UPWARD COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS:
THE CONNECTION TO COMPANY CULTURE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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By
Janet K. Clancy-Feliciano
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We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

Thesis or Project Director

Faculty Mentor

Faculty Reader

Gonzaga University
MA Program in Communication and Leadership Studies
ABSTRACT

In today’s American society, effective upward and downward communication between supervisors and subordinates is lacking now more than ever before. The importance of effective downward communication from organizational leaders receives ongoing attention, but more attention needs to be given to the importance of open reception to upward communication. It is critical that leaders in organizations build trust and encourage upward communication from employees in order to maintain organizational wellbeing and to avoid employee dissatisfaction. To help close the gap in this area of communication, this study focused on and collected data utilizing on-line surveys and employee interviews in order to examine the link between company culture and employee engagement with regards to upward and downward communication in large organizations. Deetz’s (2012) Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations, and Harriman’s (1974) Theory of Up-and-Down Communications were used to frame this study. The findings confirmed that strong downward communication is important to employees, but also that the encouragement of and reception to upward communication from subordinates plays a critical role in building trust and a strong company culture.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Trust and credibility are built when there is a strong relationship between leaders and subordinates in organizations. In order to build this trust and credibility, strong upward communication between those leaders and subordinates is of utmost importance. It is rare indeed, in today’s American organizations, for an employee to stay with one company for his or her entire career. Is there a connection between company culture, corporate communication, and employee retention? Does a general feeling of employee distrust of superiors translate into a negative corporate culture? This study seeks to examine the connection between upward communication in organizations and the connection to company culture and employee engagement.

Importance of the Study

The encouragement of upward communication in organizations is an important topic because it speaks to the ultimate success or failure of organizations that do or do not foster a healthy working environment. Organizations need to promote an atmosphere in which employees feel psychologically safe to speak up. This feeling of safety and trust builds a solid stakeholder environment where employees become more productive and are higher performers who contribute to the overall success of the organization. There is a wealth of literature examining importance of strong top-down communication in organizations, but there is a gap in the literature specifically linking the encouragement of healthy upward communication to how it affects employee engagement and company culture.

Statement of Problem
Today’s workforce is becoming more and more disengaged and dissatisfied at work. According to Jeffrey Pfeffer (2009), “One consequence of the trend away from communal and caring relationships….has been less trust and psychological attachment between employees and their employers” (p. 364). There are many contributors to the distrust and detachment experienced today, like for example corporate bullying and general incivility at all levels of organizations. This study however, will focus on how lack of encouragement of upward communication in large organizations affects employee engagement and morale. The large pharmaceutical company examined in this study has the added challenge of a field based sales force. These employees do not see their superiors on a regular basis; indeed it is sometimes only once or twice a year. The goal of this study is to come to an understanding about the positive effects of upward communication and how organizations can build a healthy and strong atmosphere – even with physically remote employees.

Definition of Terms Used

The majority of the terms used in this paper are commonly used in the corporate world. The organization studied however, uses a number of acronyms to describe different positions within the company. The entire title will be spelled out the first time presented, followed by the acronym in parenthesis. For example: Area Business Leader (ABL). A corporate hierarchy chart is also provided within the study section.

Organization of Remaining Chapters

Chapters two through four in this study contain the meat of the study. The literature review is covered in chapter two and provides a complete overview of the rationale of this study as well as the research questions driving the content. This chapter
delves deep into literature available on the topic of trust, engagement, and corporate upward communication within organizations.

Chapter three covers the scope and methodology of what is mostly a qualitative study framed in the form a communication audit. Within this chapter, the specific purpose of this study is covered in great detail and will describe the organization studied. The scope encompasses sales force morale and engagement, digging deeper into employee thoughts regarding organizational communication within the region of the pharmaceutical company studied. The methodology section of this chapter describes the culture and engagement survey taken by the northwest region of the company. It will also discuss the interview portion of the study. The goal of the research is described in this chapter as well.

Chapter four describes the pharmaceutical organization in greater detail and tackles the actual study. The engagement survey as well as the interviews will be discussed via an analysis of the results from both research tools. Discussion in this chapter will include sub-sections describing what the organization is doing well as well as recommendations for improvement.

Chapter five will provide a conclusion, which will include discussing the limitations of this study as well as recommendations for further study. The table of contents of this paper will provide a complete guide to the organization of all chapters.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Philosophical Assumptions

Strong working relationships within American organizations, particularly between supervisors and subordinates, play a critical role in the overall health of the organization. In today’s society, employees in the United States are more detached from their employers than ever before. Looking back at the mid 20th century, workers would seek an organization where they could settle in and build a long-term career, eventually retiring with a pension and secure financial future. There were deeper connections between employers and their employees, building what could be almost described as familial relationships at work, which resulted in mutual respect and loyalty.

Martin Buber’s (1970) “I and Thou” theory of relationships discusses how people relate to each other and the world around them. Buber contrasts two types of human relationships: the “I-It” relationship and the “I-Thou” relationship. In an I-It relationship people interact with one another on a superficial level, interacting with and viewing each other by their functions or perhaps professions. For example, a doctor might interact with a patient by breaking down signs and symptoms and by examining and talking to the patient as an organism and not an individual person. This is appropriate on the I-It level. However, if that same doctor interacted with her staff on the same I-It level, then there would not be an authentic and shared relationship. Appropriate I-It relationships inhabit the world of scientists and scholars who view their subjects as things and not people (Buber, 1970).

In order to achieve an I-Thou relationship with someone, one must place oneself into the relationship. This is not an easy task, as one usually steps out of the relationship...
in order to evaluate and think about it, thus becoming I-It occasionally. An I-Thou relationship sees the other person as one would see oneself: without pretenses or conditions, creating a bond which enhances the other. In an I-Thou relationship there is true and meaningful dialogue. There is value, a mutuality, and morality present in the relationship as individuals seek out authentic dialogue and interact with one another on a human level (Buber, 1970).

One could apply Buber’s theory to the corporate world when looking at how employers see or handle their employees in today’s organizations compared to the past. Today, staying with the same company one’s entire career is rare indeed. In fact, according to Forbes (2012), “the average worker today stays at each of his or her jobs for 4.4 years”. This type of job-hopping does not allow for long-term professional relationships to build and flourish at any level. Could the issue at the root of this phenomenon be that employees feel as though they are looked at simply as social security numbers and not as people, placed in Buber’s “I-It” box? How to remedy the problem of organizational turnover and disconnection? Perhaps it’s as simple as seeing all employees as people who bring value to the organization and by encouraging solid and sincere dialogue and communication throughout all levels. Openness and availability builds meaningful, ethical relationships on a professional level, which encourages loyalty and longevity within the organization.

