THE INFLUENCE OF MANAGEMENT BY WALKING AROUND ON STRATEGIC VISIONS

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ABSTRACT

A strategic vision is designed to capture the imagination of the firm's people and galvanize their efforts to achieve a higher purpose. Often employees lose sight of the strategic vision creating a gap between objectives and employee performance. Management by Walking Around (MBWA) facilitates communication between managers that craft the vision and employees responsible for executing the vision. This study examines the implications of MBWA on the implementation of a strategic vision.

INTRODUCTION

The competitive environment is changing at a furious pace. Organizations are affected by a host of internal and external environmental factors, ranging from the choices their employees make to the new technologically sophisticated products their competitors bring to the market. Keeping up with these changes, and with the new ways of strategic thinking aimed at exploiting these new developments is critical to success.

Organizations must have a sense of purpose that defines their goals and objectives. If organizations are to compete effectively, they need to establish guideposts that focus their efforts over an extended time period. Formulating a sound strategy requires both analysis and synthesis. Successful strategies are rooted in a deep understanding of what customer's value, how markets behave and how competition develops. The number one challenge of managerial productivity is the disconnection between managers that know the strategic vision and employees that are responsible for executing them.

The most important function of a leader is to develop a clear and compelling picture of the future and to secure commitment to that ideal. Top-level management is responsible for getting things accomplished through and with others to meet the strategic vision. The ultimate objective in every manager's job is succeeding in helping an organization achieve high performance while utilizing human and material capital (O'Reilly, 2000). Executive leadership is important because it sets the tone for the entire organization. In general, leadership denotes an individual with a status that permits the exercise of influence over other individuals.

The first principle of performance is to focus on results - to not lose sight of the outcomes that are required to meet the organization's goals (Hale, 2004). People in an organization want to have a sense of mission, but only top management is in the position to specify and communicate this strategic vision to the general workforce. The strategic vision describes what the company is capable of becoming. From a performance improvement perspective, people deserve clear direction. They should have some understanding of what the organization is trying to accomplish and what role they play in making it happen.

Top management's enthusiasm or lack thereof about the corporation tends to be contagious, however, the enthusiasm required to garner results cannot be spread and managed from within the office. If people's emotions are lead toward enthusiasm, performance can thrive; if people are driven toward rancor and anxiety, they will lose sight of the vision and performance will suffer (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee). The manager-employee exchange grants organizational leaders the opportunity to clearly articulate their vision to guide employee performance toward organizational objectives.

Organizational objectives as defined by the strategic vision must be performed by employees. To achieve the right combination of functions and performance that yield efficiency within the organization, managerial leaders must communicate a clear connection between the strategic vision and the functions of employees.

The need for communication pervades organizations. Communication is an important part of the leadership function and leading is a core function of management. MBWA is a communication technique in which managers interact directly with workers to exchange information (Daft & Marcic, 2004). The free flow of communication between management and employees allow the manager to correlate the organizational vision to the task of employees and employees have the opportunity to make suggestions and obtain any clarification required to perform.

Management involves looking ahead; deciding what needs to be accomplished and then helping people take the actions needed today in order to best meet the challenges of the future. Poor communication is often blamed for discord, errors, and misunderstandings in the workplace. To achieve organization success, managers must communicate the vision to employees.

This study examines how effective communication between managers and employees bridge the gap between the strategic vision created by managers and the job performance of employees toward organizational success.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People don't act upon the facts; they act upon their perception of the facts. It is one of the manager's key duties to see that the facts and the perceptions are basically the same (Gaynor, 2004). If people don't know what is going on, they simply assume what is going on. What is worse, they may assume something that is not so, and even worse than that, they may act upon those incorrect assumptions. The most powerful managers are those who share information with their employees, thereby giving the latter the power to become self-directed.

The Value of Effective Communication

Management is communication. Every managerial function and activity involves some form of direct or indirect communication. Whether planning and organizing or directing and leading, managers must communicate with and through others. The management process of setting goals, structuring resources, guiding people to act and checking to see if and how goals are met are achieved through communication (Andrews & Andrews, 2004).

Communication is used not only to convey information, but to persuade and influence people. Managers use communication to sell employees on the vision for the organization and influence them to behave in such a way as to accomplish the vision. By breaking down conventional hierarchical and departmental boundaries that may be barriers to communication, the organization can gain the benefit of all employees' ideas. When managers enlist the whole organization in reviewing the outcomes of activities, they can quickly learn what works and what doesn't and use that information to improve the organization (Daft & Marcic, 2004).

