

Communication Skills

-by Naseer Ahmed

Once in a Dale Carnegie book I found a nice quotation. It was of John D. Rockefeller, American oil magnate and philanthropist. He said, The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar and coffee. And I pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun. We know that the ability to deal with people is nothing but the managerial ability which is the essential prerequisite for any organizational or business success.

In business what we mean by the managerial ability? It is the demonstrated capacity to achieve organizational objectives both effectively and efficiently. It is said that today's successful manager needs a whole package of conceptual, technical and interpersonal abilities. These abilities include – leadership, oral communication and presentation skill, written communication, planning and organizing, information gathering and problem analysis, decision making, delegation and control, knowing own strengths and limitations and disposition to lead. But among these long list of abilities communication is the prime one for success in the managerial life.

From studies conducted among business organizations it was revealed that managers spend more than 80 per cent of their time in communicating. Communication is made within the organization, with customers and suppliers, with customers and suppliers, with stakeholders of the company, with the community and outsiders. So, communication skill is the most important skill required by any manager. That is why in any recruitment process communication skill is given the topmost emphasis. In this context I want to quote from Gerald Ford, the 38th President of the USA: 'If I went back to college again, I'd concentrate on two areas: learning to write and to speak before an audience. Nothing in life is more important than the ability to communicate effectively.'

Recently, I had an interaction with a young managing Director of an international company who is from France. He has his educational background from Finance and Economics. But afterwards he did his MBA from Kansas, USA. When I asked him how it was possible for him to become the CEO within twelve years of his career – his reply was that he had acquired good interpersonal communication skill. He can deal with his bosses, subordinates, peers and external people effectively. Education of course has given him extra strength but his command over communication skill is the real thing for his success. I hope that as chief of the Bangladesh operation of his company he will be very successful.

In a recent survey in the USA conducted among recruiters from companies with more than 50,000 employees, communication skills were cited as the single most important criterion in choosing managers. According to survey these skills include the ability to make effective written and oral presentations and the ability to work with others. All are now convinced that these skills are the key to job success and career progression.

But despite the growing importance of communications skills many people still come to the workplace unable to compete. In another survey in the USA, 65 per cent of human resources executives said that employee writing skills need improvement, 62 per cent cited difficulties in interpersonal communication skills and 59 per cent cited poor customer service skills. In the dismissal cases

in the US organization it was found that reasons are mainly personality and communication problems.

In my own working life I have some onhand experience in six different organizations – starting from public sector organizations to private ones. Everywhere I have found that there are very few people, who have excellent communication skills, which can spark better performance and success.

But the good news is that nobody brings in communication skill from the mother's womb – it is a behavior, which is to be acquired through self – development and training. There is deliberate and ample arrangement in many companies now to equip the employees – particularly managers – with this essential quality. Training, workshops, seminars, etc. are very common in all excellent companies.

Nowadays management scholars are in favor of open communication system in the organizations where teamwork and informal relationships are given due importance. In the web system, one communication managers serves as the stimulator and validator. There are few or no controls with free flow of information and exchange of ideas. Together with this information technology (IT) has facilitated the communication process in modern organizations with all the latest computerized arrangements including Internet. So, able managers must utilize all of these blessings of their own success and for the achievement of organizational objectives.