Theoretical Basis

The importance of addressing concerns within an organization before they become problems cannot be stressed enough. Deetz’s (2012) “Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations” discusses corporate control over employees and
implications of the lack of a forum for employee upward feedback. According to Deetz, many managers will provide employees the opportunity to offer feedback, but if the employees have previously given feedback that they perceived was undervalued, it doesn’t take much time for the employees to become skeptical and distrustful of the practice altogether (Deetz, 1992). One of the goals in Deetz’s theory is called “Stakeholder Democracy”, which means open negotiation where all stakeholders in the company participate in meaningful dialogue and the end result is open decision-making and better economic results (Deetz, 1995). This may be an lofty goal, but one to reach for nonetheless.

Bruce Harriman’s “Theory of Up-and-Down Communications” (1974) discusses management self-awareness and the importance of continuous up/down communication that encourages balance and effective flow of information (Harriman, 1974). According to Harriman, in large organizations, those in subordinate positions perceive downward communication more clearly than superiors receiving upward communication. This is because subordinates feel the need to develop a clearer understanding of those in higher positions in order to achieve success. Those in management positions don’t “read” subordinates as well as subordinates “read” them. It boils down to a matter of corporate survival (Harriman, 1974).

The goal of and discussion in this study is to examine the link between employee morale/productivity with regards to upward and downward communication in large organizations. Even though the Harriman theory is from the 1970’s, it is still quite relevant today and is proof that the issues examined in this project are on-going, ever-changing, un-perfected, and have been a topic of concern for decades. Harriman’s theory
discusses the importance of not just downward communication, but upward as well. The need for management to understand subordinates, and vice versa, is of utmost importance in order for organizations to have healthy communication and strong employee morale.

Deetz’s Critical Theory of Communication in Organizations also fits well within the goal of this study. Deetz’s theory discusses the importance of meaningful dialogue between superiors and subordinates with the end goal being the economic success of the organization, as well as for the employees within. This project includes a comparative employee engagement survey within a large pharmaceutical company. As we navigate through the results of the study, Deetz’s and Harriman’s theories will serve as a guide for discussion.

The Literature

Employees can feel frustrated and disconnected from those who are in charge when business within an organization is constantly in flux and/or communication is lacking. If employees feel their thoughts and opinions are not valued, morale will decline, upward communication will diminish, and ultimately, business will suffer (Roberts & O’Reilly, 1974). It is critical that leaders in organizations build trust and encourage upward communication from employees in order to “identify strengths that need to be reinforced and weaknesses that must be corrected” (Downs & Adrian, 2004, p. 13). Taking proactive measures to avoid employee dissatisfaction not only benefit employees themselves, but also benefit the organization as a whole; maintaining organizational wellbeing is far preferential to addressing established organization-wide dysfunction and employee dissatisfaction.
If corporations do not encourage, process, and act upon upward communication from employees, there are negative consequences for the organization, such as lack of trust within the organization. It is imperative that leaders at all levels solicit feedback in order to build trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). When there are low levels of trust, subordinates tend to withhold, or sometimes even block information to superiors (Roberts & O’Reilly, 1974). Employees may also withhold negative feedback because they fear offending the very people who create and operate the programs on which they are giving feedback (Detert & Burris, 2007). Employee fear of retaliation is also a relevant concern. Fear and distrust cause problems to stagnate and remain unresolved, which can result in the loss of talented employees (Atwater & Waldman, 2008). Trust presumes a level of psychological safety, which also speaks to the climate of an organization. Upward communication allows employees to feel dignified and important, as well as to become stakeholders within the organization (Downs & Adrian, 2004).

Trust and credibility are built when there is a positive relationship between a subordinate and a superior. In order to build a solid working relationship, leaders need to prove themselves to be trustworthy (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). When there is trust, employees have more desire for interaction and they are generally happier with the level of communication from superiors. Ethical leaders develop subordinates who have a sense of power, and are also open to listening to differing opinions. In essence, there is fair balance and symmetry with regards to communication (Men, 2015). Employees also believe their superiors to be more accurate and credible when there is trust present in the working relationship. Conversely, when there is distrust or fear of superiors, employees
tend to distort, block, or withhold information altogether out of fear of negative consequences (Detert & Trevino, 2010).

In situations of low ethics and trust, groups tend to be inefficient at work. People tend to protect themselves first, gossip more, and are ambiguous with communication. In fact, a subordinate’s silence can result in stunted productivity, which can then have a negative impact on the superior’s job, and the perception by skip level leaders that a manager is an ineffective leader. Distrust and silence can drive a wedge between a leader and employees. One need only to spend a small amount of time in a corporate environment to discern whether or not employees feel valued and connected to leadership, as the air in organizational space is palpable (Wheatley, 2006).

When there is a lack of upward communication, employee concerns cannot be addressed, suggestions for improvement cannot be implemented, and opportunities are missed. Simply put, it causes a stagnant work environment in which a leader will be looked upon as ineffective and disconnected. A leader will also miss out on opportunities for his/her own professional growth and for growth of the company. When employees do not trust their superiors, downward feedback has no effect on the employee performance, which causes inertia and lack of growth on all levels (Garnett, Marlowe, and Pandey, 2008). It is important for a leader to set aside feelings of defensiveness and insecurity and instead be open to learning from and receiving feedback from subordinates in order to be effective in his/her job. Accepting feedback will not only help a leader’s skill set, but also ensure successful future performance (Yukl, 2013). This implies a level of vulnerability on the part of the leader, but the gamble usually pays off with subordinates experiencing authentic leadership. One must not look at vulnerability as a weakness, but rather as
having the courage to show uncertainty and take risks. At these levels of communication, the result is actual human connection, which is what is quite often missing in organizations (Seppala, 2014).

Great communication and corporate outcomes start with a visible and engaged CEO (Adelman, 2012). The CEO and upper management are responsible for setting the tone for the organization and need to be mindful of the fact that their attitudes have a “trickle down” effect within the organization (Detert & Trevino, 2010). Employees feel more comfortable around their leaders when they are regularly present, thus making upward communication easier and less stressful (Adelman, 2012). Although some subordinates prefer to receive instructions without challenging a supervisor, those who do choose to speak up are showing their willingness to address problems and come up with solutions to those problems (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012). This behavior should not be discouraged. CEOs who expect employees to communicate both positive and negative information should be clear about the fact that they expect it, and they will accept it. According to Adelman (2012) “when employees saw actions or changes evolving from their input, they felt their voices counted, which reinforced speaking up” (p. 138).