Without communication, managers cannot influence individuals and groups to attain performance objectives. A vision must be comprehensive and detailed so that every member of the organization understands his or her part in the whole. To ensure roles and responsibilities are understood, management must effectively communicate the vision. Effective communication is at the very heart of managerial performance (Drucker, 1992).

Managers have to let others see, hear, taste, touch and feel the vision of the organization. A picture in the mind of the manager is merely that until it is understood in the minds and adopted in the hearts of the employees. Only then will hands and feet be activated and the vision implemented. It may take leadership to articulate and give legitimacy to a vision, but it takes the strength of an empowered employment to get things done. In this regard, the vision of leaders must be in harmony with the nature and needs of people thus the vitality of communicating the vision (Cooper, 2002). Managers create clear and worthy images that motivate the organization, and then create a climate so that ideas are transformed into deeds. Leadership is commitment to purpose along with persistence to see it through (Cooper, 2002).

A strategic vision is a roadmap of a company's future - providing specifics about technology and customer focus, the geographic and product markets to be pursued, the capabilities it plans to develop, and the kind of company that management is trying to create (Thompson & Strickland, 2003). Effective visions are clear, challenging, and inspiring; they prepare a firm for the future, and they make sense in the marketplace. A well-conceived vision helps managers manage - serving as a beacon of the enterprise's long-term direction - helping channel organizational efforts and strategic initiatives (Thompson & Strickland, 2003).

The vision must be crystal clear because the modern organization is composed of specialists, each with his or her own narrow area of expertise. The organization must be single-minded, or its members will become confused. They will follow their own specialty rather than apply it to the common task. They will each define “results” in terms of their own specialty and impose its values on the organization. Only a focused and shared vision will hold an organization together and enable it to produce. Without agreement on purpose and values, the organization will soon lose credibility and with it, its ability to attract the very people it needs to perform (Drucker, 1992).

What is Management by Walking Around?

Keeping people informed about company strategies is critically important in organizations of all sizes. Failure to communicate with employees or allow them access to meaningful information can exact a heavy price. A communication gap doesn’t only undermine morale and performance; it can ultimately impact the bottom line. MBWA was intended to improve connection and communication (Chip, 2000). People must know what the goal or destination of the organization is and obtain signals over the course of their efforts to confirm that they are on track (Hale, 2004).

MBWA was developed by executives at Hewlett-Packard in the 1970s (Trueman, 1991). This communication strategy was made popular by Tom Peters and Robert Waterman in the early 1980s publication, *In Search of Excellence - Lessons from America’s Best Run Companies*. Peters and Roberts learned that companies that had executive managers involved with employees and customers were more successful than those with secluded management. The two credited this success to leadership that engaged employees outside the executive suite.

MBWA actively engages managers in the day-to-day activities of the business. This approach works to furnish managers with the opportunity to make positive comments and/or receive input and feedback. MBWA provides a transparent view of the organization by allowing executives to see first hand the activities of the organization and to listen directly to the employees. The concept allows managers to be “walking around with (his or her) eyes open asking questions like crazy and trying to understand what the employees are doing” (Lavenson, 1976).

MBWA allows managers to circumvent formal communication channels and collect potentially unadulterated information. Any organization's internal communications are improved immeasurably by the personal commitment and individual involvement of senior executives and managers. They set the direction, tone and climate for communications throughout the company (Howard, 1998).

Understanding the systematic patterns that generate information distortion in organizations, managers can initiate corrective actions that counteract the tendencies toward distortion (Worth, 1998). Through face-to-face interactions, managers are able to stay in touch with what is really going on in an organization and confirm or disprove information collected through normal chains of command (Worth, 1998).

MBWA helps to reduce the problems of distortion that inevitably occur with formal communication flowing up a hierarchy (Kinicki & Williams, 2006). As telecommunications head Brian Thompson of LCI International puts it, "The problem with being a CEO is that everybody between you and them wants to tell you what you want to hear. So it's really being visible to people (Branch, 1999)." MBWA allows managers to listen to employees and learn about their problems. It also enables managers to express to employees what values and goals are important to them (Kinicki & Williams, 2006).

Two-way Communication

Communication between managers and employees is central to organizational success. Two way communication is a process in which information flows in two directions - the receiver provides feedback and the sender is receptive to feedback (Bateman & Snell, 2007). The manager-employee exchange rest on the flow of relevant, reliable and accurate information.

