

Thought Patterns of Effective Organizational Communicators

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences between how effective and ineffective organizational communicators think about typical work situations. Five scenarios were developed. Twenty managers were asked to "solve" the "problems" while talking through their thought processes. Ten of the managers were deemed effective organizational communicators by top managers and ten less effective. The interviews were then content analyzed. The coding scheme involved 27 thought categories. After content analysis was completed, the identities of the effective and ineffective communicators was revealed to the researchers. Various statistical tests were then used to analyze the data.

The research suggested eight observations. First, it was possible to discern the managers underlying thought patterns that preceded the communication events. Second, self-report measures of communicative effectiveness and others' observations were congruent. Third, effective and ineffective communicators employ were equally consistent in their use of the thought categories. Fourth, effective and ineffective communicators shared many similar thought patterns. Fifth, effective communicators had a larger array or repertoire of possible approaches to the scenarios. Sixth, the effective communicator utilized more thought categories than the ineffective communicator. Seventh, effective communicators had a multidimensional view of the communication situation.

There are some rich parallels between the game of chess and communication. Wit, skill and desire distinguish grandmasters from novices. And, of course, grandmasters win more games. In the same way, effective communicators appear to have greater skills and desire, and they are more likely to achieve their goals. Yet, what is it that specifically distinguishes a grandmaster from a novice? An effective communicator from an ineffective one? Scholars have tried to answer this question for years. There has been much progress in regard to delineating the skills and motivations of effective communicators. Yet, the knowledge component remains largely unexplored. It is difficult to understand how grandmasters win by simply observing the moves they make. In particular, one needs to understand the reasoning process behind their moves. Hence, this study sought to explore the differences between the reasoning processes of effective organizational communicators and those deemed less effective.

Past Research

There seems to be general agreement on the meaning of the communication competence construct. Namely, competent communicators are effective in attaining their goals. The problem is that communicators frequently change their goals during interactions. Moreover, individuals' goals may be a function of their communicator style (e.g. Norton, 1983). These concerns make it challenging to conduct meaningful research.

Nevertheless, there have been a few attempts to propose theoretical models of the competence construct. Littlejohn and Jabusch (1982) developed a competence model based on four components: process understanding, interpersonal sensitivity, communication skills, and ethical responsibility. Effective communicators use all four components in order to achieve their goals. Spitzberg and Hecht (1984) proposed a model based on three

components: skill, motivation, and knowledge. Their research revealed that the skill and motivation components of the model were most predictive of communication satisfaction. The knowledge component did not significantly contribute to the prediction. Theories, of course, are refined by empirical investigations.

The richest empirical heritage deals with the skills and behaviors of competent communicators. In the mid 1960's, Argyris(1965) developed a list of skills for competent communicators that included openness, risk taking and concern for others. Bochner and Kelly(1974) defined the construct of competence while describing five specific skills needed by effective communicators: empathic communication, descriptiveness, owning, behavioral flexibility and self-disclosure. Wiemann(1977) developed a five component model of communication competence which included affiliation/support, social relaxation, empathy, behavioral flexibility, and interaction management. He was concerned with specific behavioral clues related to each dimension. For example, affiliation/support included cues such as eye behavior, speech choices, head nods and duration of speaking time.

Monge et al. (1982) developed a simpler model based on two factors: encoding and decoding. What is unique about this approach is that their easy to use instrumentation was specifically developed for the organizational context. Perotti(1987a) also focused on the organizational setting and identified six personality characteristics of competent communicators: affability, articulateness, confidence, versatility, ability to think on one's feet, and patience. She goes on to describe the specific behaviors associated with each characteristic.

Another focal point of research has been the knowledge of competent

communicators. McCroskey(1982) views competence as "the ability of the individual to demonstrate knowledge of situationally appropriate behavior" (p. 5). Duran(in press) had a similar view and focused his research on the adaptability of the communicator. He described adaptability in terms of three dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioral. An even more refined approach has been proposed by those who follow the theoretical tradition of the rules approach(Shimanoff, 1980). "Rules are guidelines for what is appropriate in a given situation"(Wellmon, 1988, p. 519). For example, Wellmon(1988) identified thirteen categories of rules used in the workplace which included "listening" and a "friendly, personable manner". Though Wellmon stops short of advocating specific rules, the findings suggest this is a viable option.

