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Internal Strategies for Assessing Communication Channel Effectiveness

Melvin Murphy, DBA

Abstract

This qualitative multiple case study was designed to explore communication assessment strategies used in three law firms to improve message dissemination and channel efficiency. The findings revealed informal assessment strategies can sustain operations, indirect assessment strategies have a role, and efficient versus timely assessments could improve employee performance and morale.

Problem

The **general business problem** is that some managers of law firms do not assess the effectiveness of internal communication channels, which results in costly inefficiencies and lost business opportunities.

The **specific business problem** is that some mid-sized law firm managers lack internal strategies to assess the effectiveness of internal communication channels.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore what internal strategies that medium-sized law firm managers use to assess the effectiveness of their organizations' internal communication channels.

Research Questions

What internal strategies do managers of medium-sized law firms use, if any, to assess the effectiveness of their internal communication channels?

Relevant Literature

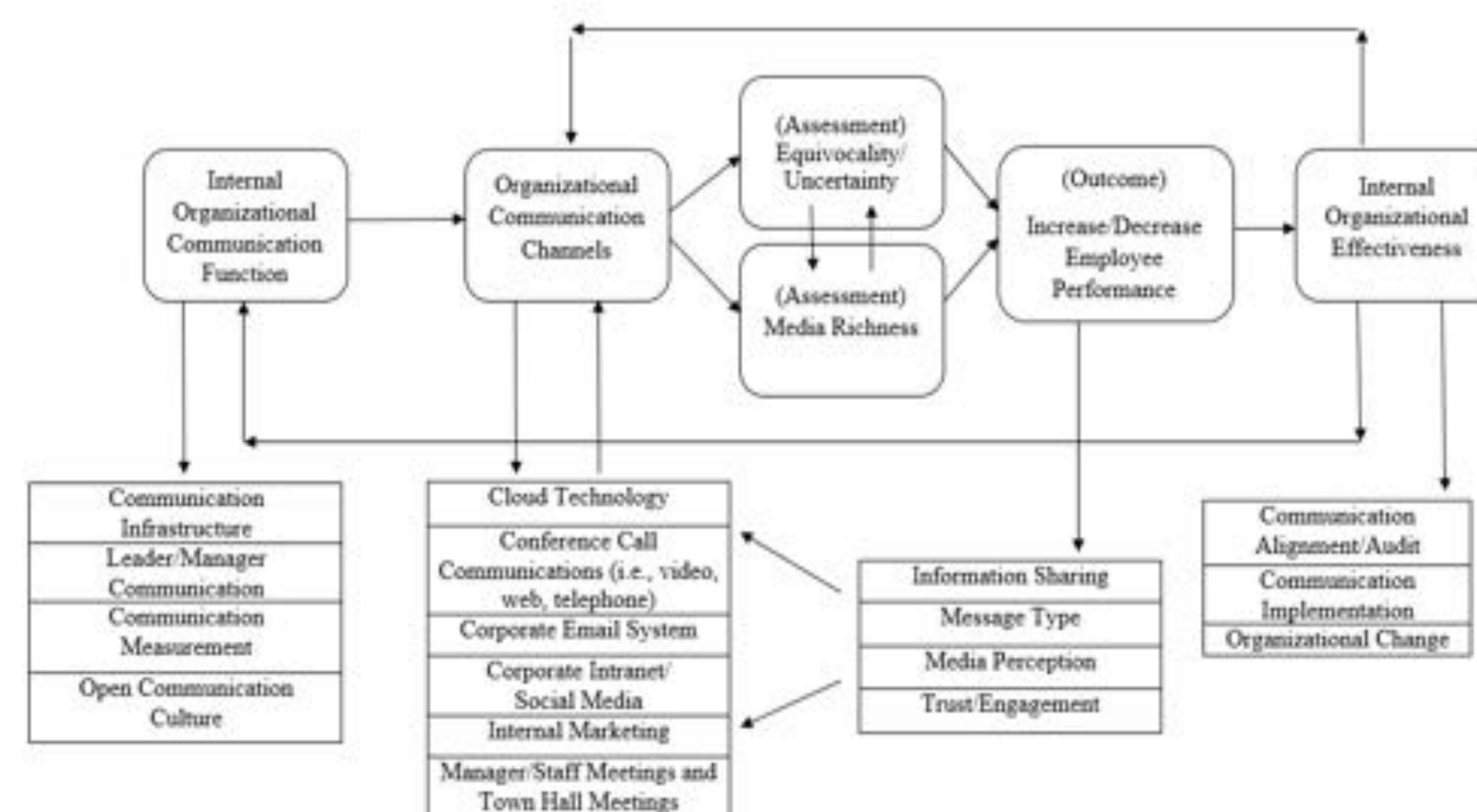
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual basis for this study was the **Channel Expansion Theory** (Carlson & Zmud, 1999) which centers on how individuals select, use and perceive communication channels.

- user perceptions of communication channel effectiveness leads to change of how channels are used, which under certain conditions leads to expanding the use of the communications channel to achieve effective communications (Carlson & Zmud, 1999).
- appropriate to explore organizational communications effectiveness. Figure 1 illustration of the CET conceptual framework as a graphical representation.

The literature review showed that corporate leaders believed assessing organizational communication channel effectiveness was unnecessary, researchers believed that study of communication channel effectiveness was needed to support channel choice and use decisions. Nyan (2015) found that communication of certainty has a perlocutionary effect. Accordingly, the literature reviewed in this study suggested communication managers need to conduct more exploration on internal strategies to assess the effectiveness of organizational communication channels.

Figure 1.



Procedures

Adhering to the scope of the study:

- Multiple case study using purposeful sampling.
- 3 mid-sized law firms, each having 50 employees and a communications department.
- 90 min interviews leaders and managers; 1 week member checking with follow up until data saturation.
- Data triangulation using recordings from interviews, documentation and member checking.

Data Analysis

Data analysis process included compilation, coding, and analysis of data originating from interviews to display the findings.

I used cross-case analysis to compare case-specific factors, determine patterns of associations, and generate coding tables and matrices.

Findings

Three themes emerged from the findings:

- Informal Assessment Strategies
- Indirect Assessment Strategies
- Efficient vs. Timely Assessment Strategies

After reviewing the organizations' documents, policies, records, and the interview data, it was clear the leaders of the case firms had only informal, indirect and unwritten strategies to assess the effectiveness of the organizational communication channels.

Neither of the organizations had any written formal communication plan or separate formal plan to assess the effectiveness of internal communication channels.

Limitations

This study had two limitations.

- Participants might respond to questions in accordance with what they believe a researcher wants to hear.
- CET suggested participants' perceptions about communication channel effectiveness depended on their experiences with communication channels in their organizational context, which represented limitations on the extent to which the results of the study are valid for other organizations.

Conclusions

Evolving communication technology, increased volume of information needed by businesses, and the intensified competitive environment has made internal company communication more critical to a business's financial success.

Law firm leaders and communication professionals who are interested in improving effectiveness of their company's internal communications channels might find this study helpful in developing of internal communication strategies and policies.

Social Change Implications

Positive social change may be fostered by influencing the attitudes and behavior of law firm leaders and managers who are leading teams.

The findings can potentially affect positive change by improving how assessment of communication channels are administered and providing synergy for a more positive employee workplace experience, thus improving the quality of life for employees.

Committee Members: Drs. Doug Campbell, Chair, Denise Land, Second Member, and Diane Dusick, URR.