Good communication is fundamental to better organizational performance. Effective communication is important because few things are accomplished in organizations without it. Managers must communicate with their subordinates in order for jobs to be performed effectively. Employees must communicate progress and potential barriers of performance to managers to ensure goal fulfillment. Employees must communicate with each other to cultivate collective resolve and achievement through coordination. Essentially, managers must communicate with employees; employees must communicate to managers and employees must communicate with each other (Bateman & Snell, 2007).

Downward Communication

Downward communication flows from managers to employees of the organization. Downward communication is used by managers to assign goals, provide job instructions, inform employees of policies and procedures, point out problems that need attention and offer feedback about performance (Robbins, 2003). Downward communication attempts to encourage a sense of mission and dedication to the organization's goals (Katz & Kahn, 1966).

The key aspect of downward communication is that employees tend to react most effective to those matters they judge to be of the greatest personal interest of the manager; therefore managers must articulate and represent the strategic vision of the organization. Having clear principles and organizational goals will ensure that employees pay attention to those messages that affect organizational performance (Duening & Ivancevich, 2006).

The advantage of downward messages is that when messages are clear and comprehensive, employees better understand their role in the company, what resources are available, and what is expected from them professionally. Providing employees with insights into the big picture of the organization can help them understand the importance of their individual work activities in relation to the whole (Angell, 2007).

Upward Communication

Upward communication is communication flowing from employees to managers, usually concerning employees' comments about themselves, their reactions about others, their reactions to practices and policies, and their thoughts about their work (Andrews & Herschel, 1996). It is used to provide feedback to managers, to report progress toward goals, and to relay current problems (Robbins, 2003).

Failure to agree to goals and roles, to find and use feedback, and to learn and develop aren't individual failures but rather collective failures of the manager and employee (McLagan & Krembs, 1995). Managers should create an environment in which workers feel comfortable reporting good news and bad. Empowered workers are more likely to report accurate information than less powerful or fearful employees (Dumler & Skinner, 2005). Effective upward communication depends on an atmosphere of trust. Managers can demonstrate the value of upward communication by replying or acting promptly and positively (Kinicki & Williams, 2006).

One clear advantage of upward-bound messages to both managers and employees is that they provide feedback about company directives, plans, or procedures. When employees direct messages upward, they can provide valuable information about their understanding of instructions, diagnose problems, and offer vital insights about front-line activities (Angell, 2007).

Employees can also satisfy needs, clarify misunderstandings, and release some emotional tension by communicating with supervisors. Finally, when employees participate in the organizational process of making decisions and solving problems, job satisfaction and productivity tend to increase (Angell, 2007).

Horizontal Communication

Horizontal communication is communication that occurs among people on the same hierarchical level to share information (Bateman & Snell, 2007). Horizontal communication increases worker productivity through coordinating interpersonal working relationships. Employee-to-employee exchange also boosts morale, allows employees to interact with and learn from each other, as well as encourage teamwork and collaboration (Angell, 2007).

Horizontal communication has several important functions. First, it allows sharing of information, coordination, and problem solving among employees. Second, it helps solve conflicts. Third, by allowing interaction among peers, it provides social and emotional support to people. Horizontal communication also builds credibility for company messages because they are heard from an employee's equal rather than solely from an upper-level manager. All these factors contribute to morale and effectiveness (Bateman & Snell, 2007).

Managing the Vision

Leadership is based on other people's trust and confidence in the leader's vision and voice (Shelton, 2004). Communication from the leader often conveys the spirit of the organization and its direction (Cooper, 2002). Getting managers out of their corporate offices is a leadership style for managers to connect with, communicate with, and relate to all levels of employees (Boardman, 2004). Manager-employee communication can improve employees' loyalty to their organization and generate improved decision-making (Sharma, 1979). Simple wandering - listening, empathizing, staying in touch - is an ideal starting point (Peters & Austin, 1985).

People working within an organization must be able to understand how their actions interrelate with the actions of others to support and execute the firm's strategy. Executives articulate a strategic vision for the organization, presents a role for others to identify with and to follow, communicate high performance standards and also show confidence in the employees' abilities in meeting these standards. Manager's being visible in the hallways and in the cafeteria can greatly enhance employees' feelings about their accessibility (Howard, 1998).

Making rounds enables managers to communicate a tone, style, and perspective. Rounds show a manager's commitment to the mission and core values, providing a chance for the manager to communicate the strategic plan, show support to those whom they supervise, and give the manager a first-hand look at whether their intentions, vision, and values are reflected in their actions (Bell, 2002).