This brief examination of the literature suggests two critical observations. First, there has been very little investigation of the cognitive aspect of communicative competence. Most social scientists suspect that effective communicators analyze the context. Yet, how do communicators do this? We simply do not know. Theoretical models include a knowledge component but there have been few follow-up studies(e.g. Littlejohn, 1982; Spitzberg & Hecht,1984). Clearly most of the research has focused on the skill area. But how do individuals know when to employ certain skills? Most of the time, listening is a valuable skill. But at times, like during a crisis, taking time to listen to all relevant points of view can actually hinder effectiveness.

Second, most of the research has been in the area of interpersonal communication. With only a few notable exceptions, the empirical research and theoretical models have emerged out of interpersonal tradition. Most communication scholars would agree with Monge's et. al.(1982) assessment

that "communication competence is best conceived within the context of the situation" (p. 524). Hence, any applications of the competency research in an organizational setting should be carefully scrutinized. For instance, while it may be argued that openness is a valuable skill in interpersonal relationships, it may prove disastrous in an organization (Eisenberg & Witten, 1987).

Purpose

These observations suggest that a fruitful direction of research would be to explore the cognitive domain of communicator effectiveness in an organizational setting. In particular, the purpose of this research was to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the underlying thought patterns of organizational communicators?
- 2) What are the differences between the thought patterns of effective and ineffective organizational communicators?

Methods

Procedures

Six communication scenarios were developed that reflected typical organizational situations. There were three objectives in developing the scenarios:

- All participants could relate to the situations.
- The situations were fairly common in the organizational setting.
- There were no obvious right or wrong answers.

After pretesting the scenarios with five managers, one was dropped and the others refined. Therefore, the final study used the five scenarios in Table 1.

An interview guide was also pretested and revised at this time. We taped all interviews. We started each interview with following statement:

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the way managers make decisions in responding to communication problems. We are less concerned about "the solution" than we are with understanding the way you solve the problem. There is no "right" way to do this. We want to know how practicing managers solve these problems.

As soon as the problem has been read, we want you to solve the problem out loud, putting into words what you might ordinarily think to yourself. We are concerned about knowing **how** you reach a solution. Hence, we will be asking "how" and "what" questions at various times. Let me give you an example. If I had to chose between items on a menu, I might say: "Well the Mexican items look good. I really like the tacos but then I just ate Mexican last night - besides I'm watching my weight. Maybe I should look at the salads. No, I guess I'm really hungry. Maybe I'll try the Chicken Kiev - it's good but not overly fattening, the right price, and so on . . .

Then the interviewees received a copy of the first scenario and asked to read it aloud. The interviewer then asked the interviewee to talk about what they were thinking about as they read through it. We were less concerned with their solution than their underlying way of processing the information. The discussion was concluded by asking if the interviewee could relate to the situations. The entire process took from 30 minutes to one hour.

After the interviews, every interviewee was mailed a questionnaire that consisted of three parts:

- Wiemann Competency Scale
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Profile
- Demographic Information

The Wiemann Competency Scale was used to examine the construct validity of the "in-practice" definitions of communication competence (see Appendix 1). Wiemann's(1977) scale consists of 36 items and is considered one of the best tests of communicator competence based on self-perceptions. Perotti (1987b) said "the Wiemann approach has the longest history, with numerous reports of data against which to test one's study results" (p. 281). A score is based on summing all the items.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is a widely used measure of personality dispositions (Kroeger & Thuesen, 1988). Clearly, personality is one potentially confounding variable in examining communicative competence. The MBTI takes about 20 minutes to complete and is based on four scales:

Extroversion -Introversion (E - I)

The EI index is designed to reflect whether the person is oriented primarily toward the outer world(E) or toward the inner world (I). The extrovert scale ranged from 0 - 26 and introverts scale 0 -28.

Sensing - Intuition (S - N)

The SN index describes an interest in perceiving objects, events, and details in the present moment (S) or the possibilities, abstractions, and insight imagined in the future (N). The sensing scale ranged from 0 - 34 and the intuitive scale from 0 - 25.

Thinking - Feeling (T - F)

The TF index describes a preference for making rational judgments by using objective and logical analysis (T) or by weighing more person-centered values (F). The thinking scale ranged from 0 - 33 and the feeling from 0 - 21.

Judging - Perceiving (J - P)

The JP index describes a preference for organizing and controlling events of the outside world (J) or observing and

understanding such events (P). The judging scale ranged from 0 -28 and the perceiving from 0 -32.

The demographic information collected included the following areas: age, education, sex, years with company, and years in current position. Any of these variables might potentially confound the results.

