

Channels and Adequacy of communication in Organisations

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Abstract

In bigger organizations especially if it has large number of stakeholders such as employees, customers as well as other publics communication has been found to contribute much more to its effective functioning. Flow of information in a multitude of directions shall communicate the policies, solutions to problems as well as ideologies of any organization. This process is mediated by many channels that are diverse, and heterogenous in their functioning along with adequacy, healthiness as well as sources of information. The purpose of this study is to assess these concepts related to the Organizational Communication found to be used by Sangam dairy to communicate with its publics to enhance corporate reputation. The study is supported by theories of Lasswell model, Shannon and Weavers communication transmission model, Schramm's model of Communication. Furthermore, the study used survey as the research method to gather data and this technique is the most suitable to collect data from different

publics of the dairy. Recommendations were made to enable the organization to achieve maximum efficiency in communication.

Key words: Multitude, heterogenous, adequacy, healthiness

Introduction

In the organisations during the process of communication not only the sending of the messages but providing adequate information is very much essential and identifying appropriate channel is equally important. The studies have recognized that all the elements in the communication process work in a combination of both the message and medium. Apart from the regular routine channels like circulars, notice boards the organization can also use informal meeting with employees who work within and outside their own departments. The communication channel selection or design plays an important role in achieving effective communication (Johnson, 1996).

Among the eight dimensions prescribed by Downs & Hazen (1977) for communication satisfaction along with communication climate, communication with supervisors and with subordinates, organizational integration, media quality also found a place. These constructs were developed by factor analyzing 88 items, measuring the satisfaction of employees with different aspects of communication.

Along with other factors satisfaction with media quality contributes immensely to the communication satisfaction and ultimately to the job satisfaction. Employees are most satisfied with information that helps them make sense of their situation by explaining how their jobs fit into the organizational mission, about organizational policies and plans, and about relationships with key constituencies in the organization's environment (Grunig 1992, Grunig & Dozier 2002, p. 487). The implications of these findings explain that the information employees receive about their immediate work environments, meetings and written directives should be made part of the communication exercise. While assessing the satisfaction with communication satisfaction with media quality is equally important. It refers to employee reactions to several important communication channels (Hamilton 1987, p.113) and it deals with the extent to which meetings are well organized, written directives are short and clear, and the degree to which the amount of

communication received is satisfactory (Clampitt & Downs 1993, p.2). Hence it was felt necessary to find out the opinions of publics about various channels and adequacy of information in the organization. Multiple channels are available and used by organizations for communication among their publics it is necessary to understand, evaluate and improve the patterns as well as the process of communication.

Short, Williams, and Christic (1976) have coined the term 'social presence' to refer to the amount of emotional and social content that is likely to be transmitted along various communication channels. Since written communication does not allow for nonverbal cues and feedback, it is said to have less social presence than face-to-face interactions in which nonverbal cues and feedback are possible. The concept of social presence is *useful* in considering communication channels in a human relations organisation. Thus face-to-face communication takes on a great deal of importance, and **written** communication channels are de-emphasised.

Publications

A sea-change in communication technologies has contributed to the transformation of both work and organizational structure. According to Kathryn A. Baker, “Managers have traditionally spent much of their time communicating in one form or another form such as meetings, face-to-face discussions, memos, letters, e-mails, reports, etc. Turkalj & Fosic (2009, p. 33) assert that organizational communication implies communication among employees, as well as communication between different hierarchic levels in the same organization.

For many decades, in-house publications have been viewed as the tools of communication with employees, while more personal communication methods have been underutilized. In practice, the production of publications and other media that have no strategic purpose in mind dominate.

In many of the organizations senior management take steps to arrange meetings with staff. At the same time, employees do not expect a great deal of face-to-face communication from senior managers as they realize that they cant spend time. But they prefer to participate in regular face-to-face exchanges with their immediate line manager.

These aspects of communication underpin the ‘exchange of information and transmission of meaning throughout the organization’ and therefore, measuring communication satisfaction

should be a useful gauge of the climate and “health” of the organization (Gray & Laidlaw 2004: 428).

