Skills and Values in Business Communication

Soft Skills in the Workplace

- Soft skills are non-technical skills that describe how you work and interact with others.

- Soft skills apply to all kinds of jobs and careers. For example, a professor and an investment manager can both be great communicators and have exceptional leadership skills, although how those skills translate into their professions can look quite different. No matter what field you're interested in, these skills won't just come in handy — they'll be integral to your success at a company.

- Top soft skills are teamwork, attention to detail, time management, organization, verbal and written communication, leadership, emotional intelligence, adaptability/flexibility, problem-solving/conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills ... Unfortunately, all too often, these personality traits are overlooked [by applicants]. But they play a role in each job out there.

Skills and Values in Business Communication

- Most interactions with other people require some level of soft skills. We use soft skills everyday at work and developing these soft skills will help you win more business and accelerate your career progression. On the other hand, a lack of soft skills can limit your potential, or even be the downfall of your business. By developing strong leadership, delegation, teamwork, and communication abilities, you can run projects more smoothly, deliver results that please everyone, and even positively influence your personal life by improving how you interact with others. The importance of soft skills:

➢ Career progression and promotion: It's become vital to develop these(soft skills) skills if you want to progress in your career as they will set you apart from others at the interview and on the job.

➢ The modern workplace is interpersonal: Skills such as active listening, collaboration, presenting ideas and communicating with colleagues are all highly valued in the modern workplace. Strong soft skills ensure a productive, collaborative and healthy work environment, all crucial attributes for organizations in an increasingly competitive world.

➢Customers and clients demand soft skills: Consumers these days have a huge number of choices of where to buy from, bought about by the internet and smartphones. For these consumers, convenience and low prices are easy to come by, so customer service is often what influences the choice to use a particular business. The ability to communicate at a human level with customers is therefore a vital factor in an organization's success.

➢The future workplace will rely on soft skill: As the cost of robots decreases and the performance of artificial intelligence improves, jobs such as manufacturing line workers, will become automated. Traditional skills like teamwork, communication and critical thinking will be more important than ever.

➢Soft skills are hard to automate: Following on from the previous point, soft skills such as emotional intelligence are hard to automate and unlikely to become automated anytime soon. This means they're expected to become more desirable in the near future. However soft skills can be difficult to teach and track improvements on. Companies such as Virtual Speech are tackling this by using VR as a way to improve soft skills.

➢Soft skills are in high demand by recruiters: Most in-demand soft skills (from LinkedIn research): Communication, Organisation, Teamwork, Critical thinking, Social skills, Creativity, Interpersonal communication, Adaptability.

Identifying Communication Skill Sets

- Organizational communication is defined as the channels and forms of communication in which organizations such as corporations, non-profits, and governmental bodies engage, including both the internal communications that occur within an organization, and external-facing communications between an organization and its stakeholders. Optimizing organizational communication can have a powerful impact on the efficacy of an organization. Individuals with a bachelor's and/or master's in organizational communication can work in human resources, employee training and management, public relations and public affairs, marketing, communications consulting, media management, policy and advocacy, and research and instruction, among other areas.

- Oral, written and electronic are the primary media of communication used in an organization. Apart from these skills one needs to develop the following communication skills.

➢ Receiving and giving instructions

➢ Listening

➢ Networking

➢ Negotiating

➢ Working in Teams

➢ Problem-solving

Interpersonal Communication Skills

- Interpersonal communication involves the information, ideas, and feelings being exchanged verbally or non-verbally between two or more people. Face-to-face communication often involves hearing, seeing, and feeling body language, facial expressions, and gestures. In other terms, Interpersonal communication is exchanging information, meaning, feelings, and opinions between two or more people via verbal and non-verbal means. Although we mentioned "face-to-face" communication previously, today's technology compels us to expand its definition to include media such as phone calls and online messaging.