Subject Selection

The twenty subjects were managers chosen by the presidents of four organizations:

Company A	Hospital	900 + employees	6 subjects
Company B	Food Distributor	600+ employees	6 subjects
Company C	Specialty Printing	400 + employees	4 subjects
Company D	Machinery Mfg.	250+ employees	4 subjects

The presidents were asked to choose the interviewees by selecting 50% to be highly effective organizational communicators and 50% less effective. In order to remove any bias, the researchers and interviewees were **not** told who was designated as effective and ineffective until after our analysis was completed.

The selection criteria was entirely left up to the discretion of the President. Why? Our assumption was that the best way to understand communicative competence in organizations was to explore the "in-practice" definitions used on the job. There are a wide variety of definitions in the literature(e.g. Parks, 1977; Cushman & Fiske, 1976). However, many of the operationalizations are not context sensitive. Therefore, we felt it was more appropriate to use the "in-practice" definitions.

Data Analysis

Ten of the twenty tapes were randomly selected for review and transcription. Content analysis procedures were used to develop a system to

categorize the thought patterns of the interviewees (Holsti, 1969). Two researchers independently constructed category systems. Differences were reconciled and the result was a 27 category system (see Table 2).

The 20 tapes of the interviews were then content analyzed. A coding sheet was developed that allowed the researchers to check off a category if it applied. Each situation was analyzed using the same 27 category system. Another researcher independently analyzed the same tape. Reliability was determined by comparing the number of coding agreements between the two judges.¹ In all cases the reliability was 95% or greater.

Measures

Three critical measures were used to organize and analyze the data: repertoire usage, aggregate usage, and stability.

Repertoire usage refers to the total number of thought categories used at least once by the interviewees. The score could range between 0 and 27. Item repertoire usage refers to the use of any specific thought category by the subjects. Either the subject used the category (1) or did not (0) in any of the situations.

Aggregate usage refers to the sum total usage of all thought categories across all five situations. A subject's score could range between 0 and 135 (5 scenarios X 27 categories). Item aggregate usage was computed by summing the number of times a specific thought category was used in all five situations. Theoretically the score could range between zero and five.

Stability refers to the regularity with which a subject used a thought category. Item stability was computed by counting the number of times each participant used a specific thought category within the five situations. The maximum category stability rating was 5 times out of 5 situations or 1.0. The minimum was 1 out of five or .20. Thought categories that were not used

by a communicator were not considered in the calculation. The stability score was then computed by summing all the item stability scores and dividing by the repertoire usage score (number of categories used). Hence, stability scores could range between 0 and 1.

Once these calculations were made, we asked top management to reveal the identities of the "effective" and "ineffective" communicators. At this time, these managers were briefly asked to reveal their rationale for choosing the interviewees.

Statistical Tests

T-tests ($p < .05$) were used to examine the differences between "effective" and "ineffective" communicators for the following concerns: repertoire usage, aggregate usage, stability, Wiemann scale, Myers-Briggs Inventory, and the demographics. ANOVA tests were used to analyze differences between the four companies on the critical measures.

When the T-tests proved significant ($p < .05$) for any of the three critical measures (Stability, Aggregate Usage, Repertoire Usage), a discriminant analysis was performed. This technique is "used to classify individuals into one of two or more alternative groups (or populations) on the basis of a set of measurements. The populations are known to be distinct, and each individual belongs to one of them. These techniques can also be used to identify which variables contribute to making the classification" (Afifi & Clark, 1984, p. 247).

A forward stepwise algorithm was used with a F-to-enter criterion (Kleinbaum & Kupper, 1978). The classification tables, overall F values and the associated significance levels reported are those obtained when the stepping procedure was terminated. The overall F value reported is the approximation to Wilk's lambda (Jennrich, 1977). No forcing of variables was

done.

Results

The Wiemann scale showed that there was a significant difference between those designated "effective" and "ineffective" communicators by those in top management. The ten "Effective" communicators had an average score of 251.0 compared to an average of 221.4 for "ineffective" communicators ($p = .0171$). When the executives were queried about their selection criteria, two themes emerged: oral communication skills and group skills (see Table 3). These are the kinds of issues addressed in the Wiemann scale. These findings appear to indicate that there is construct validity to our designations of "effective" and "ineffective" organizational communicators.

As Table 3 shows there were significant differences between the effective and ineffective communicators in terms of repertoire usage and aggregate usage. The effective communicators generally had a larger repertoire ($X = 18.7$) than the ineffective communicators ($X = 15.5$). This means that those managers deemed effective communicators had a larger array of potential thought categories to employ in any given situation. But which particular categories were they more likely to have in their repertoire?