Strategic management is a leadership responsibility. Effective strategy implementation and control depends on the full commitment of all managers to support and lead strategic initiatives within their areas of supervisory responsibility (Pitts & Lei, 2006). To successfully put strategies into action the entire organization and all of its resources must be mobilized in support of them. Managers need to communicate to all members of an organization the meaning and importance of high quality and the routes to attaining it (Jones & George, 2006).

Successful strategy implementation depends on both a well-managed organization and a solid base of committed and competent personnel to execute plans and objectives. Execution delivers results (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004). Management can formulate any number of strategies to build competitive advantage, but the success of any given strategy is only as good as the organization and the people behind it. Execution ultimately determines the success or failure of any given strategy.

Effective communication is necessary for managers and all members of an organization to increase efficiently, quality, responsiveness to customers, innovation and thus gain a competitive advantage for the organization. Managers must therefore effectively communicate the vision if employees are to perform effectively (Jones & George, 2006).

Leadership vision is necessary but insufficient for an organization to move forward with purpose toward a common destination. As important, if not more so, is the ability to communicate that vision so that others come to see that which the leader sees. Employees, in fact, have no idea what a manager's vision is until the manager describes it. The image that the employees develop in their minds is highly dependent upon the manager's ability to describe an apple so that is appears as an apple in the minds of others. Additionally, a shared vision is possible only if employees find the purpose appealing. Even when the manager is a master communicator, the employees won't bite from the apple if they prefer oranges (Kouzes & Posner, 1987).

When managers listen to their employees, they must listen for the music, not just the notes. Listen for the feelings, not just the facts. Listen not only to what is said but also to the way it is said. In short, listen to the tone of the words their employees use as well as to the words themselves (Grossman, 2002).

An engaged workforce is an increasingly popular term to define highly productive employees who are actively involved in helping a company achieve its strategic vision. They understand the company's financial performance and strategic goals and how their role and the work they do connect to the bottom line.

Engaged employees make a greater effort to support customers and increase customer satisfaction. Further, engaged employees believe that they make a difference in the operations of the company, and that this unwavering commitment is recognized and rewarded by management (Ewing, 2005).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theories that support the importance of communication in manager-employee interactions as it relates to increasing objective performance toward the strategic vision include the expectancy theory, the goal-setting theory, the path-goal theory of leadership and symbolic interactionism.

Communication is at the heart of successful management. Managers' main responsibility is to organize employees within an organization in order to pursue the objectives of the organization and to communicate with employees to achieve these ends. Without communication, nothing can be achieved in an organization. Everything an organization does and is, is dependent on communication. Communication fosters motivation by clarifying to employees what is required of them, how well they are performing and what can be done by employees to further improve performance toward organizational goals directly aligned to the strategic vision.

Communication fosters motivation by clarifying for employees what is to be done, how well they are doing, and what can be done to improve performance. The formulation of specific goals, feedback on progress toward the goals and reinforcement of desired behavior all stimulate motivate and require communication thus the importance of managerial visibility and interaction.

The Expectancy Theory of Motivation

The expectancy theory of motivation is based on the idea that work effort is directed toward behaviors that people believe will lead to desired outcomes (Vroom, 1964). Victor Vroom suggests that the motivation to work depends on the relationship among the three expectancy factors: expectancy, instrumentally, and valence.

Expectancy is a person's belief that working hard will result in a desired level of task performance being achieved. A person's belief that successful performance will be followed by rewards and other potential outcomes is instrumental. Lastly, valence is an individual's expected satisfaction associated with each outcome resulting from performance. (Schermerhorn, 2004).

For an organization to be effective, maintain the competitive edge and to foster a work environment of creativity and productivity, managers must provide direction, in addition to providing positive rewards and feedback for employee performance. By rewarding employees, employees make the connection between desired performance and rewards thereby moving the organization toward success.

Goal-setting Theory

The core of the goal-setting theory focuses on motivating workers to contribute their inputs to their jobs and organizations and explaining why goals have these effects. It is natural for people to set and strive for goals; however, the goal-setting process is useful only if people understand and accept the goals. Goal setting suggests that to simulate high motivation and performance, goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, results oriented and time related (Locke & Latham, 1990).

The premise for communication based on the goal-setting theory lies within the establishment of goals by the manager and employee to build ownership, ensure clarity and guide employee behavior by goal specificity thereby fostering organizational efficiency. Goals must be understood and accepted by the employee to become motivating factors. Employee involvement in the goal-setting process provides ownership to the goals thereby increasing goal commitment compared to goals set alone by the manager. When the employees have ownership, they will try harder to achieve the goals (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Goal setting and communication between managers and employees clarifies the employees' role in organizational functions and motivate employees by establishing and communicating performance objectives. Goals must have measurable levels of change over a specific and relatively short time fame.

