



Recognizing Dysfunctional Communications a Means of Improving Organizational Practices

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Introduction

Effective communication is not only an essential aspect of an organizational culture, but it is also the foundation of modern organizations (i.e. D'Aprix, 1996; Grenier & Metes 1992; Witherspoon, 1997). In order to respond to an organizational environment and a rapidly changing environment that demands flexibility, attention must be given to effective communication. Tubbs and Moss (2006) state, "... communication is effective when the stimulus as initiated and intended by the sender, or source, corresponds closely to the stimulus as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver" (p. 24). Effective communication can complement successful interpersonal work relationships as well as both internal and external communication practices. Pearce (1989) notes that individuals often talk past each other even when the conversation appears coherent and well coordinated; they may subsequently interpret different accounts of what each other said.

Positive internal and external communication patterns can become strategies for reducing dysfunctionality within an organization. These patterns are essential for both the coordination of interactions in an organization and the reaching of a true consensus instead of imposing decisions (Malone & Crowston, 1994). Hence, effective communication patterns should be established to ensure effective communication in a dysfunctional (or non-effectively communicating) organizational culture. It also can be a means toward achieving organizational goals. This research illustrates how individuals in organizations can adapt their communication practices when faced with dysfunctional communicative interactions. It has been perceived that well-performing organizations adapt well to changes in environment, structure, and have strategies to enhance organizational performance and thus reduce dysfunctionality (Entin, 1999). This research adds additional strategies on avoiding dysfunctional communication in order to empower organizations in the 21st century.



Relevant Literature

An organization's culture, defined by Schein (1992) as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group” is directly related to the communication patterns that exist within that organization (p. 9). Therefore, the need to communicate effectively is critical. Communication entails promoting and maintaining a workplace culture in which communication flows freely throughout the organizational structure.

Numerous definitions exist for organizational communication. Among them, Conrad and Poole (1998) define it as “a process through which people acting together, create, sustain, and manage meanings through the use of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context” (p. 5). Pacanowsky and Trujillo (1982) define communication as an organization that has “interlocked actions of a collectivity” (p. 122). The needs to study, apprehend, and develop effective communication patterns within an organization are vital (Harris & Nelson, 2007). The understanding of these patterns can create a positive organizational structure and culture and counter dysfunctional communication. In a survey, Harris and Nelson (2007) noted that “... 14 percent of each 40-hour work week is wasted because of poor communication between staff and management” (p. 12). By embracing the complex and dynamic nature of communication, organizations can function more effectively (Harris & Nelson, 2007).

Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory explores the concept of whether individuals or social forces shape social reality (Giddens, 1991). He writes that although individuals are not entirely free to choose their actions or choices in an organization, their actions produce social structure and social change. Structuration offers the perspective that within organizations the social system exists and persists as a result of each individual's actions, knowledge, and interactions over a period of time (Giddens, 1984). By establishing a strong organizational structure, organizational goals and a unified culture can develop. Giddens (1984) writes, “the basic domain of study of the social sciences according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality, but social practices ...” (p. 2). A social structure in this context is the flow or pattern of people's actions (Giddens, 1984).

Structuration Theory can apply to various types and sizes of groups (Giddens, 1991). It is



appropriate to this project because it helps us understand the diverse types of groups, assists in developing a communication perspective within an organizational culture and aids in our understanding of how an organizational structure enables and, at times, constrains the actions that give rise to a culture. Structuration offers the perspective that the social system within an organization is the product of each individual's actions, knowledge, and interactions over a period of time (Giddens, 1984). Structure gives form to social life or to an organization's culture but is not social life or the culture in its entirety. A social structure in this context is the flow or pattern of people's actions (Giddens, 1984), and these actions can help lessen dysfunctional communication.

Effective communication between individuals builds a strong organizational culture (Schein, 1994). An organization's culture is a description of both organizational activities and meaning that is created through communication within that organization. Deetz (1982) believes that all communication is distorted or dysfunctional in some fashion, but this problem can be overcome through the "to-and-fro character" of interaction. Meanwhile, Helgesen (1995) sees ideal communication interactions and the culture as a web wherein the organization shares information with the whole company regardless of rank or responsibilities. The communication within an organization becomes dysfunctional when the organization limits or restricts information to its people (Helgesen, 1995). This web-like culture allows employees to express their opinions without being criticized. The objective of establishing a strong organizational culture is simply to function effectively, which in turn results in less dysfunctional practices.