All 10 of the effective communicators had category #12 ("broke the problem down into smaller units") in their repertoire, while only five of the ineffective had this category in their repertoire. Likewise, five of the effective communicators "considered possible objections or problems with tentative solution" (category #17), while only one ineffective communicator did so. Indeed, the discriminant analysis revealed that category #12 and #17 were the most important classification variables. In fact, 75% of the

subjects could be correctly classified on the basis of this single item (see Table 4). No other categories had significant F-to-enter values.

As might be expected, effective communicators had a larger aggregate usage score than their ineffective counterparts. The effective communicators used an average of 37.3 categories across all five situations compared to an average of 27.6 for the ineffective (see Table 3). Which specific categories can account for this difference?

Once again, the discriminant analysis isolated category #12 (breaking problems down into component parts) as the most important classification variable. Indeed, 75% of the interviewees could be correctly classified on the basis of this single item (see Table 5). Effective communicators on the average used this category 1.1 times over the five situations, while the ineffective communicators used it only .5 times. No other categories had significant F-to-enter values, including #17.

The T-test revealed no differences between the stability scores of the effective and ineffective communicators. Effective communicators were using any given thought category in their repertoire on the average two times out of the five situations. Ineffective communicators had a similar usage pattern.

Table 6 shows the impact of the demographics on the study. Age, education, and years in a position proved to be nonsignificant differences. However, the average number of years with the company proved significant. In general, the less years with the company, the more effective the communicators were deemed to be.

Out of the 10 effective communicators, 5 were male and 5 were female. Out of the 10 ineffective communicators, 7 were male and 3 were female. As Table 7 shows, there were some significant gender differences on the

three critical factors, however the Wiemann scale revealed no such significant differences.

The Myers-Briggs profile proved interesting. As might be expected, effective communicators had higher scores on the extroversion scale. Effective communicators also tended to score higher on the Intuition scale (see Table 8). One of the problems with interpretation of these alternative explanations is that conducting this number of T-test increases the probability of Type 2 error is increased. In future studies we will examine these variables in more depth.

As Table 9 shows the ANOVA revealed no significant differences based on the organization type.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the differences between how effective and ineffective organizational communicators think about typical work situations. The research suggests eight observations.

First, it was possible to discern the managers underlying thought patterns that preceded the communication events. Without exception, participants were able to articulate the thought processes they were experiencing. Table 2 presents the 27 categories of patterned thoughts that were distilled from the interviews. These categories provide a basis for a more refined understanding of the "knowledge" component of effective communication. In particular, these categories suggest something beyond discerning the appropriate rules for a given organization. One of the common criticisms of the rules theorists has been the lack of generalizability across situations (e.g. Schimanoff, 1980). The data from this study suggests that theorists **can** generalize about certain thought processes across organizational settings. Perhaps, an understanding of the unique

organizational rules actually emerges from these thought patterns. In this sense, the categories may be suggesting a kind of deep structure and the rules become the surface structure.

Second, self-report measures of communicative effectiveness and others' observations were congruent. The results of the Wiemann survey and the in-practice definitions of effective communication used by the key executives were similar. The ten people designated as effective communicators using the "in-practice" definition scored significantly higher on the Wiemann survey than the ten people designated as ineffective communicators. This result challenges the old notion of self-reports not being a reliable means of evaluation. Perotti (1987b) stated that "it is highly questionable to use self-report methods for determining communication competence" (p.10). The findings of this research question that statement.

Third, effective and ineffective communicators employed about the same stability in their use of thought categories. One might think stability would be higher for an effective communicator than an ineffective communicator. Not true. The results showed that effective communicators used a given thought category 40% of the time or twice out of the five situations, on the average. Ineffective communicators had approximately the same results. The effective communicator's stability score was .3944 compared to the ineffective communicator's .3542. We can surmise, then, that effective communicators do not use a more stable set of categories than ineffective communicators.

Theoretically, one could argue that ineffective communicators employ the infamous "law of the hammer" in which they pound on everything in sight because it's the only tool available. Thus, ineffective communicators would

continue to use the same thought categories regardless of the appropriateness for a situation. But the findings do not support this view.

On the other hand, one could argue that effective communicators are like skilled freethrow shooters in that they go through the same preparatory rituals before shooting the basketball. Apparently, skilled communicators are not thinking about every problem with the same cognitive template.