Goal setting can be a powerful tool to motivate employees. Goal setting is an increasingly important part of the motivational process for managers. To use the process effectively, managers need to meet regularly with employees, work with employees to set joint goals, set goals that are specific and challenging and lastly provide feedback about performance.

Path-Goal Theory of Leadership

The path-goal theory of leadership is based on the expectancy theory of motivation. The theory suggests that a leader's behavior is motivating or satisfying to the degree that the behavior increases employee goal attainment and clarifies the paths to these goals (House & Mitchell, 1974). In addition, leader behavior is motivational to the extent it reduces roadblocks that interfere with goal accomplishment, provides the guidance and support needed by employees and tied meaningful rewards to goal accomplishment.

The manager's main job is helping employees stay on the right path to fulfilling objectives correlating to the strategic vision. Path clarification means that the manager works with the employee to help them identify and learn the behaviors that will lead to successful task accomplishments and organizational rewards.

Managers facilitate organizational learning by helping employees better understand how their actions are linked to organizational rewards thus emphasizing the importance of manager and employee communication. Managers communicate the vision through the path-goal theory by making task expectations clear through setting goals, structuring the flow of work and providing feedback through regular performance.

Managerial behavior is accepted and satisfying to employees to the extent that the employees understand the task required achieving performance objectives. Path-goal theory assets that when goals and paths to desired goals are apparent, attempts by the manager to clarify paths and goals will be both redundant and seen by employees as imposing unnecessary control. Managers must provide clarity but not to the extent that such support is perceptive as micromanaging.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, formulated by Herbert Blumer, is the process of interaction in the formation of meanings for individuals suggesting that all communication is symbolic and based upon interaction and meaning (Blumer, 1969).

The concept of symbolic interactionism is based on the premise that individuals interact with society at large and with reference groups to determine how behavior should be structured. Individuals are assumed to relate to objects or events based on their symbolic meaning given by society (Leigh & Gabel, 1992).

The theory is comprised of three core principles: meaning, language and thought. These core principles lead to conclusions about the creation of people's self and socialization into a larger community (Griffin, 1997).

Meaning states that people act toward people and things according to the meanings they give to those people or things. Symbolic inteactionism holds the principle of meaning to be the central aspect of human behavior (Blumer, 1969).

Language gives individuals a means by which to negotiate meaning through symbols. It is by engaging in speech acts with others, symbolic interaction, that people come to identify meaning (Blumer, 1969).

Thought modifies each person's interpretation of symbols. Thought is a mental conversation that requires different points of view (Blumer, 1969).

The actions and utterances of managers guide the attention of employees involved in organizational task in ways that are consciously or unconsciously designed to shape the meaning of performance objectives. The actions draw attention to particular aspects of the overall organizational experience, transforming what may be complex and ambiguous into an experience more discrete, vested, desired and rewarding with a specific pattern of meaning.

Effective managerial leadership depends upon the extent to which the manager defines the context of the situation therefore; mangers must define the organization in terms of the strategic vision and the relationship between the vision and employee performance objectives. This rational correlation of meaning provides value to the organizational experience for employees.

Efficient leadership serves as a basis for action by others. It is in this sense that effective leadership rests heavily on the framing of the experience of employees so that action can be guided by common consensus as to what should occur.

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the impact of MBWA on employees attaining the company vision, 200 surveys were constructed and randomly distributed to Hampton University students. The research instrument was field tested and the feedback was used in constructing the final survey. Of the 200 surveys distributed, 200 were returned and usable. The survey was based on a

5-point Likert scale using strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

The survey was designed to determine the importance, role and impact of manager-to-employee communication. Demographically, participants were asked to check whether they were freshman, sophomore, junior or senior in addition to their major, which would have been business major or other. Students that chose other filled in their correct major. Business majors include accounting, management, finance, economics, business administration, and marketing.

