

ROLE OF CREATIVE THINKING AS AN IMPERATIVE TOOL IN COMMUNICATION AT WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

Essentially, the world we exist moves on the basis of communication. It is communication that guides or determines our relationship with others. Communication and its affiliated skills shape and mould an individual's career. Communication skills develop personality while at the same time expand the chances of a promising career. Workplaces similarly, are not far beyond the reach. An interesting fact suggests individuals spend almost about three-fourth of their entire working period within an organization. Hence, it is therefore that the selection process of individuals to work in an organization with knowledge of technical skills accompanied by good communication skills during interviews is done thoroughly. Every step taken at workplaces is highly communication dependent. Whether it superior-subordinate transfer of information or peer level or one business organization to another, every connection is communication bound. Not only managers and leaders but also each and every employee involves themselves in daily planning and coordinating process with a large number of team members. With poor communication, the entire process goes astray and massively impacts the whole organization. Most of the communication fails because the ability to think creatively and analyze sensibly lacks.

An ability to think sensibly and reflect ideas and thoughts reasonably is an appropriate mode necessary at various contexts in a given workplace. Every day tons of situations arise which needs to be handled properly like making right decisions, solving problems, managing conflicts, leading efficiently, generating ideas and many more. Each step at workplace demands proper communication that stems from creative thinking which defines the existence and sustainability of an individual working in an organization. Today the problem in various organizations across the globe is that employees tend to overlook or disregard the importance of good communication skills and a number of other skills associated with it like creative thinking, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and many more. They have a propensity to refute problems or collect evidences to analyze situations for different purposes and in different contexts and maintain successful relationships at the same time. They neither attempt to recognize the importance of communication nor comprehend the impact that poor or bad communication brings.

Hence, the objective of this paper is to delve into the importance of effective communication at work places and to explore the role of creative thinking in various aspects of workplaces mainly while making difficult decisions, solving problems, resolving conflicts, generating innovating ideas and developing leadership skills. The purpose of this paper is to furnish employees with an edge to bridge the gap of communication through creative thinking to mend relationships and save it from being spoiled. The paper also provides space for future scope of research in this domain.

Keywords: Creative Thinking, Communication, Workplace, Skill Sets, Thinking Process.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is exchange of information, thoughts, ideas, opinions, expressions, emotions, instructions between one to one or between one to many interaction. The world revolves around communication and it is almost impossible to lead a life without it. At work places too communication is referred as an important tool to deliver important messages. The requirement for effective communication skills is excessive and crescent as today organizations are emerging and being competitive and the need to deliver correct messages in an appropriate way is of prime importance. However, the problem in today's workplace is that employees tend to be less communicative and more impulsive. They do not think before they act or communicate and often welcome disastrous consequences like conflicts, isolation, insensitivity, resentment and many more that are harmful both for relationships and business. Such outcomes have a direct impact to productivity and the future of the organization. Therefore, employees are required to be efficient in their actions in order to maximize positive results in the workplace both in terms of relationships and the future perspectives of the organization. Being efficient in terms of actions is again a broad term. As already a known fact everything is communication dependent, hence employees are required to understand the fine line of difference between communication and communication through creative thinking.

OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

This objective of the paper is to analyze:

1. To study the importance of effective communication at work place.
2. To explore the role of creative thinking in various aspects of workplace.
3. To furnish employees with an edge to bridge the gap of success through creative thinking in order to make proper decisions, solve problems, avoid conflicts, generate ideas and develop leadership skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Goodwin and Sommervold detail "*Communication errors can occur anywhere in the process, and preventing errors by providing a clear, concise message and knowing the intended audience are key skills of effective communicators*" (Goodwin and Sommervold, 2012). It is a very natural phenomenon that errors do happen mainly during communication. Very often speakers' utter words that they may not intend to but the listeners interpret them differently or due to lack of proper listening abilities listeners provide unnecessary comments that spoil the essence of communication. However, effective communicators use diverse strategies in avoiding such mistakes while speaking or listening also reading and writing. In other words they exactly understand the relevance of being creative while communicating in order to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts.

