

Communication - unified

Case duration (Min):

45-60

Organizational Behaviour (OB)

Communication and decision making

Worldwide

Case summary:

<http://www.microsoft.com/uc/en/us/about.aspx> accessed Nov09 has several video case studies – see Streamlined Communications Video (javascript:displayVideoTargetted('/global/uc/en/us/ri chmedia/silverlight/shelltemplate.xap', 'mms://wm.microsoft.com/ms/uc/Mod1_Streamline_Communications.wmv', 'modules/mod1.xml', 'about-streamlined');)

Communications, decision making and negotiation are three of the most important aspects of managerial activity. Whilst they are closely interlinked and are difficult to consider in isolation, we focus primarily on (electronic) communications within this case study. New (unified) forms of communication and technology are critically evaluated with regard to their business benefits and application in support of the communication process.

Learning objectives:

Outline the concept of communication.

Assess the organisational significance of communication.

Case problem:

How can the parties involved in business communications benefit from unified electronic communications?

Pre class activities...

- 1 What is meant by Unified communications? Conduct internet based research into the concept and be prepared to share your findings in class. **10-15**

First, if you are taking a taught management course then consult with your tutor and ensure that the case has not been scheduled into a teaching class or tutorial. If it has not:

1. Play/ read the media associated with the case. You may need to access the Internet and enter a URL to locate any video clips.
2. Attempt the Case study questions.

Consider attempting the case study as a group exercise; you could form a study group with fellow students.

3. Check the suggested answers - remember these are suggestions only and there are often many possible answers.

Discuss questions and answers with other students.

4. If you feel your answer(s) were weak then consider reading the relevant suggested readings again (also see the case study suggested references).

Title/ Media type

URL/ Media description

Get out of voicemail jail:

<http://money.cnn.com/video/news/2007/10/16/velshi.gates.voicemail.jail.cnnmoney>

Film

Microsoft is creating a communications system that promises to make offices more efficient by allowing users to see when their co-workers are busy, in meetings or on a call.

NOTES:

Case study questions...

Action		Pre/During/After class
1	COMMUNICATION WITHIN ORGANISATIONS: Identify what is meant by communication within organisations, commenting briefly on its purpose and relationship with decision-making and negotiation and briefly discuss the methods of communication that occur within organisations.	During
2	ELECTRONIC FORMS OF COMMUNICATION: Brainstorm electronic forms of communication used in business today.	During
3	UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS: With reference to the film clip and your research, discuss what is meant by unified communications.	During
4	EVALUATE BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS/DISADVANTAGES: Productivity problems associated with asynchronous electronic communications such as voicemail were recognised in the film clip. Identify and evaluate the business benefits (advantages) and problems or disadvantages associated with unified communications – in your answer you should compare and contrast various forms of communication; you should define and make reference to synchronous and asynchronous, formal and informal, verbal and non verbal communication. You should also discuss communication processes.	During

Answers...

ASYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION

The sending and receiving of messages in which there is a time delay between the sending and receiving; as opposed to synchronous communication

COMMUNICATION

Good communication is essential to the smooth running of the people management system. It must be a two-way process. This can involve a cascaded flow of information from the top and also feedback from lower levels through surveys, performance measures and open meetings.

COMMUNICATION

the activity of conveying information

COMMUNICATION PROCESS

the transmission of information, and the exchange of meaning, between at least two people.

COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Physical devices and software that link various computer hardware components and transfer data from one physical location to another.

FORMAL COMMUNICATION.

Formal communication involves presenting information in a structured and consistent manner. Such information is normally created for a specific purpose, making it likely to be more comprehensive, accurate and relevant than information transmitted using information communication. An example of formal communication is an accounting statement. See Informal communication.

Question/ Answer

1 COMMUNICATION WITHIN ORGANISATIONS:

Identify what is meant by communication within organisations, commenting briefly on its purpose and relationship with decision-making and negotiation and briefly discuss the methods of communication that occur within organisations.

Communication is a two-way process involving information and influence. Communication is used in decision-making, coordination, control, planning, teamwork, influence and visioning etc. Decision-making requires information and communication to make it effective. Negotiation requires communication and decision-making. The methods of communication include written, oral, non-verbal and electronic

2 ELECTRONIC FORMS OF COMMUNICATION:

Brainstorm electronic forms of communication used in business today.

E-mail, telephony, instant messaging, voicemail, calendaring, and audio/video/Web conferencing

3 UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS:

With reference to the film clip and your research, discuss what is meant by unified communications.

