

Effective Communication for Software Professionals

Chandrasekaran Sethuraman¹, Dr.S.K.Srivatsa²

¹Department of Computer Science and Engineering,
VEL's University, CHENNAI, 631561, India

²Department of Electronics and Engineering,
Anna University, MIT Campus, Chennai, 500007, India
chandrasekaran.sethuraman@yahoo.com, profsks@rediffmail.com

Abstract-The ability to communicate effectively is an important skill for IT professionals, particularly in light of the increasing acceptance and success of projects. As the IT industry today is moving at such a blinding pace, client relations and corporate communications should be foremost in the minds of industry executives to ensure a successful completion of a project. Geographically distributed, inter-organizational product development projects are becoming increasingly common. However, companies face challenges in managing this kind of complicated projects. Most of the challenges are related to communication. This study focused on the effects of communication in projects.

The main objective was to focus on the effects of communication practices on project success, the suitability of different communication practices for different project types and phases. For a successful project, IT professionals are expected to be able to communicate proficiently with users, clients, management and indeed, each other. The more effectively a employee communicates with the clients or business partners, the better off its results will be. This builds a strong foundation to ensure that everyone understand their role and have a way to voice their opinions. It also requires that everyone views communication as critical to their overall success and key to changing employee behavior.

The following are the impacts identified due to a poor communication:

- Miscommunication with Clients which leads to Gaps that Cause Conflict
- Wastage of Valuable Time and Energy
- Decrease in Productivity and Performance

If technical professionals really know how to communicate, they can accomplish any job more effectively as well the above said miscommunication impacts can be easily avoided. Effective communication is the key to successful outcomes. Technical professionals must be trained in the discipline of effective communication just as they are trained in the discipline of electrical and computer engineering. Fortunately, our understanding of the process of human communication has finally achieved a level of structure that allows training. This paper presents a step-by-step approach to the discipline of effective human communication.

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication excellence is based on the natural structure of language and how the human brain processes verbal and non-verbal information. When we have a clear and sound understanding of the human processes of

perception, communication, and cognition, then the process of communication becomes a predictable closed system with input, output, and feedback. When the communication process is understood within the framework of a "system", the process lends itself to analysis and understanding rather than being a "hit-and-miss" process. Different methodologies about effective communications are explained in [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12].

Our technical world is becoming more complex while one need to communicate effectively with a wider variety of people is increasing. The new millennium requires technical professionals who can communicate effectively and skillfully in a variety of situations and with people with diverse cultural and professional backgrounds and abilities. This is our present requirement and our future need.

Software engineering can be considered as an answer to many problems that pervade the software development activity. It would be worthwhile to explore some of the problems faced by the industry and then to understand how the software engineering discipline is equipped to handle them.

Effective communications means more than just "spin" you put out to the press. Your communications program is integrally important in helping to shape the opinions of your key audiences and leverage your reputation to advance your corporate objectives and preserve the goodwill toward your brand. Well-managed communication with your key audiences such as customers, employees, media, financial community, shareholders, and channel partners are mission critical to your success. Effective communicators realize that the goal is to share information, and that this information sharing is typically a two-way street.

What would be the benefit if communication tools and techniques were taught to engineers? Imagine engineering graduates who could effectively convey their ideas and concepts and values to a wide variety of colleagues and customers. This would be a boon to the engineering and business communities.

Specific communication tools and techniques exist to help technical professional achieve this outcome. When these techniques are applied, effective communication is all but guaranteed.

This study is going to suggest effective methodologies to overcome the miscommunication impacts for an effective communication methodology on project success.

This paper is organized as follows. Section II describes about general overview of communication and

methodologies as well. Section III deals with the effective persuasion lets our ideas get noticed and methodologies as well and some specific conclusions are summarized in Section IV.

II. COMMUNICATION HAS NOT SUBSTITUTE

Irrespective of whether you are a large conglomerate, a small startup, or even a one-man show, effective communication- with managers, with staff, with customers is the keystone of business success. Businesses that lack effective workplace communication practices suffer from a multitude of problems including high turnover, mistrust and lowered productivity. From giving constructive feedback and building effective interpersonal relationships to delivering key information to motivating and leading the workforce, effective communication plays a very important role in the smooth running of business.

Here are a few principles of effective workplace communication.

- Communicate often and well. It is a cliché that one can never communicate too much, but it may well be true.
- Communication efforts often fail because managers give a message once and assume it will be understood, when this is usually not the case.
- Communication of serious and important nature has to be reinforced more than a few times to ensure that the underlying message reaches the target audience loud and clear.

Also, frequent and direct communication on important issues is a must for preserving employee confidence and morale.

The company that demonstrates its commitment to its staff by maintaining clear, continual channels of communication even during challenging times will earn the loyalty of its employees.

