The Role of Communication Climate in Organizational Effectiveness

Islam M. Ahsanul

Abstract— Organizational Communication Climate represents a metaphor of the physical climate. Just as the weather creates a physical climate for a region, the way in which people react to aspects of the organization creates a communication climate. In other words, the communication climate is a composite of perceptions—a macro-evaluation—of communicative events, human behaviors, responses of employees to one another, expectations, interpersonal conflicts, and opportunities for growth in the organization. This study states that climate in general and communication climate in particular serve as a strong mediating factors between elements of the work system and different measures of organizational effectiveness such as productivity, quality, satisfaction, and vitality.

Index Terms— Communication Climate, Communication Skills, Effective Organization, Managerial Practices, Organizational Culture, Organizational Guidelines, and Productivity.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a similar fashion to the physical climate of an area, the communication climate of an organization affects the way we live: to whom we talk, whom we like, how we feel, how hard we work, how innovative we are, what we want to accomplish, and how we seem to fit into the organization. Perceptions of work conditions, supervision, compensation, advancement, relationships with colleagues, organization rules and regulations, decision-making practices, available resources, and ways of motivating organization members all combine to comprise a body of information that builds what we call the organizational communication climate. Climate is viewed as a subjectively experienced quality derived from perceptions of the relatively enduring characteristics of organizations (Falcione et al., 1987, pp. 198, 203). This study states that the communication climate of an organization is more crucial than are communication skills or techniques in creating an effective organization.

2 IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE

Communication Climate of an organization is important because it links the organizational context to the concepts, feelings, and expectations of organization members and helps explain the behavior of organization members (Poole, 1985, P. 79). By knowing something about the climate of an organization we can better understand what impels organization members to behave in particular ways. Some specialists argue that the concept of "climate" is one of the richest constructs in organization theory, generally, and organizational communi-

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• _Mr. Islam M. Ahsanul received BS in Business Management from the University of Phoenix, USA; MBA in General Management with distinction (Delta Mu Delta) from California State University, USA; F. CIM, PGD & Designation from the Canadian Institute of Management, Canada: and currently working as an Asst. Professor, Dept. of Business Administration, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology, Bangladesh._

cation specifically (Falcione, Sussman, and Herden, 1987, p. 195). Organizational Communication Climate has far-reaching explanatory powers and an understanding of it can tell us much about the culture of an organization.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION CLIMATE

Organizational Communication Climate develops out of interaction between features of an organization and the individual's perceptions of those features. Dennis states that "As a perceptual concept, organizational communication climate is measured by securing perceptual reactions of organization members to macro properties of the organization that are relevant to communication and meaningful to organization members (1974)."

4 COMMUNICATION EFFECTS

Communication Climate is different from Organizational Climate in that communication climate involves perceptions of messages and message-related events occurring in the organization. The organizational communication climate is a function of how activities that occur in the organization demonstrate to organization members that the organization trusts them and allows them the freedom to take risks; supports them and gives them responsibility in doing their jobs; openly provides accurate and adequate information about the organization; alternatively listens to and gets reliable and candid information from organization members; actively consults organization members so that they see that their involvement is influential in decisions in the organization; and has a concern for high standards and challenging work (Redding, 1972).

Organization members define and confirm the existence of communication effects. Thus, through interactive processes organization members verify the existence of trust, support, openness, and candidness. Hence, communication effects may vary and change according to the manner in which they are defined and confirmed through interaction among organization members.

Communication effects combine in different ways to evolve a belief and value system that is recognized by organizational members as the climate of the organization such as participatory, supportive, hostile, defensive, invigorating, positive and negative climate.

5 CONCLUSION

Communication Climate significantly influences productivity of the organization, because climate affects the effort of an organization member. This study suggests that the interactive processes involved in the development of organizational communication climates contribute to the potential effects on restructuring, reorganizing, and revitalizing the basic elements of organization. Guzley states that "A particular communication climate provides guidelines for individual decisions and behavior. Decisions by organization members to do their work effectively, to commit themselves to the organization, to behave honestly at work, to pursue opportunities in the organization vigorously, to support colleagues and other members of the organization, to perform tasks creatively, and to offer innovative ideas for the improvement of the organization and its operations are influenced by the communication climate (1992)." Furthermore, a negative climate may decisively undermine the decisions that organization members make about how they will work and contribute to the organization. Strong positive climates often lead to more supportive managerial practices and organization guidelines.

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