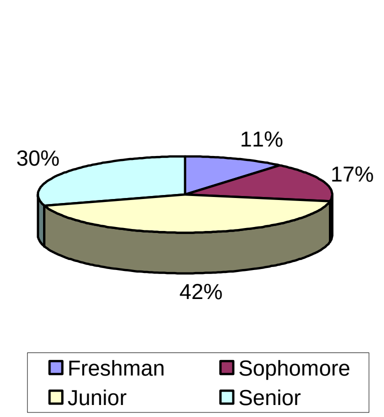
The survey consisted of 10 statements examining the importance of communication in management and how such communication impacts employee performance toward organizational goals.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

Demographic Data

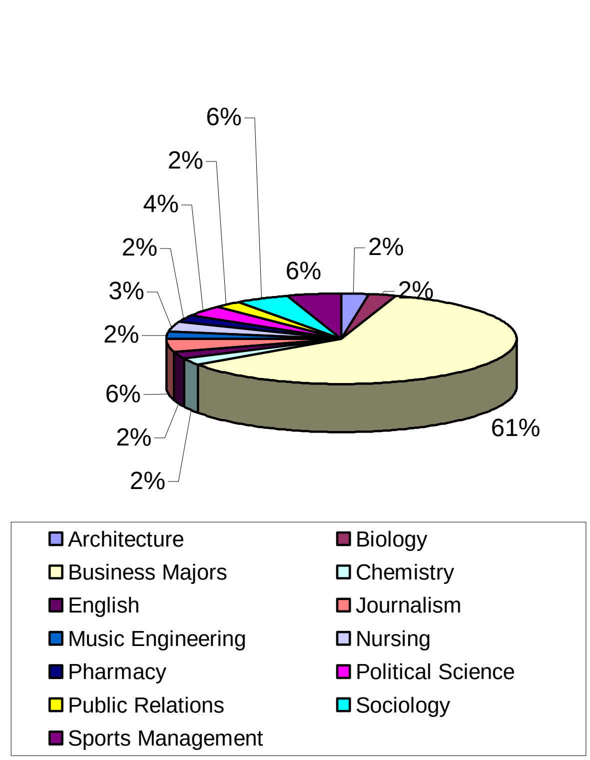
The following two graphs, classification and major, represent the demographic data gathered from the participants.

Classification



The responses were eleven percent (22) freshman, seventeen percent (33) sophomores, forty-two percent (84) junior and thirty percent (59) seniors.

Major



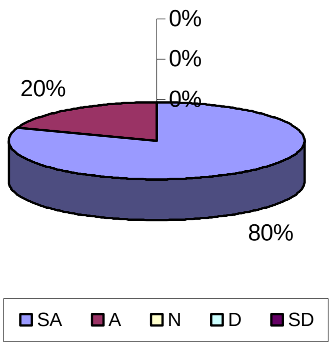
Most student participants in this study were business majors yet other majors are represented. Architecture, Biology, Chemistry, English, Music Engineering, Pharmacy and Public Relations majors each represented two percent (5) of the academic areas defined by student participants. Journalism, Sociology and Sports Management majors each comprised of six percent (10) of the areas of study identified with student participants. Nursing was three percent (7) and Political Science students composed of four percent (8). Business majors amounted to the largest demographic with sixty-one percent (121) of student participants.

Survey Analysis

Figures I - X illustrates the responses of 200 students surveyed with respect to 10 statements. The graphical illustration of the survey results was not tabulated in respect to classification or major because there was not significant variance in the responses among the classes or majors.

Statement 1: Communication is an important function of the management process.

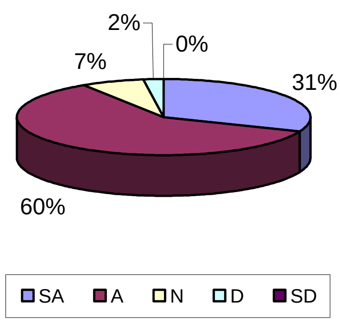
Figure I



Of the 200 students surveyed, eighty percent (161) of the respondents strongly agreed that communication is an important function of the management process. Twenty percent (39) of the respondents agreed. There were no respondents that disagreed in regards to the significance of communication within the managerial process.

Statement 2: Managers are responsible for articulating the organizational vision to employees.

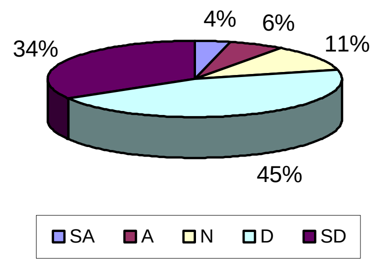
Figure II



In response to this statement, thirty-one percent (41) of respondents strongly agreed with the responsibility of managers to clearly define the organizational vision to employees. Sixty percent (79) of respondents agreed while seven percent (9) were neutral and two percent (3) disagreed.

Statement 3: Employee performance is not influence by management.