Employees who actively participate in upward communication were rated higher in terms of performance in organizations that emphasize involvement and ownership in the organization. If a policy is changed or a problem is solved as a result of an employee speaking up, that employee may enjoy the recognition and status gained from doing so – both from colleagues and from leadership (Detert & Burris, 2007). Those employees who actively engage in upward corporate communication are more effective and more productive in their jobs. In fact, according to Men (2015), “When employees are fully
informed and listened to, they feel highly involved and engaged” (p. 14). It is the process of participation that allows people to commit themselves to and take ownership of projects (Wheatley, 2006). Companies need to continuously build and grow corporate culture through solicitation of employee input, recognizing that variability in culture, not the status quo, has a positive effect on employee performance (Garnett, Marlowe, & Pandey, 2008).

Rationale

Ethical leader behaviors like trust and credibility are key components in healthy upward communication, which usually results in economic success and higher employee morale in organizations. Not only is there a need to continuously explore organizational culture as it relates to employees, but there is also a need to explore organizational culture as it relates to leaders. Credible leaders are key to the success of an organization. Where leadership credibility is lacking, so is trust, confidence, and compliance from employees (Men, 2015). It has been suggested that innovative corporate cultures retain authentic leaders who are skilled at building value and respect from and among their followers (Azanza, Moriano, & Molero, 2013). Leaders who foster an environment of psychological safety tend to have employees who speak up and also tend to be better performers (Detert & Burris, 2007). Encouraging thoughtful dissent from employees shows trust, which then builds trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2011).

The encouragement of upward communication in organizations is a topic of significance because it speaks to the ultimate success or failure of organizations that do or do not foster a working environment in which employees feel psychologically safe to speak up. Showing genuine interest in the opinions of subordinates prevents those
subordinates from feeling dismissed. Dismissiveness on the part of a leader borders on unethical behavior because the leader is sending a message to subordinates that their thoughts and opinions do not matter (Johnson, 2012). Good leaders consider teamwork and trust pivotal to a successful work environment and will make it a high priority (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Leaders who are considerate and encourage subordinates to share opinions and give upward feedback tend to have subordinates who are more productive and perform well in their jobs (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012). Higher productivity and performance make for healthy and successful organizations. Trust is the common denominator with regards to employee satisfaction, high levels of communication, honesty, organizational financial success, and whether or not leaders and subordinates accept each other (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

With regards to the behaviors used to describe healthy leaders, there are several that appear in the literature more often than not. Some of those behaviors have been used in this paper: being trustworthy, considerate, honest, genuine, credible, ethical, and confident. All are behaviors befitting of the Humanistic Manager (Moreno, 2010). More and more, humanistic management is being demanded in organizations. This type of manager knows corporate results come from the people who work for them. But what of the large organization? Is there a place for Humanistic Leadership? The literature suggests there is, but this type of management must be done on a wider scale through channels such as a company intranet or publication, for example (Moreno, 2010). Communicating on a large scale is very appropriate, but the individual must not get lost in the crowd. An occasional note or bit of recognition from C-Suite leadership brings a humanistic tone to employees in a large organization. According to Moreno (2010),
“Organisations that know how to emotionally compensate their employees will achieve better business results as they make up for the strain that pressure places on their professionals” (p. 102). In other words, if leadership is asking a lot from subordinates, they need to recognize a job well done. A simple thank you goes a long way in showing appreciation (Moreno, 2010).

As we come to understand more about the positive effects of upward communication within organizations, we will be better equipped to build organizations with strong employee engagement and healthy corporate cultures.

Research Questions

The research conducted in this qualitative study will seek to add to previous research and answer the following questions:

1. How does corporate communication and encouragement of upward communication affect employee engagement and productivity?

2. How do employees respond to different types of communication methods, both upward and downward?
CHAPTER THREE – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope

Organizations form their own cultures and sub-cultures. They develop their own narratives and build their own identities. Successful companies are able to maintain a healthy balance between the individuals making up the organization while also meeting the organizational goals (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Established trust and mutual respect between leaders and subordinates are part of the foundation needed to ensure an authentic and productive working environment. As such, it is worth examining the morale of the work force on a regular basis.

One goal of this project is to gain knowledge that will educate both direct and skip-level (those two or more above) leaders on the importance of receiving upward communication from subordinates, and to help leaders gain an understanding of how to foster the appropriate environment and set the right tone that will encourage honest, healthy and productive upward communication. Large organizations, in particular, experience more difficulty in fostering flexibility and psychological safety because they typically hold to a more rigid structure of control and hierarchy (Azanza, Moriano, & Molero, 2013).

This project informs the authentic leadership/upward communication conundrum in large organizations by conducting a communication audit within a global pharmaceutical company. The scope of this audit will encompass sales force morale and engagement, and their thoughts regarding organizational communication within the Northwest region of that large pharmaceutical company. Since the sales force within this company is external, the vast majority of communication between leadership and the
sales force is done via technology, i.e. phone, email, text, WebEx, and conference calls. Face-to-face meetings encompassing the entire sales force and organizational leadership occur once a year on a national level, and two to four times a year at the district and regional level. Keeping a pulse on the morale of a remote work force can be tough for any organization, thus the importance of frequent up/downward communication.

The main goal of the audit section of this project is to determine if the sales force feel like superiors are open to upward communication, and if top-down communication from superiors is adequate for them to manage their jobs and careers in an atmosphere of constant corporate and technological changes. In any organization, it is a delicate dance between leadership and employees in terms of leadership’s ability to filter meaningful information from corporate office appropriately and in a timely manner. Because this organization and business unit in particular is so large, the scope of this study has been narrowed to the Northwest region in which there are 95 employees in various sales representative and area business leader (ABL) positions.

This study will be both quantitative and qualitative, with a heavy emphasis toward a qualitative approach. Research will be framed in the form of a communication audit and will be conducted within the pharmaceutical company. The audit will include interviews with employees along with two identical quantitative employee engagement surveys spaced six months apart.

