

## COMMUNICATION: AN EFFECTIVE TOOL FOR EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN UNILEVER NIGERIA PLC

**Temitayo. A. Onifade., Adedayo. M. Opele and Linus. I. Okafor**

Department of Business Administration, Bells University of Technology, Ota Nigeria.

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**ABSTRACT:** *The study determined the relationship between effective communication and employee performance. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and the total population of the study were 142 respondents. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the participants. Data gathered were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The result of the analysis revealed that there was significant relationship between effective communication and employee performance. It was therefore concluded that organizations should endeavour to make effective communication an essential strategy in achieving high employee performance.*

**KEYWORDS:** communication, completeness, c courtesy, employee, performance.

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### INTRODUCTION

Communication is a many-sided phenomenon that means different things to different people. It is a process of a means of access to the mind or thought of another. Today, however, more and more workers find out that an important aspect of their work is communication which is the mutual exchange of understanding, originating with the receiver that leads to effective and efficient work performance in an organization because it's the essence of management.

It is clear that studies have been carried out emphasizing on other methods of employee performance but view in the use of effective communication. Therefore, the use of effective communication to enhance employees' performance needed to be addressed. This study sought to fill the gaps left by the previous studies by investigating effective communication as a strategy to enhance employee in Unilever Nigeria PLC.

The objectives of the study are to answer the following questions;

(i) is there any relationship between effective communication completeness and employee performance?

(ii) Is there any relationship between effective communication clarity and employee performance?

### **Organizational Performance and Effective Communication.**

Salako (2016) Communication has been characterized as the life "Life blood" of an organization and miscommunication has caused the equivalent of cardiovascular damage in more than one organization. Callaghan (2004) Communication is the process by which people attempt to share meanings.

According to Bateman and Snell (2002) They stated that, some managers believed they should choose only one channel to communicate a message because doing so is more efficient but

multiple channels may be necessary for example with virtual terms, relying solely on e-mail is not enough. Managers should also employ audio meetings, video conferencing voice mail and face – to face communication. It is helpful for all team members to be available by phone during certain hours. You should hold regular face to face meetings and enforce attendance at scheduled virtually meetings. Regular updates status and two way exchanges are necessary via multiple channels.

Another key to communication effectiveness is that people know how to use various channels properly for example virtual terms should be trained on how to use software to enhance team performance. How to use (and not use) e-mail typography to communicate emotions and such norms as acknowledging receipt of messages and speed of response

### **Seven C's of Effective Communication**

There are 7 C's of effective communication which are applicable to both written as well as oral communication. These are as follows:

**Completeness** - The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. The sender of the message must take into consideration the receiver's mind set and convey the message accordingly. Complete communication develops and enhances reputation of an organization. Moreover, they are cost saving as no crucial information is missing and no additional cost is incurred in conveying extra message if the communication is complete. A complete communication always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of receiver. Complete communication helps in better decision-making by the audience/readers/receivers of message as they get all desired and crucial information. It persuades the audience.

**Conciseness** - Conciseness means wordiness, i.e, communicating what you want to convey in least possible words without forgoing the other C's of communication. Conciseness is a necessity for effective communication. Concise communication has following features:It is both time-saving as well as cost-saving. It underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words. Concise communication provides short and essential message in limited words to the audience. Concise message is more appealing and comprehensible to the audience. Concise message is non-repetitive in nature.

**Consideration** - Consideration implies "stepping into the shoes of others". Effective communication must take the audience into consideration, i.e, the audience's viewpoints, background, mind-set, education level, etc. Make an attempt to envisage your audience, their requirements, emotions as well as problems. Ensure that the self-respect of the audience is maintained and their emotions are not at harm. Modify your words in message to suit the audience's needs while making your message complete. Features of considerate communication are as follows: Emphasize on "you" approach. Empathize with the audience and exhibit interest in the audience. This will stimulate a positive reaction from the audience. Show optimism towards your audience. Emphasize on "what is possible" rather than "what is impossible". Lay stress on positive words such as jovial, committed, thanks, warm, healthy, help, etc.