This implies that both the effective and ineffective communicators are adapting and changing their behavior at about the same frequency in all situations. This finding suggests that the situational view of communicative competence needs to be refined. To merely say that effective communicators are better at adapting to situations is somewhat misleading. Less effective communicators adapt, as well. But they may be do so in significantly different ways.

Fourth, effective and ineffective communicators shared many similar thought patterns. For many categories, there were no significant differences between the thought patterns used by the effective and the ineffective communicators. For instance, category #27 "mentions or implies that key relationships/roles are defined" was used almost as often by the ineffective communicator as the effective communicator. This implies that the conception of training for the ineffective communicators may have to change. It is not enough to simply say in a training seminar that managers need to consider key relationships when communicating. Moreover, future researchers might seek to explicitly determine what are the differences, if any, between the way effective and ineffective communicators think about organizational relationships.

Fifth, effective communicators had a larger array of possible approaches to a problem. Effective communicators had a larger

repertoire of thought categories at their disposal than ineffective communicators. Ineffective communicators had an average of 15.5 thought categories compared to effective communicators' 18.7 (see Table 3). We can infer from this that the more approaches communicators have at their disposal, the more effective they will be at communicating. Training should attempt to give the communicators a broader perspective and focus on expanding the number of possible thought categories at their disposal. This effort would enlarge their repertoire and hopefully increase their effectiveness.

Sixth, the effective communicators utilized more thought categories than the ineffective communicator. The effective communicators had an average aggregate usage of 37.3 compared to 27.6 for the ineffective communicators. Recall that the aggregate score was computed by summing the total number of categories used by the communicator in the 5 situations. In this case, more is better. The implication is that the more thought categories communicators use, the more effectively they communicate. Communication is complex and effective communicators recognize this. They seek to reconcile the inherent tensions in any situation. For example, the timing of the interaction may clash with the standard organizational procedures. A less effective communicator may only consider the standard organizational procedure.

Seventh, effective communicators saw more dimensions in the scenarios than their ineffective counterparts. The evidence from both the repertoire and aggregate scores suggested that the effective communicators had a more complex view of the organizational "problems" than the ineffective communicators. The novice treats issues more simply than does the expert. Apparently, the effective communicator sees more

complexity in a situation and breaks down the problem into smaller units. This suggests that teachers and consultants would be well-advised to teach people to break down problems into component parts. For example, one of the effective communicators shared her approach to one of the situations:

The first process that would be happening would be more emotion than anything planned. I'd be experiencing some frustration and anger. I would be wondering if there is a problem. I would be telling myself, don't overact and then I would be thinking about meetings I may be having with Sandy in terms of her evaluation. I would be making a decision about how I want to approach this. Most likely in the next situation, I'd take corrective action . . .
(sic)

In contrast, an ineffective communicator shared his thoughts in this way:

Well, I guess the thing that's going through my head is that the review meeting is as much my responsibility as it is his. I'm going to put some preparation time into the things I know I was supposed to do and the things I know I've done to be ready to talk about that at the meeting. That's about it. (sic)

The effective communicator indicated that she was breaking the problem into smaller parts by using the words "first, then, and next." The ineffective communicator had a more simplistic approach to the situation and signaled that approach by concluding with, "That's about it."

The effective communicator also looks beyond solutions. It is not that the effective or ineffective communicator considers more solutions. Apparently, it is something that occurs in the analysis of the problem. It is not consideration or non-consideration of relationships. It is something else. The effective communicator considers potential pitfalls or objections to a

solution and therefore is prepared to handle the possible reactions. The implication for training is that we need to teach people to go one layer deeper and consider the impact of their solutions on others.

Eighth, there were some significant limitations to the research design. The sample was not large and the generalizability of the findings may be limited. The focus of the research was **prior to** the communication event rather than **during** the event. Clearly, one of the major differences between effective and ineffective communicators may be how they process information during the interaction. The study also suggested that personality type, length of employment, and gender may have confounded the results. All studies have limitations. However, many of these concerns can be effectively dealt with in further research.

Conclusions

It may be difficult to holistically conceptualize the findings of the study. The example in Illustration 1 captures the essence of this study. Compare the activities of the "A" student versus the "C" student listed below. Either student can engage in any of the four activities during the five days of the week. An X indicates which activities the student used on a specific day of the week. The fraction shows how many days out of the five the student engaged in the activity. The "A" student had of total of four different activities during the five day period (Repertoire Usage = 4). The "C" student only had two different types of activities (Repertoire Usage = 2). Moreover, the "A" student had a total of eight activities over the five day period (Aggregate Usage = 8), while the "C" student had an only four activities (Aggregate Usage = 4). However, the regularity with which the students perform the activities in their repertoire is identical (Stability = .4). In

short, the "A" student draws from more activities and does those activities more often but not with more consistency than the "C" student.

