

An Analysis of Speech Communication Skills Strategies for Effective Public Relations Management for Organizational Growth in Nigeria

Touitou, Tina Chinemere

Department of Mass Communication, Babcock University, Iisan- Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT: The papers stands to advocates that effective knowledge of speech communication is necessary in discharge of public relations functions or duties, and is very vital for a public relations practitioner to be conversant with the principles of effective speech communication skills and strategies, as its job is based on establishing mutual line of communication between the organization and its publics for organizational growth and national development. The paper also poses that the key to successful employer and employees relation `is based on adequate information which can only be achieved through public relations effective two-way communication for harmonious existence and mutual understanding. Furthermore, it employs purposive sampling technique, and structured interview guide as a research instrument to elicit information from 65 final students of Public Relations and Advertising in Babcock University. The finding authenticates that effective communication is an anchor for any organizational harmony and development. And recommended that all sphere of life require effective communication to exist, survive and to grow.

KEYWORDS: Communication, Management, Public Relations, Strategies, Effective

INTRODUCTION

Communication stems from a conglomeration of symbols, gestures, numbers, words, and pictures etc. which are carried either by interpersonal interaction or through electronic media or the print media. All these provide occasions and channels to exchange information, elucidate issues, and assist in opinion- forming and decision-making on matters of common interest to individuals, groups or society as a whole. This in turn dictates the need of a commonly understood and accepted language for reading and writing, and this is the primary code of human communication. The lack of speech communication skills, reading and writing skills drastically limits the expansion of a person's overall capacities and ability. This amounts to illiteracy which is the major obstacle to the development of communication.

The art of speaking is termed "rhetoric" in 330 BC, during the time of Aristotle. The term rhetoric comes from Greek and means the art of expressive speech or discourse. Rhetoric can never be a substitute for in- depth knowledge. However, it is needed to effectively convey the content of a talk to the audience. The ability to speak off the cuff, to talk persuasively and argue convincingly is skills which can be acquired. Rhetoric is your public relations work for you. This refers both to the content and structure of a speech as well as the speaker's style.

Anyone who speaks publicly and finds an audience that listens exercises power. Power, in turn, entails ethical responsibility especially in the public relations profession. German history, as personified by Hitler and Goebbels, demonstrates how rhetorical techniques in political speeches were irresponsibly abused to seduce and manipulate audiences. Nowadays, public speaking is the sole method available to the individual who wants to call upon and motivate his or her fellow citizens to help shape society. Consequently, rhetoric and democratic awareness are two interrelated factors which are tied to ethical norms.

The speaker's basic ethical position should therefore be to:

- take the interests of his/her listeners seriously
- Feel obliged to adequately research the topic
- Speak honestly i.e. neither manipulate facts nor present one-sided information

The effective knowledge of speech communication is necessary in discharge of public relations functions or duties, and is very vital for a public relations practitioner to be conversant with the principles of effective speech communication skills and strategies, as its job is based on establishing mutual line of communication between the organization and its publics, for rural and national development.

Sam Black cited in Nwosu [2004] asserts that the spoken word is the oldest means of communication between people, and it still remains a very powerful medium of public relations, despite the competition of the printed word. Speech delivery is most likely to be effective if the speaker sees speech delivery as a transaction between him and the audience, in line with the transactional model of communication and should also understand the four basic elements of speech delivery which are the speech itself, the speaker, the audience and, of course, the occasion during which the speech is being made or delivered. Most importantly, he should know that each of these components of speech making or delivery can spell the success or failure of any speech delivery effort because each of them affects public speaking in one way or the other.

The written speech has become quite popular mainly because it is the only way to make sure that every word of a speech is exactly what you want to use. It's use in public relations situations, is also informed by the fact that it helps to reduce misquotations by reporters or mass media personnel. A written speech is either prepared by the public relations officer / speech writer for the chief executive to deliver in a function or an event. But sometimes a well-educated chief executive prepares and delivers some speeches he considers very important, especially when he has the time, but most of the time his schedule are so tight that he still depends on the public relations officer to do the speech preparation for him.

Public relations officer or speech writer is not and cannot be a lone ranger. But to succeed, he needs to adopt the team approach to speech writing. This means that he must operate with a formidable team of speech researchers and writers that can be relied upon to help in data generation or input procurement, speech drafting, brainstorming, press responses and occasional conference writing under pressure, when this is called for. The conference writing approach is adopted when there is not much time for the production of a speech for the chief executive. It involves the supply

of different ideas by members of the speech writing team and the stringing of such related ideas into a composite speech by an anchorman.