Kumar views on effective communication especially at workplaces add to what Goodwin and Sommervold has to say on incorporating clarity in communication. He writes "*In the present-day complex business world, the need for good communication skills is being increasingly felt by managers at all levels. Today's managers have to deal with different kinds of communication. They should have an idea about the handling of corporate communication so that the organizations they work for may function smoothly, both internally and also in respect to its interactions with the outside world*" (Kumar, 2011). Hence, it can understood that communication at work place is not a cakewalk as it involves a lot of people and communication

to each and every one keeping in mind the receivers' bent of mind requires different skill set like creativity and positivity.

Frey discusses the role of creativity does not simply end here rather its associated with various other skill sets. Frey writes "*as a thinking process associated with imagination, insight, invention, innovation, ingenuity, intuition, inspiration, and illumination*" (Frey, 2002). This has been detailed studied by Henry in 1991. From the viewpoint of communication, creativity seeks innovation in engaging oneself in generating new ideas in communication. However, being creative in communication is not the only agenda. Analyzing a situation, thinking thoroughly, using problem solving technique by exercising brain is also quintessential in communication. These skill sets are a part of cognitive skills and highly imperative at work place. Hence, these skill sets are one of the most crucial ability to be practiced mostly in work places to make communication more pragmatic and relationship oriented.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is highly essential and at workplaces its significance is noteworthy. At workplaces the smooth flow of communication between different levels of people is defined when senders and receivers that are participants who are engaged in communication understand each other's thought process with clarity in language accompanied with positive and constructive feedback. This pattern of communication comes with specially interlinked skill sets and otherwise known as interpersonal skills. Most of the interpersonal skills at workplace remain ineffective and are the result of poor communication as the balance between emptiness and proper discussion gets distorted. "*One important part of maximizing effectiveness interpersonal communication is to get the balance right in terms of phatic communication and a more focused discussion*" (Thompson, 2018). At such a dynamic setup when interpersonal relationships are strong much of the job gets done automatically with less or no efforts. Interpersonal communication ensures that the participants are dependent on each other. What one party does depend in some proportion on what the other is doing and vice-versa? Hence, it can be understood that if an employee does not want another employee to be harsh on him/her, then the employee must ensure that he/she should not communicate or behave in a manner which agitates a situation and urges another employee to be rude. This suggests there would be no ill feelings between employees and elements which cause stress at workplaces, poor interpersonal relationships being one of them. The productivity and performance of employees which often get challenged by stressors won't be affected rather encouraged among employees in turn would benefit the organization.

However and truly, such an active correspondence between each other is not as simple as it looks. At some point and time, it can become more complex and intrigued. Hence one can practice the skill sets used in communication in order to make it more effective. Communication requires creativity at different contexts. Globalization has generated excessive and rapid growths of organizations around the globe. Workplaces are no more subtle. All they require is a set of skilled employees outstanding in problem solving, decision making and generating innovations thereby benefitting their organizations. Hence creative thinking has become the key element in communication to make the ends meet in a workplace. The paper would detail more on the same in the coming section.

CREATIVE THINKING IN COMMUNICATION

Every workplace around the world is well aware of incorporating creative thinking in communication. Much of the purposes of workplaces are solved by appropriate creativity; creativity in decision making, creativity in innovating ideas, creativity in delivering ideas before others and many more. Creative thinking is intricately tied to the most influential role of communication which reacts just like an agent for an impulsive innovation. “*Creative process, (...) entails different types of communicational exchanges at various levels and stages: the capacity of individuals to work within and communicate across several fields of activity*” (Sales and Fournier, 2007). Not only this, creative thinking also implies intellect in different forms of communication and the support and reciprocation employees receive from diversities emphasizing strong social synthesis. Being fundamental to an individual’s rational development and conducive to workplace benefit creative thinking demands number of activities before final communication, namely “*preparation, incubation, valuation, elaboration*” (Kumar and Lata, 2015) and then communication. Creative thinking repudiates a wide range of relevant aberrations. It encourages an individual to dismiss the assumptions which are common and biased or any other approach to thoughts development process which narrows down intelligence and inventiveness. Hence, creative thinking embodies mental subsets like inquisitiveness, cognizance and perceptive means to foster new ideas and problem solving methods. The section below discusses the role of creative thinking imperative at various levels in workplace that places on the basis of communication. The section typically studies the relevance of creative thinking in making decision, solving problems, generating innovation, resolving conflicts and in developing leadership skills at workplaces.

