

## CHAPTER FOUR: News Room Management

### 4.1 Communication in the Newsroom

Communication is the vital link that influences both individual motivation and group behavior in the newsroom. Timely, precise, accurate, complete information affects the quality of decisions that editors must make and the quality of work the staff produces. However, in every newsroom, one-on-one relationship, there are natural barriers to communication. The editor's understanding of effective skills and strategies for overcoming communication barriers is an essential part of his or her management responsibility.

Communication as it works in the news room has two dimensions: communications between individuals, and organizational communication that flows up or down through the various levels of authority.

#### 3.2.1 Interpersonal Communication

Communication in the news room takes place in a variety of ways: meetings, memos, conversation in the hallway, one-on-one discussions at the city desk, telephone calls, bulletin – board, postings, talking shop over lunch or after work—all are part of the communications mix in the newsroom. Research shows that managers spend about 80 percent of their time in oral communication with others more often listening than talking. Managers prefer oral communication because it is an “action” medium and because it provides current information and immediate feedback.

Interpersonal communication, in whatever manner, serves four basic purposes: (1) To influence others, (2) to express feelings and emotions, (3) to provide, receive or exchange information and (4) to reinforce the formal structure of the organization, such as using formal channels of communication.

## 4.2 Barriers to Good communication

Barriers to communication can be explained by physical, personal and semantic reasons. Physical barriers, typically, are noise or distance personal barriers are of a psychological origin own back grounds, prejudices, and experiences can hinder listening efforts. Semantic barriers result when we give different meanings to the same words. Communication problems often are only symptoms of other difficulties among people and groups in an organization. Following are some barriers to communication that can be especially troublesome to editors:

- **Interpretation:** the tendency to evaluate what someone has said is the greatest barrier to effective communication because evaluation leads to defensiveness. Perception is not based on logic but experience.
- **Defensiveness:** is a natural reaction to negative messages, yet we don't often think how defensiveness affects communication. Two editors attempting to defend their own actions will not communicate very well because neither will be listening to the other.
- **Distortion:** messages get altered as they are passed along communication channels. It occurs when imprecise language is used, when information is misinterpreted, when social or status barriers exist, when information is condensed, or when the sender and receiver use different frames of reference.
- **Omission:** as a message is transmitted, one or more parts may be left out.
- **Distance:** physical barriers are necessary in most newsrooms, but they can prevent good communication. The managing editor who hits in the middle of the newsroom is easier to talk to than the one who stays in his or her office.
- **Too much information:** editors can get overloaded with information if their subordinates fail to screen the amount of material presented to them. In planning the newspaper every day, the editor cannot read every available story.
- **Stereotyping the tendency to categorize people:** good, bad, union–nonunion, loyal–disruptive, and self-starter–lazy-affects how we evaluate their messages. Editors who stereotype individuals will evaluate what they say based on these artificial classifications rather than the substance of the message.

## **4.2.3 Internal Communication Systems**

The basic systems of internal communication used by chain or company newspapers no longer give employees all the information they want and need. Specifically, the systems fall short for two reasons (1) most newspaper jobs now require greater knowledge and coordination than in the past; and (2) as never before, employees not only insist on being kept informed, but also they want to provide feedback to management on the information they receive.

## **4.2.4 Communication channels from staff to management**

If the editor is using the communication skills described in the above discussion, the remaining link in a sound news room environment is to open channels from the staff to the management. This cannot be left to chance. It will not happen on its own. The editor has to use the process if employees think their ideas are valued and the editors' care about their feelings and attitudes, a more, positive organizational climate will result.

## **4.2.5 Meetings**

John Dougherly, a managing editor of the times-union understands that meetings are necessary, but they also tend to waste time unless the leader imposed discipline on the group.

In every newspaper organization (or a given medium), people come together in small groups for a variety of purposes. Some of the meetings, such as the daily news conference, have been long established and serve a practical purpose. Others are for solving problems or planning projects. Still others may seem to serve no purpose at all.

There are at least six functions that meetings can perform better than any other communication device.

1. A meeting defines the team, the group, the unit
2. A meeting is the place where the group revises, update and adds to what it knows as a group.
3. A meeting helps every individual understand both the collective aim of the group and the way in which each member of the group can contribute to the group's success.

- (2) **Appraisal support:** feedback and affirmation are important to success on the job, and networks can be a source of this kind of support
- (3) **Information support:** information is actually exchanged among coworkers.
- (4) **Instrumental support:** to the extent that reciprocity is available, the individuals in a network are more likely to feel comfortable asking for help, knowing that they will have opportunities to offer support in return.

### 4.3 Motivating Journalists

For the news paper editor, a though understanding of the basic motivational process is essential. Motivation award that drives from the Latin movere, which means to move-deals with an individual's needs, with personal differences and with the ways in which workers respond to different rewards. Editors can enhance their managerial skills by knowing what causes good or bad performance on the job.

The motivational process has four components:

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|-------------|--|
| 1) The need | 3) The behavior or action toward the goal, and |
| 2) The goal | 4) The feedback                                |

Motivation is the impetus that causes an individual to pursue a goal.