Okay & Okay (2009) study said that the institution’s publications are interesting and helpful” (29.1 %) has been negatively perceived by the participants. This is due to the publishing policy which causes the institution wide publications to be seen as “the manager’s trump” without declaring information or news for the employees. His study quoted that “Our meetings are well-organized” (28.6 %) is a negatively perceived statement by the participants. This is also parallel to the condition of hierarchical communication in which work and duty descriptions are given to subordinates in written form. However, every order or directive may not be always so clear and easy to understand. Similarly, participants have exhibited an obscure perception of “written directives and reports are short and clear” (21.3 %). Oral communication deficiency, written transmission of orders and directives to the subordinates and not arranging meetings for two-way communication cause the written directives not to be comprehended. “Attitudes toward communication in the PTT are basically healthy” (21.7 %) also reveals an unclear perception. This makes the result to be considered like that participants view those directives taken from their superiors as a communication activity.

A major study by Shockley-Zalabak and Ellis (2000) of 2,000 employees in 21 companies across 7 countries showed that the receipt of information was the factor that correlated most highly with job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. However, in many organizations employees are swamped by irrelevant information (especially by email) which they neither want nor need to receive. Rather they wish to receive information that is directly relevant to their job, and prefer to know where they can access other information if they need it (Meehan, 2013).

Purpose of this study is to examine whether communication pattern is influenced by the elements such as frequency of usage, healthiness, adequacy, effectiveness of channels and to what extent they would help in understanding the professionalism adopted by the organisations in communication.

Research Questions

In this study, the researcher investigated the following questions

1. With how many people the publics communicate regularly
2. Whether the communication is adequate?
3. What type of publications, reports are prepared?
4. Whether written directives are used and also how interesting and helpful the communication is.

Basing on the above, the researcher assessed the importance of communication at Sangam dairy the different channels of communication and how effective they are and how they have benefited the company. Sangam, a milk processing dairy was established in 1989, in cooperative sector in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh. With more than 1200 permanent employees and a strong marketing division the dairy has milk producers, milk buyers and procurement as well as marketing staff as stake holders. Since the organization is magnanimous in its output and potential for employment the researchers tried to find out the status of communication.

Objectives

The researcher tried

1. to find out as to what types of publications, reports, written directives are used by Sangam dairy management
2. to find out whether the channels of communication used by the company are interesting and helpful in communicating with their publics
3. to find out whether the communication is adequate for the publics.

Hypothesis

Basing on the literature the researchers have put forward two hypothesis which say that

1. adequacy of communication is significantly and positively related with the communication satisfaction of the respondents.
 2. frequency of communication is significantly and positively related with the communication satisfaction of the respondents.
- H8. Adequacy of communication mediates the relationship between communication satisfaction and job satisfaction of respondents.

Methodology

The study used quantitative analysis to understand the research paradigm for organizational communication as it helps to understand the communication interaction process deeply. Since the amount and frequency of communication by means of channels can be studied only by means of quantitative methods survey method was used in collecting relevant data on the channels of communication and their effectiveness in disseminating information to the public at the diary. For the sake of the study a sample of 250 people was randomly selected by means of purposive sampling to get rich information for in-depth analysis of the core issues mentioned above. With the help of CSQ which is “arguably the best measure of communication satisfaction in the organizational arena” (Clampitt and Downs, 1993) and Communication audits consistently showed the effectiveness of channels along with other variables. a questionnaire was designed for collection of data. A questionnaire was used as it easy to collect large quantities of data from considerable number of people who are working in the organization. The data was generated to establish the effectiveness of organizational communication channels used by Sangam to communicate with its Publics. The researcher administered questionnaires to a total of 250 members across all the four groups of stakeholders especially to those which included those from top management, employees and the external publics of the organization i.e. mainly in the production as well as marketing community. The data was processed by means of SPSS and the hypothesis were studied by means of the statistics such as Coefficient of correlation etc.

Data analysis

With regard to the adequacy of the communication in the organization, 84.6% of the respondents said that, there is adequacy, followed by no (8.5%), and can't say (6.8%) (Table 1).

Table 1

Percentage distribution of the respondents as per the adequacy of amount of communication

S.No		fr	%
1	Yes	198	84.6
2	No	20	8.5
3	Can't say	16	6.8
	Total	234	100

Management as well as individuals in organizations transmit messages through various channels such as face to face, written, and mediated channels (Deetz, 2001). When they were asked to respond about the adequacy of information received about various topics for communication, 63.7% of the respondents said that, it is effective followed by average (19.2%), and with regard to adequacy of information sent about various topics for communication, 65.8% of the respondents said that, it is effective followed by very much effective (13.2%). The status of follow up versus amount of information desired shows that 53.8% said that it is effective and very few 14.1% said it is very much effective. With regard to adequacy of information received from various sources 59% of the respondents said that, it is adequate, followed by very much adequate (14.1%). When asked about information received from various channels, 62% of the respondents said that it is adequate, followed by very much adequate (10.7%) and with regard to the adequacy of follow-up information, 49.6% said that, it is adequate, followed by very much adequate (12.4%). With regard to the adequacy of information in meetings, 59.4% of the respondents felt it is adequate followed by very much adequate (19.2%) and when asked other information for communication, 29.5% of the employees said it is adequate and only 3.4% said it is very much adequate (Table 2).