Creative Thinking in Decision Making

Decision making is one of the most essential ability today workplaces demands. At various stages of development and earning profits, both top executives and employees have to make decisions depending on the situation. There are several purposes employees have to deal with before committing to make any decision. For example, there are many times employees provide suggestions to increase the productivity of the company. However, it is impossible for a manager to accept all the suggestions that employees furnish with. Talking about other examples can include identifying a faulty product and making decisions at once to stop the production process regardless of the massive loss of the raw materials already sanctioned for the production. Other situations can be on deciding to cut off little percentage from salary as a measure of cost-cutting and so on. At these stages taking decisions can become not only stressful but also disruptive if not accompanied by proper evaluation and analysis of the situations and their outcomes. Managers have to choose the most apt and result driving actions so as to make the best of decision to avoid negative results.

Applying creative thinking while facing such dilemmas can restrict generalizing situations and can improve skills to thoroughly evaluate such cases where the predetermined assumptions and fallacies are overruled and judgments of the situation are appropriately made.

Creative Thinking in Resolving Conflicts

Many times employees find themselves stuck in conflicts which are a result of having opinions and personalities clashes. Not only do the working relationships remain at stake but also

the same can provide negative outcomes like poor delivery of performance. Managers find it very difficult in solving disputes as going in favor of the favorite's employee leads to further disputes and not doing so results in strained relationships with the employees. Hence, managing conflicts require a high level of understanding of creative thinking and integrating it in solving conflicts. It can be practiced not only by the managers but also by the employees especially to resolve conflicts.

Creative thinking includes a number of ways to solve a conflict. The first step begins with identifying or recognizing what led to the conflict or the root cause of the conflict. This can be known by collecting information about it. Big or small, every information counts. The next move is associated with the approach towards the matter and the people involved. This step however is risky as it is required to know the type of personalities the people carry. Once known the subsequent step engages in thinking or attempting to find possible solutions to determine the conflict. This step is often carried forward hastily as it is accompanied with misguidance of various possibilities at the same time. The next step includes evaluation and finally the selection of the best solution to resolve the conflict.

Creative Thinking in Generating Innovation

Workplaces are large platforms where innovation has an immeasurable domain. Generating innovative ideas come through thinking out of the box or reaching at a level of thinking where no others can reach. Creative thinking can inspire employees to come up with atypical yet insightful ideas that can question the generalized assumptions and arise with groundbreaking solutions. *“Receiving and processing thoughts, ideas, hunches, concerns and even flashes of inspiration from unknown sources within our consciousness may form building blocks of a much great creative capacity for a business”* (Daniell, 2006).

Generating innovation begins first with identifying and defining the problem area. It can be easily done by preparing oneself through accumulating what others opine or carry views regarding the same. The next step includes employing or viewing things differently and excluding the already existing thoughts and then building connections with one of the many abstract angles as viewed now. Forming connections will provide new results. Considering the new ideas from receptive sources of inspiration injects curiosity which further brings the existing ideas and builds new configurations. Often the best ideas are invented and executed when the ideas are shared with equally talented people. Invention is all about extracting from different sources of thought process and changing or modulating the thoughts to gain a completely different and out of box thinking which in other words is termed imagination. Often linked with logic imagination can work wonder. *“If logic and imagination work together, problem solving becomes more enjoyable and more creative”* (Croome, 1999). The next step involves evaluating if the new results have any thing in common with the previous views and excluding them if they do. What remains as residue is the new innovative idea. Thinking abstractly, blending concepts based on differing and unique form of thoughts and ideas transcends to creative thinking.