Even in this age of technology where the options for virtual communication have grown tremendously, there still is no substitute for personal contact. Virtual management and communication seldom work when the stakes are high. Personal contract is not only more efficient, it is key to establishing common ground and understanding and provides psychological motivation for all the parties. It facilitates relationship building and solidarity in a way electronic communication can never do.

A breach in communication or a badly communicated message can quickly breed rumours, mistrust and negativity in the work environment.

It is essential to open up channels of open, direct communication so that employees have legitimate mean to vent feeling and share complaints without the threat of rumour and false information taking over the gap. Constructive, two-way feedback will help in improving employee productivity and working relationships in the organization. Include workers in the communication circle

with the freedom to air their opinions and participate in the decision making process.

Employees are often willing to go the extra mile and exhibit greater motivation when they are kept informed on important aspects of their job and the business, and they feel that they are being listened to with empathy. Communicating change is a challenge even in the best of circumstances.

The problem is when change is in order, most managers prefer to deal with the issue behind the closed doors of boardrooms rather than come out with it in the open. Change however has to be ably supported with proper communication, as early as possible and by using a variety of channels to ensure that the people in the frontlines are not left vulnerable to the threats of uncertainty and trickle down information.

As mentioned earlier, when change is not communicated properly, it can breed confusion and workplace negativity. Train managers and employees to become effective participants in the communication process. Ensure that important communication is vested in the hands of competent people who have the skills to get the information across.

Communication typically need to have good command over verbal and written communications, excellent listening skills , a flair for presentation, and depending upon the situation , the capacity to facilitate and moderate group communication.

The average workplace today is becoming increasingly diverse and complicated. Without effective communication to bind it together, it can become a place fraught with tension, conflict and misunderstanding.

By giving communication factor the attention it deserves, managers can rally the employees to meet challenges, boost morale, build better relationships, and successfully partner with them in achieving organisational objectives and vision.

III. EFFECTIVE PERSUASION LETS OUR IDEAS GET NOTICED

The fine art of persuasion is a much sought after but poorly mastered skill. We all have been in situations where we sometimes get frustrated over our inability to get others to listen to our ideas and suggestions, or experienced anger and annoyance at their unwillingness to follow instructions and answer important questions.

The common tactics used by people to persuade or influences others. There include: tell, sell, negotiate, enlist, inquire, attune, and facilitate.

Tell: suggestions are used to express needs and ideas to the other person. For example, “why don’t we go over the contract clauses once again to see if we can work out a compromise?” is a subtle suggestion aimed at influencing the other person to acquiesce; or something like, “The report has to be submitted to the CEO tomorrow. We need to complete the review by today afternoon”, which is basically an expression of needs.

Sell: Logical reasons and motivational factors are used to ‘sell’ the idea to a person. For example, “If we share the work between us, we will be able to meet the deadline.”

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Negotiate: Incentives are offered in an effort to woo the other person and get his or her buy in. For example, “If you can pull off this project successfully, I will see that you get a big raise and promotion this year as a bonus.”

Enlist: Appeal is made to the ego, values, ideals and aspirations of people. For example, “Will you do a favour and edit the report for me? You are the only person who can help me.” Or “This issue has always been close to your heart. You must help us now.”

Inquire: Questions are asked to draw out the other person and get more information. “Can you tell me what exactly you are looking for? I think we could work this out if we knew what kind of product you need.”

Attune: Effort is made to put oneself in place of the other person, empathize and attune to the situation. For example, “If I were you, I would have handled this matter differently.”

Facilitate: This technique is literally used to put words in other person’s mouth, so to speak. For example “This dress really suits you. I think you should buy it.” Connection with others and establishing genuine rapport is a very important part of effective persuasion. To be able to truly persuade other people to accept your ideas and point of view, you need to master a healthy combination of communication, presentation, relationship and assertiveness skills apart from the above influencing techniques.

It is important to keep in mind that effective persuasion is not about intimidation. Pulling, pushing, bullying, nagging does not get you what you want. With the right influencing tactics, you can persuade anyone to follow your lead. You can get clients to buy more. You can negotiate. You can negotiate successfully. You can induce your co-workers to listen to your suggestions or convince your team to follow your instructions.

Effective persuasion helps get your ideas noticed, enhances your career, and improves relationship with others. It makes your job easier too.

IV. CONCLUSION

By giving communication factor the attention it deserves, managers can rally the employees to meet challenges, boost morale, build better relationships, and successfully partner with them in achieving organizational objectives and vision.

The seven techniques (tell, sell, negotiate, enlist, inquire, attune, and facilitate) form a closed, feedback-loop, system with input, output, and feedback. With these fundamental tools for effective communication, the sender can communicate ideas and concepts more effectively and can influence people more elegantly. Within the Software development environment, the typical technical professional will be capable of speaking and communicating more effectively with other technical professionals as well as with managers, accountants, LAWYERS, CONTRACT PERSONNEL, AND CUSTOMERS.

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