Table 2

Percentage distribution of the respondents according to adequacy of information

Sl. No	Variable	Very much adequate		Adequate		Average		Not adequate		Not at all adequate	
		fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%	fr	%
1	Information received about various topics	39	16.7	149	63.7	45	19.2	1	0.4	-	-
2	Information sent about various topics	31	13.2	154	65.8	49	20.9	-	-	-	-
3	Follow-up versus amount desired	33	14.1	126	53.8	74	31.6	1	0.4	-	-
4	Information received from various sources	33	14.1	138	59.0	56	23.9	7	3.0	-	-
5	Information received from various channels	25	10.7	145	62.0	55	23.5	6	2.6	3	1.3
6	Follow-up	29	12.4	116	49.6	83	35.5	5	2.1	1	0.4
7	Meetings	45	19.2	139	59.4	43	18.4	5	2.1	2	0.9
8	Others	8	3.4	69	29.5	121	51.7	13	5.6	23	9.8

The researchers have tried to study the status of various channels being used for the communication in the organization. With regard to the opinion about company’s publications 61.1% of the respondents said that the publications are interesting and helpful followed by can’t say (23.1%) and no (15.8%) (Table 3).

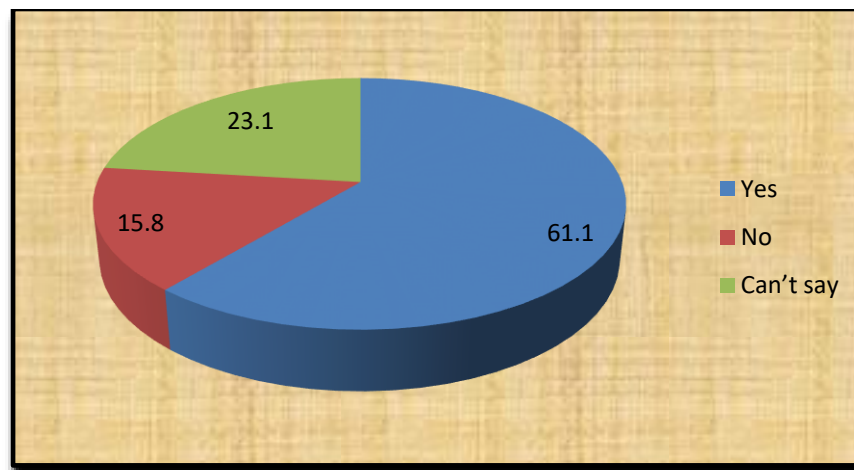
Table 3

Percentage distribution of the respondents as per the interest and helpfulness of company's publications

S.No		fr	%
1	Yes	143	61.1
2	No	37	15.8
3	Can't say	54	23.1
Total		234	100

Figure 1

Percentage distribution of the respondents as per the interest and helpfulness of company's publications



When the respondents were asked, whether the meetings are well organized or not, 93.2% have said that the meetings are well organized in the organization followed by can't say (3.8%) and no (3%) (Table 4).

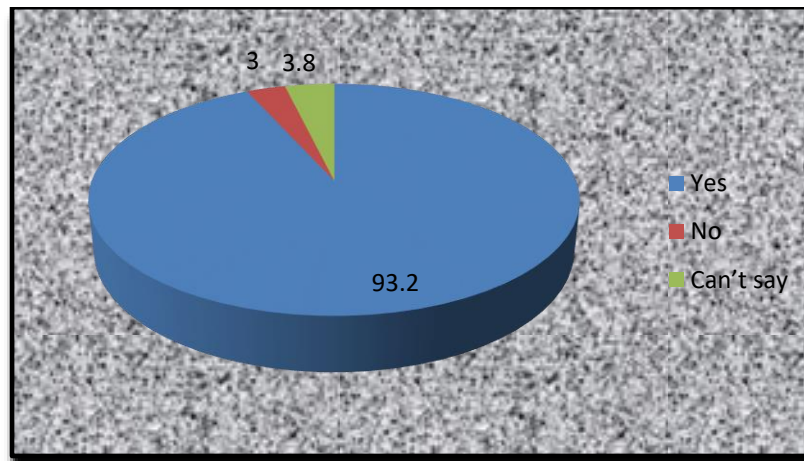
Table 4

Percentage distribution of the respondents about the meetings

S.No		fr	%
1	Yes	218	93.2
2	No	7	3.0
3	Can't say	9	3.8
Total		234	100

Figure 2

Percentage distribution of the respondents about organizing the meetings



When the sample were asked about the written directives and reports, out of 234 respondents, 94.9% said that, they are clear and concise followed by can't say (3.8%) and 1.3% answered negatively (Table 5).

