

COMMUNICATION TRAINING TOWARDS THE YEAR 2000: A MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

There can be no doubt that communication forms a golden thread throughout all other management functions and contexts in the modern organisation. Although this has, in fact, been the case for many decades, it is only during the last two decades that a growing awareness of this has developed in most organisations. In this context, it seems fair to ask what is being done in the field of communication training from a management training perspective. This paper discusses the development and importance of communication as a management function, and presents an overview of traditional approaches to and recent developments in management or business communication training, as well as four sets of empirical data on management communication training practices. Finally, a framework is proposed for the training of management communication in the economic and management sciences curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

In arguing the need for corporations and managers to rethink individual and corporate goals as well as organisational structures, Toffler (1985) refers to those companies which are beyond rescue and unable to adapt to change as "organizational dinosaurs" (1985:1). The reason for the gradual demise of such companies characterised by straight-line thinking and strategies, says Toffler, is simple: "instead of being routine and predictable, the cor-



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porate environment has grown increasingly unstable, accelerative, and revolutionary. Under such conditions ... the adaptive corporations needs a new kind of leadership. It needs managers of adaptation equipped with a whole set of new, non-linear skills" (1985:1-2).

Certainly one of the most important changes corporations and managers have had to adapt to, and which many have indeed failed to come to terms with, is a clear shift in focus from task oriented management to a people oriented approach. The nature and dynamics of this particular change process, as well as the demands that it makes on the part of corporations and their managers, have been described from various perspectives by a wide

range of modern corporate philosophers and organisational theorists (cf. Allaire & Firsirotu, 1984; Bate, 1984; Conrad & Sydow, 1988; De Cock, Bouwen, De Witte & De Visch, 1988; Drucker, 1980; Hennestad, 1988; Hickman & Silva, 1984, 1987; Hill & Archer, 1988; Kanter, 1984; Marsh & Arnold, 1988, McCathrin, 1989; Myers & Myers, 1982; Naisbitt, 1985; O'Connor, 1990; Peters, 1991; Rupert, 1990; Schein, 1984; Toffler, 1985; Tregoe, 1989; Waldron & Krone, 1991).

Although all of these authors identify a wide range of "people management issues" which corporations and managers constantly need to adapt to, a substantial number of such changes can be pooled in the category of "management communication problems". As far back as 1938 Chester Barnard contended that, "In any exhaustive theory of organization, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness, and scope of organizations are almost entirely determined by communication" (Barnard, 1938:8).

During the early 1980's a wide range of authors championed the cause of communication in management, as described by Myers & Myers (1982) in their theses that, "Communication is the central, binding force which permits coordination among people and thus allows for organized behavior". They further contend that managing is ultimately a process of influencing other people, and that such influence is exerted through communication.

Although some writers have tended to separate communication from management, management and communication are tightly interwoven. Most of the early originators of management philosophy avow the central role of communication to successful management. The trend of identifying this central role continues today. Table 1 pres-

ents a chronology of management views from early in this century to the present.

In one of the most recent statements on the role of communication in management, Smith (1991) contends that the 1990's will be the decade of the employee, and that communication will be the central key to winning and retaining the commitment and loyalty of the best employees. The key to this will require a basic change in management attitudes, one that sees two-way communication not as a bothersome chore, but as a fundamental means of helping to release the creative genius which is bottled up in organisations by authoritarian management styles.

Yet, despite the seemingly overwhelming conviction of the crucial importance, it still remains a widespread problem in most organisations, and one experienced by most managers. This is clear from the earlier contention of Kanter (1983) in Table 1 below, and the statement by former Harvard Business Review editor David Ewing (1987): "Management communication is the number one problem in business today. While technology (that supports management communication) has advanced in leaps and bounds, managers' and academics' understanding of the substance of the process has not."

**TABLE 1
MANAGEMENT'S VIEW OF COMMUNICATION**

Year	Person	Observation
1916	Fayol	Managerial work is a set of composite functions that includes communication.
1920's	Gulick	Management has seven functional areas, including directing and reporting (which includes communication).

Year	Person	Observation
1938	Barnard	The first executive function is providing a system of communication.
1957	Simon	The administrative process cannot influence the decisions of the individual without communication.
1966	Katz & Kahn	The exchange of information and transmission of meaning are the very essence of an organisation.
1972	Davis	The only way that management can be achieved in an organisation is through the process of communication.
1973	Mintzberg	Managerial jobs have ten working jobs, communication and interpersonal relations are found in three of the roles.
1974	Drucker	Communication is one of five basic management functions
1982	Peters & Waterman	Open, informal communication is one of eight characteristics of the best-run American companies.
1982	Myers & Myers	Communication is what permits people to organise and to coordinate their activities to accomplish common objectives.
1983	Kanter	The most common roadblock for managers to overcome is poor communication.
1986	Rasberry & Lemoine	Communication is the means by which all organisational activity is managed.