When subordinates and managers utilize effective interpersonal communication, they connect with the organization as a whole and promote the organization's structure and culture (Collins, 2001). These parts promote a progressive, unified community rather than fragmented parts or individuals within a group. Communication within the organization then becomes transactional. As a result, this can reduce dysfunctionality and aid in sustaining a productive organizational culture. The basic premise of transactional communication is that individuals are simultaneously engaging in the sending and receiving of messages (Barnlund, 2008). Transactional communication is effective because it is more interactive and more of a social interaction.



Interpersonal organizational relationships may be termed dysfunctional when leaders and subordinates do not communicate effectively or do not discover and communicate the shared values that can form a common ground on which the organization operates (Kouzes & Posner, 2003). Organizations should acknowledge the importance of communication, but they must also learn to recognize that ineffective communication leads to dysfunctional patterns. In addition to the need for strong interpersonal communication patterns between the levels of an organization, effective internal and external communication patterns are desirable. van Riel's (1995) definition of corporate communication consists of the management of both internal and external communication. The combinations of these components are balanced as effectively as possible to create a favorable basis for the interpersonal relationships on which an organization is dependent.

The first component of harmonizing the organizational development process often entails a review of external communications, which can be defined as interactions that focus on audiences outside of organization and these activities significantly contribute to an organization's bottom line and culture (Saunders, 1999). These forms of external communication may include media releases, brochures and annual reports. The more positive image an organization upholds, the more likely develops a strong organizational culture. In addition, Chaney and Christensen (2001) define the other component of internal communication as the interactions of employee relations, statements of mission and goals, and organizational development.

Research Question & Methodology

Based on the concept that dysfunctional communication is a concern in the organizational environment, the authors explore this research question: *What communication strategies are critical to reduce dysfunctionality communication within organizations and sustain a positive organizational culture?*

To explore this research question, the following research objectives are considered:

RQ1: What are the various roles within an organization and what affect do interpersonal relationships have on the communication patterns and culture of the organization?



RQ2: What communication patterns influence the structure of an organization?

RQ3: What is the importance of internal and external communication in sustaining the organizational culture?

The specific organization examined in this study is a Midwest media organization of 280 employees. This organization was selected because it has gone through a number of organizational changes where communication is critical to the organization's growth and prosperity. In addition, one of the researchers had previously worked at the organization and developed strong professional relationships, which helped in the data-gathering process. The organization has 16 distinct locations or markets across the United States and its markets include but are not limited to: agriculture, automotive, aviation, digital media and communications, food services, marketing, mechanical systems and wealth management (Company Website, 2010). In 1998, the media organization became an independent public company. It has published trade magazines for numerous industries for more than 100 years. Also in that year, the organization purchased another large media company. This purchase made the media organization the largest, publicly owned, business-to-business company in the United States (<http://www.fundinguniverse.com>). In 2006, the organization announced its approval of the merger.

The data collection strategies included a survey to 50 employees (see Appendix A), approximately one-fifth of the organization's workforce and a focus group composed of six employees (N = 3 males and N = 3 females) from various departments who volunteered to participate (see Appendix B and Appendix C). The focus group provided additional qualitative depth to the quantitative survey data collection. In general, the focus group discussion was open-ended and interactive, allowing for an almost unlimited number of variables to be explored. The survey focused mainly on external and internal communication, a key aspect in establishing effective communication and a unified culture. It was distributed to address purely descriptive statistics about the media organization. Forty-seven usable surveys were collected resulting in a final $n = 47$. A Likert scale was used allowing the respondents to specify their level of agreement or disagreement to the questions.

The quantitative data was analyzed to determine *what* communication practices are established and how effective they are within the media organization. In relation to Giddens's



Structuration Theory, defining these specific practices is critical to assisting in reducing dysfunctional communication. The researchers addressed the sample quantitatively to provide descriptive statistics of the employees within the organization as a means of better understanding the organization. While the qualitative research allowed for the naturalistic emergence of themes which led to the development of grounded theory and ultimately, transferable to similar organizations in size.