Methodology

In addition to traditional research, methodology included conducting two identical internal culture and engagement surveys (via Survey Monkey) of 95 employees within a small region of a global pharmaceutical company, as well as several interviews to expand
on the survey. The culture and engagement survey was sent to participants via company email and included the link to the survey within that email. The survey questions were identical to the prior survey, which was spaced six months apart (in 2015 and 2016). The purpose of redistributing the survey was to compare results and gauge improvements or decline in employee morale and engagement over the previous survey. The survey was anonymous and included nine questions, with the tenth question providing a text box for employees to type in any comments or suggestions they had. The questions were presented in a format allowing respondents to choose one of four answers: agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree, and disagree. (See Appendix A for the survey questions.)

Experience and opinion focused interviews were conducted with several employees via telephone or face-to-face. The purpose of the interview portion was to go deeper in terms of revealing information regarding morale and job satisfaction, and to reveal any patterns or common themes – both negative and positive. Research was conducted through observation of a number of internal conference calls/WebEx’s and exploration of the internal email system for recent communication from upper management. The goal of research is to reveal what the organization is doing well with regards to open communication and employee feedback, and also to determine where the company can improve in terms of communicating with and meeting the needs of their remote/field based sales force. (The interview questions can be found in Appendix B.)

With regards to the interviews, chosen subjects have varying years of tenure as well as varying positions of hierarchy within the region. Ethical consideration was assured by gaining permission from participants to move forward with the interview with
my assurance and their understanding that their responses will be completely confidential. Any themes uncovered were analyzed in order to come to a better understanding about what drives or discourages upward communication. The primary purpose of the audit is not to formulate a specific solution to any problems uncovered, but rather to explore the results and possibly shed some light on communication issues, and also to add to current research. At a later time, the results of the study will be used to create a workshop that will teach individuals in management positions the importance of actively soliciting feedback and listening to subordinates, and in knowing how to incorporate upward feedback into business plans.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative study, open coding was used in order to identify themes which can be categorized before entering into the axial coding phase, which will determine the causes and possible consequences of the results, and which themes can be grouped together. For example, is there a geographic communication problem? Does a problem stem not from person-to-person communication, but rather from technology issues? Is there a problem at specific levels in the organization?

In the coding phase, any themes uncovered were analyzed in order to come to a better understanding about what drives or discourages upward communication and how those themes relate to productivity. Results of the follow-up survey were compared to the previous identical survey to analyze improvements or lack thereof. Interview questions were experience and opinion focused and the answers to those questions were grouped together, analyzed, and included in the results and discussion section of this project.
The goal of this project is for the results to reveal what the company is doing well, but also where the company can improve in terms of listening to, communicating with, and meeting the needs of their remote/field based sales force. Research will seek to understand if the results of the surveys and interviews, and the themes discovered therein, support the hypothesis of this project: corporate encouragement of upward communication has a positive effect on employee morale and productivity.
CHAPTER FOUR – THE STUDY

Introduction

In terms of size and scope, the pharmaceutical industry is an ever-changing giant. When business within a pharmaceutical organization is constantly in flux and/or communication is lacking, employees can feel frustrated and disconnected. According to Downs and Adrian (2004), “An important goal of an assessment is to identify strengths that need to be reinforced and weaknesses that must be corrected” (p. 13). Taking proactive measures to avoid employee dissatisfaction not only benefits the employees themselves, but also benefits the organization as a whole, as maintaining organizational wellbeing is far preferential to addressing established organization-wide dysfunction.

Part of the research for this project was conducted through anonymous on-line survey, through face-to-face interviews, and through examination of written communication via company email. Thoughts gleaned through researcher observation of company regional conference calls, WebEx’s, and the company intranet is discussed. The subject pharmaceutical company has performed a number of engagement surveys both nationally and regionally over the years and this researcher discovered that, until recently, the results were rarely shared with the employees. According to Downs and Adrian (2004), “If they [employees] have participated in other surveys and have never seen their results, that lessens their motivation to participate now” (p. 23). Fortunately, since the group studied for this project was small, there was good participation from employees, which allowed for solid results. There is a recommendation that the results be shared with the region.

Description of the Organization
The subject pharmaceutical company in this study is one of the largest in the world. The pharmaceutical book of business within is comprised of a number of different business units encompassing treatments for disease states such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, and renal disease. Under the United States’ corporate umbrella, there is a Biotech firm, a Pharmaceutical branch, a Generic House, an Animal Sciences arm, an Over-the-Counter Medication arm, and a Vaccine House. Different branches of the organization run all of these businesses separately. In the last several years, this organization along with the entire pharmaceutical industry has had to adapt to new and complex federal laws, which are enforced by the government. Sales representatives can lose their jobs and the organization can be heavily fined if these laws are not followed. Everyone who works for the company commits to strict rules of compliance.

With regards to technology over the past decade, the organization has evolved from keeping records on paper and communicating through the mail, to using laptops out in the field, to using their current tools of iPads and iPhones to manage daily tasks. This technology allows for access to employees 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This researcher looks forward to exploring the effect this has on field based sales representatives and their area business leaders. There is constant change, which demands an ongoing technological learning curve along with continual communication from corporate to area business leaders and finally to sales representatives who have responsibility to make sales calls on at least eight prescribers and two pharmacies every day. This study will focus on a sales force within the Diabetes Business Unit of the pharmaceutical side of the organization.
There are a number of pieces of the corporate pie that need to come together in support of the sales force in order to ensure their success. Several different departments contribute to the potential successes/failures of the sales force. Those include marketing, managed care, pharmacy teams, human resources, and technical support just to name a few. All departments need to communicate regularly and proactively with ABL’s and sales representatives. This organization is in a constant state of change and this study seeks to learn how corporate communication, both upward and downward, affect the field based sales force.

The U.S. corporate offices for this organization are on the East Coast, thus the necessity for clear and organized technology and communication. The subject pharmaceutical company operates from a top down structure. The following chart, which was pulled from the organization’s internal audit and communication site, is an example of the management structure with regards to pharmaceutical sales, starting with the CEO of the company and ending with the sales professional.
Methodology

This audit examines internal communication within a smaller section of the subject pharmaceutical company: the Northwest region. The Northwest region is made up of 95 employees. The study process included an online culture and engagement survey of those 95 employees, with 83 employees completing the survey. Four people participated in individual face-to-face interviews. This researcher also observed a number of internal conference calls/WebEx’s and explored the internal email system for recent communication from upper management.