**Clarity** - Clarity implies emphasizing on a specific message or goal at a time, rather than trying to achieve too much at once. Clarity in communication has following features:It makes

understanding easier. Complete clarity of thoughts and ideas enhances the meaning of message. Clear message makes use of exact, appropriate and concrete words.

**Concreteness** - Concrete communication implies being particular and clear rather than fuzzy and general. Concreteness strengthens the confidence. Concrete message has following features: It is supported with specific facts and figures. It makes use of words that are clear and that build the reputation. Concrete messages are not misinterpreted.

**Courtesy** - Courtesy in message implies the message should show the sender's expression as well as should respect the receiver. The sender of the message should be sincerely polite, judicious, reflective and enthusiastic. Courteous message has following features: Courtesy implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message. Courteous message is positive and focused at the audience. It makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of message. It is not at all biased.

**Correctness** - Correctness in communication implies that there are no grammatical errors in communication. Correct communication has following features: The message is exact, correct and well-timed. If the communication is correct, it boosts up the confidence level. Correct message has greater impact on the audience/readers. It checks for the precision and accurateness of facts and figures used in the message. It makes use of appropriate and correct language in the message.

### **Importance of Communication**

Effective communication are understanding, education, empowerment and respect. Effective communication provides people with the information they need to become educated and enlightened. When people are in the know, they feel respected and empowered and are motivated to perform at their best level of productivity and performance. Salako (2016) Communication is the "lifeblood" and a vital tool in the success of every organization. It is the medium through which an organization accomplishes its goals. The benefits of effective communication are successful business, rich relationships and the ability to accurately and comprehensively express thoughts, feelings and ideas. Effective communication is at the foundation of every successful action. All business rises or falls on the effectiveness of its communication. The under listed are some importance of communication.

It leads to greater effectiveness, It keeps people in the picture. It increases motivation to perform well, It increases commitment to the organization, It involves people in the organizations affair. It enhances better relationship and understanding between boss & subordinates and people within the organization and outside in. it helps people understand need for change. It helps leaders understand how they should manage change. It reduces the resistance to change.

### **Forms of Communication**

According to Omoregie (2004). The major forms of communication includes vertical (upward and downwards) Horizontal) Horizontal (Forward and backwards) communication networks and the grapevine.

**Vertical communication.** This form of communication flows both up and down the organization it is the communication that takes place between people and those above and below them in the organization.

Upward communication as one form of communication consist of messages emanating from subordinates to superiors until it gets to the top of the hierarchy in any organization set up such as from teacher through their heads of department or supervisors to the principle this forms of communication is usually informative rather directive.

Downward communication occurs when information flows from the top downwards to the lower level in organization such as from the principal through the heads of department/subject heads to the teacher and finally to student or others.

Horizontal communication: this is interaction between peers or colleagues of some authority or status such as among the heads of departments or managers.

The Grapevine this is an informal communication network among people in organization which does not always follow channels of communication. It is capable of penetrating an entire organization but it does not always follow the same pattern and does not necessary coincide with formal channels of authority and communication.

### **Objectives of Communication**

#### **Stronger Decision Making**

Your ability to communicate effectively increases productivity, both yours and your organization.

#### **Increased Productivity**

With good communication skills, you can anticipate problems, make decisions, co-ordinate work flow, supervise others, develop relationships and promote products and services.

#### **Strong Business Relationship & Enhanced Professional Image**

You can shape the impressions you and your company makes on colleagues, employees, supervisors, investors, and customers in addition to perceiving and responding to the needs of these stakeholders (the various groups you interact with) without effective communication, people misunderstand each other and misinterpret information. Ideas misfire or fail to gain attention and people and companies flounder.

#### **Clearer Promotional Materials**

Your organizations need for effective reach of company name and public promotions are based on effective promotional material such as advertisements, bill boards, online add, posters etc. are all communicated for effective delivery and meaning.

#### **Provide Advice**

Giving advice based on individual-oriented and work-oriented, advice should not give to the person for pinpointing his mistakes rather it should be helpful for his improvement. Effective advice promotes understanding and it can be a two way process if the subordinate staff given freedom.