Before beginning the focus group session, the researchers gave the participants information about the purpose of the study and project along with consent forms to assure participants of their confidentiality. Confidentiality was maintained via coding of the respondents' perceptions and the data presented in aggregate form. This approach allowed the researchers to solicit data from as many sources as possible to create the most holistic snapshot of the context possible. The focus groups were conducted at the offices of the organization during the 60-minute lunch period.

The focus group participants were asked open-ended questions in order to gain perspectives and analyze the results in comparison allowing themes to emerge. The questions focused on topics including: communication challenges in the workplace, traits of good interpersonal skills, areas for improvement in communication at his or her organization, and the participants' perspective on defining effective communication.

Data Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed in relation to the research questions. The mixed methods approach emerged as a strength of this study because various communication mediums (external, internal, interpersonal) were examined from all levels and roles within the organization. The mixed methodology also allowed the researchers to gather information in regard to the general consensus of the organization with the qualitative data and the quantitative data is solely for descriptive purposes. The qualitative methods were structured to gain insight on communication patterns and collect data to address the overarching research question and objectives. The researchers conducted a comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) where the data was compared allowing for themes to emerge naturalistically. Glaser and Strauss (1967) created the constant comparative method in order



to derive grounded theories in the analysis process. This type of analysis helped reveal connections between questions and categories.

Results of the Study

Based on the data collection through the focus group and survey distribution, the communication patterns of internal, external and interpersonal communications were examined. The survey results reveal that the changes the media organization has undergone have provided a lack or need for improvement in the internal and external communication practices to promote the organization in the industry. The survey provided participants with five choices for response: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The survey focused on the external and internal communications, specifically the internal mediums within the company, such as the e-newsletter, internal intranet and email communications. It also addressed the external communication concerns of the organization's industry reputation and brand awareness. These areas are examined in detail below.

Enewsletter, Internal Intranet and Email Communications

Fifty-one percent of the employees were neutral about the enewsletter is an effective form of internal communication. These enewsletters featured both work-related and non-work-related facts about employees at the media organization. The Intranet provides a site where employees can go and find information about the company. Thirty-two percent of the respondents agreed that the intranet was beneficial to them when they needed something and they visited the site at least three days a week. The survey results indicated that 43 percent of the participants felt that the recorded messages on the intranet from upper-managements about the company as the most beneficial aspect. These videos allowed employees to stay updated on happening within the organization.

The survey also highlighted email communications due to how much technology has changed the way individuals communicate. The results indicated 55 percent of the respondents use email as their main source of communication and 72 percent agreed or strongly agreed it is the most effective form of communication within the media company. The results revealed that although most individuals use email, 59 percent feel it is as beneficial and effective as face-to-face communication.



Overall Internal Communication

Various mediums used allow for internal communication at the Midwest media organization: The internal intranet, online messaging system, enewsletter, email communications, etc. ... The company feels strongly that internal communication needs to be at its best. The results of the surveys distributed revealed employees felt that there were various mediums for internal communication, yet the processes could be stronger. It was very apparent through the survey results, that when the processes are not effective, employees tend not be satisfied with what type of culture their organization demonstrates.

Seventy-three percent of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the media organization's internal communication is effective. Comments from the survey for the improvement for internal communications include:

1. More frequent communication with various mediums.
2. Communication up and down the organization, not just across it.
3. Promote the willingness to communicate rather than self-presentation.
4. Better design and writing of internal communications (emails, newsletters, etc). Present the company as a real corporation in all the internal communication processes.
5. More consistency and a feeling of inclusiveness within the organization
6. Inform employees of things going on more effectively so that the morale is stronger.

Overall External Communication

In analyzing the survey results for external communication, employees felt the external communication at the media organization is weaker than and not as effective as the internal communication. Based on the results, 68 percent of the respondents indicated that they disagreed or strongly disagreed that the company has established successful and effective external communication practices. The respondents stated the internal communication appeared stronger because there are more outlets and forms of it.