Surveys

Survey data were compiled and analyzed in cooperation with the Culture and Engagement Champion for the Northwest region. The survey approved for distribution to the sales force was a follow-up survey, which compared results to the same survey distributed six months ago. The purpose of redistributing the survey was to compare
results and gauge improvements or decline in employee culture and engagement on the regional level. The current survey was distributed to 95 employees, with 83 total responses (87%) and 82 complete responses. There were nine questions on the survey with the tenth question providing a text box for employees to type in any comments or suggestions they may have. Questions one and two revealed position and geographical location within the region. Question one answered current job position. 13.25% (11) of the respondents were Area Business Leaders (ABL), also known as managers, and 86.75% (72) of the respondents were Sales Professionals. With the exception of Seattle who had the fewest respondents (3.61%), the geographies were mostly evenly represented and included Montana/Wyoming (12.05%), Boise (13.25%), Spokane (10.84%), Everett (10.84%), Olympia (8.43%), Tacoma (10.84%), Portland East (10.84%), Portland West (8.43%), and Eugene (10.84%).

The questions were presented in a format allowing respondents to choose one of four answers: agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree, and disagree. What follows is a review of the answers given to questions three through nine. The actual survey can be seen in the Appendix section of this document. This researcher participated in a regional WebEx facilitated by the regional director who discussed last year’s results in relation to the current survey results. During the WebEx, the regional director described the survey as a “pulse check” on the sales force to “see how folks are feeling” about their jobs compared to last year. He went on to thank everyone for participating in the survey, saying, “your feedback is very valuable and I thank you for it”.

Questions one and two were logistical. Discussion begins with question three, “Overall I am extremely satisfied to work for my company”: Agree (51.81%),
Moderately agree (38.55%), moderately disagree (8.43%), and disagree (1.20%);
Regional Director comment: “These answers are an improvement over six months ago.”

Question four, “I rarely think about looking for a new job with another company”:
Agree (46.99%), Moderately agree (30.12%), Moderately disagree (14.46%), and
disagree (8.43%); Regional Director comment: “These answers are comparable to those
on a national level with the organization and don’t always indicate negativity, as many
people like to keep a pulse on what jobs are out there.”

Question five, “My job makes good use of my talents, skills, and abilities”: Agree
(50.60%), Moderately agree (34.94%), Moderately disagree (9.64%), and disagree
(4.82%). There was no Regional Director comment to the results for this question.

Question six, “I see a clear link between my work and my company’s business
priorities”: Agree (56.10%), Moderately agree (30.49%), Moderately disagree (7.32%),
and disagree (6.10%); Regional Director comment: “In the December results, people
struggled with this one, even on a national level. These results are much better”.

Question seven, “The leadership of my company communicates a vision of the
future that motivates me”: Agree (40.24%), Moderately agree (37.80%), Moderately
disagree (14.63%), and disagree (7.32%); Regional Director comment: “These results
represent an opportunity for the ABL (1st line leader) and the Regional Director (2nd line
leader)”.

Question eight, “In my company there is open and honest communication”: Agree
(36.59%), Moderately agree (37.80%), Moderately disagree (14.63%), and disagree
(10.98%); Regional Director comment: “This is also an opportunity area. I own this one
and am committed to being more open as a result”.

Question nine, “Do you feel valued in your current role?”: yes (82.93%), no (17.07%); Regional Director comment: “We need to catch people doing well more often. We need to recognize people’s strengths more often.”

The following are results comparing 2015 results with the current 2016 results with regards to the percent that “agree” or “strongly agree” in questions 3-9. Question nine (the last one) is a new question this year so had no comparator to last year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overall I am extremely satisfied to work for my company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I rarely think about looking for a new job with another company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My job makes good use of my talents, skills, and abilities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I see a clear link between my work and my company’s business priorities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The leadership of my company communicates a vision of the future that motivates me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In my company there is open and honest communication.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel valued in my current role.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show there were improvements with every question year over year. There are areas of opportunity with regards to leadership communicating a better vision that will motivate the sales force and also in making the sales force feel like leadership is being open and honest with them. The regional director committed to meeting with his area business leaders to discuss the results of the survey and to come up with solutions for communication issues revealed in the survey. A test of this promise will be whether or not those solutions are communicated to the sales force. Healthy communication would have the regional director or the area business leaders inform the sales force about what was discussed and if any new initiatives were implemented as a result of the direct
upward communication on the employee engagement survey. The literature informs us this type of action is a building block to trust in superiors, as well as a way to make employees feel dignified and important.

The free text section of the survey revealed three central themes for improvement:

Free text theme one

The Company has recently gone through a restructure and launched two new drugs to the market. The feedback from the sales force was that there was too much training expected of the sales force (in terms of time) prior to the launch of the new drugs, as their call expectations during that time were the same. They felt overwhelmed with studying and test taking and felt their focus was taken away from their jobs and selling. There was frustration expressed by the sales force regarding the need to spend evenings studying, which took time away from their personal lives. The regional director agreed, and thanked the sales force for their patience during that time. He said the company has taken note of the feedback and will keep it in mind while planning for the next phase of the drug launch period.

Free text theme two

The sales force feels overwhelmed with paperwork and busy work. The company inundated the sales force with what employees called “busy work” like call trackers to keep track of reach and frequency with regards to physician calls. The regional director has instructed the area business leaders to stop asking for this data, as they already have access to all of their sales representative’s call activity in their computers. He recognized that there was duplication there and agreed that the focus needs to be on prescriber calls and growing business.
Free text theme three

The sales force wants more resources to provide to physicians with regards to the new medications they are promoting. They don’t feel like they have enough data beyond dosing cards and the package insert to use in discussion with physicians. Regional director reiterated that the FDA controls the data that is released in the first year of a new product’s life. The first three months are package insert data only. He assured the sales force that in the next four weeks, they would be receiving more data and information to support their efforts with prescribers.

Finally, there were two or three strongly worded comments about ABL incompetency and the regional director committed to addressing those concerns at that level.

The survey results and follow-up discussion with the regional director indicated good upward communication. The test of effectiveness however, will be whether or not action is taken as a result of that communication. Time will tell, and continuous follow up and conversations are necessary to ensure corporate is truly receptive to the feedback. According to Kouzes & Posner (2011), “Credible leaders know that it is through their visible actions that their true commitment is demonstrated” (p. 39). If organizational leaders do what they say they will do, then they build credibility with employees which is a first step in building community and a healthy organization.

Interview Results

There were four interviews conducted for this study. The results reflected much of what were in the survey results, but revealed some deeper information in terms of job satisfaction. Interviewee years of employment with the organization ranged from two to
fifteen years. The four individuals were made up of three sales representatives (one man and two women) and one female area business leader (manager).

