Pathways to Management and Leadership

Level 3: First Line Management

Unit 3009V1

Management Communication

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Management
Communication

Contents

SAMPLE MATERIAL

About this workbook

The unit

The main purpose of this workbook is to support you as you study for the Chartered Management Institute Level 3 — First Line Management, so it specifically focuses on the content of the syllabus for Unit 3009V1, *Management Communication*.

This workbook provides underpinning knowledge and develops understanding to improve your skills as well as to prepare for future assessment. If you are studying towards the Level 3, then you will be assessed by your Approved Centre on 'your knowledge and understanding of' the following learning outcomes:

1. understand the importance and principles of management communication

2. understand how to use methods of communication to achieve the management objectives

3. understand how to review the effectiveness of communication in the achievement of the management objectives

The content of this workbook may also assist you with some aspects of Unit 3004V1, *Managing and Communicating Information*.

Two areas explored in the workbooks for Unit 3004V1 and Unit 3005V1, *Identifying Development Opportunities*, are very useful in this subject area, and brief summary extracts of those ideas are included as appendices to this workbook, for reference.

The aims of this workbook

This workbook aims to help you learn how to:

- apply effective information approaches within your work role

- provide appropriate information and advice

- make good use of meetings.

This workbook, then, is about managing information efficiently, informing and advising effectively, and using meetings appropriately.

Syllabus coverage

The table below shows which sections of the workbook address the assessment criteria of the qualification syllabus.

Unit 3009V1: Management Communication Syllabus coverage	Addressed within section
1.1 Describe the role of communication in the management environment	1
1.2 Identify the effects of communication on management practice	1, 2
1.3 Describe the communication principles that support team activities	1, 2, 3
2.1 Describe the processes for conducting a team briefing	3
2.2 Identify the stages of organising and leading a formal management meeting	3
2.3 Describe the structure of a written management report	4
3.1 Identify feedback methods to determine impact of communication	2
3.2 Evaluate the feedback to determine achievement of the management objectives	2

Getting started

Information and communication are the lifeblood of an organisation. Communicating and providing information effectively is essential for yourself, your team and the organisation as a whole. The way you communicate at work will depend on your personal style, but also on the systems and processes that are used in your organisation. Effective procedures are particularly important when you are running or attending meetings.

How to use the workbooks

The workbooks provide ideas from writers and thinkers in the management and leadership field. They offer opportunities for you to investigate and apply these ideas within your working environment and job-role.

Structure

Each workbook is divided into sections that together cover the knowledge and understanding required for that unit of the Level 3 in First Line Management. Each section starts with a clear set of objectives that identify the background knowledge to be covered, and the management skills in the workplace that enable you to demonstrate this knowledge. You do not have to complete the sections in the order they appear in the workbook, but you should try to cover them all to make sure that your work on the unit is complete. There are self-assessment questions at the end of each section that allow you to check your progress. You may want to discuss your answers to the self-assessment questions with your line manager or a colleague.

Activities

Throughout the workbooks there are activities for you to complete. These activities are designed to help you to develop yourself as a manager. Space is provided within the activities for you to enter your own thoughts or findings. Feedback is then provided to confirm your input or to offer more ideas for you to consider.

To get the best from the workbooks, you should try to complete each activity fully before moving on. However, if the answer is obvious to you because the issue is one you have encountered previously, then you might just note some bullet points that you can then compare quickly against the feedback. You may sometimes find it difficult to write your complete response to an activity in the space provided. Don't worry about this — just keep a separate notebook handy, which you can use and refer to as needed.

Try not to look at the feedback section before completing an activity. You might like to try covering up the feedback with a postcard or piece of paper while you are working through an activity.

Timings

Timings are suggested for each section and activity, although it is important that **you** decide how much time to spend on an activity. Some activities may occupy only a few moments' thought, while others may be of particular interest and so you might decide to spend half an hour or more exploring the issues. This is fine — the purpose of the activities is to help you reflect on what you are doing, and to help you identify ways of enhancing your effectiveness. It is always worth writing something though, even if it's brief — the act of writing will reinforce your learning much more effectively than just referring to the feedback.

Scenarios

There are scenarios and examples throughout each workbook to illustrate key points in real workplace settings. The scenarios cover a wide range of employment sectors. As you work through, you might like to think of similar examples from your own experience.

