

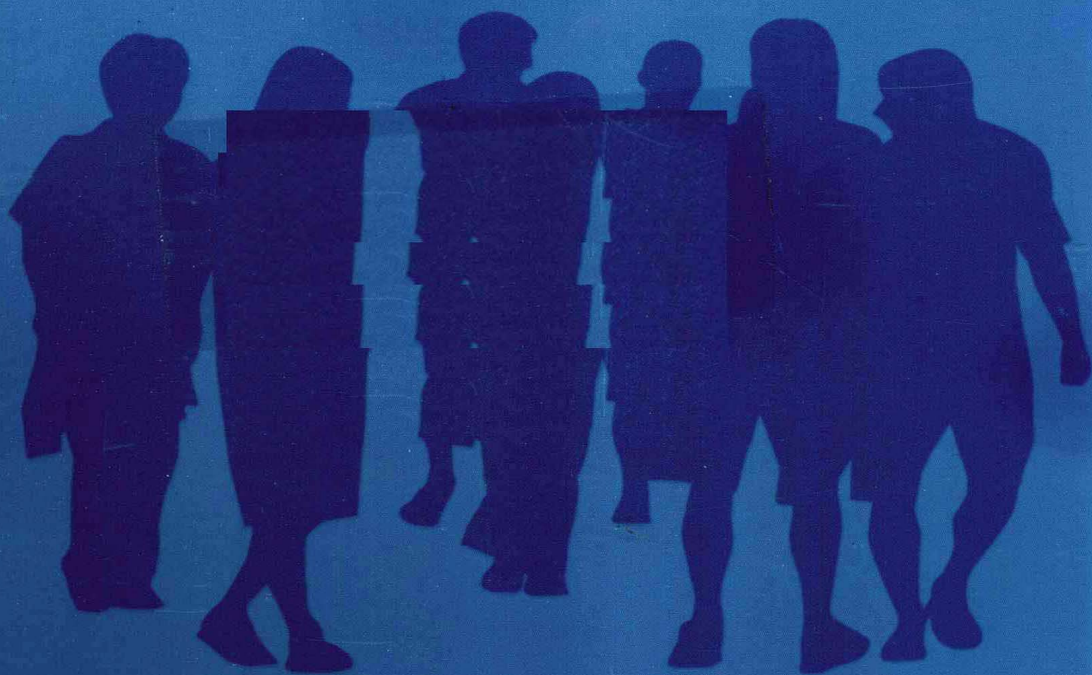
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21世纪高等院校经济管理实验实践教学教材  
21st Century Management Textbook Series for  
Experimental and Practical Teaching

# Managerial Communication Theory and Application

## 管理沟通理论与实践教程

● Zhang Chunyang / Denise Gates 编著  
John Stark / Chynette Nealy



华南理工大学出版社

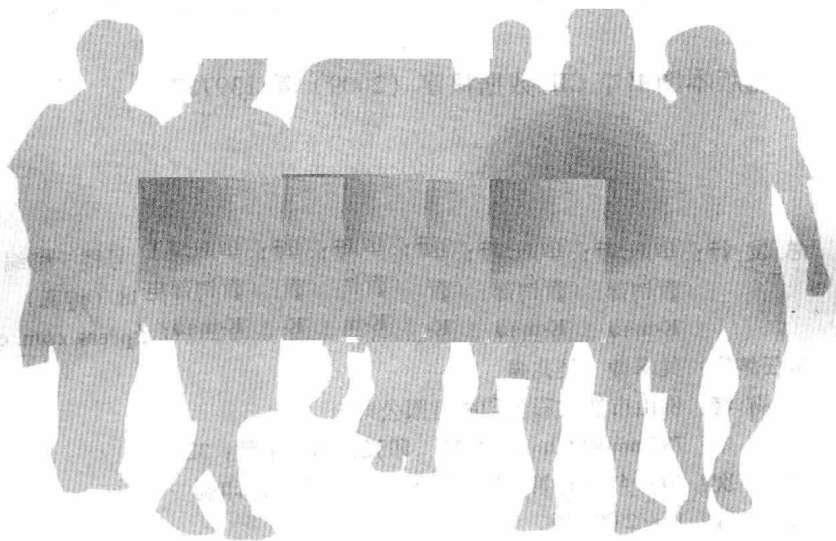
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## 序 言

华南理工大学工商管理学院为了提高教学质量和培养学生的创造能力，成立了经济管理类实验中心，开出了一系列创新性实验课程，并且编写了实验课教材，这是一个很有开创性的尝试。