### **Provide Order**

Order is an authoritative communication pattern and it is directive to somebody always a subordinate to do something. Orders will be written and oral orders, general and specific orders, procedural and operational order, mandatory and discretionary order. Order should be clear and complete, execution should be possible and given in a friendly way.

### **Suggestion**

Suggestion is supposed to be very mild and subtle form of communication. Suggestions are welcomed for it not obligatory to accept them, it can be voluntary and anonymous and submitted through suggestion boxes.

### **Persuasion**

Persuasion may be defined as an effort to influence the attitudes, feelings or belief of others or to influence actions based on attitudes, feeling, or beliefs. Persuasion can be done to others if you are convince, you do not impose, you are not rigid are prepared to meet half-way and you can look at situation from the other person's angle also.

### **Education**

Education is a very conscious process of communication, it involves both teaching and learning by which organizations provide to their employees in the form of training. Education is given for management, employees and outside public.

### **Warning**

If the employees do not abide by the norms of the organization warning is a power communication tool and it can be general and specific. Specific warning should be administered in private and after thorough investigation. The aim of the warning should be the organization betterment.

### **Employee performance**

Employee performance is whether a person executes their job duties and responsibilities well. Many companies assess their employee's performance on a annual or quarterly basis in order to define certain areas that need improvement (Salako 2016). Performance is a critical factor in organizational success

An employee performance appraisal is a process often combining both written and oral elements whereby management evaluates and provide feedback on employee job performance provides a basis for pay increases and promotions. Appraisals are also important to help staff members improve their performance and as an avenue by which they can be rewarded or recognized for a job well done. Many companies assess their employee's performance on an annual or quarterly basis in order to define certain areas that need improvement. Performance is a critical factor in organizational success.

### **Measurement of Employee Performance**

**Punctuality:** Employees who regularly arrive late for work or are frequently absent from the office are unlikely to be meeting their performance objectives. The underlying issue needs to

be addressed here – have they received adequate training? Do they get along with their co-workers and manager? Issues with punctuality mean an employee is not doing their job to their full potential and a negative attitude may also be affecting their colleagues.

**Quality of work:** The timely completion of projects to the desired standard is a key indicator in measuring employee performance. Is the work being carried out average or outstanding? Are they committing maximum effort to projects? Is their attitude affecting their ability to meet your expectations? Do they understand their personal performance objectives? The answers to those questions will help you to understand the root causes of any problems.

**Observe personal habits:** Perpetual bad habits can detract from employee performance. This may include indulging in office gossip, taking unauthorized breaks, disruptive behaviour and the use of computers for personal reasons (such as social media, online shopping). In order to prevent these habits from being adopted by their co-workers, you must be clear on what is acceptable in your business and issue an appropriate behavioural code.

**Check their attitude:** A bad attitude will often manifest itself in insubordinate behaviour. Again, this is indicative of an individual who is unlikely to be meeting their performance objectives. Typically, these employees will not comply with company policies and are likely to display disrespect for your company and co-workers.

**Review personal presentation:** Most firms have a professional dress code appropriate to the job and company culture. Employees who disregard your expectations and present a disheveled or careless appearance reflect badly on your image. It's likely that their performance will be failing to meet your expectations too.

**Carry out a client survey:** The consequences of poor employee performance will ultimately manifest themselves in customer service. A client survey can quickly identify issues with individuals. A positive response means your employee performance is meeting or exceeding expectations. What is the overall customer service experience of your recruiters and representatives?

**Carry out random checks:** Depending on the nature of your business consider implementing random checks against quality standards. This may include reviewing telephone calls and checking records. While your employees may be aware of this policy, the random nature of the checks can motivate staff to put in a consistent performance.

Evaluating employee performance should be carried out on an on-going basis and encompass all areas of their work ethic and individual achievements. Remember too, that poor performance or negative behaviours can also be symptomatic of an underlying problem with your organization's culture, so have a plan in place to address any issues you discover.

### **Empirical Review**

Rogers and Roethlisberger (2002) stated that the major barrier to mutual interpersonal communication is our very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate to approve (or disapprove) the statement of the other person or the other group.