Planning your work

The reading and reflection, scenarios and activities in each section of the workbooks are designed to take around two hours to complete (although some may take longer). This is a useful indicator of the minimum length of time that you should aim to set aside for a study session. Try to find a quiet place where you will not be interrupted and where you can keep your workbooks, notes and papers reasonably tidy. You may also like to think about the time of day when you work best — are you a 'morning person' who likes to get things done at the start of the day, or do you work better in the evening when there may be fewer disturbances?

Preparing for assessment

Further information on assessment is available in the Student Guide produced as part of the *Pathways to Management and Leadership* series. If you have any further questions about assessment procedures, it is important that you resolve these with your tutor or centre co-ordinator as soon as possible.

Further reading

Suggestions for further reading and links to management information are available via ManagementDirect through the Study Support section of the Institute's website at http://mde.managers.org.uk/members. Alternatively, email ask@managers.org.uk or telephone 01536 207400. You will also find titles for further reading in the Bibliography at the end of this workbook.

The CMI Management Library holds an extensive range of books and pamphlets for loan to members. A postal loan service is offered to members in the UK only. You will only pay your return postal charges. Go to www.managers.org.uk/library to review the collection and to place your requests.

Section 1 Approaches to information

By the end of this section you should be able to:

1.1 describe the role of communication in the management environment

1.2 identify the effects of communication on management practice

1.3 describe the communication principles that support team activities.

What is information?

This may seem to be a simple question. However, though we all use the term, we may not have thought through exactly what is involved.

Activity

Activity 1.1	(about 5 minutes)

How would you define information?

Feedback

There is no right answer to this, but it can be taken to mean a number of things. You may have used some of these words:

- *data*
- *facts*
- *details*
- *numbers*
- *opinions.*

You may also have considered the ways in which information arrives, such as:

- *emails*
- *letters and memos*
- *reports.*

In the workbook for Unit 3004V1, Managing and Communicating Information, *the terms 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' are discussed, so you may also have responded with these terms. Quantitative information usually consists of objective, hard, provable facts, often associated with numbers; while qualitative information is much more based upon subjective issues, such as opinions and feelings.*

> *All of these things play a part, but none of them seem to capture what information is, nor how it relates to some of the other expressions that you might use.*

From data to action

Here is an idea that aims to explain the various terms associated with information, and the way they are interlinked. It builds on Favell's model, (2004). Figure 1 illustrates this as a flow diagram.

data

add structure

facts

add context

information

add linkages

possibilities

add intentions

decisions

add commitment
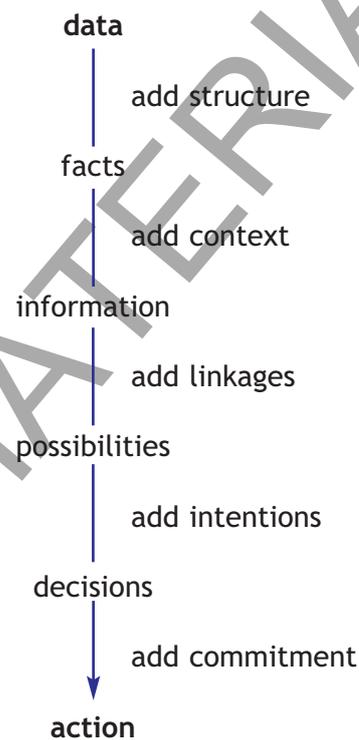
action

Fig. 1 From facts to action (after Favell, 2004)

Data, sometimes called 'raw' data because it is untreated in any way, is usually made up of a string of figures or characters. Without *structure*, it is difficult to interpret, and therefore cannot really rise to the status of a *fact*.

Here is an example to illustrate the process in figure 1.

You are given some data, which is: 1415231005329LNBH

This is pretty meaningless as it stands. However, if you understand the structure (in this case, what the characters represent), the fact emerges.

For example, suppose the structure in the data example is represented by the characters as follows:

- 1 and 2 = hours on the 24-hour clock

- 3 and 4 = minutes

- 5 and 6 = day of the month

- 7 and 8 = month

- 9 and 10 = year

- 11 = floor number

- 12 and 13 = room number

- 14 and 15 = city

- 16 and 17 = building.

It becomes clear then, that the fact is:

- 1415 hrs, 23rd October 2005, Third Floor, Room 29, London, Broadcasting House.