Likewise, in order to get a clear view of effective communicators, we must look their thought repertoire as well as their usage patterns. This study legitimizes communication training beyond skill building. It suggests that trainers need to share with managers how to think about "communication problems". Employees need to know how to break communicative situations into smaller units as well as how to anticipate possible objections to their plans. To researchers, the study provides some useful methods that could be employed in other studies. The study showed it is possible for interviewees to articulate their thought processes and that researchers can analyze those patterns. Moreover, the scores calculated could prove to be useful procedures in future research. Finally, theorists should find this study helpful in more precisely defining the kind of knowledge that competent communicators use in coping with specific situations. The study may may not have told us the secrets of the grandmasters but we certainly have a hint about how they think.

Note 1: Reliability was calculated using Holsti's (1969) formula:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2 \times M}{N_1 + N_2}$$

M = Number of coding decisions on which there was agreement by both judges

N₁ = Total number of coding decisions by Judge 1

N₂ = Total number of coding decisions by Judge 2

Illustration 1
Example of Critical Scores

<u>Activities</u>	<u>"A" Student (Stab.)</u>					<u>"C" Student (Stab.)</u>					
	M	T	W	R	F	M	T	W	R	F	
1. attends class	x	x	x			(3/5)	x	x	x		(3/5)
2. takes notes	x		x			(2/5)					
3. reads book	x	x				(2/5)			x		(1/5)
4. rewrites notes	x					(1/5)					
Total:						8/5					4/5

Repertoire score: "A" student uses 4 activities
"C" student uses 2 activities

Aggregate score: "A" student has a score of 8
"C" student has a score of 4

Stability score: "A" student has a score of .4 (8/5 divided by 4 activities)
"C" student has a score of .4 (4/5 divided by 2 activities)

Table 1
Scenarios Used for Interviews

Situation 1

Your secretary has been working for you for over a year. The quality of Lee's work has been excellent, and you would like to communicate this information.

Situation 2

Your annual evaluation meeting with your manager is in one month. You believe that you deserve a raise, and intend to communicate this in the meeting.

Situation 3

Sandy, your subordinate, has been coming to work late, has been taking long lunches, and has been failing to meet deadlines to which you both agreed, Sandy's co-worker mentioned to you that, at a recent off-site meeting, Sandy appeared to be intoxicated at a cocktail party and came late to scheduled morning meetings. Sandy's regular six-month evaluation meeting with you is in a week.

Situation 4

You have been assigned to work on a special project to study the feasibility of adding a new product or service to your organization. Others who make up this project team are from different departments but from the same level of the organization. Sean has been assigned as team leader. After two meetings, it appears to you that another team member, Bobby, is disruptive to the group. Your next meeting is tomorrow.

Situation 5

You have been asked by your manager to implement in your department a policy in which you have had no input and with which you disagree.

Table 2
Thought Category System

1. Mentions or implies a decision to determine who should handle the problem.

"Should I talk to her, or should her boss do it?"

2. Mentions or implies possible scenarios.

"If I don't say anything, it might get worse. If I do, she might get angry."

3. Mentions or implies that more than one alternative solution was considered.

"I could tell them I don't like the policy either. Another alternative is to pretend I support it all the way."

4. Mentions or implies a decision to consider how others (excluding key players) think.

"I wonder what the human resource director would think?"

5. Mentions or implies a decision to get more information.

"I would want to know more about her attendance record for the last year."

6. Mentions or implies a decision to organize a sequence of steps to approach the situation.

"First, I would check out the priorities with the top manager and then find out more about each member of the team."

7. Mentions or implies that consideration was given to the medium of communication.

"I think it is important that I talk with her face-to-face."

8. Mentions or implies that key terms are defined.

"I would want to know just what is meant by feasibility."

9. Mentions or implies a decision to formally document or not document the situation.

"I would follow-up the conversation with a written report for her personnel file."

10. Mentions or implies a decision concerning the formality of the interaction.

"At her next official performance evaluation, I would tell her I like her work."

11. Mentions or implies a decision to consult others (excluding key players).

"I would probably ask the Human Resource Director for advice."

12. Mentions or implies a decision to break down the problem into smaller units.

"I probably need to consider her records. I will want to talk with the manager she had before me. I'd also think about the appropriate channel."