Some of the recent studies conducted explore the connection between Communication and Performance.

Kibe (2014) investigated the effects of communication strategies on organizational performance. A descriptive research design was used in this study. 132 questionnaires were distributed employees. The findings of this research showed the importance of both the theoretical level and practical level. It concluded that for any organizational performance to be effective, an open communication environment should be encouraged. Once members of the organization feel free to share feedback, ideas and even criticism at every level it increases performance.

Ogbo, Onekanma & Ukpere (2014) emphasized that flexibility in inventory control management is an important approach to achieving organizational performance. The study also found that there is a relationship between operational feasibility, utility of inventory control management in the customer related issues of the organization and cost effectiveness technique are implemented to enhance the return on investment in the organization.

Nnamani & Ajagu (2014) examined the relationship between the employees and their work environment, to assess the extent of employee performance on productivity and to find out the extent environmental factor has enhance to performance. The survey method and the research tool was questionnaire. The study had a population size of 1,152, out of which a sample size of 297. Two formulated hypotheses were tested using Pearson's correlation coefficients and z-test statistical tools. Study reveal that there was unsafe and unhealthy work place environment, poor motivation, lack of innovation, high cultural interference and allow organizational interpretation process caused low productivity in the company.

Adegbuyi, O. A, Adunola, O, Worlu, R. & Ajagbe, A. M. (2015) The study was able to ascertain from various literature reviewed that business strategies such as (customer orientation, employee autonomy, communication, training and development job satisfaction, corporate social responsibility, motivational factors) have major role to play in organizational performance. Recognizing the causes of organizational performance is important especially in the perspective of the current global crises because it helps an organization to identify those factors that should be given priority attention in order to improve the organizational performance. Hence, this study recommends that business organizations should adopt appropriate strategies that would enhance adequate organizational performance. Many authors have adequately addressed effective communication and performance on organization. However, they failed to address the effect of communication on attitude of lecturers to students and their work. New technology and innovations are welcomed development to the educational environment. But it is also important to address the negative effect and challenges that comes with "change"

## **METHODOLOGY**

The population of this study comprised of all the Staff of Unilever Nigeria Plc, Lagos. The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study and the total population of the study is 142 respondents. The research hypotheses were testing using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC).

**Hypothesis One**

**Hi:** There is a significant relationship between communication completeness and employee performance

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between communication completeness and employee performance

**Level of Significance** = 0.01 (alpha level).

**Test of relationship between communication completeness and employee performance**

		Communication Completeness	Employee Performance
<b>Communication Completeness</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	.731**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	142	142
<b>Employee Performance</b>	Pearson Correlation	.731**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	142	142

**\*\*.**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**$r = 0.731$ ,  $N=142$ ,  $p < 0.01$**

From Table 4.21 above, the Pearson's product moment correlation between communication completeness and employee performance is observed. The  $r$  value of communication completeness' = 0.731\*\*. The results indicated that communication completeness influence on employee performance is up to about 73% and significant at 99 percent confidence level. This result indicates a positive and strong relationship between the dependent and independent variable i.e, There is significant relationship with communication completeness and employee performance. With a high correlation coefficient of 0.73. Hence, the null hypothesis stated above is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted with the conclusion that there is significant relationship with communication completeness and employee performance.



**Regression Estimate****Independent Variable: Communication Completeness****Dependent Variable: Employee Performance**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Regression Result</b>
R	0.731 <sup>a</sup>
<b>R Square</b>	0.309
Adjusted R Square	0.404
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.5235
Estimated Sum of Squares	32.696
Residual Sum of Squares	47.229
<b>F statistics</b>	81.690
<b>F Sig.</b>	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Constant	0.618
Constant Sig.	0.000
<b>Slope:</b>	0.731
<b>Slope Sig.</b>	0.000

**Sources: SPSS 19.0 Computation.**

The  $R^2$  is 0.731 shows that about 73% of the variations in the dependent variable were explained by the explanatory variable. The F sig of 0.000 shows that there is a considerable harmony associated with the regression result. The slope of 0.731 which also shows that it is statistically significant at 5%. This implies that there is significant relationship with communication completeness and employee performance.