So, you now have a fact — but so what? Why do you need this? What you need now is the *context* to turn this fact into some *information*.

The context is that you are to attend a meeting, to discuss staffing. Now you are much clearer.

However, there is still the question about what aspect of staffing you are to discuss, or why. This is where the *linkages* come in — the links between this item of information and other items of information you might already have, or might need to collect.

So, suppose you had recently received an email telling you that your organisation has just won a very large project order, and you also know that one of your staff is going on maternity leave soon. It then occurs to you that the order will cut across the school holiday period, and many of your staff have children of school age. Making all these linkages highlights *possibilities*, and clearly, the meeting will explore some of these.

Once the possibilities have been explored, you are likely to be clearer about your *intentions*, and these in turn will lead you to make *decisions* on what to do. All you need now is the *commitment* to carry out the decisions, and you have an *action plan*.

Activity

Activity 1.2	(about 5 minutes)

How do you think the facts to action model could help you with your own information management?

Feedback

Knowing the individual steps can help in a number of ways:

- *If you don't understand something, it can give clues as to what is missing, or what you need to discover.*

- *It can remind you that the best use of information is where you can make links with other information, to lead to increased possibilities and increased knowledge.*

- *Where decisions are proving hard, it suggests that intentions may not be fully clear.*

- *Where action is not taking place, it points to checking the commitment level.*

- *It might also influence the way you structure your records — perhaps to include the reasons why decisions were made, in case they need to be revisited, or to include the linkages that were made when considering the possibilities (for example, in case any of these later prove to be wrong assumptions).*

Types of information

The next point for you to consider is to do with the various types of information that exist.

Activity

Activity 1.3   (about 5 minutes)

List here the various types of information that you have come across.

Feedback

There are a number of different approaches you might have taken to this question. This illustrates that context is needed to clarify the question. Initially, you probably thought: 'That depends what you mean.'

Look again at the feedback for activity 1.1. You can see how it could apply here too, depending on the context you had in mind.

You may also have thought of some of the following.

If your context was the extent to which information was provable or improvable, you might have listed words like:

- *hard or soft*

- *fact, theory, supposition, hearsay and rumour, opinion*

- *quantitative or qualitative.*

> *If your context was about physical properties, you might have listed:*
>
> ■ *hard copy*
>
> ■ *electronic*
>
> ■ *speech and memory*
>
> ■ *musical or rhythmical.*
>
> *If your context was about access issues, you might have listed:*
>
> ■ *restricted, freely available*
>
> ■ *public domain, private domain.*
>
> *If your context was about the level of formality, you might have listed:*
>
> ■ *formal, informal*
>
> ■ *structured, unstructured.*

You have probably picked up by now that all information fits into several different categories. It is only useful if you know *why* you need it, and this will give you some clues as to the context, which tells you what you will be using it *for*.

The principles of managing information

As well as understanding the facts to action model, it is also important that you consider the basic principles of information management systems. Again, this process can be presented as a flow diagram.

Activity

Activity 1.4   (about 15 minutes)

Create a flow diagram that represents the process that you use for managing information. You will probably want to start it with 'identifying information needs'.

Feedback

Compare your flow diagram with the example in figure 2:

Identify why information is needed
↓
Identify the type of information needed
↓
Identify the criteria to be used to decide its usefulness
↓
Identify the sources that are available fot this information
↓
Find out how to access them
(and if they are available to you)
↓
Identify how you will store and retrieve the information
once you have it
↓
Access the information, and collect it
↓
Sift, edit and select the items that you need
↓
Store the items
↓
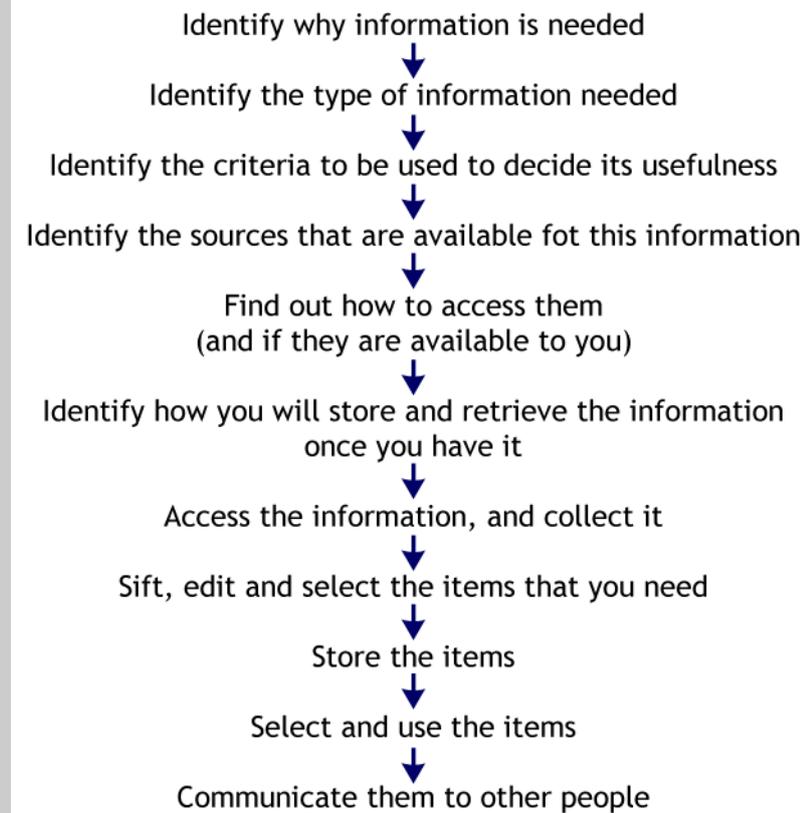Select and use the items
↓
Communicate them to other people

Fig. 2 A basic model of information handling, Favell (2007a)

You should note that the first six steps are planning steps, which should happen before you actually do anything. A common mistake is to launch straight in to collecting the information without planning properly. The result can often be:

- *information overload*

- *a realisation later on that the wrong information has been collected*

- *poor storage, so the information is not easily accessible.*

Activity

Activity 1.5 (about 10 minutes)

Look again at your response to activity 1.4, and check to see how many of the planning steps you missed out. Think of a situation where things have not gone well at work. How would spending a few extra minutes on these steps have helped you in those situations?

Feedback

You should have been able to think of some examples where a little additional planning could have helped. Perhaps proper planning could have saved some time: for example, by not having to hunt for information that you know you have put somewhere, or perhaps by going to the reference book, instead of waiting to ask a manager who is not available for a couple of days.

Evaluating information

It is important for you to evaluate information before you use it as a basis for making decisions. After all, these decisions might involve spending significant sums of money, or restructuring the organisation or your operation in a way that may have a big effect on both effectiveness and the people involved. It is essential, therefore, that you make sure the information that underpins any decision is as good as it can be.

The information management process starts with identifying the information you need, and then confirming the criteria for deciding whether that information is useful — the 'right' information.

Activity

Activity 1.6   (about 10 minutes)

What criteria could you use to judge whether the information is 'right' for you?

Feedback

You have probably responded with some of the following.

Is the information:

- *valid?*
- *authentic?*
- *current and timely?*
- *sufficient?*
- *complete?*
- *accessible?*
- *reliable?*
- *relevant?*
- *structured/formatted well?*

These are some of the key indicators as to whether an item of information is high quality or not.

Valid information

Validity usually refers to the extent to which information accurately represents what it is supposed to represent.

For example, information about numbers of people registered as having entered a shop is often collected by an electronic counter. The counter registers one count each time a beam is broken. However, there could be discrepancies:

- If someone enters the shop, and then leaves again, they have broken the beam twice: is this one count, or two?

- Does the counter also register young children? An adult with two children under six years of age might register three counts in and three out. And what does a pushchair count as?

- What happens if a dog runs in and is chased out, several times a day?

The figures resulting from this counter may or may not represent the number of potential shoppers, depending on such variables. You should question whether the figures you are looking at are valid, as they may not represent a true picture.

Authentic

Information is considered to be authentic if it is 'real' and taken from real life situations, rather than being artificially produced, or fictional. For example, figures resulting from a count of ticket stubs after a theatre performance would be an authentic way of telling how many were in the audience for that performance, whereas the figures resulting from someone guessing by looking at ticket sales for the week would not be an authentic item of information.

Current and timely

Activity

Activity 1.7   (about 5 minutes)

What does 'current' mean, in the context of information?