13. Mentions or implies a decision to confront a key individual involved in the situation.

"I would talk directly to her the very next morning."

14. Mentions or implies an acknowledgement of his/her emotional state.

"I would be real irritated by having to ask for a raise."

15. Mentions or implies a standard organizational procedure for handling the situation.

"I might go through the first step of the disciplinary procedure."

16. Mentions or implies consideration of a key individual's point of view.

"From her perspective, she might not think anything is wrong."

17. Mentions or implies possible objections or problems with tentative solutions.

"If I pretend to like the policy, they'll see straight through me."

18. Mentions or implies the consideration of timing.

"Why hasn't she been told this throughout the last year?"

19. Mentions or implies a personal preference of handling the situation.

"I just don't like to confront people like that."

20. Mentions or implies consideration is given to how another individual (excluding key players) might handle the situation.

"Her old boss would never have put up with this."

21. Mentions or implies consideration of the seriousness of the problem or situation (compared to some standard).

"Alcohol on the job is a major offense compared to showing up late."

22. Mentions or implies consideration as to the degree of directness or indirectness.

"I don't think I'd come right out and say that."

23. Mentions or implies that a purpose has been formed.

"One way or another, I need to get that raise."

24. Mentions or implies that consideration is given to how similar situations have been handled in the past.

"I had an employee situation similar to this one at my last job."

25. Mentions or implies that the current situation is being compared to some desired state.

"The team is supposed to work together toward a common goal."

26. Mentions or implies that the situation is being viewed as impacting a bigger organizational picture or situation.

"With that kind of performance, this company won't be in business for long."

27. Mentions or implies that key relationships/roles are defined.

"Since I am her boss, it is my responsibility to give her feedback."

Table 3
T-tests on Critical Variables

Measures	Effective		Ineffective		P-Value	df
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Repertoire Usage	18.7	(3.6)	15.5	(2.4)	.03	1,18
Aggregate Usage	37.3	(10.6)	27.6	(6.7)	.03	1,18
Stability	.39	(.07)	.35	(.05)	.16	1,18
Wiemann	251.0	(21.6)	221.4	(25.2)	.02	1,18

Table 4
Discriminant Analysis of Item Repertoire Scores

	Classification by Disc. Analysis		
	% Correct	Effective	Ineffective
Actual Effective	100.0	10	0
Actual Ineffective	50.0	5	5
Total	75.0	15	5
Wilk's Lambda = .53	Approximate F = 7.4	df = 2,17	

Table 5
Discriminant Analysis of Item Aggregate Scores

	Classification by Disc. Analysis		
	% Correct	Effective	Ineffective
Actual Effective	100.0	10	0
Actual Ineffective	50.0	5	5
Total	75.0	15	5
Wilk's Lambda = .65	Approximate F = 9.53	df = 1,18	

Table 6
Means for Demographics

Measures	Effective		Ineffective		P-Value	df
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)		
Age	3.22	(.97)	3.88	(1.05)	.18	1,18
Position	5.1	(5.79)	11.5	(8.33)	.09	1,18
Yrs./Co.	11.2	(6.59)	21.2	(11.26)	.04	1,18
Education	4.5	(1.23)	4.4	(1.33)	.86	1,18

Table 7
Critical Measures by Gender

Measures	Male	Female	P-Value	df
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Repertoire	15.83 (3.24)	19.0 (2.77)	.03	1,18
Aggregate	27.9 (8.67)	39.12 (8.25)	.01	1,18
Stability	.35 (.05)	.41 (.05)	.04	1,18
Wiemann	233.3 (24.4)	239.87(32.28)	.64	1,18

Table 8
Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator (T-test)

Measures	Effective	Ineffective	P-Value	df
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)		
Extrovert	20.33 (6.72)	11.5 (7.05)	.01	1,18
Introvert	9.77 (5.97)	13.66 (5.22)	.16	1,18
Sensing	10.11 (19.09)	16.44 (10.35)	.40	1,18
Intuitive	27.33 (21.04)	7.88 (6.00)	.02	1,18
Thinking	17.11 (6.05)	15.66 (9.81)	.71	1,18
Feeling	14.11 (25.41)	7.77 (6.55)	.49	1,18
Judging	23.11 (18.4)	16.55 (4.63)	.33	1,18
Perceptive	19.33 (27.28)	9.77 (3.99)	.33	1,18

Table 9
Critical Measures by Company (ANOVA)

