INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AND MULTINATIONAL ORGANIZATION COMMUNICATION

Note: This paper was awarded as "The Outstanding Paper" at the International Conference on Organizational Innovation, Bangkok, Thailand, August 2010

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Abstract

In this study, intercultural communication challenge is considered. Later, the business context and intercultural communication are addressed. This is followed by importance of cross-cultural communication study. Besides, we explain barriers to effective cross-cultural communication. Communication in the export-import activities is elaborated. Finally, Communication in teams is studied. A topical bibliography is provided.

Keywords: Communication, Intercultural, Multinational Organization.
Introduction

Intercultural Communication Challenge

Learning to understand people whose background is diverse from our own is not an easy assignment. That challenge is to become an effective and successful intercultural communicator as we communicate with neighbors who might speak a “strange” language or a business partner who stops in the middle of a meeting. To be successful in communicating with the thousands of others we can face with the new global economy, we should communicate with people whose entire backgrounds, whose very method of viewing the world and doing things, may be different from us. The functioning of this new world refers to intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication means that people from different cultural backgrounds interact with one another. Cultural differences can create potential to make intercultural communication very difficult, and sometimes impossible. Culture strongly affects values, beliefs, world views, nonverbal behavior, language, and how to have relationship with others.

Intercultural Business and Communication Context.

Most nations are tied to an international system of economic interdependence, and most nations have at least one asset within their borders that is needed by another country. No nation is absolutely self-sufficient. Markets and cultures continued to converge, and major enterprise have seized the opportunity to go global. This results in augmented foreign competition. International corporations increasingly participate in various international business arrangements involving joint ventures between two or more organizations that share in the ownership of a business undertaking. Global competitors face both abroad and at home as tariffs are reduced, markets are deregulated. Cross-cultural collaboration and teamwork are important an organization’s success.
There are various issues when living or working in a foreign environment. Communication across cultures is difficult. A critical impact of business globalization is the development of diversity in the workers. Effective global enterprise communication skills are the backbone that supports the transaction of business around the world. Managers working global business develop cultural acquire and fluency cultural-sensitive communication tools. The development of managerial communicative skills is challenging because management can be viewed differently from culture to culture.

**Importance of Cross-Cultural Communication Study**

Communication covers all aspects of organization activity. It’s the process by which things are achieved in global organizations. For global managers, effective communication is a crucial skill because the manager’s planning, organizing, monitoring and facilitating functions become operationalzed only through communication. Cross-cultural communication creates when two managers from different cultures exchange meanings in both verbal and nonverbal ways. Every international manager is a communicator. Everything an international manager says and does communicates something in some way to some group or somebody. Cross-cultural communication happens when two managers from different cultures exchange meanings with one another. Verbal communication is the primary ways to encode a message. The communicator is able to convey a great deal of additional information through tone of voice, facial expressions, postures, gestures, use of personal space, punctuality, eye contact. A challenging area for global managers is the encoding and decoding of messages so that their original meaning is interpreted in the correct way. Proactive steps by both the receiver and communicator shall improve the overall cross-cultural communication process. In addition, feedback is sought by the communicator to assess whether the original message is received as intended. If not, follow-up
messages must be sent. Most transnational managers, after getting to know individuals from a different culture, are left with the impression that it is hard to categorize host-country nationals’ behavior into a simple communicate effectively with vendors, customers, government officials, and other key stakeholders in host countries, knowledge about culture, communication style, and preferences is crucial. Unfortunately, many global organizations do not provide adequate cross-cultural and language training to their soon to be global assignees. Such training programs can help international managers to understand their own culturally determined stereotypes and communication preferences in attempt to make them more accepting and understanding of the communication preferences of managers from different cultures. The more culturally different the receiver’s culture is from that of the communicator’s, the more likely misinterpretation shall happen as the "Global Focus" issues are especially essential when virtual team members are from diverse cultures and spread out geographically.

