

Effective Communication as a Strategy for Enhancing Organizational Performance: A study of Afghan Relief Committee, Kabul

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Abstract

The study examines the role of effective communication for enhancing organizational performance in an Afghan Non-Governmental Organization, Afghan Relief Committee (ARC). The problem that led the research is the delays in access to information and employees' under achievement in end year performance evaluation. This research is using primary data, and survey research method is adopted for this purpose. However, some data will be collected from previous researches under literature review of this study. The focused populations are active employees of the Afghan Relief Committee which makes a total of 150 people in Kabul. The research targets 30% of total population (35 employees) through random sampling and are approached through a questionnaire for data collection.

The study found that there is direct link between effective communication and organization performance. The study has found out the most effective communication methods preferred by employees as well as concrete recommendations for effective communication in the organization.

Introduction

Communication is a means of bringing about change. It is the mainstream of any organization growth. There is need for interaction and understanding of management-employee relations this will bring about increased performance of all parties involved in the communication process or chain. According to Banihashemi (2011), communication as a medium, a means to performance ends, or as constitutive, as the end in itself.

Communication is a critical factor in directing and mobilizing the workforce towards the accomplishment of the organizational goals or objectives. According to Williams (2007) smart managers understand that the end effective, straight forward communication between managers and employees is essential for success.

In organization, employees spend more time communicating than doing any other task. Probably it is important of all our activities. It is easy to see that communication is the activity, which has enabled us to develop the civilized society we know today.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate and identify the communication methods which are most effective in transmitting and managing information to increase the performance of ARC staff. Effective communication strongly helps in better performance by employees. Also empirical studies would be gathered and analysis would be made using our area of study; Afghan Relief Committee. The research will assist in finding the communication barriers as well as preferred communication methods at ARC.

Profile of afghan relief committee (ARC)

ARC as a non-sectarian, non-political, non-governmental organization was established in 1980 by the name of Austrian Relief Committee (ARC) in response to the Russian invasion to Afghanistan and the massive influx of Afghan Refugees into Pakistan. Owing to it's voluntarily efforts, ARC gained fame, won the trust of Afghan Communities and developed into a leading Organization. In 1994 a decision was made by ARC Vienna Board that the Austrian Relief Committee to be proceeded by Afghan Relief Committee (ARC). So Afghan Relief Committee (ARC) has gradually been approved as the lawful successor of former

Austrian Relief Committee (ARC) and re-registered with the government of Pakistan, registered with the government of Afghanistan and relevant agencies as Afghan Relief Committee (ARC).

Presently Afghan Relief Committee (ARC) has its Article of Association, Board of Trustees (BT) and management committee (MC). The BT is the superior body of ARC and has the power to make principle decision within the legal framework of ARC. The BT consists of seven members, five honorary members and two members from ARC. Currently ARC has a legal status to receive grants, aid and donation from governments, institutions and individuals to enable it to achieve its established objectives.

Now ARC implements integrated community-based rural development programs in Afghanistan, focusing on agriculture, irrigation, health, sanitation, construction, income-generation, and training of the villagers, rural development technology, social forestry, livestock and veterinary services. The integrated rural development program aims to have a measurable, positive and sustainable impact on rural communities.

Statement of problem

Many organizational disputes originate due to failure in communication. Hence it is important to stress that in communication, emotions, environment, psychological and technical characteristics of the medium is relevance to enhance the organizational performance. In the view of Okoye (2004), psychologically transmission goes beyond reception of information but understanding and feedback. Most organizational conflict has been raised due to in-effective communication strategies. Change is a gradual and continuous process, giving room for inputs and adjustments. The new innovations, use of internet, ICT awareness and appraisal methods are good in itself but the medium and level of communication is problematic.

Furthermore, the constant delay in accessing information by staff seems to limit their performance, which could create maladministration in coordinating of organizational activities. Therefore, performance of employees in relation with their duties and responsibility seems to question their communication techniques in terms of performance in the organization.