Adapted from Penrose,, Rasberry & Myers, 1989

One of the most important reasons for the apparent inability of organisations and managers to come to grips with the problems of management communication, and to energise and channel it into the powerful force that it can and ought to be in modern management, is a clear lack of knowledge and understanding of the management communication context and process. Although there seems to be a very high level of awareness of the role and importance of communication in management, the lack of basic knowledge and understanding invariably leads to

the practice of lip-service and a resultant high level of frustration and conflict potential in many organisations.

The purposes of this paper are:

- (i) to illustrate the role and importance of communication in modern management;
- (ii) to provide a concise overview of the traditional approaches to and recent developments in management communication training;
- (iii) to present four sets of empirical data on management communication training; and
- (iv) to propose a framework for management communication training in the management sciences.

THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION IN MANAGEMENT

In contemplating the need to move from management to leadership with a view to meeting the demands of business towards the year 2000, Rupert (1990) suggested four general and sixteen specific requirements for good business leadership. One of the four general requirements is that leaders need to make their dreams a reality by communicating their vision to align people with it. Rupert (1990), states that leaders must make ideas tangible, and be able to integrate facts, concepts and anecdotes into meaning. Among the sixteen specific requirements, are the impartation of enthusiasm, articulateness, creative imagination and vision, understanding, organising, delegating and trust. All of these attributes and processes are dependent upon the leader's understanding of communication and his or her ability to communicate.

However, in order to move beyond the general importance of communication in the organisation it seems necessary

to ask how relevant it is from the viewpoint of the two major groupings in the organisation: employees and managers. The rest of this section of the paper will endeavour to explore the communication needs and expectations of employees, and the requirements for and characteristics of an effectively communicating manager.

EMPLOYEES' COMMUNICATION NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

For many decades, employee publications have been regarded and used as the great solution to the problem of intra-organisational communication. The in-house publication was seen as the "people's forum" where views could be aired and policies and procedures be conveyed and institutionalised in an informal medium which enjoyed the shared "ownership" of all levels of employees in the organisation. Very often, this medium was no more than a unidirectional channel in the hands of the executive.

There is, however, a growing body of evidence which suggests that internal publications may have become too relied upon. Many organisations are still underutilising other, more personal communication methods – methods which paradoxically both employees and top management agree are essential, and more effective, than publications alone.

In a comprehensive survey of the role of interpersonal communication in organisations in the USA, McCathrin (1989) came to a number of significant conclusions on employee perceptions of the prevailing communication effectiveness in their organisations:

- More than half of the work force are concerned about a lack of information about their employing organisation, including where the company is headed and the why behind decisions.

- For these employees, an effective management is one that is willing to listen, and not just "talk down".
- While employers and employees have a greater need than ever to relate effectively to one another, both these groups clearly feel that, to a significant extent, this is not happening.
- One of the largest shortcomings employees see in management is a failure to encourage a free exchange of information among employees and departments.
- 61 percent of employees said that a participatory management style at all levels of decision making is very important to them, but only 28 percent said it exists in their organisations.

With regard to the communication needs and expectations of employees, McCathrin (1989) found the following:

- Employees prefer personal communication from their immediate supervisors, senior executives, and small group meetings, in that order.
- The forms of communication that needed most improvement are those of senior executives, immediate supervisors, orientation programmes, small group meetings, and upward communication programmes.
- There is a preference for one-on-one communication in all key areas, including the conveying of expectations for performance, rules and regulations, strategies and goals, safety and productivity advice, and benefits information.

Quoting a prominent specialist in internal communication, McCathrin comes to the conclusion that, "There is no question that a gap exists today between what employees want to hear and who they want to hear it from and the methods most companies use to

communicate with this very critical audience". Thus while the need for interaction between managers and employees has been substantiated over and over, "it just isn't happening" (McCathrin, 1989).