实验中心从培养经营管理类学生的动手能力、沟通能力、研究能力和创造性思维出发，率先提出从传统经管课程中“固化”出实验实践课程的思路，这是一种对传统教学模式的突破。

在自然科学、工程、农业和医药等领域，实验是经常需要进行的活功，相应学科的教学中都设有实验课程。但是在像经济、管理、社会等领域，由于涉及人的主观因素和复杂的社会条件，不可控因素过多，再加上规模和成本、安全和道德等原因，无法进行像自然科学和工农医等领域中的实验。但是随着信息学科与系统学科的发展，仿真技术不但进入了理工农医学科，也进入了经济、管理等学科，可以认为是一种广义的实验。

近年来，一种和理论研究、实验研究并列的所谓“计算实验(Computational Experiment)”方法开始出现，作为一种基本研究方法，不仅可用于验证、测试、参数和条件的选择，而且在探索、发现新的现象和新的规律方面有着独特的作用。相信它在经济管理各方面，特别是探索一些复杂而不确定的现象和问题时，会逐渐发挥极其重要的作用。

工商管理学院组织了一批实验课教材，其中既有技术性较强的，也有和经营管理联系密切的；既有和建模、定量分析有关的，也有和人际沟通有关的。千里之行，始于足下，现在有了一个良好的开端，今后随着教学改革的深入和发展，必将出现新的实验课程和实验内容。

中国是一个封建时期延续长久的国家，由于现代工业和科学发展较晚，传统的知识分子有一种轻视实践、轻视实验的倾向。在校学生也有不重视实验课的现象。但是随着客观形势的发展和人们对管理学科的全面认

识，实验实践必将日益得到更多的关注。希望这套丛书日后无论在品种还是质量上，都得到更大的发展和进步。

爰特为序。

王心托

2008年6月

# Preface

How important is managerial communication? Dale Carnegie said 85 percent of one's financial success is due to one's ability in dealing with people; Bartlett and Ghoshal said communication is the lifeblood of an organization. Thus to both individuals and organizations, communication is vital. Communication skills, however, are not innate. They can be learned and improved. Based on this concept, the book is organized into a relatively simple framework that both students and teachers will find easy to grasp. Each chapter contains the following four sections:

- Warm-up Exercise is an introductory activity calling the students' attention to the problems or topics to be discussed;
- Key Concepts introduces the theories and concepts related to the chapter topic;
- Chapter Review offers exercises in various forms which can serve as a self-test and a quick review of what has been learned from the chapter;
- Application is where students apply what they have learned.

Thus the objective of the book is two-fold; it introduces the key concepts of managerial communication and more importantly, it offers a variety of exercises to apply what has been learned.

The book consists of eleven chapters, of which chapter 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 were written by Zhang Chunyang, chapter 1, 2 and 5 by Dr. Denise Gates, chapter 6 by Dr. Chynette Nealy and chapter 11 by Dr. John Stark.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of Professor Chen Chunhua and Han Wei, who have inspired me and given me the opportunity to work on this book. Their encouragement, ideas and criticism have been precious. I also wish to thank the leaders of the School of Business Administration in South China University of Technology and South China University of Technology Press, who have supported my efforts. I am grateful to Dr. Denise Gates and Dr. John Stark, who took time from their busy schedule to proofread the whole book. I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Wang Haibo, who kindly provided me with valuable materials. Last but not least, special thanks go to Ms. Wu Cuiwei, who proofread and gave constructive comments and suggestions on how to improve the book.

Zhang Chunyang

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# Chapter 1

## Role of Communication in Business Organizations

### 1. 1 Warm-up Exercise

#### Purpose of the Exercise

To understand what managerial communication is.

#### Details of the Exercise

*Step 1* : Divide the class into teams of 4 or 5.

*Step 2* : Each team devises a way to introduce the group as well as the team members so that the instructor can recall the name of the team and the team members. This step will be limited to 10 minutes.

*Step 3* : Ask each team to introduce the team and its members.

*Step 4* : The instructor compares the performance of each team and selects the most winning team based on creativity in introducing themselves.

#### Questions for Further Discussion

1. Compare and contrast the ways in which the groups introduced themselves today. Which group stood out and why?

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2. How might successful managerial communication enhance your workplace and your career? In what ways can managerial communication be beneficial?

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## 1.2 Key Concepts

Managerial communication involves the strategies and processes managers use to convey thoughts and ideas germane to helping organizations pursue their missions. Managers rely on communication to share thoughts, ideas, feelings, needs, concerns, dreams, visions, etc. Strong communication skills have enabled managers to effectively lead meetings; write memos, letters, and emails; give presentations; conduct job interviews; manage projects; answer telephones; serve customers; listen to and support colleagues; assess and resolve workplace conflict; and so on. A large part of a manager's success can be attributed to effective communication. So it's imperative that employees develop their managerial communication skills if they hope to be successful in the workplace.

