



IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN PROMOTING ISLAMIC PRACTICES

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Abstract

As a feature of socially defined people, everyone is in communication with the others in the social context. Whatever the content is, individuals should exchange and share thoughts, news, in other words they should communicate. In this regard, especially in organizations and or in the individual life or religion practices where formal and informal communication exists, “communication” plays a vital role in structuring our daily activities, objectives, policies and strategies. The purpose of the current study is to better understand how important communication is in promoting Islamic practices.

Keywords: Information, Sources, Perception, Prayer, Religion

Introduction

Communication is as old as management. Management, on the other hand, is as old as human existence, for without communication, life could have been at a stand-still. Communication is therefore as old as human existence, although its recognition as one of the facts that are changing managerial efficiency can be more recent. According to Blackwell, (1974) “concern for communication is a fairly recent phenomenon”.¹ It was the first world war that made the western world communication-conscious. The opening after the war, of the German and Russian diplomatic archives of 1914 made it appallingly clear that the catastrophe had largely been caused by communication failure, despite copious and reliable information (Blackwell, 1974).² Communication is undoubtedly needed in any given society, for without communication, the whole life would be at a stand-still. While Barnard describes it as “the first executive function”.³

Communication therefore is obviously needed for the following reasons:

Achieving Synergy

Communication is the means by which organized activities (like Muslims’ prayers, fasting etc.) are unified. It is also a means by which social, energetic inputs are fed into business, religious and social systems. Management must get the best performance out of the group as a whole, with the complementary parts working together in the most effective way to achieve corporate objectives. It is through communication that behavior is modified, changes effected and goals are achieved.

Communication imparts beliefs

Through persuasion and conviction which arises as a result of the influence of the superior.

Inter-personal relations

Good communication between the leaders and the led (even in religious matters) is an essential factor if the group is to be effectively coordinated and united. Communication, to be effective, must be good, and renowned management authors have put heads together to build up what could be regarded as principles of good communication. Thus, according to Hall (1972), in his work, *Business Administration*, the following are useful guides for establishing good communication:

Principle of Clarity

Communication possesses clarity when it is expressed in clear and understandable language and transmitted in a way that will be understandable by the receiver. Getting full attention for every well-composed message is no easy matter, for the fact that the quality of the message and the brevity of our human attention span. Competing for attention.

Principle of Integrity

As the principle of integrity makes clear, “the purpose of communication is to support understanding by individuals in their achieving and maintaining the cooperation needed to meet group goals”.⁴

Multi-dimensionality of Communication

The multi-dimensionality of communication is seen in the sense that it is not a one-way affair. Thus, we have theories that see a real possibility of conceptualizing information flow as a system. This information flow is one provided for a manager to specify for him certain inputs flowing from a subordinate who taps internal and external resources. One conception of the information flow for decision purposes is closely related to organizational level. Information moves upwards from a supervisory level and is summarized for the consumption of the departmental managers who take action within the scope of their authority. Another conception of information is down-wards through the organizations but this is quite a continuing process. This involves vertical as well as horizontal flow of information and, in this way, everyone in the organization would get informed as quickly as possible about his area of operation and have opportunity to take needed actions expeditiously. Lateral communication also occurs between employees on the same level in the organization and this adds to the smooth running of the whole communication system. From the foregoing, we have downward, upward and lateral communication flows confirming the multi-dimensional flow of information within a group or organization.

Barriers to Communication

The problems faced by communication in the modern social, economic and religious society are numerous, and if they are understood, they are likely to be less harmful to the smooth-running of human inter-relationships. This is because language uses oral or written arbitrary symbols to transmit meaning from one person to another every language has its own sound system and grammatical structures. If for instance one who is sending a message belongs to a different language groups his ignorance of the other person’s language will serve as a barrier to communication between him and the receiver.⁵ Among the most disturbing communication problems discussed to be inhibiting the quality of communication in modern society are:

Inattention and lack of effective listening

These problems are common with receivers who might not have listened attentively or get confused because of conflicts with the information heard before, or the information that is contrary to their beliefs. Non-listening appears to be a chronic human failing. The remedy for inattention is not clear, as human beings tend not to make serious efforts to understand what does not interest them. This can be illustrated by common parties arguing on an apparently agreed matter. Whatever the reasons, any efforts to communicate with someone not listening will fail.