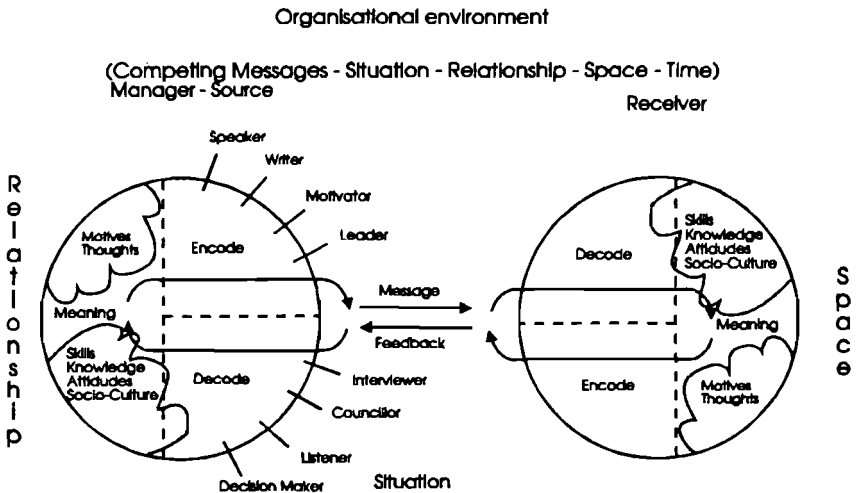
The communicating manager

In view of the clear confirmation of the move from a task oriented to a people oriented approach in management, there can be no doubt about the somewhat overstated truth that communication is the lifeblood of business. Unfortunately, however, this statement has become a measure of evaluation for the networks and structures of communication in organisations, rather than for the process, which is the essence of communication. The fact is that, however effective and sophisticated the communication networks in an organisation may be, if the people are inapt in their communication, the general communication will remain poor.

If communication is important for the organisation as a whole, then even more so for the managers of the organisation. Some practitioners calculate that the average top executive communicates an astonishing half a million words per working month. The question naturally arises how effective this communication is, particularly in view of the importance thereof in general, and given the specific nature of employee communication needs and expectations.

A closer inspection of the everyday functions most managers are expected to fulfil in the workplace reveals that their communication roles are multi-faceted and more complex than would be apparent on face value. Rasberry and Lemoine (1986:27) endeavoured to depict the complex nature of management communication in a graphic model, representing the communicating manager as the source and employees as the receivers in the communication process. Their model is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1
A MODEL FOR EFFECTIVE MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION



Although the model shows the inherent disadvantage of all graphic models in that it depicts the process as if it were static, its clear value and contribution is that it does provide a clear picture of the various management contexts which require the manager to be an effective communicator. If the implications of this model are seen in conjunction with the communication needs and expectations of employees discussed earlier, it becomes clear that managers truly need to be more than average communicators!

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT TRAINING

In outlining the objectives of business economics training at university, Marx (1980) states that although it is clear that no university can be expected to deliver "ready-made" and well-rounded managers, a large part of the training focus ought to be directed towards that which students need to know and to be in order to become effective managers through the added cumulative practical experience acquired in the workplace. The critical question is whether the knowledge students acquire in the typical management training course at university, though it may cover most of the technical background and know-how in a particular field, is adequate in preparing the student for the people-intensive nature of business today. The fact is that, to be prepared for what they will have to face in the "real world" of modern management, students need both general human or people management skills, and, more specifically, management communication skills.

People management skills

The following eight statements made by Naisbitt (1984) with regard to the new role of management and the changing nature of the modern corporation, provide significant insights into some of the demands to be met by

management training in order to keep abreast with and remain relevant in the dynamic world of business towards the turn of the century:

- In the new information society, human capital has replaced dollar capital as the strategic resource. People and profits are inexorably linked.
- People know intuitively that work should be fun. But only a few corporate innovators have created an environment in which fun, profit, and productivity flow.
- In the information era the strategic resources are information, knowledge, and creativity. There is only one way a corporation can gain access to these valuable commodities – that is, through the people in whom these resources reside.
- The attraction of an authoritarian management style is almost irresistible – and wrong.
- The best and brightest people will gravitate toward those corporations that foster personal growth.
- The manager's new role is that of coach, teacher and mentor.
- Authoritarian management is yielding to a networking, people style of management.
- The dawn of the information economy has fostered a massive shift from structure to quality of life.

In a similar vein, Hickman and Silva (1985) identify six clearly people-oriented skills for modern executives:

- Creative insight
- Sensitivity
- Vision
- Versatility
- Focus
- Patience

These attributes are identified on the clear assumption that "individual leaders, not organisations, create excellence".

From a Southern African perspective, Wiggill (1991) contends that graduate

students needs a "life skills kit" to be able to manage people and their job, and develop their career successfully. Wiggill (1991) states clearly human-oriented skills – how to run successful meetings, how to pick winning teams, evaluate decisions, manage conflicts, and write reports – as requirements for graduates. He goes on to say that "Graduates need to know fundamental things about corporate culture and be able to read the style of the company they work for. When people understand the corporate value system, they know how to fit in and get ahead".

Management communication skills

If, as has indeed been indicated and confirmed in the preceding sections, there has been a significant move away from a task oriented approach to a people oriented approach in modern management, and if indeed there is a need for the teaching of people management skills in tertiary management training, then communication training must certainly occupy a central place in such training. It is hardly possible to think of an organisation without people, and even harder to imagine interaction between people without communication. It has, in fact, become somewhat of an easy way out to make the quality and effectiveness – sometimes even the lack – of communication the scapegoat for poor organisational performance.

