Communication Theories and Models, Nature of Language, Non-Verbal Behaviors, Effective Listening and Basic Conflict Resolution Techniques

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Index of Learning..............................................................................................................2
Introduction.........................................................................................................................4
Sources of Learning..........................................................................................................4
Discussion of Competencies..............................................................................................7
   Interpersonal Communication.........................................................................................7
   Communication Models.................................................................................................9
Nature of Language and Nonverbal Behaviors.................................................................10
Effective Listening Strategies........................................................................................11
Conflict Resolution Behaviors.........................................................................................11
   Communication Choices in a Variety of Contexts.........................................................12
Conclusion........................................................................................................................12
Works cited.......................................................................................................................14

Exhibit 1:
Exhibit 2:
Exhibit 3:
Exhibit 4:

Index of Learning

Name: Blain Hardy
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Course: interpersonal Communication: process and theory
Accrediting college and catalogue year
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**Competency statements**

I can discuss interpersonal communication theory.

I can explain communication method

I can discuss how the nature of language influences the communication process including non-verbal behaviors.

I can identify effective listening strategies important for interpersonal communication.

I can examine the effectiveness of others and my own communication choices in a variety of contexts.

**Sources of Learning**

Real estate consultant for 10 years

Business owner for 15 years

CCIM Member

**Documentation**

Brokers License

Letter stating member of CCIM Institute

Business Transactions
INTRODUCTION

People establish and manage their relationships while creating meaning by exercising mutual responsibility through interpersonal communication. Communication is inescapable, irreversible, complicated, and contextual. Interpersonal communication is of importance to every person in day-to-day activities that involves a helping hand. Interpersonal communication is the means by which we live; as without it, human beings cannot coexist. Aspects such as listening, asserting, non-verbal communication and persuading characterize interpersonal communication. I, having been a real estate consultant for ten years, acted as a member of the Certified Commercial Investment Member Institute (CCIMI), owned a manufacturing company for 15 years and a husband and father, I have had the perfect opportunity to practically, communicate and personally interact effectively with others. This has even given more experience to perfect my understanding of the discipline more than the theoretical concepts and skills covered by interpersonal communication course in Portland Community college.

This essay will discuss communication theories and models, nature of language, non-verbal behaviors, effective listening and basic conflict resolution techniques. All through, I will cite examples from my own experiences top to illustrate and clarify these interpersonal communication concepts and skills. SP 214 examines person-to-person interactions and concentrates on the development of various communication skills in order to uplift the quality of dyadic interactions at various situations.
SOURCES OF LEARNING

Interpersonal communication is the technique that we apply to express our ideas, feelings and thoughts to another person or party. I worked as a test technician at Groove Worldwide Company and reported to the director of the research and development test track for nine years. While in this job, I learnt the importance of accurately communicating technical information, especially the professional approach required when collecting data in the field and when presenting the results of the survey, which ought to reflect the situation on the field. This experience gave me the confidence to set up a small business initiative after conducting an accurate market research to confirm the feelings and views of the customers concerning lumber products.

In 1997, I started a small lumber company with only a few employees under my supervision. It was easy for me to address and solve any conflict among the employees in time through personal dialogue. Close monitoring of their behavior and attitude helped me realize their commitment towards the job. It was during these sessions that I had the opportunity to get their views and ideas on the approaches that we can apply to enable the business grow faster. Close monitoring also enabled me identify their abilities and skills thus assigned them duties according to their specialization. The number of employees grew with business expansion and so I had to improve my interpersonal communication skills to direct the several managers that we hired earlier to oversee operations in various departments. It was my obligation to confirm their effectiveness through analysis of their interpersonal skills to steer the company up the success ladder. Although they were academically qualified, they had to be equipped
with information about the company’s culture. My duties as a chief executive officer e.g. sales, acquisition, negotiations and administration-required application of interpersonal communication skills thus improving my effectiveness and the general performance of the company. After fifteen years of successful business operation, thanks to interpersonal skills I acquired during this period, I gave up the company due personal problems.

After one year, I married for the second time. Considering both our previous difficult marriages, we decided to participate in pre-marriage counseling exercise at Little Country Church in Redding, California. This was necessary because the pastor required all couples to under-go the routine before presiding over their union in the church. The counseling required the application of interpersonal skills by the counselor meant to form a life bond between two different individuals. Although I had impeccable interpersonal skills experience from my earlier administrative roles, the experience was new to me, purely social. This enabled me realize the reasons my first marriage failed. My fiancé pondered me with marital questions that I clearly had no clue of how to answer them even though I had an earlier experience on marriage issues. The counselor asked us to give examples of good and bad non-verbal behaviors and describe how they may affect our relationship. He provided us with a workbook that included an assignment in effective listening, useful conflict resolution behaviors, and communication models. This knowledge did not only help us, but we also passed this down to our children who are now in a relationship or already married.