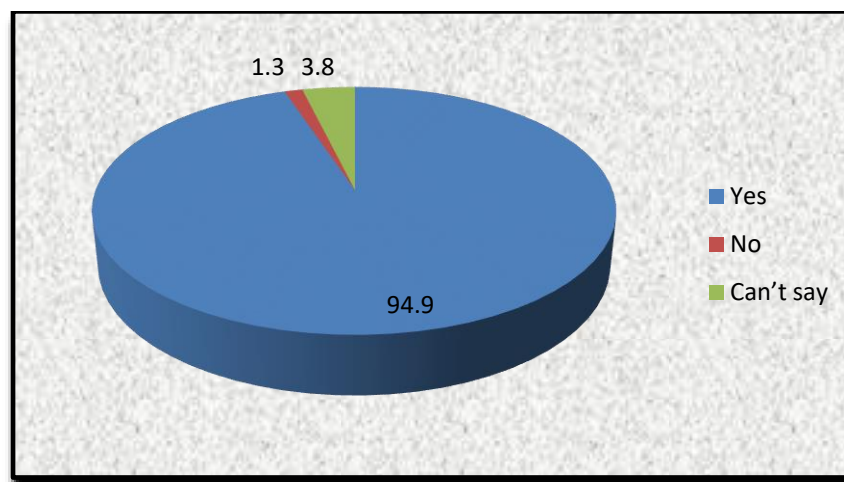
Table 5

Percentage distribution of the respondents, according to the clarity and conciseness of written directives and reports

S.No		fr	%
1	Yes	222	94.9
2	No	3	1.3
3	Can't say	9	3.8
	Total	234	100

Figure 3

Percentage distribution of the respondents, according to the clarity and conciseness of written directives and reports



With regard to the respondent's attitude towards communication in the organization, 82.5% of the respondents said that the communication in the organization is healthy, whereas, 12.4% said they can't say and answered as no (5.1%) (Table 6).

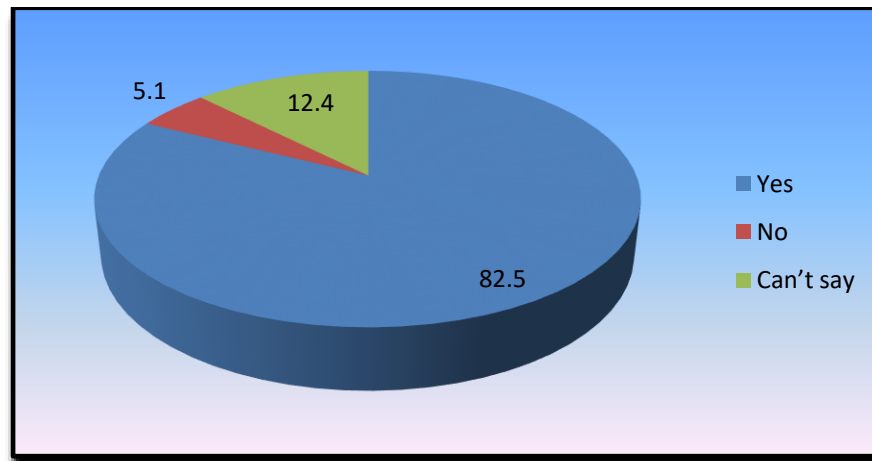
Table 6

Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the healthiness of communication

S.No		fr	%
1	Yes	193	82.5
2	No	12	5.1
3	Can't say	29	12.4
Total		234	100

Figure 4

Percentage distribution of the respondents according to the healthiness of communication



Conclusions

The researcher tried to ascertain the contribution of various channels and the adequacy of communication in the organisation by means of survey as well as the interviews. To understand the adequacy of information the researchers tried to find out the number of employees the respondents deal with regularly and found that among the sample 53% would interact with below 20 employees followed by 20-50 employees (40.6%) and around 6% interact with more than 50 employees.