In his earlier mentioned survey of organisational communication in American companies, McCathrin (1989) found that one of the most important reasons why personal forms of communication seem to be ineffective in most organisations, is that there is a lack of confidence on the part of both top management and supervisors about their ability to successfully conduct effective meetings and discussions. Fear of too much candour, too many questions and the potential

for disagreement with management decisions, are also factors that make some companies hesitate to encourage discourse with employees.

McCathrin (1989:16) concludes that, "Most managers assume that they are perfectly good at face-to-face communication, but often they are not". Improvement in this area, he says, provides a major opportunity to contribute to their organisations. In order to attain this, more than sixty percent of the corporations surveyed have hired outside help with employee communications, including management training in this most important field.

TRADITIONS IN MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION TRAINING

In this section, attention will be given to three traditional approaches to communication training in the context of organisational management: the speech communication approach, a structural approach, and a public relations approach.

The speech communication tradition

The basic tenets of the speech communication tradition are found in the criteria and guidelines for effective oral and written communication. These two communication forms are assumed to be the most important, if not the only skills necessary for effective communication in the organisation. In the context of the total communication process and its constituent components, this tradition can undoubtedly be classified as a sender orientated approach. Heavy emphasis is placed on grammar and vocabulary skills, and the focus is typically on letter, report, memo and resume writing, while speech making and the total range of interviewing seem to be the most important interpersonal communication contexts. Most of the communication training courses offered from this viewpoint are labelled Business Communication. Two recent local publications,

viz Adey & Andrew (1990) and DuBrey (1990), can be classified under this tradition.

However, the author of this paper tends to agree with Brownell (1987) that communication instruction that focuses exclusively on developing skills without regard for process, content and context, is largely misdirected. If students leave the communication training classrooms for a life of effective writing and clear speaking, we should be delighted indeed. The fact that these are some of the most obvious goals of communication, seems to create the impression that they are also the most important goals. In the past they may well have been so. However, as communication educators are increasingly expected to contribute to preparing the business leaders of tomorrow, they should become increasingly concerned with the long term view – with helping students become more responsible, and more effective, management communicators.

The structural tradition

The structural tradition in management communication training, as its description indicates, is largely concerned with the structures of the organisation, and the way in which information flows through the various organisational structures and networks. Typical descriptive terms in this tradition are horizontal and vertical communication, organisational channels and media, information overload and redundancy, formal and informal communication channels, and communication levels, such as interpersonal, small group, and public communication. This approach gave rise to the still fashionable organisational diagnostic tool known as the communication audit, which, in essence, measures the flow and effectiveness of information in the organisation with regard to its volume, relevance, timeousness, direction, sources,

and destinations. Most of the management communication training courses based on this approach are known as Organisational Communication.

The main point of criticism that can be levelled at this approach is the fact that, in its essence, it is strictly functional in nature, and consequently not giving enough attention to the more basic, and decidedly more important, relational aspects of communication in the organisation. As with the tenets of the speech communication tradition, it is not in the least suggested that the principles of the structural approach should be discarded or even negated. However, on its own, it falls woefully short in meeting the demands of management communication in the modern organisation.

The public relations tradition

Public relations as a communication function is probably as old as business itself. Over the years it has grown in importance and stature, and during the last two decades it has become tremendously sophisticated in terms of technique, strategy, technology, and symbiosis with all other management areas, particularly corporate marketing. The 1980's, specifically, was a decade of greatly increased efforts by corporate communicators to improve on-going communication with external audiences. The goal was to enhance sales and corporate image, and the primary targets were stockholders, the financial community, customers, and, to a significant degree, the general public.

In South Africa, the impact and importance of public relations is reflected in the founding and increased growth of industrial communication associations, such as the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) and the South African Association of Industrial Editors (SAAIE). The established nature and

stature of public relations is also confirmed by the extent of such courses offered by tertiary institutions and private concerns alike.

Thus, public relations has been and probably always will be of crucial importance to the organisation and its management. However, in the process, as pointed out by Smith (1991), many companies ignored or took for granted their most important and critical constituency – their employees. In addition, increasing competitive pressures have made it very clear that the 1990's will be the decade of the employee. From this viewpoint, the communication demands placed on the modern manager continue to grow. Everyday, management requires the manager not only to master and excel in the basic skills of reading and writing, but, even more important, to communicate effectively on a one-on-one personal basis with a wide variety of people on various topics, to resolve conflicts, motivate and lead subordinates and peers alike, facilitate participation in management decision making processes, and manage communication with people through traumatic organisational changes.

It becomes clear then, that the traditional public relations approach of an institutional division assuming responsibility for predominantly external oriented communication as well as some structured internal communication activities – however important its past and future value may be – simply does not equip the individual manager to deal with the everyday management communicator demands identified in the preceding paragraph.

