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## An Analysis of Leader Communication Within a Credit Union

Communication is essential to the operation and success of organizations and can flow in many various directions. Communication is often described as the process of sharing information across mediums for the purposes of obtaining mutual understanding (Craig, 2006). Information sharing occurs between members of an organization's executive team, between the executive team and the rest of the workforce, between direct managers and subordinates, and between teams within an organization just to name a few. Take for example, the policies and procedures that govern organizations. The decisions on which practices to implement and reinforce are made at the top and communicated downwards to the rest of the organization. How well or poorly the information is received can be impacted by how the information is delivered. In the process of communication, there are many factors that can block the reception of information and/or misconstrue the message that is obtained from the communication. Additionally, organizations should be mindful of over communication. As with many things, too much communication can be as harmful as too little communication. This paper intends to review the current approach to communication within a credit union as practiced by its executive management team.

### **Method/ Style of Communication**

The credit union being reviewed is both a team-based organization and a learning organization. The organization strives to communicate clearly, concisely, and timely to ensure that its workforce is well informed of successes and areas of improvement. The Executive management team within this particular credit union utilizes multiple modes of communication to share information within the organization. There are various types of and purposes for communication that occur within the organization and the communication styles can vary depending on who delivers the message and who the recipients are. Emails, intranet pages, posted policies, and

face-to-face meetings are the most common methods utilized to share information organization wide. As the methods of e-mail, Internet pages, and posted policies do not allow for recipients to receive or interpret nonverbal communication cues understanding of the messages relayed rely heavily on the communication style being used. De Vries et al. (2009) define communication style as "... a distinctive set of interpersonal communicative behaviors geared toward the optimization of hierarchical relationships in order to reach certain group or individual goals" (pg 368). Within this organization, the most common styles of communication tend to be supportive, assertive, precise, and assured. As a financial institution, especially one that supports continued learning, precise and supportive communication styles are helpful in the development and collaboration of its teams. An assured communication style is beneficial in communicating information about the future of the organization, the soundness of the organization, and the organization's ability to protect the funds it holds for its members.

### **How Communication Has Developed Within the Organization**

Communication within this organization has evolved over the years and has changed with changes in the executive management team and with the COVID-19 global pandemic. With the COVID-19 pandemic the organization had to adjust its methods of communication as a larger than normal portion of their workforce were working remotely. Leaders quickly learned that communication within a team whose members worked remotely is very different than the communication of a team where all its members are physically in the same location. To be effective in their communication, leaders within this organization changed their communication style to be more precise and supportive. Currently, the communication within the organization aims to not only share operational information but to encourage collaboration with team members of all levels through the various projects and means of collecting employee feedback.

Furthermore, the executive team has made efforts to be more visible to all staff, creating a physical representation of the organization's efforts to promote openness, teamwork and a multidirectional communication flow.

### **Recommendations to Improve Communication**

There have been instances within this organization where the communication style used has been less than ideal. In these instances, the communication styles used were aggressive and argumentative which in turn pointed fingers and placed blame (Dasgupta et al., 2012). In other words, the aggressive and argumentative styles of communication gave the impression of a personal grievance or opinion being shared as an organizational truth. For situations like this, communication can be improved by adopting an assertive style of communication instead. By pivoting to an assertive style of communication leaders will still be able to communicate their points without doing so at the expense of individual employees or teams (Dasgupta et al. 2012).

### **Conclusion**

Communication styles vary from person to person, liter to liter, and organization to organization. A leader who does not evaluate their communication style on a consistent basis and/or varies their communication style depending on purpose runs the risk of one day becoming ineffective in their communication. Communication and communication styles are rarely a set it and forget it method to sharing information. Not all communication styles are received well, and not all communication styles are appropriate in all methods of communication. Through the communication process leaders can conduct evaluations of their communication styles to ensure that the message they intend to deliver is the message being received by their intended audience.

References

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