Research undertaken by Foehrenbach and Ruch in the 1980s demonstrated an important link between an employee's satisfaction with organizational communication and the communication efforts of top management (Pincus, 1986). Not only the top management sometimes employees at other levels also should be taken in to confidence to get the things done. In this context, researcher tried to study with how many members the employees generally communicate with others. Study reveals that, respondents generally communicate with an average of 19.62 persons followed by 10.20 in peer group, 6.44 in sub-ordinates, 2.18 in superiors and at an average of 1.08 persons in top management.

In the context of the availability of channels including regular personal interactions the adequacy of information was also studied and from the study it is concluded that except few (15%) almost all the staff members felt that the communication provided in the organization is adequate.

When they were asked to respond about the adequacy of information received about various topics for communication and that information sent about various topics for communication is adequate, two thirds of the respondents said it is adequate. but in case of follow up versus amount desired only half of them found it adequate and little more than half said that information received from various sources is adequate and in case of information received from various channels more than half said that it is adequate.

Both of them showed that the company's publications are very limited. The manner in which the company publishes brochures, pamphlets and others also seems to be not very impressive. Hence, the respondents seem to be not much in favor of them. Only little more than half say they are interesting and helpful. As the interviews show the company's publications are very limited.

The manner in which the company publishes brochures, pamphlets and others rarely. Hence, the respondents seem to be not much in favor of them. Only little more than half say they are interesting and helpful.

But the respondents are mostly asked, whether the meetings are well organized or not, 92.8% have said that the meetings were well organized reflects the earlier opinion that the communication is highly structured. In a periodical manner i.e. for every ten days, two weeks, and for every month the staff would meet. Hence, they are regularly organized.

The employees of an organization would discuss about various issues in meetings and in this case 50.9% of the respondents rarely discussed personal issues in meetings 61.5% of the reviewed their work in meetings regularly, 31.2% of the respondents discussed about policies regularly. Exactly half of the respondents discussed problems at work regularly and one third would take up evaluation of performance in meetings normally. In the case of conflict settlements in meetings half of the respondents take up regularly. In exchanging their ideas 63.2% of the respondents regularly and more than half of the respondents very rarely discussed cultural issues in meetings.

Same is noticed with the written directives and reports. Almost all of them said that, they are clear and concise indicates the professionalism in the organization. Since the policies, problems are handled in written formats their role is acknowledged.

With regard to the respondent's attitude towards communication in the organization, not all say it is healthy and only 82.5% of the respondents said that the communication is healthy indicates that the atmosphere is not fully in favor of healthy communication and certainly the gaps need to be filled. The same opinion is also expressed about adequacy as only 84.6% of the respondents said that there is adequacy. This is also supporting the point that there is gap in the organization with regard to communication.

Table 7
Correlation with adequacy of communication and satisfaction

		Communication - Adequate	Overall satisfaction with communication	With top management	With superiors	With Peer group	With subordinates	With others
Communication - Adequate	Pearson Correlation	1						
Overall satisfaction with communication	Pearson Correlation	.321**	1					
With top management	Pearson Correlation	-.128	.061	1				
With superiors	Pearson Correlation	-.090	.050	.361**	1			
With Peer group	Pearson Correlation	-.076	.136*	-.017	.357**	1		
With subordinates	Pearson Correlation	-.028	.084	.064	.366**	.564**	1	
With others	Pearson Correlation	.024	.015	.113	.142*	.211**	.376**	1
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).								
* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).								

The correlation between adequacy of communication and communication satisfaction is significant ($r = 0.321$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 8
Correlation with number of employees and communication satisfaction

		Overall satisfaction with communication	Communication - Adequate	No. of employees in Dept	No. of employees in Top Management	No. of employees in Superiors	No. of employees in Peer group	No. of employees in Subordinates	No. of employees in others
Overall satisfaction with communication	Pearson Correlation	1							
Communication - Adequate	Pearson Correlation	.321**	1						
No. of employees in Dept	Pearson Correlation	-.043	-.096	1					
No. of employees in Top Management	Pearson Correlation	.023	-.057	.062	1				
No. of employees in Superiors	Pearson Correlation	.154*	.021	-.007	.399**	1			
No. of employees in Peer group	Pearson Correlation	-.024	.021	.055	.188**	.157*	1		
No. of employees in Subordinates	Pearson Correlation	.046	-.090	.208**	.232**	.268**	-.150*	1	
No. of employees in others	Pearson Correlation	.077	-.005	.196**	.060	.074	.004	.301**	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).									
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).									