Studies showed that motivation and performance are linked to the degree of satisfaction and challenge workers experienced in their jobs. Increased motivation would occur if jobs could be redesigned to give workers more responsibility, greater opportunity for growth, and increased feelings of achievement. These ideas were embodied in a concept known as job enrichment.

#### 4.3.1 Is Money a Motivator?

Money can mean whatever people want it to mean. Its value as a motivator is entangled with all other human needs, and its importance to individuals is difficult to determine. Money is not the only thing, but it is the first thing.

Change may represent a great opportunity, but it is never without its losses. Loss of the past, loss of an important relationship, loss of routines, comforts, or traditions that were important. Whatever the outcome. Change means that things will never be quite the same again.

For a newspaper, changes can originate from outside and inside the organization. External changes might include competition, a swing in the economy, shifting social or cultural values, technology and government laws and regulation. Internal sources of change might include different policies or procedures, a new publisher or editor, increased expectations for job performance, a strike, or improvements in the pay or benefits system.

In a newspaper company, change or innovation typically takes place in three waves:

- a. **Identifying and defining the problem:** identifying the need for change. The process begins with this step. The skills used in diagnosing a problem are, in a broader sense, the skills of reporting.
- b. **Building coalitions:** the second step in introducing change or innovation is creating a team and getting others sign on, finding peers to act as cheerleaders, and getting blessings for the change from the top.
- c. **Putting an idea to work:** as the action phase begins, the innovator switches roles from composer or creator to conductor. A large number of additional players may become involved at this point.

### 4.4.2 The Editor's Approach to Managing Change

An editor's philosophy of change should encompass three elements:

- a. **Trust:** is essential in all organizations. Creating an environment where trust can be nurtured is vital to editors seeking to deal effectively with change.
- b. **Organizational learning:** This is the second factor in which a manager's philosophy toward change is how the manager and the organization integrate new ideas into the established system. It is a key element in developing a sound philosophy of change.
- c. **Adaptiveness:** In this element a managerial commitment to being prepared for change before the actual need for it is necessary. Managers who are adaptive rather than

**Changes in individual behavior are more complicated and time-consuming to effect.** These changes involve emotions, attitude, and experiences with other leaders, as well as customs, mores, and traditions that have developed over many years.

**Working with an individual staffer to change behavior involves four steps:**

- (1) **Awareness:** A staffer cannot begin to change until he or she becomes aware of the problem.
- (2) **Understanding:** Many managers don't delegate effectively because they don't understand the principles of delegation.
- (3) **Acceptance:** Accepting responsibility for change.
- (4) **Change:** In this final step change will occur naturally, because there are awareness, understanding and acceptance of the change by managers.

**There are two styles of change in individual behavior**

**Participant change:** - This change occurs when a manager shares information about his or her performance or a different assignment. Monitoring performance usually done by in collaboration between editor and staffer. **Directive change:** - This change style is imposed on individuals and the organization. Such change usually comes from the publisher or the newspaper corporation.

Whenever there is a change, an important key to guiding the staff through change is the ability to analyze the reasons **why people resist change**. The common reasons for resistance to change are: loss of control, excess uncertainty, surprise, surprise, giving up old habits, loss of face, concerns about future competence, ripple effects, more work, past resentments and facing a real treat.

In spite of the legitimate reasons for resisting change, there are many reasons **why people are willing to accept change** and may even be eager for it: the change may be their choice, the change may satisfy a need, and the change may be for the better.

**Generally, the editor's job is to overcome resistance to change.** Some strategies for achieving this include staff participation, keeping the staff informed, and creating a climate in which

- (1) **Share resource:** A limited resource may be a source of conflict.
- (2) **Goals:** Individuals may have goals that are different from those of the news paper.
- (3) **Perceptions and value:** Individuals value systems and perceptions may differ leading to conflict
- (4) **Role requirements:** Role conflict an hour at every level of the organization
- (5) **Nature of the work:** Inequity is work leads or in rewards can be a source of conflict
- (6) **Individual style:** People have different styles and approaches to deal with work and with other people
- (7) **Ambiguity:** Uncertainly over responsibility is a certain cause of conflict.

The process of conflict generally occurs in four stages:

- i. **Frustration:** Factors such as promotion, pay raises, power, scarce economic resources, rules and values may create frustration for individuals or groups.
- ii. **Conceptualization:** The parties to the conflict attempt to understand the nature of the problem – problem solving and developing strategies.
- iii. **Behavior:** the parties then attempt to move toward a resolution
- iv. **Outcome:** the degree of satisfaction each side achieves with the outcome of the conflict. If one party is not satisfied or is only partially satisfied, the seeds of future discontent are sown.

### 4.5.2 Conflict and Individuals

Conflict can produce a variety of emotions, such as anxiety, fear, and anger. When there esteems to be no satisfactory way to reduce those feelings, we rely on our defense mechanisms. The concept of self-image is at the heart of our defense mechanisms. When conflict threatens self-image, there are at least two ways to dissipate the threat. First, we can change the self image so that it moves into harmony with whatever is causing the difficulty. The second way of dealing with a threat to self-image is to be defensive. This occurs when the reporter denies that an error was made or attempts to reject or distort the editor's criticism. Such distortion may be conscious or unconscious. In this way, the reporter maintains the integrity of self –image.