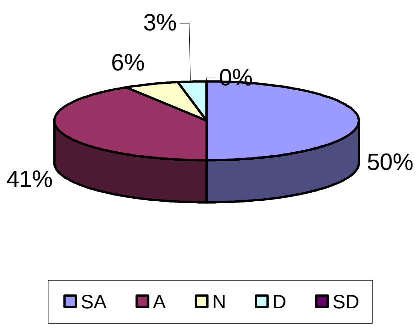
Figure III



A minority of four percent (8) of respondents strongly agreed that management lacked influence over employee performance while six percent (12) agreed. Eleven percent (22) of students surveyed were neutral while an overwhelming majority of forty-five percent (91) of respondents disagreed and thirty-four percent (67) strongly disagreed.

Statement 4: Face-to-face communication between managers and employees is essential to productive employee performance.

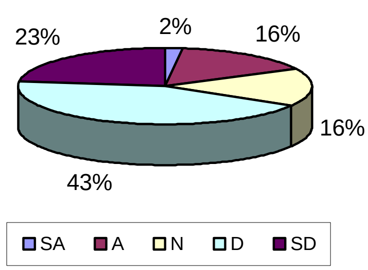
Figure IV



Fifty percent (100) of students strongly agreed and forty-one percent (82) of students agreed with the influence of direct communication between managers and employees as it relates to employee performance. A minority of student respondents of six percent (12) were neutral and three percent (6) disagreed.

Statement 5: Employees don't need interaction with managers to perform their objectives.

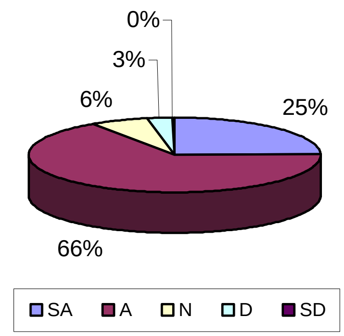
Figure V



Of the 200 students surveyed, two percent (4) strongly agreed and sixteen percent (31) agreed that employee and manager interaction is not necessary for employees to successful perform their objectives. Nevertheless, a majority of students descended on the statement with forty-three percent (87) disagreeing and twenty-three percent (46) strongly disagreeing.

Statement 6: Employees must understand the organizational vision to perform their tasks.

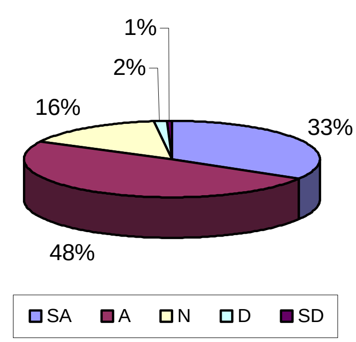
Figure VI



A vast majority of students responded positively to the value of clarity for employees on the organizational vision to perform their tasks. Twenty-five percent (74) students strongly agreed and sixty-six percent (98) students agreed. Six percent (19) of respondents were neutral and three percent (8) disagreed.

Statement 7: MBWA improves the flow of information between managers and employees.

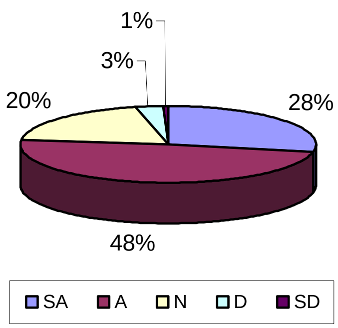
Figure VII



A significant number of the students surveyed responded affirmatively to the improvement MBWA makes on the exchange of information between managers and employees. Thirty-three percent (67) of students strongly agreed and forty-eight percent (98) agreed. Twenty percent (39) of students were neutral; three percent (6) disagreed and one percent (1) strongly disagreed.

Statement 8: MBWA improves employee understanding of the organizational vision.

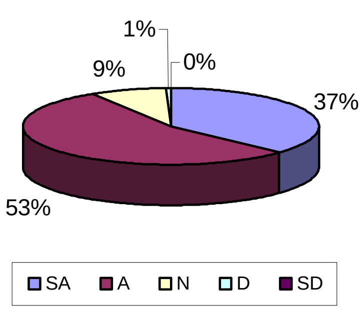
Figure VIII



As with Statement 7, Figure VIII shows a strong positive correlation between student responses and how MBWA develops employee understanding of the organization vision. Twenty-eight percent (56) of students surveyed strongly agreed and forty-eight percent (98) agreed. Twenty percent (39) responded neutral, three percent (6) disagreed and one percent (1) strongly disagreed.

Statement 9: Manager-to-employee exchange is important for organizational success.