Communication is strategic. Influenced by personalities, culture, and training, the communication managers utilize can take many forms. Managers have to determine which style or type of communication is most appropriate for the context. Therefore managers need to determine how their messages can be related to a second party, the receiver, with their intended meanings. Often managers strive to achieve a level of shared understanding with others or at least an overlap in interpretation of a message.

The goal is for information to be shared with and understood by a receiver in a reciprocal process. Communicators use verbal and nonverbal language to enact their roles in this process, which will be outlined in detail later. The process of communication may sound simple, but communication can be complicated by various barriers that can impede it. For example, receivers sometimes misconstrue, or misunderstand messages or senders assume similarities in meaning when in fact they do not exist. Communication is further complicated when communicators intentionally and strategically use ambiguous language because they know if they utilized direct and clear language they could not reach agreement or come to consensus on some issues. So in this way managers manipulate communication to get the outcome they want. Communication can be utilized to clarify or to strategically confuse; strong communicators know the difference.

Consequently, communication is vital to organizations functioning effectively, and managers must be excellent communicators to advance professionally. They must create environments that are conducive to effective communication. It is crucial that managers communicate well so they can coordinate functions within organizations. Without effective communication skills, productivity would decline and managers would have difficulty

attaining workplace goals. Communication is not merely a function of management; it is management because organizations are interconnected systems of communication designed to achieve a common goal. Devoid of communication, organizations and their managers could not exist. For this reason, managers must acquire superb communication skills if organizations are expected to survive.

### **1. 2. 1** *What Is Managerial Communication*

“Managerial communication is about the movement of information and the skills that facilitate it—speaking, writing, listening, and the processes of critical thinking,” (O’Rourke, 2007). It has to do with the communication used to coordinate individual and group efforts to achieve organizational goals (Duncan, 1983). Because management is the ability to use communication (Miller, 2005) in order to get things done through people (Dale, 1965), organizational members need to have strong communication skills. Both written and verbal communication skills are mandatory in the workplace as organizational members will use them to construct messages that must be congruent with organizational values and societal norms. Managerial communication is what enables managers to enact their roles, which is to improve profits, reduce costs, enhance service delivery, and promote a better quality of work life (Duncan, 1983). Henri Fayol suggests that management is a process whereby communication is used to plan, organize, command or coordinate (leading), and control (Timm et al, 1995; Miller, 2005). Through communication, organizational leaders generate a vision for organizations. Then managers determine how to implement plans to attain those goals. Managers ultimately decide how to “improve performance, to solve problems, and to develop personal competences” (Timm et al, 1995: 5). Overall, managerial communication is about the dissemination or spreading of information in order to attain goals utilizing people. And to achieve those organizational objectives, you must be an effective communicator.

### **1. 2. 2** *Overview of Theories in Managerial Communication*

Thinking about managerial communication has evolved over the years. Scholars have embraced various theories and recognized the importance of incorporating aspects of each theory based on the needs of a particular situation when communicating within organizations. In the following paragraphs, some of the theories will be introduced.

Theories that have shaped thinking about management can be classified into three

categories: Classical, Human Relations, and Human Resources. During the 19th century and early 20th century, known as the Classical period, three management scholars developed management theories to help understand and predict workplace behaviors between management and subordinates. Among those scholars were: Frederick Taylor (1911), Henri Fayol (1949), and Max Weber (1947). They advanced theories that have come to be called the mechanistic approach to managing employees, or the Classical view. This machine-like approach to managing employees resulted as managers compared their employees to machines and expected them to function much the same, with little regard for the personal aspirations or professional needs of the employees.

### Classical Period

The impetus of the Classical period was the condition of the United States after the Civil War. The nation experienced an increase in jobs and economic development (Duncan, 1971). Railroad and transportation expansion were on the rise, and shipping demands increased. This increase in personnel needs compelled management to examine efficiency and productivity. Also around this time, the nation was plagued with labor disputes from 1870 to 1909 (Duncan, 1971). The goal of management seemed to be to enhance efficiency, striving for the greatest output from employees with the least amount of effort. This mindset describes the mechanistic approach to management. The goal of employees, however, was to get the maximum salary and improved working conditions. Later during other periods scholars came to realize that salary wasn't the only motivating factor for employees. Nevertheless, during the Classical period, management emphasized output and overlooked the importance of employee needs.