*Barriers to Effective Cross-Cultural Communication*

Major barriers to effective cross-cultural communication come from: differences in spoken language, the extent to which information is exchanged, the use of nonverbal behavior, and consideration of time. Approximately 6,000 languages are used in the world today. Global managers are required to communicate in a second or third language that both individuals shall understand. Regardless of one’s fluency in that second or third understanding and language of the receiver’s host culture, miscommunications and cross-culture misunderstanding are still likely to happen. To prevent issues from happening, successful international managers in the 21st century need to be able to communicate in the language of their customer, no matter where that customer is located. Before one can conclude that English is sufficient to engage in most international business activities, global managers are required to consider the number and
languages of the nations they shall be working with and the degree of interaction with host-
country nationals. Facial expressions is an essential in a global manager’s daily interpersonal
dealings with individuals from other cultures. Global managers can have cross-cultural
communicators achieve two tasks. First, they ought to improve message and information they
wish to send. Second, they ought to seek to improve their own understanding of what people
from other cultures are trying to communicate. International managers are able to take various
steps to become more effective cross cultural communication. They are required to have an
objective understanding of their own communication norms and culture. To be effective, global
managers are required to step outside of their culture and see it from the perspective of a non-
home-country national. Although many persons know that English is the language of world
business and is sufficient for most common business transactions. But others argue that a global
assignee should always speak the language of the customer. Every one tries to make global
assignees to learn the host-country language. This is especially important for managers who will
be working and living in a host country for extended periods. For others persons who visit
multiple countries each year and spend only a few weeks in each, then learning various key
phrases such as “Good morning, my name is so and so,” and “Hello, It’s nice to meet you,”
“goodbye and thank you” shall help the global assignees function and gain the respect of the
host-country nationals. Time pressures and travel schedules always mean that international
managers cannot follow up their messages and encourage feedback every time they communicate
with stakeholders from different cultures. Under such circumstances, an atmosphere of mutual
trust and confidence between managers from diverse cultures are able to encourage facilitate
communication. In cultures that need longer time to know one another and more disclosure about
one’s personal life, the trust building always need several initial face-to-face visits before mutual
trust is able to be established. The managers resist to get down to business during the early visit and instead concentrate on building rapport and getting to know host-country nationals. He waited until they initiated business discussions and as a result was perceived as friendly, nice and can be trusted. Such guidelines is able to be useful to global managers. More important, however, is the decision to listen. Guidelines are useful if the manager makes the conscious decision to listen. Only after the realization that effective communication concerns understanding as well as being understood, the manager is able to guidelines for effective listening become useful. One of the best methods to encourage someone to express true feelings, emotions and desires, is to listen. But just listening is not good enough, one must listen with understanding.

Communication in Multinational Organization

Official communication comes from the field through the international division to the appropriate areas at headquarters and back. Communication can be efficient because all international communication goes through the international division. Nowadays an augmenting of the revenues of major companies in many nations comes from international activities. Competition over who is best is able to lead communication problems and a waste of resources. One group may withhold information for the benefit of a subgroup. Staffing affects communication networks. An enterprise that needs to ameliorate its intercultural communication should reexamine its staffing practices and patterns.

To minimize communication issues, a company can:

• Hire host country personnel who are familiar with the home country culture
• Have a mixture of home country and host country nationals in the subsidiary
• Build specialists in certain regions
• Train personnel in the international division in intercultural communication
Many companies from the Koreans, the French, the Germans, and the Japanese expect that their workers is able to adapt, function, and communicate in different culture environments. European companies expect that managers shall speak at least one foreign language fluently. In cultures in which loyalty is essential in the workers, those working for a foreign company experience a decrease in his ability to communicate effectively.

In the international organization, scholars agree that:

- Managers should adapt to the culture.
- Technical expertise is not enough.
- Language and cultural sensitivity are crucial.