The head of the speech communications unit is the team leader. Every speech that leaves the unit must pass through him. He is the expert and is the final gate. The speech that leaves the unit is regarded as a result of the collective effort of the speech writing team. The final scrutinizing exercise is carried out by the head of the speech unit, after which the speech is then passed on to the secretarial staff for typing. And after typing, the proof-reading process is carried out by all members of the speech team to spot out any typographical and other errors. The final product is then taken to the head of the speech unit for the final assessment. Then an appropriate file with the organizational headed letter is used to convey the speech.

Statement of the Problem

The lack of speech communication skills, reading and writing skills drastically limits the expansion of a public relation's overall capacities and ability to be effectively managed the entire organization or the society. This amounts to illiteracy which is the major obstacle to the development of communication and national development. Mabogunje [2000] asserts that development is a process of moving the whole social system upward so as to enhance the capacity of each member of society to realize his inherent potential and to effectively cope with the changing circumstances of his life.

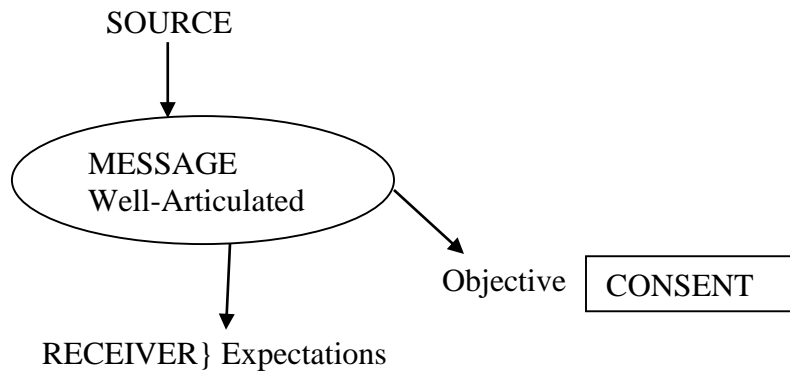
John [2002] opines that communication is necessary, not only for all aspects of a person's development, but also for all aspects of a nation's development, and if the mass media of a nation neglect to mobilize each and every member of that nation, not just a few privileged of its citizens towards the attainment of this upward mobility, then, in our view, such media should be accused of having failed in one of its most important roles: as an agent of change, a prime mover of development, in fact, they should be adjudged guilty of social irresponsibility and criminal apathy. In same vein, a Public relations being a communication process, adjunct of mass media is guilty of same. But, at same time, public relations cannot mainly function properly where there is no mass literate audience, tribal isolationism, and poor transportation and communication facilities. With these, public relations cannot really communicate with the masses.

METHODOLOGY

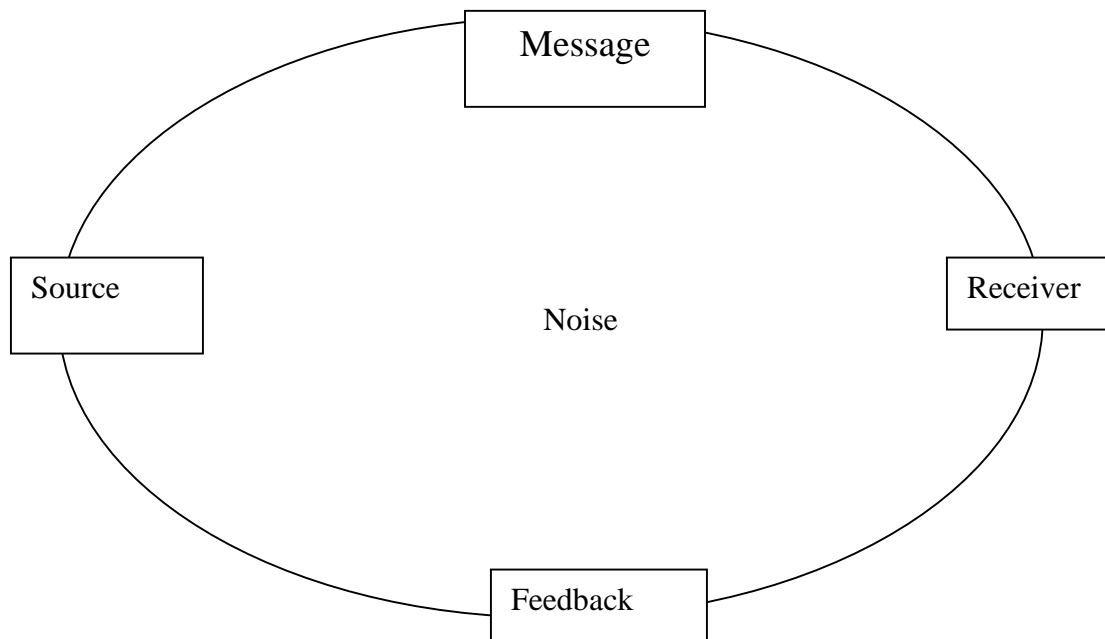
The population of the study was on the final year students of Public relations and Advertising in the Department of Mass Communication of Babcock University, which comprises of 65 students irrespective of age, gender, religion and ethnicity. Randomly the students based on their intellectual capabilities were surveyed with the research instrument of structured interview at class meeting. They were asked to put their thought in writing. Purposive sampling technique was employed from which data collection was made. Purposive in that the final year students of Mass Communication Department are exposed and skilled in the field of Public relations and Advertising to be able to answer the question unbiased.