Creative Thinking in Solving Problems

Workplaces are extreme environments where apart from productivity, earning profits and image building there are many problems that keep arising in daily basis which need instant solving and if not solved can affect the workplace in negative ways. Certain problems like ethical matters, sexual harassment, cultural conflicts, team hostility and problems of the same kind

demand special attention and quick solving techniques. These sensitive issues are required to be researched well and then come up with solutions as insufficient information can lead to faulty decisions and the problems can become stretchy without any solutions. Hence, creative thinking offers the solutions to many problems by viewing each problem differently and seeking to find the solutions differently again.

At first employees are required to recognize the nature of the problem that is done through a thorough examination of the background information about it. Next step includes viewing problems from different angles. The approach of solving problems can be through two ways *“intuitively or systematically. When you solve a problem intuitively, you react immediately and instinctively, without following a particular procedure and systematic problem-solving method is to adapt a solution from a prior problem and apply it to your current situation”* (Butterfield, 2017). However, it must be understood that both the approaches are different and hence will produce results differently. The intuitive angle of viewing the problem is crucial while fast decisions are demanded and the second one is approached when things are more organized and systematic. The next step attempts to find possible solutions to establish the problem. Although it is good to have more than one possible solution, not being able to find the best solution is often frustrating. For every possible solution, it is required that problem solvers get a clear idea about the negative and positive outcomes of each possible alternative. This is the next step which is assessing each alternative and also the risks and merits attached to them. Then comes evaluating or selecting the best solution for the problem and which dominates all other alternatives keeping in mind the maximum benefits from the solution and negligible or no risks with it. The final step involves monitoring solutions which ultimately results in the solving of the problem. *“Critical thinking will make you a better problem solver. This is important because problem solving is essential to success in a competitive workplace”* (Goetsch, 2008).

Creative Thinking in Developing Leadership Skills

Creativity is one of the most essential skills among effective leaders. It is the leaders that use the creativity skills in order to generate change and transform workplaces. In fact, no leaders can exist without creative thinking. An interesting study suggests that leaders are often considered as catalysts that bring change in an organization and creative thinking is the fuel behind bringing this change. Leadership and creative thinking are connected terms and *“there are implicit relationships between the fields of leadership and creativity”* (Puccio et al., 2010). Effective leaders are known for their imagination and innovation that inspires people that follow them possible due to creative thinking ability. *“Some leadership characteristics that are related to creativity include visualization, ability to withhold judgment, flexibility, resourcefulness, willingness to take risks and problem solving ability”* (Parker and Begnaud, 2004). Leaders are highly creative people who not only troubleshoot problems but also visualize upcoming hindrances through their creative thinking and communicate the same to their people. Creativity also enables them not to get carried away by the inducement to evaluate or descend down to any decision quickly. Creativity enables the leaders to remain open to accept ideas and keeping intact the curiosity to consider the generated ideas and still remain flexible in any alteration.

CONCLUSION

Creative thinking is an art, an art that is substantial and farfetched and that is a dynamic process to beget knowledge and cognitive subjections. Thinking, organizing, framing and moulding are the conceptualization of creative thinking are as imperative as considering and understanding the process. Today, workplaces demand employees to foster their attributes to bag the productive flashes of creativity at the confinement of their thought process. Excluding possibilities as not an option rather striving to expand or inflate them is what imagination is structured with and from which creative thinking originates. This paper studied the importance of communication at workplace and explored the role of creative thinking in various aspects of workplace. This paper substantiated thinking process in various fields like making decisions, solving problems, generating innovative ideas and developing leadership skills. Thinking process is no different from creative thinking. The ability to creative thinking is a portent to successful business ambience and an indication to accomplishment in goals in life. However, the process of creative thinking does not stop rather keeps growing dynamically making connections and abating ambiguity in innumerable stages that employees come across daily at workplaces. At workplaces special trainings on creative thinking must be conducted for success. Scope for further research can be established on critical thinking and communication. This paper is useful and beneficial for management academicians, research scholars, and employees at workplaces who would like to learn and dig deep into creative thinking.

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