide a more clear and articulate response.

In summary, some benefits of active listening are, trust, positive rapport, healthier relationships, and an increased sense of personal awareness.

Now let's move into defining active listening. I believe to do so, we must first identify the different levels of listening. Now arguably, researchers believe that there are 3, 4, or and even 5 listening levels (Bymes, 1984). Today we will cover 3. This will help us see what type of listener we want and who we want to be when we actively listen.

The first level of listening is called internal listening. This is a very passive and transactional approach to listening (Huettig, & Hartsuiker, 2010). An example would be, "Okay, I'm going to talk. Now it's your turn to talk. But while you're talking, I'm going to stop and I'm going to listen." Listening in this manner, we are

thinking what is in it for me? Level one listening we often refer to as listening “to” or listening to exchange (Baranger, 1993).

An example at work would be, a morning meeting or round table. Say the morning meeting is outlining the goals for the day. In our minds, we know we have to complete x y and z before 5pm. We then create a mental or physical schedule of how we are going to spend our day. We are in this mode of, this is what I heard, and this is what it means to me.

Another example is when a customer wants to purchase an item. We express how much an item cost; they then decide whether they will take the item or not. Based on that, payment is exchanged, and the transaction is complete. That is the basic or 1st level of listening. Very basic and without deep meaning.

There isn't anything wrong with this level of listening in certain contexts.

Greetings in passing, asking for directions to go places, simple things that don't need a lot of memory, and that are basic exchanges of information.

Level one listening becomes an issue when certain conversations are had, meetings of decision making, or preventing crisis.

This would be poor level in these contexts.

Let's now discuss level two listening. What is a good definition of level two listening and how does it contrast from level one?

Level two is, “Listening for” or focused listening. On this level we are concerned with the other person's experience. This means we listen at a deeper level to see what the information means to the person sharing the information or someone

else. Some refer to this level as being sympathetic, or sympathetic listening (Wilson, 2003).

For example, if you are a supervisor and a team member was going to be late for work because their child was sick. They call in to notify you of this information. Level one would be too impersonal to give a response. Considering their experience, would probably be nervous to call and feel like they were letting the team down. We have all had that supervisor or manager we wanted to avoid at all cost. Do not be that person. By listening to understand their side, you can answer them in a respectful and concerned way.

As a member of any organization, we need to understand this type of listening.

This is the type of level of listening we should try to operate on a daily basis.

This is the minimum level that employers want to see. They want to know how well do you listen to understand. They want to know what does this mean to you and how does your deeper understanding solve problems.

They are looking for people with good listening skills, so that you understand the world from their point of view, so that you adapt to their culture, thus creating that loyalty and relationship that's going to benefit both parties.

Level two is all about listening for a greater meaning.

The last level we will discuss today is active listening. This encompasses all of level two but also adds in our physical bodies and even intuition.

Our bodies showing up and representing how we are actively listening, our eyes are focused on that person, we are leaning in, we ignore external and internal

distractions. We aren't just listening to the words, but to what is not being said, and how the words are said, and considering our prior knowledge of the persons, their beliefs, their desires, and what they value (Robertson, 2005). This is using our intuition or gut feelings to consider a response. Again, using all parts of our body, not just our ears to listen.

Listening on this level requires us to be empathetic. We are understanding at our deepest level

with good intention to really receive the message given.

We can define active listening as not listening to, or listening for, but we are listening with.

Features of active listening include remaining neutral and nonjudgmental, verbal and nonverbal feedback such as eye contact, smiling, adjusting your posture, and asking questions and being able to paraphrase the information received (Willis, 2018).

Let's think back to that employee with the sick child. Perhaps they went into work anyway and you weren't notified what was going on. You see them at their desk,

You say, "Hello, how are you doing?" They say, "I'm fine." Level one listening would stop there, because do you really want to know what is going on and how they were doing or was it just a cordial greeting. Your response is, "Ok well have a good day." Level two listening would say, "Just fine, Not great? What's going on." They would say, "There's a lot going on right now." Your response

would be on the lines of, “I’m sorry to hear that. Let me know how I can help you or if you need to take a break.” You would crack a smile and perhaps head back to your desk.

Level three listening or active listening would have recognized the demeanor, the somber voice, the lack of eye contact, the body posture. You would have remembered that this person is usually cheerful. Your intuition or gut feeling would acknowledge there’s something deeper to this message. You would say, “Would you like to talk in the office? I am available to listen. Remember I am here to help.” They most likely would oblige and disclose information based on your probing questions and then you two together would come up with a resolution. Maybe going home is the best option to tend to their child, or delegating their tasks for another day. This is where that trust and rapport is really gained.

Now we will move on to a few things that block us from active listening.

Researchers believe that the greatest block we have that prevents us from listening well is our own internal processing (Anwar, 2018).

We have our own voice, we have our own thoughts, our own ideas, tips, and pointers that we want to share, and those often block the ability to really listen to someone well. We also have our own perspectives and experiences that hinder our listening.