- There are a number of qualities that help develop interpersonal communication skills: empathy, assertiveness, and cultural sensitivity. The following are considered as important aspects of interpersonal communication:

➢Active Listening

➢Regulating Skills

➢Building Rapport

➢Emotional Control

➢Building Trust

Leadership Communication Skills

- Leadership communication is a type of communication most commonly used by leaders to relay information about the company's culture, core values, mission, and crucial messages to build trust and encourage employees. In practice, it involves delivering a shared vision and inspiring others to buy into that vision. It is describing the values inherent to the company and showing how the company is living up to that promise. With clear communication, leaders can navigate their organization through all types of changes, big or small. Leadership communication also builds trust within the organization, both between leaders and employees and between employees and the organization itself. By clarifying company culture and structure, it helps employees to align better within the organization. This communication then inspires open dialogue throughout the company, promotes collaboration, teamwork, and honest feedback. Finally, it helps prevent miscommunications within the organization and ensures that all employees are kept up to date with important information.

- The following are identified as the important traits of leadership communication:

➢Adapting appropriate communication styles

➢Active listening

➢Openness and transparency

➢Ability to ask questions

➢Receiving and implementing feedback

➢Empathy

Etiquette and Professionalism

- Etiquette refers to a set of unwritten rules of conduct for social interactions; it is more about the dos and don'ts that someone is expected to follow in a specific cultural setting. In other words, etiquette includes the manners in which we conduct ourselves in a social setting. There are basically three aspects of etiquette-respect, courtesy, and common sense.

- Professionalism refers to competence, skills and the expertise expected in a profession.

- In professional world etiquette may differ according to the culture.

Elements of Professionalism

- The workforce would be inconsistent, unpredictable and chaotic without professionalism, and achieving objectives would be nearly impossible. Fortunately, there are certain standards by which companies operate, and the elements of professionalism are a large part of them. If you operate within these norms of professionalism, you have a better chance of excelling in your career.

➢Appearance

➢Expertise and competence

➢Accountability

➢Consistency

➢Integrity

Ethical Values

- Ethics refers to our ability to differentiate right from wrong and ethical values concern our ability and willingness to do the right thing. It requires us to go beyond our self-interest and immediate gain to "respect, protect, serve, and help others."

- The NCA credo (US)underlines the general principles of ethical communication which may apply to business communication, such as:

➤Truthfulness

➤Accuracy

➤Honesty

Ethical dilemma versus Ethical lapse

- An ethical dilemma is a situation where ethical decision-making involves making a choice between alternatives that are not obvious or evident, usually in a gray area between ethically right and wrong. In an ethical dilemma, choices are blurred, and outcomes may result in unfair consequences to one or perhaps all the stakeholders involved. This may occur in cases of competitive interests, such as in a firm, employees seek higher compensation and benefits while its investors and management want to maintain lower costs, with both having a valid ethical position. When placed into an ethical dilemma in business contexts, the decision-maker has to rely on procedure or policy to come to a resolution. These may be rigid and result in seemingly unfair outcomes.

- Ethical dilemmas can be extremely complicated sometimes, with neither decision being ethically correct. For example, if a business finds out that an organization in its supply chain uses child labor, it logically and legally may have to either find another supplier or demand to stop using child labor. However, this may result in loss of the only income and source of food for the child and their family, leading to greater poverty or starvation.

- An ethical lapse can be viewed in two ways, as either a clearly unethical decision or a mistake that resulted in an unethical outcome – either way it is a decision which is unethical. An ethical lapse can be an error in judgment made during an ethical dilemma as well. Therefore, an ethical lapse is not necessarily a characteristic of complete lack of integrity, but rather can be viewed as an ethical 'blind spot' or oversight. Ethical lapses can be classified in several categories. A lapse from subjectivity occurs when an unethical action is allowed due to the fact that morality cannot be defined – such is in more minute aspects where personal ethical codes differ from person to person. There is also a lapse of conscience where an individual goes against something, they know to be unethical, potentially as a result of carelessness or an attempt to gain something.