The respondents also felt the corporate website should be improved to showcase the company better. Respondents of the survey suggested improvements to the company's external communications:

1. More transparency across all levels of the organization
2. Form better relationships with external media outlets
3. Participate in local media business, networking, etc. ...
4. Community participation and volunteer opportunities
5. More positive image in the industry
6. Create a strategy plan that identifies the company as a brand with goals
7. Position the company as a leading authority in the markets we serve

Focus Group Results

The six participants in the focus group ranged in age from 20 to 50 (N= 4 males, N=2 females). The interviews were setup with two female managers in the organization. Fifty surveys were distributed to the employees at the organization and there was a 90 percent response rate. Out of the responses, 29 of them were male who ranged in age from 30 to 60 and 16 of the participants were female who ranged in age from 20 to 40.

Once the discussion began, participants were reminded that the each would be labeled as E1, E2, E3, etc. (E-employee) in the study. Confidentiality increased the probability for data collection. The main purpose of the focus group study was an exploration to determine what factors influence dysfunctional communication patterns within an organization. It has been assumed, based on research that often these dysfunctional interactions lead to miscommunications and uncomfortable work environments.

Defining Dysfunctionalism

Participants said miscommunication occurs the most as the number of people involved grows. The larger the group, the greater chance of miscommunication and the result becomes dysfunctional communication where communication hinders instead of helps (E1, focus group, March 2010). One participant felt strongly that a large portion of the miscommunications within the media organization occurs because of the lack of feedback and updates from the management levels (E5, focus group, March 2010).



Miscommunications can occur at every level of an organization and without proper steps to fix the issue, the outcome tends to lead to dysfunctional communication patterns and practices.

Communication Challenges

When asked what specific communication challenges the focus group members face when working interpersonally with others or a group the most common response was dealing and working with different personalities, different views and priorities. The group agreed that traits of a successful project include constant communication, defined roles and goals and respect and honesty for each person a part of the group. In addition, they agreed that the type of interpersonal relationship they have with their peers or managers greatly affect the culture of an organization.

Resolving Miscommunications

Focus group participants said that when miscommunications occur those affected are usually a part of a face-to-face meeting or a mass email is sent out to those involved. “Often a conversation exists and steps are taken to implement a procedure to ensure it does not happen again” (E6, focus group, March 2010). The group agreed that the most common miscommunication is a complete absence of communication. The results include high employee anxiety, reduced productivity and resentment towards management (focus group, March 2010). This lack of communication can result in dysfunctional processes and weak interpersonal communication amongst all members.

Defining Effective Communication

When the participants were asked how they would define effective communication, all of the respondents revealed the traits of truth, conciseness, and clarity in their interactions. One participant said, “Communication successfully conveys an intended message, thought or idea from one channel to another and allows for feedback between the different channels” (E1, focus group, March 2010). The communication within the media organization from the management level was one key area that was discussed as an area that needs improvement. The need for organized group meetings to discuss company updates and effective strategies to gain precise feedback and opinions are essential (E2, focus group, March 2010).



Interpersonal Communication Patterns

The participants of the focus group said that the interpersonal skills of their managers and those employees with whom they work closely needed to be stronger in order for the organization to sustain a culture. Examples of stronger include: listening, empathy, respect, openness, and diplomacy were all important interpersonal communication traits. With the advancement in technology, interpersonal communication patterns need more attention. Emerging technology in many ways has both help and hindered the communication that exists within the levels of an organization. The focus group participants felt that emerging technology has provided more ways to communicate which results in more interactions happening in various mediums (E1, focus group, March 2010). However, technology has reduced the amount of face-to-face communication and the ability to read an individual's non-verbal reactions to a specific communicated message (E2, focus group, March 2010).

Discussion

It is clear through the data collection that the employees of the Midwest media organization agree that the company desires clearer guidelines for internal and external communication. In relation to the Structuration Theory, without the proper structure or processes in place, the organization will be negatively affected as will the organizational culture and result in dysfunctional communication patterns. Externally, establishing the organization's identity as a brand in order to remain competitive appears to be the company's biggest struggle. The external communication patterns have not progressed as positively as expected since the company has undergone so many changes. An understanding of Structuration Theory allows an individual to see that a structure can enable and constrain actions within an organization. When a strong identity is lacking externally in the industry, this can only negatively affect the identity internally and the culture the organization needs to sustain. The process needs to begin with promoting the company as a brand externally and the culture of the organization. The survey responses indicated that at least 42 percent of respondents felt they could communicate with upper-management about concerns. Upper-management should pursue this advantage and begin to create a strategy and time frame to improve its external communication processes. This positively relates to understanding Giddens' Structuration Theory in that although individuals are not entirely free to choose their actions or choices in an organization, their actions produce social structure and social change (Giddens, 1991).