A change to a global structure does not make a global person out of a domestic personnel. If the shift to a global structure is not prepared carefully, there shall be a lot of confusion, poor communication and bad decisions. Workers may know the product inside and out, but they have little or no background in the international distribution systems, international market, intercultural communication, and international sensitivities problems. They may evaluate international procedures on the basis of their domestic expertise and their self frame of reference criterion. They decide everything on the basis of their own backgrounds. A global company needs coordination, unity of command, and communication. Worldwide operations communicate to the appropriate functional managers, such as finance, marketing, and personnel, at headquarters. The difficulty is that communication is able to occur along specialized paths. A functional manager have not overview of the whole situation because he deals only with one functional aspect. They should communicate with staff in their areas of specialization around the globe but also should communicate with managers from other functional areas to coordinate
efforts. Various companies spend great effort on cross-functional training of their management staff to improve operations. The process needs adaptation and sensitivity to the different goals of the various functional areas and cultural orientations. The geographic structure coordinates operations within a region but always does not pay enough attention to coordination between regions. Communication between regions may be not enough because of different ethnic rivalries and languages. The communication system may be fragmented, and be difficult to pull all the regions together to share resources and exchange ideas. In the worldwide product structure, global communication relating to one product can efficient but the communication between different product groups is able to weak because each product has marketing channels and its own sales force. Communications are negatively effected by fragmentation and competition. As a company becomes a global company, the changes needed for communication shall be difficult for workers at headquarters but even more difficult for personnel in the field. Nowadays, workers in the subsidiaries must contact a various personnel production product, development, finance, marketing and sales. Communicator lacks of background in the firm and without intercultural communication skills shall have difficulty structuring the message appropriately and choosing the optimal channel. An effective global structure needs intercultural communication training. Product development team members are not able to consider just domestic problems they must plan and think globally. Advertising campaigns must not be planned with only the local market in mind the team ought to consider cultural, regulatory and, legal requirements in other markets. Although each one has major responsibility for a special segment of the advertising campaign, everyone requires to be aware of the overall strategy and know what is going on worldwide. They all must overcome their work as a team and differences. The communication needs are more critical if R&D and production are spread over several locations all over the world. A
number of companies possess R&D labs in several nations. In a global enterprise those labs must coordinate and communicate with each other. They ought to cooperate and be informed rather than compete for resources. Each segment ought to keep in mind the best interest of the company as a whole. The global structure can be very beneficial for international operations. Global organizations do not distinguish between international and domestic advertising budgets. Managers from around the world must communicate with each other. They must know each other’s requirements, ways of doing things, and priorities. The staff in marketing, finance, and product development at headquarters ought to have a global outlook and understand the thought processes, values of the cultures, and customs in which the company does business. A global structure needs effective communication at headquarters and full integration of communication strategies on a global basis.

Communication in the IMPORT-EXPORT Activities

The first stages of international involvement do not need much international adaptation. For example, various companies begin their international experience by exporting through an import-export company. In the advanced stage of exporting the company can establish an export department in the company. Often, firms sell abroad because someone abroad wants the product. If the foreign market very requires the product, the adaptation in terms of culture, product, and language may be minimal. In the first exporting stage the company looks at itself as a domestic company that sells some of its production overseas, toward more international involvement. A growth export company shall adapt its products to specific markets and consider the foreign market an integral part of its business. The E-commerce and Internet have provided international markets to small firms. As soon as a business applies a web page, people around the world are able to view its services and product line. Online communication of a website must be
constructed with careful attention to cultural priorities to succeed in international markets. A small business can go through an import-export company or hire an agent. The managers of the company have no contact or little with the foreign markets. Company who use a foreign agent to represent it and distribute its products in foreign markets, it must be familiar with some of the legal issues in hiring, firing agents, and maintaining. Exporting company hire translators, go to trade fairs and shows, and advertise its products. The company shall be more interested in the technical aspects of exporting, for example shipping methods and letters of credit, than in cultural adaptations. Communication with the foreign market is passed by agent and interpreter. The level of adaptation can be dependent on the product. The product is standardized, the Coca-Cola Company must adapt its communication techniques and styles to the various communication styles and cultures of its bottlers around the world. The product is the same everywhere, the packaging, the bottle shapes and sizes, may vary. In its communication and operations in worldwide operations, Coca-Cola must adapt to various audiences and take into consideration the conventions and expectations of many cultures. Even if the firm possesses excess capacity product should make life easier in another culture, the product may not sell unless the company is willing to research the market, a process that needs a lot of intercultural understanding and communication. A company requires research on consumer preferences and attitudes, government regulations, and the purchasing power of consumers. All information must be collected evaluated, organized and then communicated. A company must adapt its strategy to foreign conditions and be aware of consumers needs and satisfaction. Then a decision is made to adapt a product to foreign markets, the requirement for intercultural communication increases. The greater the requirement shall be to communicate directly with people with different cultural backgrounds.