After our marriage, I indulged into commercial real estate consultancy career. This career involved marketing my skills through effective
interpersonal communication. I read books, attended seminars and watched webinars to improve my skills. I also embarked on postgraduate studies to further my graduate academic qualifications on interpersonal communication, thus enabling me secure an administrative role in full membership of Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) Institute. The ability to network myself with seasoned professionals in the real-estate business has accorded me a comprehensive suite of communication models. As a director of the Northern California CCIM Chapter and Chair of the Sacramento district, I have been able to share many of the communication techniques I have learned with committee members to better organize and facilitate chapter business.

My recent past experiences on interpersonal relations have largely improved my interpersonal communication techniques, the reason for my status. Learning is a process that requires a prolonged life experience. Theoretical class work is important in basic advancement of competency but only as a foundation for future practical application, that perfects one’s skills. I gained many skills in the delegation of my duties that I did not gain in class in lower levels.

DISCUSSION OF COMPETENCIES

Interpersonal Communication
To analyze dyadic conversations in terms of interpersonal communication theory I must answer three questions: Who is involved in the conversation: what is the purpose of the conversation, and how interpersonal
communication theories apply? A conversation involves two or more people, sending or receiving a message or messages through computer mediated of face-to-face medium. The main aim of any conversation is relaying of a message from one person to another over various issues. Examples of interpersonal communication theories are Affiliated Conflict Theory (ACT), Expectancy Violations Theory (EVT), norm of Reciprocity, Discrepancy Arousal Theory (DAT), Cognitive Valence Theory (CVT), and communication accommodation theory among others. (Baxter). I believe the two most important interpersonal communication theories are interaction adaptation theory and communication accommodation theories. This is because these two theories cover the two basic determinants of the type and the extent of interpersonal communication. Communication accommodation theory studies the way individuals interact based on the situational set up of the venue of the interaction. Interaction adaptation is more based on the personal factors like requirements, desires and expectations, which characterize the commencement of interaction among individuals. Thus, by studying the two theories, we get a clearer insight on the internal and external factors that characterize interactions.

**Interaction Adaptation Theory**

The contents of this theory draw meaning from the results of other previous theories and then make predictions during interaction process. Burgoon, Stern, and Dillman describe this theory by stating, “People begin interaction with a combination of expectations, requirements and desires”. Most interactions are geared towards benefitting one or both parties involved. Situations make people interact in a bid to get a solution for a certain problem. When people share their grievances, the solution
becomes more effective as a problem shared is a problem solved. The bond created between people in this type of communication is always mutual, and allows people to co-exist in harmony, in a society. I have attended many negotiation workshops over the years consisting of two party workouts to complex negotiations involving multiple partners. I negotiated a lease agreement involving buyer, seller, and tenant of a building used for a private school. I created a list of all the decision-makers along with their expectations, requirements, and desires and asked them to rate them on a scale of 1 to 10. After identifying the issues that were most important and least important I was able to incorporate important issues and use the least important issues as negotiating points in coming to a mutual agreement. The above experience taught me that clarifying expectations, requirements and desires for both parties plays a vital role in achieving a positive outcome during the negotiation process.

**Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)**

Howard Giles argues that when people interact, they adjust their vocal patterns, speech and gestures, to submit to others. It explores the ways in which people minimize or emphasize social differences between themselves. The theory links context, language and identity. The two main accommodation processes covered by this theory are; convergence i.e. techniques through which individuals reduce social differences amongst themselves through adaptation to each other’s interaction and divergence i.e. seeks to accentuate the linguistic differences between individuals through analyzing their differences.

I used the communication accommodation experience during a presentation of a market and financial analysis of a property to the owner
of a self-storage facility. The owner objected to several of my findings and asked me to adjust my data to justify a higher asking price. I suggested we review my data again and during the review, I used descriptions of the property to disrupt the conversation before reframing the results of my data to accommodate his views. Upon further review, the owner agreed to list the property at the market value I established. Listing the property at fair market value proved to be the correct choice as I was able to sell it within 90 days meeting the desired result of the seller. Most people have used this technique during a debate without ever realizing it, however, comprehending how, when, and why I use this technique has proved to be very rewarding.

I have found using Interaction Adaption Theory and communication accommodation theory are effective in the analysis of interpersonal interactions. Having a conversation to bring about change opens the door for conflict and having the ability to analyze the results are very important factors in modifying our approach in becoming effective during interpersonal communication.