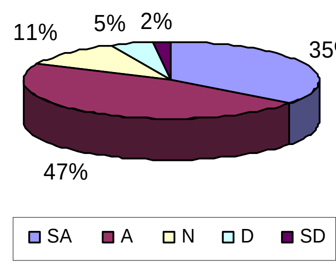
Figure XI



The vast majority of students affirmed the importance of information exchange between managers and employees for organizational success. Thirty-seven percent of the students surveyed (74) strongly agreed and fifty-three percent (108) agreed. A marginal representation of students disagreed with the statement with nine percent (17) neutral and one percent (1) disagree. There were no responses strongly disagreeing.

Statement 10: As an employee, I prefer seeing my manager walking around to speak with employees.

Figure X



Lastly, students were asked as employees if they preferred interaction with their managers and the majority of students ascended. Thirty-five percent (70) strongly agreed and forty-seven percent (94) agreed that they preferred managerial visibility and communication. Eleven percent (22) of students were neutral, five percent (10) disagreed and two percent (4) of students responded negatively to the statement.

CONCLUSIONS

The role of communication is a critical process through which managers coordinate, lead and influence others in the organization. Communication is a complex process that requires constant attention so that intended message - that is, intended meaning, understanding and feelings - are sent and received.

Employees must know what the goal or destination is and receive signals over the course of their efforts from managers to confirm that they are on track.

From a performance improvement perspective, employees deserve clear direction. They should have some understanding of what the organization is trying to accomplish and what role they play in making it happen. The first principle of performance is to focus on results - to not lose sight of the outcomes that are required to meet the organization's goals.

Managers ensure efforts are focused on the right goals, objectives, deliverables, and activities. Effective communication by the manager can and must occur so employees are continually reminded of what is important, where the organization is headed, and what is required of them.

One of the biggest challenges managers face is communication. And yet, communication is also one of the most critical aspects of management and leadership. Without good communication, managers can fail to gain goals, and fail to develop rapport with the people on their team responsible for task objectives. In short, they can fail as leaders no matter how good their intentions may be.

Managerial engagement by walking around the work environment provides clarity for employees while providing managers with unadulterated information about working conditions that may hinder objective achievement.

Effective communication helps an organization increase profits by ensuring everyone understand the overall strategy and how to coordinate all parts of the organization for success. Managerial communication is essential for achieving these means.

Managers have to clearly link rewards that people value to the performance that is productive to the organization. Managers can improve organizational success by providing clarity while also listening to the feedback of employees.

By continually communicating to people the overall purpose of their work, managers provide meaning to work day tasks of employees. Employees understand the shared objective as being in synch with their own best interest thus inspired work and organizational efficiency.

Employees are empowered by managers when they understand where the organization is headed and they have confidence in their managers. Consistency of focus is about managers consistently sending the same messages about what the goal is and what is important.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Management by Walking Around is a workplace concept yet the population for study was limited to Hampton University students; therefore further study would require distributing the survey to various working employees.

Additionally, the study needs to be conducted in different business settings to ascertain managerial and employee awareness of the concept and to explore the degree to which the concept is actually implemented by management.

Further study in the context of working employees and diverse work environments will provide additional support to this study.

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MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

Management by wandering around (MBWA) is a face-to-face communication technique in which a manager walks around a work area and talks informally with employees about issues and concerns. The purpose of this survey is to examine the impact of MBWA on employees attaining the company vision.

Check applicable category: ___ Freshman ___ Sophomore ___ Junior ___ Senior

____ Business major ____ Other: ________________________

Please use the following scale and circle the response that best describes your attitude about each statement:

SA	A	N	D	SD
Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Neutral**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**

1. **Communication is an important function of the management process**.
   SA A N D SD

2. **Managers are responsible for articulating the organizational vision to employees.**
   SA A N D SD

3. **Employee performance is not influenced by management**.
   SA A N D SD

4. **Face-to-face communication between managers and employees is essential to productive employee performance.**
   SA A N D SD

5. **Employees don't need interaction with managers to perform their objectives.**
   SA A N D SD

6. **Employees must understand the organizational vision to perform their tasks.**
   SA A N D SD

7. **MBWA improves the flow of information between managers and employees**.
   SA A N D SD

8. **MBWA improves employee understanding of the organizational vision.**
   SA A N D SD

9. **Manager- to- employee exchange is important for organizational success**.
   SA A N D SD

10. **As an employee, I prefer seeing my manager walking around to speak with employees.**
    SA A N D SD

Survey results will be available after April 28, 2006 from dewarrenklangley@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your participation.