Communication Process Theory

Kunle [2005], defines communications as the process by which an idea is transferred from a source to a receiver with the intention of changing his or her behavior. Therefore, public relations experts knowing the importance of speech communication skills and strategies should endeavor to sensitize those in the corridor of power to acquire the skills that will enhance peace, harmony and national development in Nigeria.



This figure above indicates that the source has a message with an intended objective; Kunle [2005] opines that the message from the source should be well articulated so that the receiver or audience who has expectations concerning an issue of importance can develop consent. The audience affected by the set objective must be identified, analyzed and classified according to their interest. People cannot be carried along without their consent because the support for any given cause must emanate from understanding which marries the articulation of the message with expectation.



Kunle further established that communication is a complex process. It is an exchange or sharing of information or message. As such it requires basic components to make it happen. These components are: The source, the originator of the message; the medium through which the message or information is conveyed; the receiver and the feedback which of course is the answer [the reaction of the receiver to the message; while noise is anything that interferes and causes distortion in the message such as: mis-spelt words, poor reading and listening skills, laughing and jeering are all known as semantic noise.

Impediments to effective speech communication

- Differences in educational background, in language level and usage,
- Mental stress during communication.
- No feedback , lack of skill on the part of the communicator [poor skill exhibited by the audience]
- Channel noise which could be cracking noise caused by atmospheric noise, missing paragraphs and mechanical or physical noise
- Poor communication facilities could give rise to misunderstanding.
- Inability of a leader to express himself clearly and succinctly could lead to poor management
- Misunderstanding could originate from the receiver who failed to listen attentively

Poor knowledge of the above variables and how they work will result to ineffective communication which will affect effective management of an institution or national development. To fully understand the nature of communication, the public relations or the management of the organization must be familiar with the meaning and characteristics of communication in modern

business, and to be aware that communication involves a source, a channel, a receiver and a feedback mechanism and including noise which could be semantic or channel noise. Communication can be interpersonal, verbal, non-verbal, organizational, group intra-personal or take the form of mass communication, while, organizational communication can take the form of formal and informal communication.

Vital Roles of Speech Communication

The role of communication in public relations management is to provide public relations with the link pin or chain with which to bridge the various segments of information in an organization under a central control. In this regard, the vital roles of communication in public relations management will be better appreciated by relating the enormous tasks of public relations in organizations both in private and public, in the interface with other professions of accountancy, management, marketing, philosophy, sociology, sciences, and social sciences among others. The vital roles of communication cannot be exhaustive but certainly includes the following:

- Creating harmony and understanding of public relations policies, goals, objectives and action plans and implementations among the publics.
- Communication removes the boundaries between organizations and their publics thus, reducing or eliminating the areas of misunderstanding that could hamper effective public relations activities.
- Communication makes it possible for various publics to understand their individual and group roles for such cooperative operations.
- Communication contributes to public relations success in dealing with different cultural, religious and traditional groups..
- Time management of public relations programmes are made possible when communication is used for different schedules to meet the demand of the publics at their convenience.
- Communication has made it possible for public relations to be understood by the publics and the society, thus the practice of public relations has been made simple.
- Research activities are also made possible in public relations management through effective utilization of communication as documentary tools.
- The vital roles of communication in public relations management is pervasive in the entire field of public relations practice, be it in government, organizations, individual interests, community and other areas.