Different perceptions

People see things in different ways. Perhaps due to differences in culture, custom and environment, which have an effect on how each individual communicates, or how effective their communications are for example, if two people are invited to

give reports on a robbery incident witnessed by them, the report of one may vary from that of the other, since each will emphasize more on his interests. Another example is the case of a manager watching a group of employees laughing. Different managers will infer different things from the laughter. A manager who believes that work must be painful in order to be productive feels that time is being wasted, the assignments are too easy, or that the boys are not serious. To the manager who believes that happy and contented employees work harder, the laughter tells him that he is succeeding as a manager. However, the manager who is socially insecure feels that the men are laughing at him.

Feedback

This is the response of the receiver in communicative situation and it is very important in communication. It shows whether a piece of information has been appropriately decoded. However, one way communication is the root of basic problems of effective communication. One way communication is the root of basic problems of effective communication. Givers of information should endeavour to know how far it is understood by the receivers through feedbacks, and questions should be asked from the receivers as to what suggestions they have to give, thus making the communication a multilateral process. Absence of feedback is a visible 'disease' of most communications. This is because feedback is an important aspect of communication.

Lack of Confidence

Communication may be used to establish confidence, but certainly confidence is an essential ingredient of communication. Without a considerable degree of confidence, it becomes difficult to transact business faster or efficiently. Some communicators are noted for making a number of countermanding messages that follow their original information, resulting usually from non-logical decisions. Repetitions of this experience gradually condition subordinates to distrust the communicator, delay action, or act unenthusiastically. Confidence arises partly from experiences and from frequency of satisfactory mutual dealings. The general level of confidence is also indicative of the state of morale. If this is poor, the manager should examine himself, even though he may not want to follow Destock Sky's advice that "if people around you are spiteful and callous and will not hear you, fall down before them and beg their forgiveness, for in truth, you are to blame for their not wanting to hear you".⁶

Badly expressed messages

Irrespective of how communication is delivered, vagueness and murkiness are always common: Faults such as poorly chosen and empty words and phrases, careless omissions, lack of coherence, bad organization of ideas, awkward sentence structure, inadequate vocabulary, platitudes, numbering repetition, jargon, failure to clarify and precision lead to costly errors, costly corrections and the need for otherwise unnecessary clarifications.

Loss by Transmission

Successive transmissions of the same message are decreasingly accurate due to cumulative errors. In oral communication, about 30% of the information is lost in each transmission, so that in large groups, much more is lost in oral communications. Even, written communications accompanied by interpretations are subject to some loss of meaning in transmission.

Poor Retention

Equally serious is the problem of poor retention of messages. Previous research studies show that organizational employees retain only 50% of communicated information and superiors, 60%. No⁷ wonder then that enterprises operate under a cloud of ignorance. The need for adequate repetition is therefore obvious.

Geographical Distance

Modern communication techniques have not completely overcome the problem of communication over a distance. Telephones, letters and telegrams, though are rapid modern methods of communication, are no substitutes for face-to-face communication. Oral communication on phone, though a very close counterpart, is by no means, a perfect substitute for

face-to-face communication. This is because it is costly, mechanically imperfect over a distance and lacks the overtones of communication ordinarily conveyed in face-to-face communication. Written communication is also a less adequate substitute for face-to-face communication, because what can be discussed within about ten minutes may take two to three pages to write; yet it may be less likely to convey exact ideas, as face-to-face conversation, which can be voiced out immediately and questions asked and cleared.

Channel Noise

Channel noise may be used as a family term for all disturbances faced by oral or written communications between the sender and the receiver. Communications, no matter how well planned, transmitted or interpreted, always face this problem, which reduces their eventual qualities and effectiveness. Channel noise presents a great threat to effective oral communication, as messages put across are often mis-heard or wrongly interpreted. Similarly, noise is often a barrier to communication it interferes with the transmission of the signal. This disturbance is usually in the form of sounds, but it need not always be. It can be in visual, audiovisual, written physical as well as psychological form.¹⁴

Insufficient Adjustment Period

Sometimes, communication announces changes which seriously affect the recipients. Some communications point to the need for further training, career adjustment or status arrangements. Changes affect people in various ways – some for good and some for bad. It may take time to think through the whole meaning and implications of a message. Consequently, it is important to efficiently adjust to its implications. We should not need to force change on people before they adjust to its implications.

Timing

Giving the correct information at the wrong time or failure to watch the receiver's disposition constitute a great problem in communication. For example, customers of a bank talking to cashiers when they are busy counting some currency notes or checking their records.