Exposure of staff to the innovations in the organization in terms of communication channels have experienced shortcoming which if not adequately addressed may lead to poor performance of the organization. These problems mentioned above, has posed the following questions that would guide the study and there by enhance quality of effective communication in the Afghan Relief Committee.

Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this study is to examine the effects of effective communication on organization performance in Afghan Relief Committee. The specific objective includes:

1. To explore the relationship between effective communication and organization performance,
2. To examine the communication techniques that enhances organization performance in Afghan Relief Committee.
3. To provide practical recommendations for improved communication system which ultimately leads to better organization performance.

Research questions

1. Is there a relationship between effective communication and organization performance in Afghan Relief Committee?
2. How effective has the communication techniques enhanced organization's performance?
3. What are the practical communication mechanisms that contribute to better organization performance?

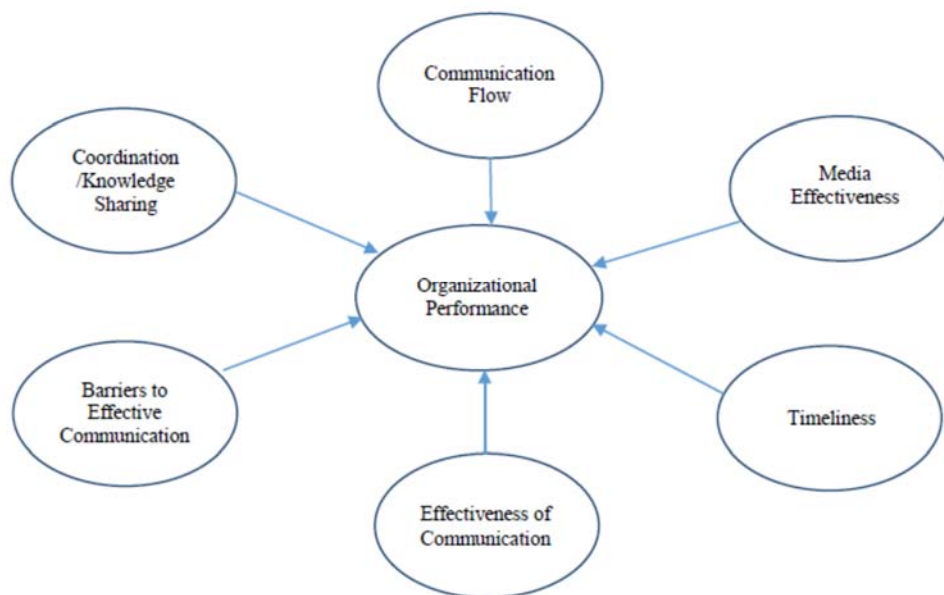
Research hypotheses

H₁: There is a significant relationship between effective communication and ARC's organization performance.

H₀: There is no relationship between effective communication and ARC's organization performance.

Theoretical framework

In this study, the focus is made on the impacts of communication parameters on organizational performance. Communication makes backbone of an organization and has significant relation with employee performance. An organization can perform efficiently if communication strategies are clear and system is maintained in a way that everybody has a chance to share ideas, feelings and thoughts. This research will find out the approaches which can fit well the communication needs of Afghan Relief Committee and enhance employee performance through effective communication. Employees will suffer if they don't receive the required information for conducting their organizational affairs which will subsequently affect overall performance of an organization. In figure below, different parameter with regard communication are mentioned which can have direct impact on organizational performance.



Research methodology

This study is using survey design research method and the study area is an Afghan Non-Governmental Organization; the Afghan Relief Committee. The data for this research was basically collected from primary sources; however, secondary data and findings of previous researches was widely used under literature review of this research. The focused population is active employees of the Afghan Relief Committee making a total of 150 people in Kabul. The research targeted 30% of total population (35 employees) through random sampling. A questionnaire composed of 35 questions was developed, tested and distributed to targeted population for data collection.