Preparing the speech

Carla [2005] opines that the aim of a speech is to convey as much of the available information as possible to as many listeners as possible. Its success can be measured by the amount of information the audience take with them and the extent to which they have been persuaded. She further to say that the most important is to establish the aim and purpose of the speech [what do I want and why]. If you have nothing to say, don't say it. Having established the aim and purpose, the following questions should be considered:

- Which target group will I encounter?
- How large will the audience be?
- What is the occasion or subject of the meeting?
- What exactly am I trying to say

- For how long should I speak?
- Will my speech be followed by a discussion?
- Who is speaking before and after me?
- Am I going to speak from a lectern or do I have the chair?
- How are the seats of the audience and speakers arranged?
- Are there any visual aids available in the hall?

When you have settled these matters with the organizers, you can begin preparing the speech itself. In addition, Nwosu [2004] states that as simple as it may appear, every speech, like every school composition is broken down into: Introduction, Main body and the Conclusion. Time should be allocated as follows: introduction up to 15%, the main body approximately 70%, and the conclusion approximately 15%. Therefore, overall a speech should not last longer than 45 minutes, as a longer speech overtaxes the audience. The level of your audience's expectation is highest at the beginning of your speech. It is up to you to maintain this level of interest, create suspense and thus captivate your audience. The question is how do you go about it?

During introduction, give the audience one or two minutes to get used to you. They need this time to adjust to the tone of your voice and to accustom themselves to your gestures, facial expression and appearance. You need this time as well to adapt to the acoustics of the room and to get your stage fright under control. Be friendly to the audience, and when you commence speaking, use a pleasant tone of voice and as well as to maintain eye contact and always remember when you are smiling, the whole world smiles with you.

The opening remarks of your speech build a bridge between you and your audience; they should awaken your audience's interest in you and in what you have to say. This will work with the help of the following tricks: Situation- related opening remarks refers to the weather, the venue, the meal you have just shared or refer to one of the previous speaker's unintentionally witty remarks. A witty opening remark always goes down well; therefore, make sure that you don't tell a joke which everyone has already heard, as there is nothing more embarrassing than that.

With regard to the impact of your speech, your opening remarks are especially important. Devote as much care to your opening remarks as to the main body of your speech. Your care will be rewarded by the attention of your audience. But avoid frequent use of the first person in your opening remarks. If you haven't been introduced, limit your own introduction to your name and some information about your professional activities. In this way you demonstrate your competence which is what the audience are most interested in.

Rentrop [1989] contents that the successful development of the main body of your speech is in many respects like a good thriller and both demand suspense. Do not present your audience with answered questions; instead, let them share the development of your train of thought by taking them on a trip:

- From the discovery of the problem
- Through the initial perplexity

- To the unfolding of the solution

Rentrop, further, opines that the credibility of a speech depends largely on how precisely its climax is tailored to the given circumstances [occasion of the speech, audience, and other speakers]. People love tales of suspense, and let your speech be an experience for the audience. Naturally, the occasion of the speech will determine how it is delivered. The type of development required for a graveside speech is different to that for an electioneering address etc. Nevertheless, one thing is true of all speeches: they depend on their climax. The climax of a speech can, for example be your most telling argument; the publicizing of previously confidential business information; an emotional pause or gesture. The end of a speech will remain in the audience's memory longest. Therefore save your best punch till last. The content of your conclusion is determined by your main point.

Types of Speech:

Nwosu [2004] asserts that there are different types of speech such as: the impromptu speech, extemporaneous speech, speaking from memory. While, Carla [2005] outlined types of speech as: After-dinner speeches, presentations, lectures, reports. Election speeches, impromptu speeches, occasional speeches, addresses etc. And she further, identifies three types of speeches that are very important for the local government politicians:

- Discursive Speeches
- Electioneering Speeches
- Occasional Speeches.

Practical Tips for the Opening Speech

- Prepare yourself well and do some detailed research. For instance, it is by no means unimportant to know your speaker's correct titles. It is most embarrassing to be corrected by a speaker you have introduced.
- Always make your opening address without notes.
- Do not speak too much about yourself. Stating your name is enough. However, never forget to introduce the speakers, this has happened to many chairpersons due to nervousness and is a great source of embarrassment
- Listen attentively to the speeches. Have an assistant on hand to help you with organizational details. It is impossible for you to act simultaneously as organizer and chairperson
- At the end of the speeches, thank the speaker[s] on behalf of the audience and open the discussion.
- If no questions are asked, the ball is in your court. It is up to you to ask provocative questions or put forward propositions in order to get the discussion moving.
- Give the speakers an opportunity to make their closing statements [this should be agreed on in advance].
- Close the discussion on time but inform your audience when you're near the end of the list of floor speakers and ask whether anybody else wants to be added to it etc. Rieck [1982].