Recipe for Better Communication

Stoner (1974) laid down the following measures as positive steps to remove barriers to good communication:

- Management by objective (MBO) well implemented;
- Clear functional lines;
- Giving the right information in the right quantity at the right time;
- Clarifying ideas properly before communicating;
- Examining first, the true purpose of each communication;
- Considering the total physical and human setting whenever we communicate;
- Consulting with others (where appropriate, while planning communication);
- Being mindful of overtones as well as basic content of the message, while we communicate;
- Endeavouring to convey something of value or help to the receiver when the opportunity arises;
- Making necessary follow-up of your information;
- Ensuring that your actions support your communications;
- Communicating for tomorrow, as well as today; and
- Lastly, a good manager should endeavour to be a good listener as well as a good communicator. We must learn to listen with "the inner ear" if we must know "the inner man". Communication is at its best when the communicator talks and listens simultaneously.

Utilization of Communication in Islamic Practices

All acts of worship in Islam and beliefs and orientation are discharged through communication. Communication has lent itself to Islamic activities so much so that the two of them (communication and Islam) may be regarded as inseparable twins. This assertion will be substantiated in the following sub-headings:

Call to Prophethood

Allah (SWT) introduced the religion of Islam to mankind through the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the command contained in the Quranic communication thus:

“Read in the name of Allah who create”

“Proclaim! (or read!) In the name of Thy Lord and Cherisher, who created” (Q96:1)⁸

Muhammad and his Message to the Human Race

After his call to Prophethood, Muhammad started carrying out the onerous task of spreading the message of Islam to mankind in all walks of life-far and wide, but starting from his immediate family/household. This, he was doing through communication in obedience of God’s command in the Glorious Qur’an: “We have not sent you, Oh Muhammad, But as a mercy to mankind”. The important position occupied by communication in Islam can be seen from the two illustrations above: God himself communicated with Muhammad in sending him with the message of Islam to mankind. His message, according to Islamic history, was sent through Archangel Gabriel (Jubril). Unlettered Muhammad, although overwhelmed with surprise, started reading in obedience of Allah’s command communicated through Angel Jibril. After this occurrence, he started spreading information about the new faith-Islam and today, the divine message has passed from generation to generation, making the religion of Islam to become accepted in all parts of the world.

Call to Prayer

As a result of the volatility with which the Meccan pagans received the message of Islam, Allah’s command to Muhammad to teach his followers to make loud talk to people for prayers was not allowed to materialize until after some years of practicing the religion. Islamic history reveals that it was a slave called Bilāl that first made the call to prayer in the following words:⁹

Allah Akbar, Allah Abkar (4x)

As-hadu an Lailaha Ila Allah (2x)

As-hadu ana Muhammadan Rosulullahi (2x)

Hayyi ala-l solati (2x)

Hayyi ala-l falahi (2x)

Allah Akbar Allah Akbar(2x)

La ilaha ila llah

Meaning

God is great, God is great (4x)

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except God (2x)

I bear witness that Muhammad is His messenger and Apostle (2x)

Come unto prayer (2x)

Come unto success (2x)

God is the greatest (2x)

There is no deity worthy of worship except God (2x)

This communication of calling fellow Muslims to prayer is of one of the most important ways in which communication manifests itself in Islamic practices. This is simply because, worship (prayer) is the first step taken by Muslims in wanting to practicalize their faith. Call is made to prayer five times daily and when worshippers have all entered the place of prayer with ablution, the pronouncement to start praying (Iqamah) is pronounced.

Rising for Prayer

The call that is made to signify that prayer is about to commence is called Iqamah and it is done by the Muadhin (caller to prayer). It is another form of communication in Islamic practices, which runs thus:¹⁰

Allahu Akbar, Allah Akbar (2x)
Ash-hadu an Laillaha illa llah
Ash-hadu ana Muhammadan Rosulullah
Hayyi ala Solat
Hayyi alat-falahi
Qad qamat-s-Solatu (2x)
Allah Akbar, Allah Akbar
La illaha illah llahu

Meaning

Allah is the greatest, Allah is the greatest
I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah
I bear witness that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger and Apostle
Prayer has commenced (2x)
God is the greatest, God is the greatest
There is no God except Allah

The above pronouncement is made as soon as members of a praying congregation arrange themselves in straight rows and the Imam, after duly inspecting the rows to his satisfaction, beckons on the Muadhin to start the iqamah. In fact, prayers are observed with the congregation listening to, and following the communication from the Imam, and echoed (where the crowd is large) by the *Muadhin*.¹¹

Muslims in Practical Prayers

It is pertinent to point out the fact that all the parts and/or acts of Muslims' prayers are guided and controlled by communication, from the call to prayer to the Adhan¹² and all other stages. That Muslims pray five times daily, the names of the five times daily prayers and how they are observed are all taught by the Qur'an and Hadith, also through communication. The Qur'an says:

Keep up prayers...