As communications technologies have evolved over the years, they have done so independently, in parallel with one another, creating disparate communication silos. These silos have led to redundancies and inefficiencies for the end user. End users are forced to juggle multiple user-names and passwords to access different communications services. By integrating e-mail, telephony, instant messaging, voicemail, calendaring, and audio/video/Web conferencing, it is easier and more cost-effective than ever to collaborate. All of the ways in which people contact one another are integrated into a single environment, using a single identity and presence that spans phones, PCs, and Web. Unified communications represents a concept where multiple modes of business communications can be seamlessly integrated. Unified communications (UC) is the integration of real-time communication services such as instant messaging (chat), presence information (a status indicator that conveys ability and willingness of a potential communication partner-for example a user-to communicate), IP telephony, video conferencing, call control (Call control decodes addressing information and routes telephone calls from one end point to another) and speech recognition with non real-time communication services such as unified messaging (integrated voicemail, e-mail, SMS and fax - single interface, accessible from a variety of different devices). UC is not a single product, but a set of products that provides a consistent unified user interface and user experience across multiple devices and media types.

INFORMAL COMMUNICATION.

This describes information that is transmitted by informal means, such as casual conversations between members of staff. The information transmitted in this way is often less structured and less detailed than information transmitted by formal communication. In addition, the information may be inconsistent or may contain inaccuracies. Furthermore, the information may also include a subjective element, such as personal opinions. See Formal communication.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Gestures and facial expressions which convey meaning within a particular linguistic context.

TACTILE COMMUNICATION

Interpersonal communication through touching, including shaking hands

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Communications over a long distance, as opposed to communication within a computer, or between adjacent hardware pieces.

SYNCHRONOUS COMMUNICATION

when people are online at the same time, engaging in a real-time conversation with others, somewhat similar to normal face-to-face discussions.

NOISE

factors extraneous to the communication process which interfere with or distract attention from the transmission and reception of the intended meaning.

4 EVALUATE BENEFITS AND PROBLEMS/DISADVANTAGES:

Productivity problems associated with asynchronous electronic communications such as voicemail were recognised in the film clip. Identify and evaluate the business benefits (advantages) and problems or disadvantages associated with unified communications – in your answer you should compare and contrast various forms of communication; you should define and make reference to synchronous and asynchronous, formal and informal, verbal and non verbal communication. You should also discuss communication processes.

- **WHEREVER with WHATEVER** can use software to transcend geographic boundaries in order to stay connected with team members and partners no matter what device is being used, and no matter where the user is located. With globalisation, we need to find people, communicate, and collaborate quickly and easily. Unified communications helps streamline comms between people and organizations. UC allows an individual to send a message on one medium and receive on another,

- **WHENEVER** communicate in real time, from your office PC or on mobile devices whilst on the road,

- **BUSINESS PROCESS INTEGRATION** simplify and integrate all forms of communications in view to optimize business processes and reduce the response time, manage flows and eliminate device and media dependencies.

- **RESPONSE TIME** One of the main focuses of Unified Communications is to reduce communication response time, or in other words perceived speed, which often is essential in decision making and acting upon instructions. Always-available style of communication. Human delays are also minimized or eliminated, resulting in better, faster interaction and service-delivery for the customer, and cost savings for the business.

- **PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY** It enables users to know where their colleagues are physically located (say, their car or home office). They also have the ability to see which mode of communication the recipient prefers to use at any given time (perhaps their mobile phone, or email, or instant messaging). A user could seamlessly set up a real-time collaboration on a business problem and the problem could be resolved in moments,

- **STREAMLINE INFORMATION DELIVERY.**

- **REDUCED COSTS** Unified communications also allows for easier, more direct collaboration between co-workers and with suppliers and clients, even if they are not physically on the same site. This allows for possible reductions in business travel, especially with multi-party video communications, reducing an organization's carbon footprint. Consolidate telephony, voicemail, and e-mail systems to lower maintenance and service costs dramatically, particularly for organizations with remote or branch offices,

- **TEAMWORK** Bring people together with audio, video, and Web conferencing to improve team collaboration.

Problems.

Key problems include:

EMPLOYEE FATIGUE/ Always on,

INEFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION – (1) Encoding, emails, text, instant messaging, fax etc are vulnerable to problems with the message that might not actually convey what the sender wanted. Lack richness, detail and precision; (2) transmission channel may distort the message or prevent non verbal communication cues – see body language, paralanguage, proxemics, the environment and temporal issues; (3) decoding, in the absence of interpersonal communication and sometimes in the absence of feedback there is a danger that the recipient may not decode the message in a manner that gives the intended meaning; (4) opportunity for feedback may be limited (see asynchronous comms or text/voice only communication) and there may be (5) noise: factors extraneous to the communication process which interfere with or distract attention from the transmission and reception of the intended meaning.

FEEDBACK (IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERPERSONAL COMMUNIC

the processes through which the transmitter of a message detects whether and how that message has been received and decoded.

Case study references

Cole, G A. and Kelly, P P. (2011) 'Management Theory and Practice', Ed. 7. Cengage EMEA.

Martin, J. (2005) 'Organizational Behaviour and Management', Ed. 3. Thomson Learning.