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Communication in Teams

Strong communication relations are vital to the wellbeing of a team. The most effective relations occur naturally. Such as:

- Have an appointment areas in which people is able to talk informally and meet.
- Maintain team members in close to ease communication.
- Encourage the most appropriate technology, and keep it up to date.
- Support free flow of communication between colleagues.
- Circulate agendas in advance of the meeting to give our team time to prepare.
- Attempt to delegate to other members of the team.
- Shift chairperson at each meeting to involve everyone.
- To be guarantee that good news is heard and clearly understood by all relevant persons.
- Support all relationships that may be good to the team.
- If issue is in any team relationship, deal with it quickly.
- Grant team roles carefully.
- Keep social contacts with other departments of organization.
- Maintain a record of contacts with valuable persons we meet outside the team.
- Find person with experience when seeking problem-solvers.
- To be interested in good points in an idea, and never criticize ideas in public.
- Guarantee that the whole team is able to learn from solving problems.
- Respect individuals they are doing a good job will build team morale.

How a team communicates internally depends on the location of its members and its size. Team members ought to have easy access to each other. If some members are off-campus supply efficient communication links, for example telephone, fax, e-mail, or video, all locations to
guarantee that dialogue is able to flow freely between the parties concerned. There are various methods for a team to communicate, within its own organization or externally. For example:

- Electronic means, intranet, e-mail, internet
- Consistency in conversational links between colleagues. These create an informal climate in organization.
- Video telephones and video-conferencing facilities that are able to reach right across the international business world.
- Other methods of communication are, for example: circulars, paper memo, reports, letters, faxes, notice boards, and telephone calls.

Making team meetings effective is a critical test of leadership skills. To be sure that team members understand the objective of each meeting and what is expected of them. Meetings often have a clear objective for exchange of information. Meeting are planned for future action. Draw up an agenda to be discussed and circulate this in advance of the meeting. Lead the participation and make purpose clear and aim to accomplish consensus within the team. Support everyone to have their say, subject to relevance and reasonable brevity, more creative the ideas. WORK-OUT MEETING: Meeting of whole team to study work methods. REPORTING MEETING: Meeting to spread special information to team. Teams depend to good networking skills. Make full advantage of the informal and formal connection both outside and inside organization to provide support for team.

If transactional processes make it possible to achieve task processes, then communication effects make it possible for transactional processes to work. Communication is the process of applying nonverbal and verbal to negotiate a mutually acceptable meaning between two or more personnel within a special environment and context. In a group, risk may come from the number
of members and the possible interpretations and interactions that can result from communication. A team normally works in an organization and with other units, pendency influences everything the team does:

- Accepted methods of doing things govern both teams and sub teams. Members live by norm, members know when
- A decision from any part of team can affect other part of that team
- Relationship among sub teams can maintained and created by the communication flow.

Each unit requires the other for information, and all units interact in making decisions, processing ideas, and building relationships. Without effective communication relationships, each unit may function independently, not interdependently.

- Information, influences, and ideas flow into and out of the team both from and to other teams and the environment.

Conclusions

The essentials of communication can lessen when anything changes communication is crucial again. Convergence is achieved only if workers talk about and agree to the ways they should work together to accomplish the objective, who should do what, and who requires what help. Committee convergence is able to be accomplished if people can listen and express to individuals needs and desires. In organizations where workers are not able to talk about their concerns and doubts, disasters occur. If managers and workers do not feel free to say, they don’t know something, not able to do it, or feel wrong about conducting it, failure is likely and trust will be broken. If communication is not truthful, projects shall struggle. Organizations work best when there is both trust and individual coverage. Nowadays, multinational companies expand around the world. Communication in global cultural teams is very important. Intercultural
communication is more crucial. Communication in the export-import activities is also essential. Communication in teams is essential in every organization, both domestic and international level.

References