Cultural differences play a part in blocking our listening. We base our reality on what we have experienced and what that has taught to us (Sranchez & Guo, 2005). This puts a filter on our listening.

Another block that affects listening is talking (Eisenberg, 2010). We often interrupt and only listen to respond. This can hinder our rapport and relationships. People become less likely to want to talk to you when they know they aren't going to be heard.

And lastly, another block is our physical environment (Longest, Rakich & Darr, 2000). The lighting, the chair, whether or not other people are around, all of this plays a part in hindering or blocking our listening.

Now let's go over ways to improve our active listening skills if we adapt them into our everyday practice (Cheney, 2011; Keyton, 2011; Tourish, 2010; Lunenburg, 2010).

1. · Find or create a reason to listen- Remember be the type of listener you want someone to be for you. We want people to trust us.
2. · Resist judgement and evaluation- Take the message for what it is. Create that welcoming and safe space for others to be vulnerable and for you to understand them at a deeper level.
3. · Reduce Barriers or Interference- Get out of your own head. Reduce the inside noise and focus solely on the message and person in front of you. Also remember to set aside, personal bias or stereotypes of others.

4. · Consider your physical Environment- close the door, forward phone calls, go into a private place, adjust the lighting, arrange seating to suit your liking, adjust the environment so that you can focus on listening.

And lastly,

5. Be kind to yourself- This takes practice. This is a skill that we all must continue to develop. If you find yourself getting distracted, refocus and try again.

This concludes our lesson for today.

Today we have identified the types or levels to listening, defined active listening, described ways our listening is blocked and then concluded with skills to improve our listening. I hope that you found this lesson informative and you are motivated to become a better listener.

I thank you for your time. Take care.

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APPENDIX C: VIDEO

YouTube Link

https://youtu.be/GY_ovm-iEdM

YouTube Transcript

Slide One

Hi. This lesson is cultural sensitivity. By the end of this video, you will be able to define cultural sensitivity and have learned ways to improve your cultural competence when working in a diverse, multicultural environment. Let's get started.

Slide Two

Diversity is a very important topic in today's workplace (Legas & Sims, 2011). The new workplace has various demographic groups contributing to organizational success. Diversity fosters innovation, creativity, and values unique ways of thinking (Jackson & Ruderman, 1995).

Slide Three

With diversity comes the responsibility to be culturally sensitive. Cultural sensitivity is a set of skills that allows us to better understand and add value to the belief, concepts, and opinions of others different from ourselves (International Communication Association, 2010).

Slide Four

Researchers believe there are two types of diversity competencies useful in the workplace: interacting with difference and valuing difference (Turnbull & Pirson, 2010).

Slide Five

Interacting with difference refers to our ability to use communication skills to not respond with judgement or unfair treatment due to differences.

Slide Six

Valuing diversity refers to embracing diversity by appreciating our differences within the workplace and encouraging and creating practices procedures and systems that value diversity.

Slide Seven

There are four key concepts to improving our cultural sensitivity within the workplace: awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills (Deardorff, 2006; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett, 2004).

Slide Eight

Awareness is knowing one's own individuality and behaviors. When you know about yourself and how it affects others, you are able to see how your behavior either fits or doesn't fit in a certain social setting or situation (Belk, 1988).

Slide Nine

Attitude refers to our awareness of personal bias and prejudice to other cultures in our workplace. Being mindful of our words, actions, thoughts, and behaviors will make for a more positive work experience for all (Johnson et al., 2006).

Slide Ten

There are so many things about other cultures that we do not know or understand. Having an open mind to explore and learn new things will bring about healthier and happier relationships as well as an increase in productivity and work cohesion.

Slide Eleven

Improving our communication skills will significantly increase our cultural competence. Daily practice of skills such as active listening, empathy, and self-awareness will help us reach our cultural sensitivity goals (Diversity Training University International (DTUI)).

Slide Twelve

Now that we have a better understanding of cultural sensitivity, let's go over some skills we can use in our daily interactions.

Slide Thirteen

The greatest way to improve cultural sensitivity within the workplace is to be respectful. Being respectful means adapting the following skills (Paludi, 2012):

Slide Fourteen

Number One. Do Not Reflect your own beliefs on another. Just because someone believes in something different than you, doesn't make them wrong and you right. Respecting each other personal beliefs creates an inclusive workplace environment.

Slide Fifteen

Number two. Minimize Power Differences. Allowing all voices to be heard shows that each member of the organization adds value and their thoughts and ideas are appreciated. Though there are different positions, all voices, and opinions matter.

Slide Sixteen

And lastly, do not diminish, demean, or disempower through individual or group actions. All groups and individuals should feel safe and valuable to the organization. Be sure to empower, encourage and appreciate yourself and others.

Slide Seventeen

That's it for now. Hope you enjoyed this lesson. And remember, through cultural sensitivity, you can make a world of difference

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