*Establish regular prayers - at the sun's decline till the darkness of the night, and the morning prayer and reading; for the prayer and reading In the morning carry their Testimony.*¹³

Also, the teaching that prayers should be preceded with ablution and how the ablution should be performed are all Islamic acts taught through communication. It is the uniqueness imbued upon Islamic practices that makes all the praying acts of Muslims to be in unison and unequalled universality.

The five Pillars of Islam

The notion that Islam is built upon five pillars and each of the five pillars is carried out are all results of communication. Really, Islam is built upon the following five pillars:

Hadith

عن عبدالله بن عمر بن الخطاب رضي الله عنهما قال سمعت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقول: " بني الإسلام على خمس : شهادة أن لا إله إلا الله وأن محمدا رسول الله وإقام الصلاة وإيتاء الزكاة وحج البيت وصوم رمضان " (رواه البخاري ومسلم¹⁴)

- Belief in the unitary existence of God and in the prophethood of Muhammad;
- Keeping up obligatory prayers, five times daily,
- Giving generously to the poor and needy;

- Fasting in the month of Ramadhan; and
- Performing hajj to Mecca and Medina at least once in our lifetime.

Faith: Believe in the oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad

Communicating with mankind on the first pillar of Islam, God sent to Muhammad through Jubril, God communication with His Noble Prophet through Angel jubril in the cave Hirah which was regarded as first revelation Glorious Qur'an. Subsequently, when Angel jubril appealed to prophet Muhammad He (Angel jubril asked him to read while the prophet replied thus: what I should read I am not reader" until Angel jubril red the Quranic verse to verse 5 of the chapter 96 of the Noble Qur'an) the following Qur'anic verses: Say: He is Allah, the one and Only.¹⁵ Also, the prophethood of Muhammad was communicated in many parts of the Quran, but the most unique is in Qur'an 48, verse 29, which states:

Muhammad is the apostle of Allah. And those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst Each other. Thou wilt see them bow and prostrate themselves (in prayer), seeking Grace from Allah and (His) good Pleasure. On their faces are their marks, (Being) the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude In the Taurat; and their similitude In the Gospel is like a seed which Sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, (filling) the sowers with wonder and Delight. As a result, it fills the unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great reward.¹⁶

And He drew out His hand, and Behold! it was white to all beholders!"

Salat: Praying five times Daily

That Muslims should up-keep prayers five times daily was also commanded by God in the Qur'an as has been pointed out. Prayer is held to be the spiritual ladder through which a Muslim rises unto his God. It is the greatest distinguishing factor between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Almsgiving

The injunction that Muslims should give generously to the poor and needy is also part of the information communicated to mankind by God in the Qur'an. God says:

Alms are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah. And for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah, and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.¹⁷

Fasting

That Muslims should fast throughout the month of Ramadan is contained in Qur'an Chapter 2, verse 183: "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you As it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint."¹⁸

Hajj

Performing holy pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina at least once in our lifetime if we are of sound health and we have the means, including what to leave for people we are leaving behind to use to maintain themselves in our absence. The Qur'an speaks

"And proclaim the Pilgrimage among men: They will come to Thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways;¹⁹

Conclusion

Communication is an important activity in any form of organized living or human existence. The organization of a family, company, club, society or any human group needs communication if the group must achieve anything. Islamic practices, from the introduction of the faith to any act in the religion, are all based on communication. Despite the importance of communication to groups and the larger society, it is often hampered by a number of barriers, most of which have been tackled by communication experts, bearing in mind the importance of this all-important phenomenon to meaningful human existence. Increasingly, better and more sophisticated means of communication are evolving to make its practice, especially as it applies to the religion of Islam, an easier and smoother task. Modern communication gadgets are now found in mosques and other Islamic gatherings.

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