FOUR SETS OF EMPIRICAL DATA

Although the nature and content of management communication training have been areas for intensive investigation in the United States for quite some time, little has been done in this

regard in South Africa. This section represents an endeavour to analyse and classify management communication training in South Africa from three different viewpoints. Firstly, the results of a descriptive inventory analysis of management communication courses offered at tertiary institutions – universities and technikons – will be discussed. Secondly, the results of a similar analysis of management communication courses offered by private training institutions and consultancies will be presented. And finally, the results of a qualitative investigation into the perceptions of management communication training needs among a group of top management executives in South African companies are discussed. However, before these three sets of findings are discussed, it is necessary to provide an overview of some of the most prominent American investigations and findings in this regard.

An American perspective

As mentioned earlier, communication training in the business curriculum has been widely investigated in the United States for some time. Only a few of the more recent studies can be included in this discussion, notably those by Glassman & Farley (1977), David (1982), Tesch (1982), Ober & Wunsch (1982), Feinberg & Pritzker (1985), and Ober (1987).

Glassman & Farley (1977) surveyed 142 institutions and found that 76 percent offer at least one business communication course, with the major emphasis being on written communication. Tesch (1982) compared opinions of 117 members of the American Association of Business Communications on the desired emphasis on ten topics in the basic business communications course. No significant differences were found on the desired emphasis on report writing, communication theory, and memorandums. English fun-

damentals, oral communication, letter and resume writing, job application and non-verbal communication were also rated significantly.

In 1982 the status of business communication instruction in post-secondary institutions in the United States was investigated by Ober & Wunsch, with a follow-up comparative replication of the same study by Ober in 1986. The 1982 study yielded the following key findings:

- Nearly 75 percent of the institutions offer most business communication courses in the school of business administration; in two thirds of the institutions, the basic course is entitled Business Communication(s) and is required for most business majors.
- In terms of subject matter emphasis, business letters and writing principles receive the heaviest emphasis, with little emphasis being devoted to oral communication in the basic course.
- Report writing and advanced business communication are the most common business communication courses other than the basic course.

In the 1986 follow-up replication study, Ober found the following:

- Compared to the 1982 study, the business administration unit is gaining popularity as the sponsoring unit for most business communication courses.
- Significantly more institutions in the 1986 study required the basic business communication course for business majors than in 1982.
- The relative subject matter emphasis appeared not to have changed much from 1982 to 1986.

In a study decidedly biased towards the speech communication tradition, Feinberg & Pritzker (1984) employed the Delphi method with a subsequent postal survey to question 173 business

executives in accounting, sales, research and development, personnel, marketing, manufacturing and product engineering on what should be taught in an MBA level business communication course. They came up with a list of 44 concepts, which could be condensed to the following six major topical areas and the constituent items of each area:

- Wordiness: brevity; simple direct sentences; redundancy/ repetitive-ness; relevant information.
- Formatting documents: letter format; report format; memo format; attachments and documentation; appearance; effective illustration.
- Organisation of data and thoughts: paragraph development; stating the purpose; paragraph structure; logical sequence of thought; clear conclusion; emphasis of significant points.
- Grammar: syntax; misplaced modifiers; punctuation; run-on sentences; verb agreement; confusion of adjectives and adverbs.
- Vocabulary: euphemism; choosing the correct word; cliché; jargon; slang; spelling.
- Audience: diplomacy; knowing when and to whom to communicate; appropriate tone.

Thus, in conclusion, it seems on the face value of these studies that most business communication courses offered in business and management schools are still heavily inclined towards the limited speech communication approach. However, there is ample evidence that an extended approach is followed in Schools and Departments of communication at many post-secondary institutions, where the courses go beyond basic oral and written communication skills training to include organisational communication, public relations, and advanced management communication courses. This is clearly demonstrated by a substantial range of textbooks, such as those by Farace, Monge & Russel (1977),

Fisher (1981), Myers & Myers (1982), Rasberry & Lemoine (1986), Penrose, Rasberry & Myers (1989), and Smith (1991). When the cited research findings are compared to the approach and substance of these works, the possibility that Business Schools may have fallen behind modern management communication principles in their teaching of such courses, cannot be discounted.

The South African picture

In order to gain a picture of communication training at tertiary institutions in South Africa, a descriptive inventory analysis was conducted on the relevant year books of all South African universities and technikons. It should be stated clearly that the subsequent classification was done on the face value of nominal descriptions of courses as they appear in the various yearbooks. No assumptions or inferences are made with regard to the comparability of either the content or the form of the various courses. Neither are the courses compared on the basis of duration or the level of the student groups. Instead, the classification merely reflects the number of times a certain topic is mentioned as an autonomous course or a module of a course. The results of this classification is presented in Table 2.