Interviewer reassurance was given with regards to confidentiality and anonymity, which made the individuals more comfortable in giving open and honest feedback. Positive feedback vs. negative feedback was essentially evenly split, with the more positive feedback provided by the two employees who have been with the company the longest.

These employees see themselves being more effective when the organization gives them the freedom to do their job. Micromanaging was seen in a very negative light. Sales representatives expressed frustration with “ride alongs” with upper management and marketing, as they see this as an interruption to their productivity. Expectations of the sales force involvement in WebEx’s, conference calls, training, administrative work, and technological issues present challenges to day-to-day business and are also seen as an interruption to productivity.

Formal Channels of Communication

The formal channels from which employees receive information come in a top-down manner mostly through the email channel. Interviewees preferred this mode of communication instead of conference calls, text messages, and face-to-face meetings. Email from corporate, and communication from upper management with regards to sales goals and resources available were seen in a positive light. Company voicemail is seen as antiquated and is rarely used by those in the field. The company is in the process of phasing out this mode of communication in favor of email and texting.
In terms of communication from those at the top of the pyramid, interviewees had mostly positive things to say, although opinion was unanimous that the Area Vice President’s (AVP) presence is noticeably absent. All of them mentioned a monthly birthday and anniversary blanket email the AVP sends out to the sales force, calling it disingenuous, as it is the only time the sales force hears from her. There was one comment that the AVP’s assistant is probably the person generating the email to begin with. In fact, one interviewee said if the AVP passed by at a meeting the sales rep would have no idea who she was.

Communication from different levels

Job satisfaction is affected in varying ways with regards to communication on different levels. From peers, each interviewee said communication is mostly good. As would be expected, there were some outlier comments about a peer or two who over or under-communicates, but mostly communication on this level is quite good. ABL and RBL (Regional Business Leader) communication opinion varied. Interviewees are not interested in “chatting” on the phone with their ABL; they want the point of the call. They also don’t appreciate when their manager vents to them about other reps or about the job; there appears to be a tipping point in terms of too much behind the scenes information being revealed by the ABL. Opinion regarding communication from the RBL was varied with some wanting more, and some being fine with just the minimum communication. This is a good example of the challenges of communicating in large organizations, finding a way to satisfy and engage everyone to individual satisfaction is difficult indeed.
Communication and technology

Technology is an issue and affects the way sales representatives do their jobs. The fact that laptop computers are in dire need of replacement was voiced unanimously. In speaking to the technology help line, corporate is aware and is exploring options for replacement. Upgrading computer technology for a national sales force of over 3,000 people is a huge expense and this interviewer was informed that it is in process, but will take some time before the upgrade is implemented. Sales force opinion is that this slow uptake, unfortunately, is at the expense of their productivity. With the exception of one interviewee who described himself as “I’m not a techno person”, iPads and iPhones are appreciated and work well in the field in helping them get their job done efficiently.

All were in agreement that the company website is easy to navigate and they can usually find what they are looking for with little trouble. Finding contacts in other business units of the company is challenging, however, with the opinion that one really needs to “dig to find people” and there’s “no collaboration whatsoever with other business units”. It was mentioned in one interview that if an employee wanted to move across the country and transfer to another position in another business unit, she wouldn’t know who to contact in that area.

There were strong opinions regarding face-to-face meetings and were split 50/50, with half wanting more and half not wanting any. Two interviewees believe meetings are a waste of time, with one calling them “a dog and pony show for upper management”. The other two interviewees think face-to-face meetings are necessary; they feel people are more engaged and less distracted when they are in a meeting and not “walking around the house” or “picking up kids from school” during a conference call. Another positive
reason to have face-to-face meetings is that it reminds employees of the size of the company and the importance of the company as a whole. Employees want to hear about the good the company is doing and want to come together more often for the sake of connection. There was consensus that a two-day meeting is far better than a three or four day meeting where it is thought there is too much “fluff” and an inefficient use of time.

Question 14 asked the employees if they feel like they have a say in decisions that affect their job. It was unanimous that, outside of making their daily call routing, they feel like they have no say in important decisions, and expressed frustration at being held to metrics that they feel limit productivity and are thought to be unrealistic and stifle creativity with regards to knowing and running the business in each of their specific territories. These employees also expressed that they don’t feel free or safe to express differences of opinion with any level of management. They said they do not believe anything would change as a result even if they did. There was a common opinion that the company is ultra conservative and as a result is unwilling to take the chance on improving processes.

Overall, these employees think communication is good, and not lacking with regards to their direct supervisors. There is however, disconnect with skip level leaders and this researcher believes a sincere effort to connect by upper management is in order. Opinion across the board regarding the total disconnect between the Area Vice President (AVP) and the sales force was unanimous with one of the interviewees saying it’s “a huge missed opportunity on her part – there’s no emotional attachment whatsoever, so there’s no loyalty built towards her”. Harriman’s theory discussing management self-awareness informs us of the unbalance and ineffectiveness shown by the AVP. Through
her complete detachment from the sales force, she is not showing any understanding or respect of their wants and needs, nor any desire to for that matter. One could say she seems to reside in Buber’s “I-It” realm with regards to the sales force, rather than the “I-Thou”.

Discussion

This researcher accessed a number of different areas to examine internal communication for the Northwest region of the subject pharmaceutical company. What follows is a brief discussion of the findings of the surveys and interviews, as well as observation of the internal website and conference calls.

What Are They Doing Well?

The survey revealed the company is working to analyze areas of opportunity and to improve communication with the sales force. They are conducting culture and engagement surveys on a regular basis at the regional level as well as the national level. During this study period, the company also circulated a survey on the national level with the following introductory statement: “The Field Communication team wants to improve how we share information and communicate business updates, sales direction, and key initiatives. Your responses will help us determine if our current communication vehicles/tools are effective and if you get the information you want and need”. There was also an email circulated from the national vice president covering the results of the latest transformation survey which was geared toward gauging the sales force’s thoughts on the last corporate restructure.

After conducting interviews, it was revealed that the sales force does not necessarily believe much change will come as a result of the surveys; however, one
example of change as a result of survey feedback was the directive to the ABL’s to cease asking their sales reps for reach and frequency reports. This is proof of effort being made on behalf of middle leadership to make changes, even simple ones, as a result of feedback from the employee surveys.

The fact that there was a good response to the survey (87%) from the region shows that the sales force is engaged and willing to put forward their thoughts for improvement. Indeed, the regional director could have sent out the results of the regional survey in an email, but instead he chose to discuss the results on a brief conference call/WebEx where he could show slides and make himself available for questions and clarification. At the end of the call, he offered up his cell phone number and invited anyone to call him at anytime with thoughts or concerns.