	A	B	C	D	P-value
	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	Mean (S.D.)	
Wiemann	241.6 (42.78)	228.0 (20.45)	235.2 (15.43)	240.7 (28.83)	.8828
Repertoire	17.3 (3.44)	18.8 (3.12)	14.0 (3.36)	17.2 (2.5)	.1728
Stability	.376 (.033)	.346 (.073)	.356 (.061)	.433 (.068)	.1799
Aggregate	33.0 (9.03)	33.33 (11.89)	25.25 (8.84)	37.5 (8.81)	.3910

Appendix 1
Wiemann Communication Instrument

Please indicate your degree of agreement with the following statements on a 0-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 scale by placing the appropriate number in the blank space provided. Let 0 represent "no" agreement, 5 represent "average" degree of agreement, and 10 a "high" degree of agreement.

- _____ 1. I find it easy to get along with others.
- _____ 2. I can adapt to changing situations.
- _____ 3. I treat people as individuals.
- _____ 4. I frequently interrupt the persons I am talking with.
- _____ 5. I am "rewarding" to talk to.
- _____ 6. I can deal with others effectively.
- _____ 7. I am a good listener.
- _____ 8. My personal relations are cold and distant.
- _____ 9. I am easy to talk to.
- _____ 10. I won't argue with someone to just prove I am right.
- _____ 11. My conversation behavior is not "smooth".
- _____ 12. I ignore other people's feelings.
- _____ 13. I generally know how others feel.
- _____ 14. I let others know I understand them.
- _____ 15. I understand other people.
- _____ 16. I am relaxed and comfortable when speaking.

- _____ 17. I listen to what people say to me.
- _____ 18. I like to be close and personal with people.
- _____ 19. I generally know what type of behavior is appropriate in any given situation.
- _____ 20. I do not make unusual demands on my friends.
- _____ 21. I am an effective conversationalist.
- _____ 22. I am supportive of others.
- _____ 23. I do not mind meeting strangers.
- _____ 24. I can easily put myself in another person's shoes.
- _____ 25. I pay attention to the conversation.
- _____ 26. I am generally relaxed when conversing with a new acquaintance.
- _____ 27. I am interested in what the person I am talking with has to say.
- _____ 28. I don't follow the conversation very well.
- _____ 29. I enjoy social gatherings where I can meet new people.
- _____ 30. I am a likable person.
- _____ 31. I am flexible.
- _____ 32. I not afraid to speak with people in authority.
- _____ 33. People can go to me with their problems.
- _____ 34. I generally say the right things at the right time.
- _____ 35. I like to use my voice and body expressively.

_____ 36. I am sensitive to others.

We ask for the following information for descriptive purposes only.

37. What is your age?

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| _____ a) under 20 | _____ d) 40-49 |
| _____ b) 21-29 | _____ e) 50-59 |
| _____ c) 30-39 | _____ f) 60 + |

38. How long have you been in your current position?

_____ Years

39. How long have you worked for the organization?

_____ Years

40. Please check the space which best indicates your formal education.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| _____ a) Did not finish high school | _____ d) Specialized/professional degree |
| _____ b) High School | _____ e) College degree |
| _____ c) Completed some college | _____ f) Graduate degree |

Appendix 2
"In-Practice" Definition of Effective Communicator

Key Executive A:

"I selected the people based upon personal observation: their ability to get information across, their ability to listen effectively and feedback from others. For example, an ineffective person is one about whom we had complaints from people who work with him about his style and ability to listen. Problems were generated because of their communication style and ability to listen and solve problems with the work group."

Key Executive B:

"I used personal experience and talking with other people about their perception. The criteria we used were numbers of staff issues that come up, how satisfied employees seemed to be with their communication and how well they expressed themselves in groups."

Key Executive C:

"I based my decision more on oral communication. The ineffective people, when they talked in a meeting or face-to-face, seemed to take off in some direction but I could never quite keep up with them or follow them. Their organization of thoughts or ideas was very poor. It was almost just the opposite with the other two (effective communicators). They always seemed so well organized and thought out and not having to explain what they just told you. They were good listeners, as well. If you say something back in response, they could pick up your meaning quickly and go from there. Good listening skills. With the other two, (ineffective) I got the feeling they heard, but the words didn't come through. Simple words and concepts would get turned around."

Key Executive D:

"I based my decision on personal observation and feedback from others. The ineffective communicators were not effective talking in front of groups. The effective were well liked by peers, the department knows what is going on, they have regular meetings and spend time communicating."

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