**Hypothesis Two**

**Hi:** There is a significant relationship between communication clarity and employee performance

**Ho:** There is no significant relationship between communication clarity and employee performance

**Test of relationship between communication clarity and employee performance**

<b>Communication Clarity EmployeePerformance</b>			
<b>Communication Clarity</b>			
	Pearson Correlation	1	.521**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	142	142
<b>Employee Performance</b>			
	Pearson Correlation	.521**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	142	142

**\*\*.**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

$r = 0.521, N=142, p < 0.01$

From Table 4.23 above, the Pearson's product moment correlation between communication clarity and employee performance is observed. The r value of communication clarity and employee performance = 0.521\*\*. The results indicated that communication clarity accounts for about 52% of employee performance and significant at 99 percent confidence level. This result indicates a positive though somewhat weaker relationship between the dependent and independent variables i.e, communication clarity and employee performance. However, the positive relationship between the variables shows that, to some extent, communication clarity would minimally enhanced employee performance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted with the conclusion that there is significant relationship between communication clarity and employee performance.

**Regression Analysis**

**Independent Variable: Communication Clarity**

**Dependent Variable: Employee Performance**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Regression Result</b>
R	0.521 <sup>a</sup>
<b>R Square</b>	0.699
Adjusted R Square	0.696
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.57563
Estimated Sum of Squares	83.138
Residual Sum of Squares	35.786
<b>F statistics</b>	250.907

<b>F Sig.</b>	0.000 <sup>b</sup>
Constant	0.649
Constant Sig.	0.000
<b>Slope:</b>	0.521
<b>Slope Sig.</b>	0.000

**Source: SPSS 19.0 Computation**

The  $R^2$  is 0.521 shows that about 52% of the variations in the dependent variable were explained by the explanatory variable. The F sig of 0.000 shows that there is a considerable harmony associated with the regression result. The slope of 0.521 which also shows that it is statistically significant at 5% shows that there is significant relationship between communication clarity and employee performance. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This is a further proof for the rejection of null hypothesis as it was initially rejected in the correlations result.

### **Discussion of findings**

The result of hypothesis one shows that there is significant relationship with communication completeness and employee performance. This is in relation with what Nnamani & Ajagu (2014) said that completed and comprehensive communication system connects measures throughout an organization to translate high level objectives into lower level activities. Then, measures are imposed on individual employees to monitor their performance of these activities. Performance criteria need to be unambiguous, clearly explained, relevant to the work tasks undertaken by employees and achievable. The criteria should not include factors beyond the control of the individual employee. Hypothesis two result shows that there is significant relationship between communication clarity and employee performance. Kibe (2014), suggested that the main building blocks of a employee performance include: development of the organization's mission and objectives; enhancing communication within the organization so that employees are not only aware of the objectives and the business plan, but can contribute to their formulation; clarifying individual responsibilities and accountabilities; defining and measuring individual performance; implementing appropriate reward strategies, and developing staff to improve performance, and their career progression further in the future.

### **CONCLUSION**

The finding of this research has shown that effective communication should be highly recommended to every organization in all the sectors of the economy. Any management both government establishment and private that is desirous of ensuring the success and efficiency of its workforce, should be conscious of implementing effective communication programmes to their employees for better performances. Therefore, effective communication process should be an integral part of management strategy because it goes a long way to enhancing the realization of organizational goals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The effectiveness of communication is determined by both parties; hence it becomes necessary that they must pursue the same objective, which is high performance rate in all affairs of the institution. All cadres of staff should be involved in making decisions on issues that affect their performance, for it will lead to organisational development. Every organization should endeavour to make communication effective to minimize organizational conflict, less misunderstanding, improving information management and cordial relationship between management and workforce. Change is needed but when it is badly communicated it will likely lead to poor performance and negative outcome.

Consequently, all staff members should key into the communication programme of the organisation to enable them be at abreast with the use of the all forms and medium of communication in their organisations.

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