Overall, the company is doing well in terms of communicating with the sales force. It recognizes the need for further communication and fine-tuning of those communication methods which fits well with Deetz’s previously discussed theory that there should be a goal for open communication at every level.

Recommendations for improvement

Although there seems to be quite a lot of communication with and “pulse checking” of the sales force, a disconnect was revealed in terms of demands on the sales representatives for extra training and the reality of workload on the daily level. The sales force expressed frustration about the number of conference calls, WebEx’s, and trainings required on a regular basis while the expectation to “meet the metrics” in terms of number of calls per day never changes. Quite simply, the sales force feels overwhelmed with what they term as “busy work”, which impedes their ability to focus on what makes
them successful: sales calls with their physicians. There were strong negative opinions regarding “canned” sales models the sales representatives are required to master and use in the field, with interviewees expressing their frustration by saying, “just let me do my job and stop putting words in my mouth”.

Sales people tend to have outgoing personalities in common. They do however also have their own distinct personalities. One interviewee expressed frustration that the company was managing to the “lowest common denominator” in terms of creativity and ability, thus the scripted sales call verbiage. Leadership would do well to offer training on sales models and verbiage, but then trust their sales force to disseminate how to use it in their own territories. Forcing all sales representatives to speak from a script speaks to the distrust that can build between leadership and subordinates. The literature informs us if sales representatives are continually reprimanded for not utilizing a specific sales model or script with every call, experienced sales representatives will ultimately go silent and creativity will be stifled (Wheatley, 2006).

The company should be commended for its communication mining with regards to the sales force, however there is a recommendation the company go beyond explaining the results of surveys and actually determine and explain concrete solutions that will be enacted as a result of the sales force feedback. During the interviews, it was a unanimous belief that there will be no action on the part of the company as a result of sales force feedback. This is an unfortunate revelation. The belief that no solutions will come from their feedback speaks to dismissiveness by leadership. As stated earlier in the literature review, dismissiveness on the part of a leader borders on unethical behavior because the leader is sending a message to subordinates that their thoughts and opinions do not matter
Deetz’s theory informs us it would be difficult to build a stakeholder atmosphere in this situation.

The lowest rated question/response in the survey was: “The leadership of my company communicates a vision of the future that motivates me” – 77%, and, “In my company there is open and honest communication” – 73%. This is an improvement from 2015 to 2016, however roughly 25% of the sales force would like to know where the company is heading and how it will affect them. With regards to open and honest communication, leadership invites it, but the sales force do not feel like they will be listened to and/or they feel like saying anything negative will be looked down upon. This speaks to Buber’s classic “I-It” behavior where management is not looking at the sales force as equals or in partnership. Getting a “corporate answer” to a complaint is frustrating to an employee who builds the courage to voice his/her concern so employees tend to choose to not say anything at all. This type of silence will drive a wedge between leaders and subordinates.

The highest rated factor of the survey was: “Overall I am extremely satisfied to work for my company” – 90%, and, “I see a clear link between my work and my company’s business priorities” – 87%. These numbers also improved from 2015 to 2016, and shows that the company has made employees feel secure in their jobs and also the company has been clear about priorities. Employees may not agree with the priorities, but the company is clear about what those priorities are. It is recommended that the company do a better job of recognizing employees for work beyond sales numbers. It is also recommended that the Area Vice President become more visible and involved with the employees, as discussed before, employees feel no loyalty towards her, and in fact, have
a negative view of her. They never hear from her with the exception of blanket birthday/anniversary emails (which they assume her assistant compiles) or outside of large annual meetings where she is on stage speaking to a room of thousands of sales representatives. The AVP would do well to adopt a humanistic tone to her leadership by going beyond mass blanket emails and perhaps send an occasional note or bit of recognition to individuals or smaller teams. Moreno (2010) informs us this type of recognition goes a long way in showing appreciation, consideration, and in building credibility.

There was a point several years ago when the company was experiencing massive lay-offs, which resulted in extremely low morale among the sales force. During that time, the company established Change Agent positions to help facilitate better communication, get feedback from, and keep a pulse on the morale of the sales force. Those positions were occupied for two years until the lay-off period passed, at which time they were dissolved. It is recommended that the company recreate those Change Agent positions and make them permanent, as it is appropriate to communicate in person with the sales force when times are good; not just when they are bad. According to Conrad and Poole (2012), Change Agents “generally possess a high level of competence in one or two fields, which helps them recognize important information and also potential problems looming on the horizon” (p. 354). Being proactive in order to avoid problems within the sales force will keep business running smoothly.

Employee involvement in decisions within large organizations such as the one studied is very difficult to manage. In the case of the subject pharmaceutical company, there are 3,000 sales representatives in just one business unit alone, a lot of voices indeed.
Deetz’s “stakeholder democracy” process would work well for the sales representatives if incorporated at least at the district level. Each person, as a stakeholder on his or her particular team, can effect change there. Open collaboration and negotiation at the district and regional level is quite realistic. It is beyond that where the sales force seems to lose voice. This is the point where the regional director, who has the ear of upper management, can pass along communication successes and challenges experienced by his subordinates. It’s a step up process where he must be the voice of his subordinates.

Circling back to previous discussion with regards to the importance of employee trust in upper management, the interviews conducted in this study revealed that there is truth to that topic. The fact that some employees revealed that they don’t think anything will happen as a result of the engagement survey shows a general distrust of and detachment to superiors in the organization. According to Sandvik and Sypher (2009), “Trust is enhanced through longer-term interactions and by believing that the other party is taking your interests into account” (p. 365). When employees feel valued and work with people they respect, then they are typically more interested in the success of the organization. They feel a psychological connectedness, which will translate into loyalty and longevity (Sanvik and Sypher, 2009). This pharmaceutical company would do well by communicating value and encouraging collaboration from top leadership levels all the way down to the sales force level, and possibly more importantly, vice versa. It is imperative to not just leave this interaction to the regional director. This type of top-down communication will being to establish a sense of community and trust within this very large organization, and eventually meaningful upward communication will result.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARIES AND CONCLUSIONS

Limitations of Study

Although the results of the study discussed herein revealed very relevant and useful information, there are limitations to the study which could be resolved given different research circumstances.