- An important ethical lapse is the authority fallacy which results in an unethical action because it has not been deemed unethical by a notable authority. For example, decisions in business are often defined by corporate codes. If the action is not listed as wrong in such policies, people may choose to act unethically due to this fallacy. Ethical lapses are commonly seen as individual and rare errors. When an individual or company routinely causes harm, it is no longer just an ethical 'lapse' but an exemplification of unethical standards.

Guidelines(Principles) of Ethical Communication

➢Be truthful and honest

➢Active listening

➢Speak Non-Judgmentally

➢Speak from your own Experience

➢Consider the receiver's preferred communication channel

➢Strive to understand

➢Avoid a negative tone

➢Do not interrupt Others

➢Respect privacy and confidentiality

➢Accept responsibility

Cross-Cultural Communication

- Culture is a way of thinking and living whereby one picks up a set of attitudes, values, norms and beliefs that are taught and reinforced by other members in the group. This set of basic assumptions and solutions to the problems of the world is a shared system that is passed on from generation to generation to ensure survival. A culture consists of unwritten and written principles and laws that guide how an individual interacts with the outside world. Members of a culture can be identified by the fact that they share some similarity. They may be united by religion, by geography, by race or ethnicity.

- Cross cultural communication thus refers to the communication between people who have differences in any one of the following: styles of working, age, nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Cross cultural communication can also refer to the attempts that are made to exchange, negotiate and mediate cultural differences by means of language, gestures and body language. It is how people belonging to different cultures communicate with each other.

Diversity and Cultural Differences in workplace

- Culture is a way of thinking and living whereby one picks up a set of attitudes, values, norms and beliefs that are taught and reinforced by other members in the group. This set of basic assumptions and solutions to the problems of the world is a shared system that is passed on from generation to generation to ensure survival.

- Diversity is a condition of simultaneously available differences in terms of gender, culture, language, religion, and ethnicity.

- So, the diversity in workplace are mediated and accentuated by cultural differences. The cultures can be categorized as:

- High-context culture: Oral communication is valued and considered as contractually binding; trust oral communication than written ones; rely more on non verbal cues and gestures; a strong sense of community feeling and bonding.

- Low-context culture: Heavily rely on verbal communication-majorly on written communication; rely less on contextual elements to understand a message, rather a direct and straight forward communication is preferred. Individualism, personal choice, and work ethics as well as personal achievements are highly valued.

Advantages of Diversity

➢Improved productivity

➢Improved creativity and innovation

➢Increased workplace harmony

➢Positive organizational culture

➢Enhanced personal and organizational growth

Cultural (Intercultural) sensitivity

- Cultural sensitivity, also sometimes referred to as cross-cultural (intercultural) sensitivity or simply cultural awareness, is the knowledge, awareness, and acceptance of other cultures and others' cultural identities. It is related to cultural competence (the skills needed for effective communication with people of other cultures, which includes cross-cultural competence), and sometimes regarded as the precursor to the achievement of cultural competence, but is a more widely used term than cultural competence. On the individual level, cultural sensitivity enables travelers and workers to successfully navigate a different culture with which they are interacting.

- Cultural sensitivity counters ethnocentrism, and involves intercultural communication and other skills. Many countries' populations include minority groups comprising indigenous peoples and immigrants from other cultures. Workplaces, educational institutions, media and organizations of all types are mindful of being culturally sensitive to these groups. Increasingly, training is being incorporated into workplaces and students' curricula at all levels. The training is usually aimed at the dominant culture, but in multicultural societies may also be taught to migrants to teach them about other minority groups, and it may also be taught to expatriates working in other countries.

