

Chapter 3

The Art and Science in Communication: Workplace (Cross–Cultural) Communication Skills and Competencies in the Modern Workforce

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ABSTRACT

One of the challenges facing the modern workforce is the increased diversity of the workforce and similarly complex prospective customers with disparate cultural backgrounds. Language barriers, cultural nuances, and value divergence can easily cause unintended misunderstandings and how low efficiency in internal communication in a multinational environment. It leads to conflict among employees and profit loss in organizational productivity. Therefore, effective communication by people from different cultures stands out significantly in the modern workforce who want to make inroads into international markets, take advantage of multiculturalism, and avoid possible side effects. The purpose of this chapter is on communication, specifically, the art and science in communication, resulting in communication skills and competencies in the modern workforce. The chapter will cover the meaning of communication, language, and history/philosophy of communication and will conclude with factors to be sensitive about when becoming effective cross cultural managers in the modern workforce.

INTRODUCTION

The United States is a diverse country of immigrants, so the promotion of cultural diversity and different cultural heritages (Dong, 1995) are necessary. Ethnocentrism is viewed as lacking acceptance of cultural diversity and intolerance for outgroups (Berry & Kalin, 1995). This lack of acceptance of cultural diversity has a strong tendency to lead to negative stereotypes toward other cultural/ethnic groups, negative prejudice and negative behaviors against these group members. As the world becomes a global village

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and increasingly more people with diverse cultural backgrounds interact with each other constantly, it is imperative to investigate what factors could help overcome ethnocentrism, especially as the modern workforce is expanding overseas (Tran, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

Tran (2016) states that one of the challenges facing the modern workforce is the increased diversity of the workforce and similarly complex prospective customers with disparate cultural backgrounds. After all, language barriers, cultural nuances, and value divergence can easily cause unintended misunderstandings and how low efficiency in internal communication in a multinational environment. It leads to conflict among employees and profit loss in organizational productivity. Therefore, effective communication by people from different cultures stands out significantly in the modern workforce who want to make inroads into international markets, take advantage of multiculturalism, and avoid possible side effects.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is on communication; specifically, the art and science in communication resulting in communication skills and competencies in the modern workforce. The chapter will cover the meaning of communication, language, and history/philosophy of communication. This chapter will briefly touch upon computer-mediated communication (CMC) in relations to communication in the business environment and the global workplace. The chapter will conclude with factors to be sensitive about when becoming effective cross cultural managers in the modern workforce.

COMMUNICATION

According to Tran (2016a, 2016b, 2016c), Scott (2005) defined communication as sending, receiving, and understanding information and meaning, and claimed that receiving and understanding are the most important operations in the communication process since the response of the receiver defines whether or not the communication attempts are successful. Communication, however, can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011). The word communication is derived from the Latin word, *communis* which means common. The definition underscores the fact that unless a common understanding results from the exchange of information, there is actually no communication. The two elements in every communication exchange are the sender and the receiver. The sender initiates the communication. The receiver is the individual to whom the message is sent. The sender encodes the idea by selecting words, symbols, or gestures with which to compose a message. The message is the outcome of the encoding, which takes the form of oral or written verbal and nonverbal symbols (Tran, 2016b).

The message, according to Tran (2016b), is sent through a medium or channel, which is the carrier of the communication. The medium can be a face-to-face conversation, a telephone call, an e-mail, a written report, or a text (via a cell phone). The receiver decodes the received message into meaningful information. Noise is anything that distorts the message. Different perceptions of the message, language barriers, interruptions, emotions, and attitudes are examples of noise. Feedback occurs when the receiver responds to the sender's message by returning the message to the sender. Feedback allows the sender to determine whether the message has been received and understood. The elements in the communication process determine the quality of communication. A problem, commonly known as a barrier (Lunenburg, 2010), in any one of these can reduce communication effectiveness (Keyton, 2011). There are numerous barriers that negatively affect effective communication, of which, the following barriers are detrimental to leaders: emotional barriers, physical barriers, semantic barriers, and psychological barriers (Tran, 2016b).

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