A close inspection of Table 2 reveals an overwhelming emphasis on public relations and general communication courses. As far as the high incidence of public relations is concerned, it can be assumed that a major contribution to this can be ascribed to the fact that this is the one primary focal point of communication training at virtually all South African technikons. In addition, public relations is a topic covered in most Departments of Communication and in most Departments of Business Economics.

With regard to the relatively high frequency of general communication courses, this is to be expected in view of the fact that communication training at tertiary institutions has been and still is dominated by Departments of Com-

munication situated mostly in Arts Faculties.

**TABLE 2
COMMUNICATION COURSES AT
SA TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

TOPIC	UNIVERSITIES	TECHNIKONS
Public relations	17	12
Communication (General)	15	12
Intercultural/international communication	8	-
Communication theory/fundamental communication	7	-
Journalism	7	7
Business communication	7	1
Organisational communication	7	-
Persuasion	6	-
Mass communication	6	-
Audiovisual/Graphic/Pictorial communication	5	-
Communication law/ethics	4	-
Communication research	4	-
Oral/Speech communication	4	-
Marketing communication/Advertising	3	1
Development communication	3	-
Interpersonal communication	3	-
Media theory	3	-
Corporate communication	2	-
Management communication	2	-
Small group communication	2	-
Communication practice	1	-
Client communication	1	-
Non-verbal communication	1	-

Although the differentiation between business communication and organisational communication in Table 2 can be questioned, this seems to be a reflection and a confirmation of the differences between the speech communication tradition (business communication) and the structural tradition

(organisational communication) pointed out earlier in this paper.

Table 3 presents a different perspective, classifying the different communication courses offered at universities only, in terms of the department/discipline in which it is offered.

**TABLE 3
COMMUNICATION COURSES ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENT/DISCIPLINE**

DEPARTMENT/DISCIPLINE	% OF ALL COMMUNICATION COURSES
Communication	53,8
Linguistics	11,5
Business Economics	9,6
Public Admin. & Law	9,6
Business Management	5,7
Journalism & Media Studies	5,7
Marketing & Advertising	3,8

It is clear from both Table 2 and Table 3 that, despite the general agreement about the importance of communication in the management process, faculties and departments in the manage-

ment sciences are still lagging far behind in addressing the need for management communication training.

Commercial training and consultation in South Africa

Another important indicator of the status of management communication training, is the scope and nature of training and consultation themes covered by commercial training and consultation institutions. Although it is virtually impossible to gain a comprehensive overview of what is available in the market in this regard, an inventory analysis of courses advertised in the Purple Pages, a directory of South African management training, should provide at least a representative picture of commercial management communication training packages. An inventory analysis of the Purple Pages, conducted in August 1991, revealed a total of 23 training and consultation firms offering an interesting blend of management communication themes. In Table 4 these themes are classified in terms of their inclusion in the training courses offered by the various training and consultation firms. These classified as high, occurred more than ten times, medium between six and ten, and low five times and less.

**TABLE 4
COMMERCIAL TRAINING THEMES**

HIGH FREQUENCY	MEDIUM FREQUENCY	LOW FREQUENCY
Effective speaking	One-on-one	Meetings
Presentations	Executive image	Interviewing
Writing skills	building	Telephone skills
Influencing/	Human relations	Transactional analysis
Assertiveness	Conflict resolution	Customer relations
Group dynamics	Listening and	Reading skills
Leadership/Team	questioning	Intercultural skills
building	Non-verbal skills Communication and management Negotiating Basic communication skills	

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To put the data in Table 4 in perspective, it should be made clear that training offered by the two foremost professional communication associations – the Public Relations Institute of South Africa (PRISA) and the South African Association of Industrial Editors (SAAIE) – was not included in this survey. It can also be said, however, that the former body concerns itself mostly with external corporate communication issues, while the main focus of the SAAIE is on journalistic issues related to the in-house publications and external media, such as annual reports.

Perceptions of South African top executives

This section represents the condensed findings of a series of unstructured qualitative in depth-interviews conducted individually in 1991 with fifteen top executives from five prominent medium sized and large South African companies on their perceptions of communication management and management communication training needs. The most salient points from this investigation are as follows:

- **Role and importance of communication:** All the respondents were unanimous in their agreement on the particular importance of communication in organisational dynamics and management. In most instances the spontaneous response was that effective communication was a prerequisite for any organisation to function properly and attain its goals.
- **Communication viz-a-viz other management functions:** The general trend of responses to the question whether communication could be seen as a separate management function, was that it could not conceivably be seen apart from other management functions. In fact, without communication it would be impossible to perform any

of the other management functions. As such, communication can be seen as the life blood of management and organising.