In examining the survey results, these are some low-or no-cost strategies proposed which ultimately could reduce dysfunctionality and help sustain a positive organizational culture:

1. To improve both internal and external communication: Develop advisory boards/task forces for each department within the company to foster communication among employees
2. Brand development: The company needs to define and construct the brand based on the company's objectives that need to be put in place with a consistent message.
3. Promote external communication through volunteerism: Encourage employees to participate in community programs or programs promoting the media organization. This will generate more of a culture among employees and ultimately the organization.
4. Promote communication internally: Offer quarterly web casts that employees can log on to at work that update them on the company, changes, new policies, etc...

In examining the data from the focus groups, it is apparent that the communication challenges employees face within the media organization concern different personality types, schedules and opinions. The response of the participants supported RQ1 in that the various hierarchical roles need to work together to create stronger interpersonal relationships and to achieve effective communication patterns. Deetz (1982) notes that communication is distorted whenever genuine conversation is hindered, or more specifically, any condition of the ideal speech situation or environment is not upheld. This directly relates to the researchers finding in that effective communication creates a positive organizational culture and the structure of the organization can become sounder. The making of meaning through interaction can facilitate more effective communication. Employees within the company rely on email as one of the main communication mediums, which results in less face-to-face interaction. This medium can be effective when communication interactions are direct and concise, but can also lead to miscommunication without the proper approach.

Summaries & Conclusions

Every organization is different based on its size, business practice, values, mission statement, and many other elements. The current study supports the notion that an organization must pay attention to the communication patterns within an organization within the various outlets —



external, internal and interpersonal. In addition, the study reveals how the structure and culture of an organization is affected by the overall success of an organization's communication patterns. In relation to RQ2, the structure is critical to an organization's communication patterns, steps need to be taken across all levels of an organization to create and maintain not only effective communication patterns but also an organizational culture and community. These steps need to be achieved internally, externally and interpersonally to achieve the inclusive culture. This study also illustrates that within the particular Midwest media organization studied; there are critical communication and structural areas that need improvement in order for effective communication patterns to be established and employees to feel that they are part of an organizational community. The support for RQ3 has to come in the form of action on the part of the organization's management to identify and address the concerns revealed in the data collection strategies. The employees who were a part of the data collection strategies expressed specific concerns in relation to internal and external communication that, if addressed, would facilitate the ideal organizational culture.

In addition, this study will aid in exploring communication patterns in other organizations. Giddens' Structuration Theory exemplifies how the structure of an organization and the meaning of interactions can affect the overall organizational culture and development of effective communication. Based on the feedback from the participants in this study, we see how critical an organizational culture and structure is to establishing effective communication strategies. Often times, the overall structure can affect how employees communicate in an organization.

Limitations to the Study

When using the qualitative data collection tool of a focus group, the results gathered may not be representative of the consensus of all employees at the media organization. This is a limitation in the sense that only the participants who gave specific suggestions and concerns about the media organization are documented. When conducting a focus group some participants may be more vocal than others, which can result in the other participants agreeing with the ideas and opinions of the most vocal participants. Likewise, the distribution of the survey is used for descriptive purposes to gain a snapshot of this particular media organization, but the results are transferable to all similar organizations. With the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies in this study, the



process to gather information and analyze the results can be more time consuming and costly than some researchers choose or are allowed to do.

Conclusion

Effective communication structures are a core component to implementing effective communication patterns and evoking a strong culture to shape a more effective organization (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The literature used in this study suggests that a balance of a strong corporate culture, internal and external communication as well as effective communication within interpersonal relationships will aid in reducing dysfunctionality within an organization and sustaining its culture.

This research supported the notion that communication is not only an essential aspect of an organizational culture, but effective communication can also be seen as the foundation of modern organizations (D'Aprix 1996; Grenier & Metes 1992; Witherspoon 1997). Community may not be a trait of many organizations, but it is what defines organizations with strong cultures (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). By establishing strong communication patterns and interpersonal relationships between the various levels of an organization, the flow of messages becomes more functional internally and externally.