The questionnaire used for data collection was pre-tested on a group within the research population in order to reinforce its final administration. SPSS software was used for reliability test of the questionnaire:

Reliability statistics

| | | |
|------------------|--|------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
| .754 | .778 | 35 |

The result of Reliability Statistics shows that Ca is .778 which is that data is reliable and sufficient for survey research. Cronbach's Alpha is a globally accepted reliability test for research purposes with below definition of internal consistency:

| Cronbach's alpha | Internal consistency |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| $\alpha \geq 0.9$ | Excellent |
| $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ | Good |
| $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ | Acceptable |
| $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$ | Questionable |
| $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ | Poor |
| $0.5 > \alpha$ | Unacceptable |

The questionnaires with complete instructions were handed-over to respondents and it was assured that their responses will be kept confidential. The questionnaire consisted of two sections, A and B. Section A consisted of 5 question related to demographic specifications of the respondents. And Section B consisted of 35 questions relate to effective communication and organizational performance.

Out of 35 employees, only 30 of them responded to the questionnaire and returned the paper with their inputs.

SPSS Software was used for analyzing the collected data and each question was individually analyzed for getting clear picture on study questions.

Demographic Analysis of the respondents –among thirty respondents, almost 54% of them are female while only 46 % (14 out of 30) makes male respondents. This figure assures that both male & female has participated in the study and their inputs are incorporated in this paper. This will help to have ideas from different segments which ultimately add value to the results.

Table 1. Gender

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Male | 14 | 46.7 | 46.7 | 46.7 |
| | Female | 16 | 53.3 | 53.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

In this study respondents were asked to highlight their position from the three management levels as well as from the support staff:

- Top Level Management (Executives, Head of Office/Units)
- Mid-Level Management such as Managers, Supervisor and etc
- Support staff like cleaners, drivers, guards, cooks and etc.

The reason behind having the results analysed based on managerial level is because of having preference of different groups on communication methods. In example, email or electronic communication may not fit for first level workers in the field who rarely have access to internet. Rather they may prefer to have communication on phone which is normally accessible to everyone. This study will find out that which communication method is

preferred to which management level. The table below shows that responses are received from different levels and it dictates that there will be wiser conclusion from all departments.

Table 2. Frequency analysis based on management levels

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Top Level Management (Head of Unit, Executives) | 1 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| | Middle Level Manager (Project Manager, Supervisor) | 3 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 13.3 |
| | First level Management (Officers, Consolers, etc.) | 18 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 73.3 |
| | Support Staff (Guard, Cleaner, Driver,) | 8 | 26.7 | 26.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

There were 35 questions concerning communication in the questionnaire which focuses on different aspects of effective communication. It explores the current/ongoing communication methods, communication barriers, communication flow and preferred communication methods by employees of Afghan Relief Committee.

Hence, each and every question & response is here analysed individually for getting a clear idea on the responses and will then conclude the discussion as well as the results.

Table 3. In this organization, my ideas are frequently passed on to top-management

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Disagree | 2 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 6.7 |
| | Neutral | 6 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 26.7 |
| | Agree | 15 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 76.7 |
| | Strongly Agree | 7 | 23.3 | 23.3 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

This table shows that 73% of employees agree with question that their ideas are passed on to top-management. However, a significant percentage of employees (27%) have disagreed and said that their ideas are not passed to top management. These can a focus area for senior managers of ARC for making the environment in way that each and every staff has the opportunity to pass their ideas to top management.

Table 4. In order to share ideas/information with top-management I must go through my manager

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 1 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| | Disagree | 1 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 6.7 |
| | Neutral | 4 | 13.3 | 13.3 | 20.0 |
| | Agree | 18 | 60.0 | 60.0 | 80.0 |
| | Strongly Agree | 6 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

This part is crucial –employees should not feel compelled to go through their supervisor for sharing ideas with top management. This is considered as barrier which can impede the work progress and can avoid passing some critical ideas directly to top management. Employees sometime don't feel comfortable for sharing their ideas with their supervisor because of thinking that supervisor can make problem during performance evaluation.