- **Responsibility for communication:** There was general consensus that, with regard to external communication, a specific person or division should assume responsibility. However, when it came to internal communication, it was everybody's responsibility, particularly that of managers at all levels. Despite this, respondents indicated that, in general, most managers either did not know enough about communication, or did not do enough to apply it in practice.
- **Standard of communication:** Respondents' ratings of the prevailing standards of communication in their respective organisations indicated a clear consensus that communication needed to be improved on all levels. It was also clear that reaching management status did not necessarily equip people to be effective communicators, and that specific steps needed to be taken to provide such skills to present and potential managers.
- **Level and nature of communication problems:** The spontaneous reactions of most of the respondents indicated that major problems were perceived at the supervisor/worker interface. However, further probing revealed serious communication deficiencies on most of the other levels, including top and middle management. As far as the nature of these problems was concerned, most of the respondents found it somewhat difficult to clearly formulate specific communication shortcomings. This, in itself, may be seen as a reflection of the lack of understanding on the topic, even at this level.

- Communication training needs: There was a general consensus among all respondents that there was a definite need for communication training on all levels of their respective companies. The following were areas in which a specific need for training was identified:
 - Communication and management styles
 - Understanding communication and its implications
 - Presentations/public communication skills
 - Interactive skills and 2-way communication
 - Intercultural communication
 - Message formulation and adaptation
 - Internal channels and media
 - Supervision communication
 - Listening and responding

In conclusion, it can be said that even this limited investigation of the perceptions of South African top executives confirmed the assumption that management communication training should go beyond the basic speech communication skills of written and oral communication, or the information flow and network approach of the typical organisational communication approach. It also provides a clear indication that there is a need to move beyond the public relations approach which regards internal communication with the organisation's employees as just another project involving one of a total range of publics.

A MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

There can be no doubt about the tremendously important role that communication plays in the modern business organisation (Puth, 1991). It has invariably been called the lifeblood of organisational management by a wide spectrum of communication scientists and business leaders. Thus, it comes

as no surprise that communication is regarded by many managers as one of the most important tools in their management arsenal. They effectively experience it as the means by which the people of the organisation and all organisational activities are managed. It has, in fact, been proved over and over that, with both a well-designed communication strategy and effective communication skills, a manager can be highly successful. In order for this to happen, however, a manager needs to command an adequate knowledge of the nature and role of communication in the management of people, and to adopt and really live out a positive attitude towards communication. The key is rather simple: For communication to become an effective management tool and a force in business, it needs to be practised and applied effectively by management. And for this to happen, management communication, in the wider sense of the word, needs to become a fully recognised discipline in formal tertiary management training.

James Emshoff, who, as president of Diners Card International, transformed the entire corporation to face the demands of the next ten years, likens the need for managers to meet the challenges of the nineties to a transition from a traditional culture to a new emerging culture (Emshoff & Denlinger, 1991). In this context, Emshoff identifies six rules to develop people management skills (Chapter 3):

Rule 1: Treat every idea from another employee as a valuable contribution and make it your challenge to bring it to life.

Rule 2: Share information across organisational boundaries, and build and use networks among peer managers.

Rule 3: Empower people whenever you can, but always be clear about

your business reasons for doing so.

Rule 4: Communicate in all directions – Inform upward, empower downward, and network outward.

Rule 5: Build your people reputation on trust and cooperation.

Rule 6: Make your people heroes.

Closely inspected, these rules can each one be seen to be directly dependent upon the communication knowledge and understanding of the manager. Emshoff (1991:32) makes it clear, in fact, that “All the planning on paper didn’t prepare me for the ensuing turmoil”. As a result of his experience, Emshoff advises managers to forget the notion that people management skills are needed only by those with some sort of formal people responsibility.

But what are the implications for the management of communication in the modern and progressive organisation? Smith (1991) indicates six major implications that managers should take cognisance of if communication is to become an effective organisational process and a management asset:

Implication 1: Communication is a fundamental component of the management process and should be viewed as a contributing partner with other key staff functions in influencing employee understanding of both business goals and public relations issues.

Implication 2: A clear statement of commitment to communication by top management is essential, as is their participation in and support of the communication process at all levels of the organisation.

Implication 3: Communication must be a planned process – a strategy – involving both communication professionals and key management people.

Implication 4: Managers are the key conduits and catalysts for effective communication, and the system must recognise their needs for information, training, and rewards for good communication performance.

Implication 5: Priority issues should form the core content of the management communication programme, and should be discussed in an open and understandable manner through various channels of communication.

Implication 6: The communication process should undergo regular evaluation to prove its worth in terms of employee performance and awareness of key public issues.