**Communication Models**

In the broadest sense, a model is a systematic representation of an event or object in an abstract and idealized form. Abstraction allows elimination of certain essential details that attracts the attention of communicative behavior. Models are metaphoric in that they allow us to solve one situation in relation to our earlier experience on solving related issues. The three main features of models are, they should allow us to ask questions, clarify complexity and they should guide us to new discoveries. Models highlight only those features that are critical to the message being
delivered, thus there is less focus on other features. By examining models, one does not only learn about situation, object or process but also the designer’s perspective. In communication studies, models allow for simplification of complex issues to help students and scholars understand the processes and components that are involved.

The main types of these models are Berlo’s model (1960), Shannon weaver mathematical model (1949), Aristotle model (1954), Schramm’s model (1954), and helical model (1967). Aristotle characterized communication in terms of a speaker (i.e. an orator) presenting an argument to be relayed to listeners (i.e. an audience). All the preceding models later applied this principle. For instance, in 1949, Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver published a mathematical model of communication that used boxes and arrows to relay messages. Bow and arrow models emphasize on the components of communication (i.e. a sender, message and receiver) and the direction of influence. Others focus on evolutionary and dynamic nature of communication mode rather than the direction of influence or components.

However, models are limited in nature thus they can cause confusion on the message they represent, the design may make an incomplete model lead to under estimation of the results and they can lead to oversimplification due to repetition.

**The Nature of Language and Non-Verbal Behaviors**

Our bodies tell how we are feeling. Our actions and mannerisms portray respect or disrespect. This implies that whether we talk or remain silent, we continuously send messages. Non-verbal behaviors like a shrug of
shoulders or wave of hands have a meaning. Expression of our faces can give someone an insight of our feelings. Our mouth can show that we are sad by frowning or happy by smiling. Direct verbal communicators are assertive, clear and effective with their words. Indirect verbal communicators are quiet, shy and indecisive and usually use short statements and sentences.

Communication is universal but the meanings of non-verbal and verbal signs are different. It is important to understand the diversity of communication to enhance your knowledge on other cultures.

**Listening Strategies for Effective Interpersonal Communication Skills**

Strategic listening skills are an important key ingredient in effective communication. There are many different levels of listening, ranging from active to on-and-off listening. The elements involved in communication are talking (35%), reading (16%) and writing (9%). Listening gives other people the feeling of being respected and appreciated. When we listen, we perfect the skills in others by encouraging them to develop an attitude of positive communication. We listen in different ways at different times. We listen better at certain situations more than others do. Active listening requires listening not only for the message content, but also for the meaning and the feeling of the speaker.

**Conflict Resolution Behaviors**

Conflict resolution can defined as the extraction of a positive aspect/result out of a social conflict. The mediator extracts information about
conflicting motives and the intentions of both parties that he/she uses in a collective negotiation, diplomacy or peace building. A person’s preferred method of dealing with a conflict is based on two basic dimensions, assertiveness and empathy. People balance their concern to satisfy others with the urge to satisfy themselves in different ways. There are five strategies that individuals use to resolve conflict depending on their pro-social or pro-self goals: (1) avoidance conflict style that is characterized by inaction and passivity; (2) yielding conflict style where the mediators have high concern for others more than they are; (3) competitive conflict style minimizes empathy while maximizing assertiveness; (4) cooperation conflict style that is characterized by an equal concern for both pro social and pro-self behavior and (5) conciliation/compromising conflict style that is typical of intermediate level of concern for both personal and social outcomes. Conflict resolution is extremely sensitive to culture.

**Communication Choices in a Variety of Contexts**
Context stands for the situation in which communication occurs that includes the people present, the task and the occasion. For instance, you cannot use the same style and language speaking to a police officer as you would to your colleagues. Appropriateness of a situation is eminently significant when choosing a communication style. Three things determine appropriateness: role i.e. a part played in a certain situation and Varies depending on the situation e.g. right now I am a student, if I am working somewhere, I would be an employee: norm i.e. a written or non-written guideline for what is appropriate: and a standard which is an established level for what is appropriate. Competitive communicators use knowledge, attitudes and skills.
CONCLUSION

People establish and manage their relationships while creating meaning by exercising mutual responsibility through interpersonal communication. Communication is inescapable, irreversible, complicated, and contextual. Interpersonal communication is of importance to every person in day-to-day activities involving more than one person. A conversation involves two or more people, sending or receiving a message or messages through computer mediated of face-to-face mediums. The main aim of any conversation is relaying of a message from one person to another.

Effective communication determines your success in every aspect of life. Thus, the key to success are; think before you speak, be positive with your language, know that words can build or destroy and do not give in to the temptation of speaking words that can hurt others. Before you utter anything to someone, ask yourself if it is true, kind or necessary