Everything requires proper management for it to function effectively and efficiently. Therefore, effective communication, be it oral or written needs logical and proper management.

CONCEPT ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION

What management is?

Onabajo [2002:23]. 'Management, as a concept is the harnessing of all necessary resources, by which an organization can be run effectively to meet the set objectives for which the organization is founded.

Nwosu [1996] is a process of planning, organizing, motivating, communicating, directing and controlling in order to attain organizational objectives. It is the guidance or direction of people towards organizational goals or objectives. With these public relations practitioner can achieve its objectives with effective knowledge of speech communication skills and strategies, which would enable him move the organization or the society into action for the community and national development.

What Public Relations?

Adamolekun and Ekundayo [2002], defined Public relations as.....the distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, acceptance and co-operation between an organization and its Publics, involves the management of problems or issues, helps management to keep informed on the responsive to Public opinion, defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management to serve the public interest, helps management to keep abreast of and effectively utilize warning system to help anticipate trends, and use research and sound ethical communication techniques as its principal tools

[Nwosu [2004] asserts that a public relations is the profession that influences public opinion or attitude in such a positive direction, understanding and acceptance; it establishes a two-way communication to ensure mutual understanding, or resolve conflicts of interest between individuals, organizations and its publics.

What is Strategy?

Strategies are Public relations various communication channels through which audiences could be reached". Thus, communication could be defined as the dissemination of meaningful symbols by a source to a receiver through some form of channels

Effective means the process of producing the result that is wanted or intended; or producing a successful result.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Summary of the discussion of the findings of the study, via the responses of the interview constitute the bases of analysis:

Research Questions Are:

What are the most three important characteristics of a successful Public relations practitioner?

The 59% respondents were of the opinions that ability to communicate was the best feature of successful public relations, while 30% were on getting things done, followed by the ability to take decisions 11%.

What are the positive influences of effective communication in an organization?

The students stated that one of the impacts of effective communication in an organization is that, it enhances free flow of information in an organization. It helps the both employer and employees to understand each other and foster mutual harmony and respect among them. They also stated that effective communication is a pre-requisite for any development in any organization. It ward-off misconception, misperception, rumors or grapevine in an organization that causes misunderstanding among the employer and employee. It creates harmony and curbs crisis in an organization. It helps the management to carry the entire system along.

Furthermore, they stated that effective communication foster an increase productivity and long-term profitability, peace and harmony among the publics of the organization. It's creates good-will and good-image in organizational reputation, and helps an organization to co-ordinate departmental activities effectively and efficiently.

What are the negative impacts of ineffective communication in organization?

In summary the students state that negative impacts of ineffective communication in an organization are:

- Crisis or conflicts in an organization
- Anarchy and strife leading to de-functionality in an organization
- Low productivity and profitability
- Misconception and misinformation known as grapevine or gossip.
- System disintegration and mismanagement
- Poor employer and employees relations
- De- satisfaction of customers

What strategy can be used to enhance effective communication?

- management cadres to come down to the level of their subordinates
- To have good listening ability and patience
- Honesty and open-door policy
- Use of proper channel to disseminate information

On this account, effective public relations practitioner should not so much concerned with the question, "How much can I earn?", but rather, "What will my job be like: Based on the above research findings, therefore, a public relations expert with ability to communicate and manage would achieve much more than the above research findings in any organization, which would in turn lead to organizational growth and national development.

CONCLUSION

Communication is a living and dynamic field of knowledge and an abstract phenomenon among the various intelligence values of human existence, and any being without the intelligence or stimuli to communicate is considered dead. Therefore, in all sphere of life require effective communication to exist, survive and to grow, including community and society as whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Public relations practitioner should embrace the principles of good argumentation techniques in any speech communication, that is the ability to present effective arguments and refute your opponents' arguments
- Consider the freedom of opinion as a basic human right
- Always conscious on the fact that communication in all its manifestations is the basis of successful leadership.
- Finally, PR practitioner is expected to be fully involved in the utilization of mass media

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