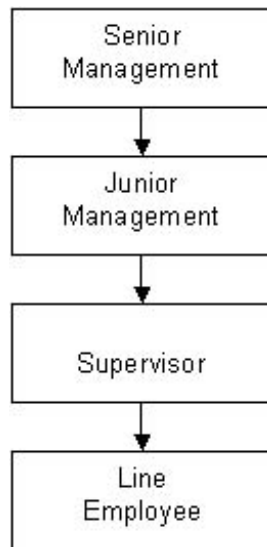


Communication

Communication is the passing on of ideas and information. In business we need good, clear communication. The contact may be between people, organisations or places and can be in a number of forms such as speech, writing, actions and gestures. Organisations need to be structured in such a way as to maximise the benefits of communication processes. This is why team structures are so useful because they open up a multi-flow channel of communications.

Up until the 1980's many large firms in America and Western Europe were characterised by top-down communications systems.



Communication flowed down the line i.e. instructions were passed down the line. Individuals at the bottom end of the system had little scope for decision making.

However, modern communication systems stress the importance of empowerment, and multi-flow communications: There are a range of media for flows of communication in a modern organisation including:

- * team briefings
- * team discussions
- * meetings
- * informal talk
- * e-mail
- * discussion boards, etc.

Large organisations like Corus and Travis Perkins recognise the importance of multi-channel communications and have therefore created team working structures. Teams are organised into multi-disciplinary groups in order to draw on a range of expertise. The teams are encouraged to make decisions rather than to wait for commands from above.

Multi-channel communications

Formal communications are those that involve the officially recognised communication channels within an organisation. Informal communication involves other forms of interactions between organisational members.

Good communication is an important person to person skill in an organisation. Employees are most likely to be well motivated and to work hard for organisations where there are well organised multi-directional communication flows. Communication flows in a number of directions:

Downward communication involves the passing of commands from higher levels in a hierarchy to lower levels. This is

sometimes referred to as top-down communication.

Upward communication involves the feedback of ideas from lower down in the organisation to higher levels. This sort of communication flow is important in the consultation of employees, and enables managers to draw on good ideas from those working at grassroots levels in an organisation.

Sideways communication involves the exchange of ideas and information between those at the same level in an organisation e.g. between the various functions.

Multi-channel communication involves a range of flows of information. Information and Communications technology and the resultant networking systems enable effective multi-channel communication.

There are all sorts of ways of organising effective communications between members of an organisation:

Team briefings - enable team leaders and managers to communicate and consult with their staff. Team briefings may take place on a daily basis or less frequently.

Formal meetings - enable a more formalised approach to communication.

Face-to-face communications enable a free and frank exchange of ideas.

There are many other ways of communicating such as e-mail, electronic noticeboards, physical noticeboards, newsletters, phone, fax, videoconferencing etc.

The type of communication channel used needs to be appropriate to the message being conveyed. For example, if an exchange of ideas is required some sort of face-to-face meeting will be most appropriate. The communication of information can be done by newsletter, or notice board. Team working encourages a range of different types of communication and can be to high levels of motivation.