Employees devised a plan to get their salaries up and productivity down by working slower. This concept known as systematic soldiering involved the workers placing peer pressure on each other to minimize the work output of employees so that management could not expect more effort and output for less money. Rate busters were frowned upon by other employees because management would assume that if fast and efficient workers could achieve that level of output, then the other workers could do the same. Therefore, management would change its expectations of employees, wanting more productivity in less time. For example, if management agrees to pay \$3 an hour for 100 bricks to be laid, and a new employee comes along and can lay 130 bricks in an hour, management might assume that all employees can lay 130 bricks in an hour. This discovery would prompt management to expect all employees to lay 130 bricks in an hour. The problem for employees was that they were expected to do more work at the same pay rate. The increase in the number of bricks laid in

an hour did not compel management to increase pay; management just expected more work. Therefore, through peer pressure from social groups, employees controlled the productivity with systematic soldiering. Rate busters were discouraged from outperforming the status quo.

Taylor's (1911) goal was to remedy systematic soldiering and alleviate some of the workplace unrest that plagued this time period. He was the father of the scientific management movement. He envisioned a more productive and efficient way for workers to achieve organizational goals. His idea was to launch time and motion studies and to determine the best way to complete a task. Once that best way was determined, organizational leaders would select employees who were best suited to complete the task. Others, who were not as competent at the given task, would be reassigned or fired. Taylor's ideas came under scrutiny by United States Congress as some people saw his methods of managing as inhumane. Employees were treated like machines, not individuals in their estimation. Nevertheless, many of Taylor's ideas are still prevalent in management today. For example, many factories and fast food chains have determined the best way to complete certain tasks, and they require their workers to comply with their norms and expectations for completing assignments. Business communication during this period was largely written because employees were expected to comply with all rules and policies. Management determined what the rules would be, and employees were simply expected to follow them without question. The assumption here was that employees did not have requisite skills or relevant information to offer and should therefore rely on management to do all the thinking and to make all the choices. Employees were expected to put in their time and to leave; they were not encouraged to think of ways to enhance their job performance or to help advance the organization's goals. In this way, some people think that employees during this period were undervalued.

Other theories were associated with the Classical period as well. Fayol's (1949) contribution rested with the notion that management could plan, organize, command, coordinate, and control efforts within organizations. These elements of management were implemented using communication, although Fayol did not specifically list communication as one of his elements (Miller, 2005). Management within organizations, according to Fayol, is also influenced by the structure. He spelled out six primary principles that encompassed his thinking. First, the scalar chain, suggests that communication within organizations is primarily vertical. Leaders will give their subordinates commands and information, but subordinates are not permitted to communicate to their colleagues as it is deemed unnecessary. Second, unity of command, infers that only one's manager should give direction and guidance. This eliminates unnecessary communication and the need for employees to chat with others who are not their supervisors. Third, unity of direction,



maintains that similar tasks should be managed by the same supervisor. Fourth, division of labor, limits the amount of work placed on employees. The assumption here was that employees who focus on fewer areas can specialize in those areas and become experts at them. Instead of completing many tasks with mediocrity; employees can finish a few tasks exceptionally well. Order, the fifth principle, indicates that each employee and task should have an appointed place. This keeps the corporation organized, and it helps to assure that employees know where they are supposed to be at any given time. Finally, span of control, suggests that managers should be limited in what they can control so as to maximize effectiveness. Fayol proposed that first-level managers oversee 20 to 30 employees while upper-level managers supervise 6. Communication from the perspective of Fayol's theory of management was limited. Management communicated downward, but upward communication was not encouraged. Moreover, Fayol introduced an idea he referred to as gangplank, which maintains that communication can occur horizontally among individuals who are on the same level when doing so will facilitate the process of completing a task. As such, communication is downward (vertical) and to a limited degree horizontal (Miller, 2005). Upward communication is not recommended as managers are seen as being the leaders who are in command of the organization (Fayol, 1949). Fayol proposed additional ideas to influence management related to rewarding employees, employee attitude and behavior, and power structures.

Weber (1947) also was a theorist who contributed to the thinking during the Classical period. He emphasized bureaucracy and the implementation of rules. This system of management alleviated the desire of managers to make decisions based on emotions, privilege, or favoritism. With a clear structure in place, management and employees could expect rules to be followed, and accountability was inherent in this system of rules and authority. Written communication was believed to have helped facilitate this rule-governed approach to management (Miller, 2005), which required information and policies to be known and understood.

Communication during the Classical period was limited to task-related matters. Employees were dissuaded from talking about their personal needs or even discussing ways they could enhance their job performance. The organization perceived that it already knew the best way to achieve its goals utilizing the scientific methods espoused by Taylor and other theorists from this time; therefore, communication may have been seen as a waste of time and resources. Communication was downward or vertical with the occasional exception of managers on the same level communicating with one another in order to coordinate tasks. Upward communication was limited as managers were seen as having already determined the best way to handle workplace issues, so subordinates were not encouraged to give input or