Table 5. I am often delayed in my job because I do not have the information I need.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Strongly Disagree | 9 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| | Disagree | 13 | 43.3 | 43.3 | 73.3 |
| | Neutral | 3 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 83.3 |
| | Agree | 3 | 10.0 | 10.0 | 93.3 |
| | Strongly Agree | 2 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 30 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Employees are delayed in their performance if information is not received on timely basis which can ultimately impact the overall performance of the organization. The study has found that there is a number of employees (16%) whom are delayed in their job due to late information from the office.

Media effectiveness

The appropriate type of communication has very much impact on effective performance of employees. An office cannot accommodate a certain type of communication unless it sound effective for employees and information is transferred on timely basis. Since a purpose of this study was to found the most appropriate type of communication, here we go for analysing the communication methods based on preference of employees on each type. It's important to understand that which level of management prefers which type of communication.

The findings show that all three levels of management prefer electronic communication and call it effective for daily communication. It sounds great that employees prefer using email for communication with colleagues and stakeholders. Using email has become a very effective way of communication in this dynamic world. The support staff such as guards, cleaner, driver and cook does not prefer email since they either have no knowledge of using email or not suitable in context of their working environment.

Face to face communication is highly preferred by employees in this study. It worth to mention that information can easily be transferred during face to face communication and avoids back and forth written communication which often happens in emails among offices. It's recommended to use face to face communication while transferring important information which can raise questions in minds of employees and results in continuous back and forth emails among employees. Since organizations are dynamic and changes are often introduced, it's important to use face to face to face communication in other to avoid confusion and floods of questions in emails. All staff can benefit from this type of communication including support staff such as cleaners, drivers and etc.

Conclusion

The findings of this study shows that there is link between effective communication and organizational performance. Communication is vital in any type of organization; private or public, and success depends on effective communication and flow of timely information to employees for performing their tasks. Management of organization should make communication process as integral part of management strategy because it can have direct impact in achieving organizational goals. Employees should have an overall concept about role of effective communication in the office and how it can assist in better performance of staff. Employees feel confident when their ideas are received and considered by senior management – this can encourage the sense of creativity and enthusiasm among offices.

Communication techniques are pretty important for better understanding and easy flow of required information. The study shows that staff members prefer certain types of communication methods in every level of management. Email communication could not be effective for field staff who have rare access to internet. While telephone calls can be very

useful for such circumstances. Therefore, it depends on the context of each organization. Management of organization must understand the appropriate method of communicating their staff at different levels. Finding the communication needs of an organization is another important aspect of this topic – organizations should support the assessments where communication needs are found out. This can be super effective for large or multinational organizations.

In conclusion, effective communication makes the back-bone of a productive and sustained organization. Staff participation is crucial for an organization and can effectively enhance the organization performance.

Recommendations

- 1) The barriers to communication must be reduced in order to have effective communication in the organization. Meaning that, communication should flow to different levels of the organization and management.
- 2) Feedback is a crucial part of effective communication. This can help in improving staff performance as well as in achieving organizational goals.
- 3) Pass staff ideas to top management. This can raise the sense of ownership and creativity. Staff performance will slow down if their ideas are not considered by supervisors or top management; and thus can leave a negative impact on employee performance.
- 4) Provide on-time information to the staff for better performance. Staffs are delayed in performing duties if information is transferred late or incomplete. Provision of timely information to staff has direct impact on better performance.
- 5) Communication methods are crucial in establishing effective communication in an organization. In this study, top level and middle level employees have preferred communicating through emails while support staffs have preferred telephone calls, face to face communication and telephone communications.

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