The point of the rules proposed by Emshoff (1991) and the implications identified by Smith (1991), is that for a manager to be able to successfully make the transition from traditional management practices to the emerging organisational cultures and paradigms towards the year 2000 and beyond, a well-grounded knowledge and a practical understanding of the management communication processes and principles are absolutely indispensable. Based on this assumption, our contention is that impartation of such knowledge and understanding should form an integral part of formal management training at tertiary institutions, where the bulk of tomorrow’s managers are prepared and honed for the challenges of this decade.

A PROPOSAL

In this paper, as well as in an earlier argumentation of the importance of communication in modern management (Puth, 1991), it was frequently alluded to the fact that communication cannot be divorced from, and in fact is a prerequisite and an integral part, of all other management functions. This

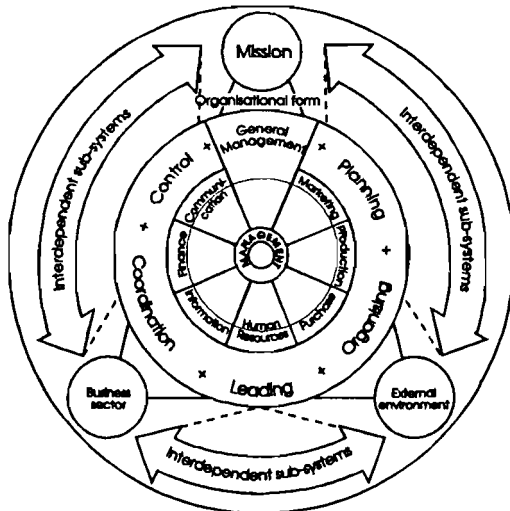
viewpoint also forms part of the basic philosophy of the Department of Business Economics at the University of Pretoria. The recognition of the role of and justification for communication as a management function, is aptly illustrated in Figure 2 which depicts a model of the management training approach adopted in this Department.

It should be stated, however, that the communication function has, in terms of courses offered in the Department up to this point, been limited to undergraduate semester courses in Marketing Communication/Advertising and Corporate Communications/Public Relations. Both of these topics have also been covered in advanced postgraduate semester courses, while an additional postgraduate semester course in Management Communication has been offered for the last two years.

In view of different communication training traditions, the four sets of empirical data, and the implications of a more comprehensive management perspective on and approach to the role of communication in the modern organisation, I wish to propose what I would hope to be a number of thought provoking points on the teaching of management communication towards the year 2000 and beyond:

Point 1: In view of the significant importance ascribed to communication in the management of organisations, and the apparent lack of management communication training in the business curricula of most tertiary institutions, much greater consideration should be given to including at least some basic communication courses in Faculties and Departments in the Economic and Management Sciences.

Figure 2
A MODEL OF MANAGEMENT TRAINING



Adapted from Marx, Rademeyer & Reynders (1991)

Point 2: A comprehensive approach to the teaching of management communication should cover at least two of the three major traditions of communication training: (i) the theory and practice of organisational communication (structural tradition); (ii) the theory and practice of corporate communication (public relations tradition).

Point 3: With regard to the latter, a number of non-traditional publics, which will become more salient in the years to come, such as trade unions, conservation groups, the sales force and dealer networks, international trade groups, etcetera, should be added to the traditional groupings addressed in most existing public relations texts.

Point 4: As far as the speech communication tradition is concerned, we are hesitant to ascribe sole responsibility for this to a specific course. Rather, responsibility for this should be assumed by all teaching departments at tertiary institutions. This is, after all, a prerequisite and an assumed skill in all contexts of advanced study, and one that should, ideally, be acquired at primary and secondary school levels. We grant, however, that the management situation does present a specific context which requires basic verbal communication skills, and that such skills can be taught and practised in practical sessions supplementary to some of the other courses.

Point 5: Finally, it seems imperative that the managers of the future should be equipped with personal management communication skills relevant to the various organisational management contexts in which they will be expected to operate after their formal training.

For this reason, consideration should be given to a course in management communication skills, covering topics such as the following:

- Communication and management
- Management communication barriers
- Management communication styles
- Communication and motivation
- Communication and conflict
- Communication and leadership
- Communication and decision making/problem solving
- Communication and culture
- Communication and change.

CONCLUSION

Communication has always been a crucial factor in the management of organisations. In essence, organisations are groups of people working towards attaining their personal as well as the organisation's goals. And where there are people, communication is an inevitable consequence. The fact is that the quality and effectiveness of all management functions are dependent on the communication in the organisation. Sadly, this fact has been fully realised by managers and corporate philosophers only during the last five to ten years. But even more disturbing, is that this realisation does not seem to have dawned on faculties and departments of management training at tertiary institutions. It is hoped that this paper will contribute not only to a greater awareness of the importance of communication in management, but also to concrete steps in meeting the challenge of management communication training towards the year 2000 and beyond.

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