The correlation between frequency of communication and communication satisfaction is also tested and found that, there is a significant relationship between frequency of communication and communication satisfaction in case of peer group only ($r = 0.136$, $p = 0.037 < 0.05$) observed, whereas in case of top management ($r = 0.061$, $p = 0.356 > 0.05$), superiors ($r = 0.050$, $p = 0.451 > 0.05$), and subordinates ($r = 0.084$, $p = 0.203 > 0.05$) no significant relation is noticed.

Basing on these conclusions the following recommendations are made for the improvement of communication in the organization.

1. With regard to publications, Sangam dairy regularly publishes pamphlets, brochures and other literature which are used extensively on special occasions. But the website is not updated regularly. It should vigorously promote information in the form of magazines. The format of pamphlets and brochures should be changed by incorporating creative inputs of text and visuals.
2. The format of reports, circulars and letters and the presentation of message seems to be very routine. They can be improved upon by changing the formats such as introduction of color paper, quality printing and creative inputs such as animation characters, visuals. The letter head itself can be changed with bright colors, logos, and taglines. Even the annual reports can be made more interesting in presenting the data in the form of tables, graphics and illustrations. To add transparency it can be placed in public domain by uploading in the websites regularly. The archives of the reports also can be maintained to provide ready reference to the media as well as public.
3. With regard to print media, since a large gap has been found in the dairy the management should concentrate in adopting printed material such as introduction of Bi weekly and monthly journals and also news letters, house journals, in which the employees shall be encouraged to exhibit their skills in form of writings and opinions. They would also help in conveying the information to all the employees at various levels. Company's publications can be improved and since it is the age of e- publications they may opt for e-newsletters and e- house journals as it would cut the cost and would be readily available to read whenever and wherever they wish.
4. Even the meetings need to be improved qualitatively and quantitatively. Not only the formal the informal meetings can be encouraged and instead of making them routine by changing the ambience they may be clubbed with little bit of entertainment and shift venue from indoors to outdoors and if possible to far of places of tourism and heritage importance.
5. The written directives and reports can also be improved by making them more creative and bring out in the form of hard as well as soft copies. They can as well be uploaded in the website which shall improve the availability and make them more transparent.

6. As all the publics don't opine that the communication is healthy the management has to imbibe healthiness in to the exercise. It should be unbiased, factual and uniform throughout all the departments and among all the levels of employees.

7. The number of people with whom the employees interact regularly shall also be promoted as it is necessary to improve the quality and also to resolve conflicts and generate new ideas. The volume and quality of feedback would also improve tremendously. To facilitate this formal and informal gatherings and get-togethers might be arranged by the managements also.

8. As of now the company mostly takes up PR activities in the form meetings only. They seem to be mostly one sided facilitating only one way communication. Hence, they should be organized in the form of two way communication where both the parties can share and exchange information. Inter departmental meetings inside the organization and frequent visits to the rural areas will help in getting connected to the wide network of external publics. The top management and superiors should make themselves available to the staff as it creates a healthy environment to exchange ideas and problems as well.

9. The format of reports, circulars and letters and the presentation of message seems to be very routine. They can be improved upon by changing the formats such as introduction of color paper, quality printing and creative inputs such as animation characters, visuals. The letter head itself can be changed with bright colors, logos, and taglines. Even the annual reports can be made more interesting in presenting the data in the form of tables, graphics and illustrations. To add transparency it can be placed in public domain by uploading in the websites regularly. The archives of the reports also can be maintained to provide ready reference to the media as well as public.

As observed by the researcher, most of the employees do not have an idea about newsletters and publications of the dairy. Instead of sending circulars to limited departments, their scope should be broadened. For example, when a particular employee or department does a commendable job a letter of appreciation can be sent to the concerned individuals as well as to the other departments also so that, the others also get motivated.

10. Inter departmental circulars should be promoted vigorously in the dairy and among its subsidiary units.

11. The new media such as e-mails and whatsapp groups can be opened and extended to the outside public also. Continuous updating of the information should be done to pass on information afresh.
12. The areas of interaction also can be extended to the publics. In the company the interaction is mostly need based and personal touch has been missing. Hence, instead of being a time bound program the information channel should be opened to the issues of personal nature and from public prospective also. Since the company is strongly routed in rural areas they can extend the services to majority villages in the form of spreading the knowledge about agriculture allied sector and technology transfer by regularly conducting awareness programs.
13. Only eighty percent of the respondents said that the communication is adequate. To make it hundred percent the company has to fill the gaps and take the advantage of all the opportunities to communicate to the people.

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