- Cultural diversity includes demographic factors (such as race, gender, and age) as well as values and cultural norms.
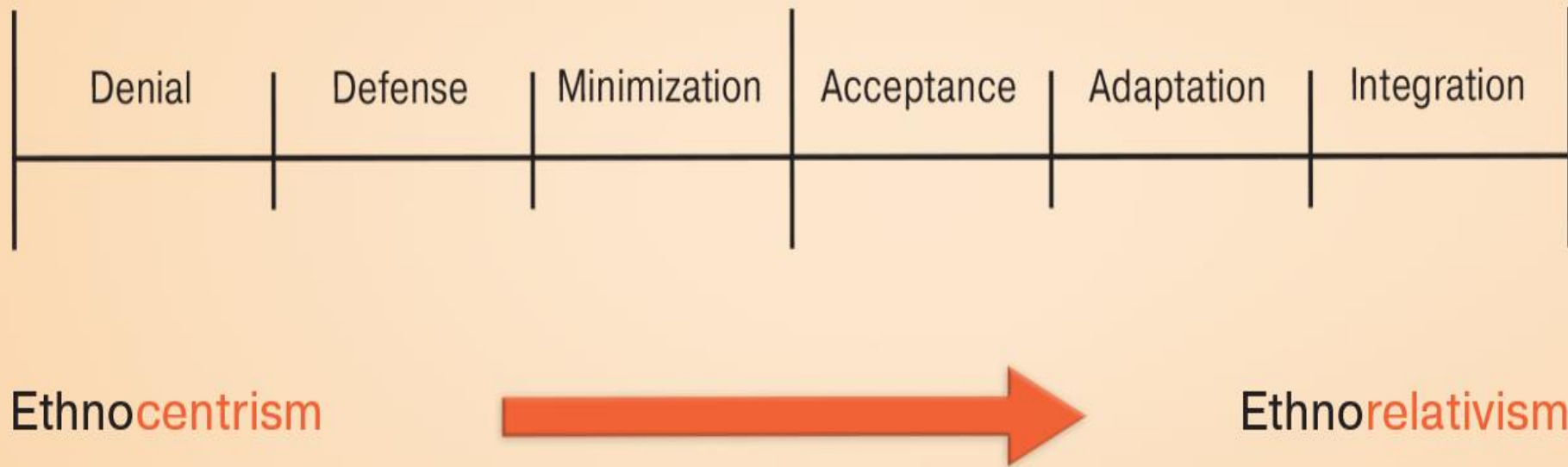
- Ethnocentrism is using one's own culture as the benchmark to judge other cultures so creating bias. Ethnocentrism occurs when one has the belief that their own cultural group is superior to others. Individuals who are ethnocentric will believe that their culture's beliefs, ideas, values, and practices are correct, and they use the standards in their own culture to assess other cultural groups.

- Ethno relativism states that no one culture it is superior to another (recognize differences between cultures, and believe in adapted and accommodate). Ethno relativism is a belief based on deep and heart-felt respect for other cultures that all groups, cultures, or subcultures are inherently equal.

- The differences of cultural sensitivity from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism are:

➢ Denial of differences

➢ Defense against cultural differences

➢ Minimization of cultural differences

➢ Acceptance of cultural differences

➢ Adaptation of cultural differences

➢ Integration of cultural differences

Improving Intercultural Communication Skills

➢Develop intercultural sensitivity

➢Recognize variations and differences

➢Learn about other culture

➢Write clearly

➢Speak and listen carefully

Writing Skills Definition

- Writing skills are the skills you use to write effectively and succinctly. A good writer is someone who can communicate their point to their audience without using too much fluff and in a way that the other person can understand. Skills like research, planning and outlining, editing, revising, spelling and grammar, and organization are critical components of the writing process.

- The ways to improve our writing skills:

➢Start With Your Audience

➢Know the Right Tone

➢Get to the Point

➢Edit and Proofread

➢Seek Outside Support

➢Don't Overthink It

Listening Skills

- Listening skills are skills that contribute to your ability to accurately receive information when communicating with others. These skills are an important part of effective communication in the workplace. Developing good listening habits can help to ensure you understand the information correctly, interpret messages accurately and optimise your conversations and communications for efficiency.

- Below are seven skills that can help you improve your active listening abilities:

➢ Limit distraction

➢ Practice objectivity

➢ Reflect and clarify

➢ Use body language

➢ Give your full attention

➢ Ask meaningful questions

➢ Recall previous information