Even though the response rate to the employee engagement survey was excellent (95 people with 83 responses), the sample size of this study was quite small. The overall business unit in which this group of people works is made up of almost 3,000 people. One could safely assume that each region has its own communication challenges, as there are different regional business directors in charge of each area. Certainly the regional communication results would vary, but it would be interesting to see if the skip level (to the national level) upward communication results would be consistent with each region, as that would provide a wider and more accurate picture of the sales force opinion of the organization as a whole.

Another limitation of the study is the study participants are all in the pharmaceutical industry and work for the same company. The results therefore, are more specific not just to that industry, but even narrower – to the same company. Results also focused on a remote, field-based group of employees who do not see their supervisors every day. There may have been different results if everyone saw each other on a regular basis. Conducting this study across a broad range of large organizations would provide a meatier picture of how sincere encouragement of upward communication affects employee morale and organizational culture.
Lastly, there is a geographical and cultural limitation to discuss. As stated before, the sample group for this study resides in a number of states in the Pacific Northwest. Dissimilarities abound with regards to cultures in different parts of the United States, and the pharmaceutical industry is not very diverse in terms of ethnic make up. Also, all the employees on the sales force have obtained higher degrees of education, with a bachelor’s degree being the minimum education requirement for the job. Diversity and attention to level of education are two very important inclusion pieces for any study.

Recommendations for Further Study

Despite the limitations previously discussed, the results of the study did provide data consistent with current literature on the topic. This same format of research could easily be altered and expanded to encompass not just a small region of a company, but a large national company as well. With different time constraints, and access to several different types of organizations, results would certainly be more robust.

It is interesting to note that of the nine questions asked on the survey, the one with the highest improvement year to year was the one addressing open and honest communication within the company. It was however, the lowest rated question, with 26% of the respondents moderately disagreeing or disagreeing with the statement. This response revealed there is more work to do. With ever changing technology affecting the way organizations communicate with their employees, there will be a need for further research to keep a pulse on trends in communication. This researcher would posit that there is however, no better way to effectively communicate with employees than with regular face-to-face interactions.
Conclusions

Organizations need to own it when their employees do not trust leadership. In this study, the regional director seemed sincere in addressing the problems within his region as well as being committed to maintaining what was right. Regular culture and engagement surveys are a good place to start, but the interviews revealed deeper and more specific trust issues within the organization. This fact speaks to the recommendation for regular and meaningful face-to-face interactions with leadership beyond the district and regional managers. As stated in chapter four, being proactive in order to avoid problems within the sales force will keep business running smoothly.

The research conducted in this study seeks to add to previous research and answer the questions of how corporate communication and encouragement of upward communication affect employee engagement and productivity, and how do employees respond to different types of communication methods, both upward and downward. Buber’s (1992) “I and Thou” theory of relationships is quite applicable to this specific research. Interviews with employees revealed comfort with speaking openly and honestly with direct managers, however, there were comments about disengaged and/or robotic leadership. Buber’s theory speaks to seeing others as one would see oneself. When there is disconnect between skip level leaders and subordinates, as there is in the organization studied, there is no opportunity to get to know anyone much less “see” them as one would see oneself.

It is a challenge to maintain a community atmosphere in a large organization, although it can and has been done. Companies like The Men’s Wearhouse and Southwest Airlines are just two of several companies discussed repeatedly in the literature as
excellent examples of communal organizations. Both companies have a large focus on encouraging employees to build deep ties to the company and each other. These solid ties create social capital which builds trust, reliability, and collaboration at every level (Pfeffer, 2009).

Through consistent encouragement of upward communication and action taken as a result of that communication, organizations will tend to see employees who are more productive and committed to the company, their co-workers, and their job. Corporate encouragement and management of stakeholder democracy will bring meaningful dialogue from every corner of the organization, which will result in open decision-making and better economic outcomes for not just the organization, but the employees as well.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Survey Questions

This survey serves as a follow-up to an engagement survey completed six months ago. Results will be compared and shared with the region on a regional WebEx. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and will remain completely anonymous. Any comments offered at the end of the survey will only be identified on a regional level rather than a district level in order to maintain anonymity. If you agree to participate, please choose one of four answers (agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree, and disagree) to each of the following questions:

1. Please select your current position.
   - Area Business Leader
   - Sales Professional

2. Please select your geography:
   - Montana/Wyoming
   - Boise
   - Spokane
   - Seattle
   - Everett
   - Olympia
   - Tacoma
   - Portland East
   - Portland West
   - Eugene

3. Overall I am extremely satisfied to work for my company.

4. I rarely think about looking for a new job with another company.

5. My job makes good use of my talents, skills and abilities.

6. I see a clear link between my work and my company’s business priorities.

7. The leadership of my company communicates a vision of the future that motivates me.

8. In my company there is open and honest communication.
9. I feel valued in my current role.

Survey text boxes:

10. What do you need to be more successful in your current role?

11. Are there specific areas, regional or national activities you consider to be less than relevant to your selling success? If yes, briefly describe.

12. Any additional comments are welcome here…
APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

Name:
Position:
Tenure with company:

Anything you say in this interview is completely confidential and between you and the interviewer only. You may opt out of any question you don’t feel comfortable answering. Do I have your permission to proceed?

First, what do you think will happen as a result of this interview?

1. What factors tend to facilitate your effectiveness on the job?

2. What, if anything, inhibits your effectiveness?

3. Describe the formal channels through which you typically receive information?

4. What are the major communication strengths of the corporation? Weaknesses? –

5. What happens when you send upward communication to your RBL/Corporate?

6. What communication channels are best at keeping you abreast of the day-to-day operations of the organization?

7. How would you evaluate communication from top management?

8. How often do you receive information of little value? Can you give an example? Do you feel overloaded with information? Do you get too little information?

9. How does communication here affect your job satisfaction? From your peers? From RBL/corporate?

10. Do you feel like you have the appropriate technology to do your job?

11. Is there a need for more face-to-face meetings on the regional or national level?

12. Is the company’s website is clear and easy to navigate?

13. Is it easy to find people in other business units within the organization?

14. Do you have a say in decisions that affect the way you do your job?

15. Are you free to disagree with your immediate supervisor? Does the organization encourage differences of opinion?
16. Are you satisfied with the company’s overall internal communication? Will you give an example of what you like?

17. Are there any other areas of communication you think should be explored or anything you would like to include today?

18. Employees typically desire increased opportunities to communicate upward on such matters as suggestions for improvement. Do you see this at PNW Pharma? What keeps this from happening? How do you think this affects productivity and job satisfaction?

19. If you could make any changes you wanted in PNW’s communication, what would you change? Give me your wish list?