The intent of this project was to explore the communication patterns (internal, external and interpersonal) within a media organization and through a mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies develop solutions for dysfunctional communication. The data aided the researchers in understanding steps to improve communication processes and reduce dysfunctional patterns. These steps begin with examining the current structure and culture of an organization and locate the organization's areas of weakness. Ultimately, the results become transferable to all organizations and assist with the development of effective communication patterns.



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Appendix A: Survey for Midwest Media Company

Company E-Newsletters

1. New information about the company was gained through these e-newsletters.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. I felt a sense of community within the company by reading these e-newsletters.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. The E-Newsletter is a successful form of internal communication.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Suggestions for better strategies:

The Pulse (internal intranet system for employees)

1. I go to the Pulse first when looking for information about other publications.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. The forum section on The Pulse is a benefit to employees.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. I have posted questions on the Pulse and received beneficial feedback.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. I go on The Pulse at least 3 days a week.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. The pre-recorded messages on the Pulse were informational and reassured me on the state of the company.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

6. The pre-recorded messages on the Pulse provided me with new information and information I needed.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. The Pulse assists my needs as an employee.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Email

1. Email is my main source of communication with other employees.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. Email is an effective form of communication for me.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree



3. The emails from upper-management in the company have provided me with answers to questions I may have.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. Communicating via email is more effective than face-to-face communication.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Internal Communication

1. I use our online messenger system to communicate to employees about work-related tasks.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. I use our online messenger system to also communicate with my social network at work.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. If more internal events, meetings and news were posted within the company I would add to it and have a better feel of a sense of community.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. The internal communication within the company is effective and successful.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. Internal communication could be improved how?

6. I feel like I can communicate my opinion to upper-management.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. If an advisory board was created internally based on your department (marketing, sales, editorial, etc...) that met once a month to share ideas and concept to improve best practices I would participate.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. The communication within my group is more effective and more successful than that compared to the company as a whole.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

9. If you could suggest promoting the company, as a brand, what would you suggest?

9. The company Web site effectively explains the services it offers to customers.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

External Communication

1. The company has established successful and effective external communication practices.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

2. The company should involve itself in more community-related events to promote itself.



Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

3. The company's internal communication is stronger than its external communication.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

4. If the company organized a volunteer program I would contribute.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

5. How can the company's external communication be improved?

6. My magazine has created more external relations with other organizations than is apparent in the organization as a whole.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

7. I participate in holiday fundraisers that contribute to charities.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

8. I participate in the most or all of the holiday events during the summer or group lunches.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

Any additional comments or items you would like to add:

Please state:

M or F

What group or magazine are you part of ? _____



Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion at the Midwest Media Company

Read to focus group participants: The purpose of this focus group is to determine what factors influence dysfunctional communication patterns within an organization. The information obtained will aid in generating ideas and to exploring possible solutions to lessening dysfunctional communication and interactions within organizations. It has been assumed that often these dysfunctional interactions lead to miscommunications and uncomfortable work environments. The data from these focus groups will be accumulated and summarized in a report with all participants remaining anonymous. Each individual will be labeled as E1, E2, E3, etc. (E-employee). With the assurance of this confidentiality of all opinions and information expressed from participants, this will allow for a more accurate data collection. I encourage all participants to feel that their opinion is valued and this information will help aid in creating an organization with a more sound and robust culture. Thank you again for participating and contributing to this focus group study.



Appendix C: Focus Group Questions:

1. What communication challenges do you face in working with a group for a project?
2. Give an example of a project that went well. What were the strengths of the communication amongst the group? How did this affect the group's success?
3. How would you define “effective” communication?
4. In what way or in which areas of the organization do you feel communication patterns could improve? What are some possible strategies?
5. Within your organization do you notice a difference between the communication patterns from men verse women?
6. What do you consider good interpersonal skills when working with a team of resources (employees) on a project?
7. Do you feel that the communication from your management team is effective?
8. How do you think emerging technology has helped or hindered the communication that exists within the different levels of your organization?
9. When a miscommunication occurs what steps are taken to resolve the issue within your organization?
10. Do you feel the organization's internal or external communication strategies are stronger and more effective?
11. Give an example of an interaction or miscommunication. What were the results? How the situation was overcome or was it not?