

Fundamentals of Organizational Communication

Prepared by

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Chapter 3



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Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Describe the Scientific Management School.
- 2.2** Describe the Human Behavior School.
- 2.3** Describe the Integrated Perspectives Viewpoints
- 2.4** Describe emerging perspectives for organizational communication



Chapter 3

Communication Implications of Major Organizational Theories

In Chapter 2 we established three major perspectives for studying organizational communication: the Functional tradition, the Meaning-Centered approach, and Emerging Perspectives. In this chapter we identify and describe major organizational theories developed in fields others than communication and evaluate their communication implication. We use the communication perspectives from Chapter 2 for our evaluation. We look at how researchers describe the ways in which organizations should work, what types of assumptions are made about people in organizations, and what these descriptions and assumptions mean for organizational communication



Chapter 3

Communication Implications of Major Organizational Theories

We examine four major perspectives or schools of organizational thought: the Scientific Management, Human Behavior, Integrated Perspectives, and Postmodern, Critical, and Feminist Perspectives schools. The four can be distinguished from one another by the questions researchers and individuals representing each viewpoint ask about organizations. Theorists representing the Scientific Management school ask questions about how organizations should be designed, how workers can be trained for maximum efficiency, how the chain of command works, and how division of labor should be determined.

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Communication Implications of Major Organizational Theories

Human Behavior theorists are concerned about the influence of individuals in organizations, what motivates workers, and how motivation affects the organization. These theorists believe organizational design and structure reflect basic assumptions about human behavior. They describe organizational relationships and people as resources. Human Behavior approaches are frequently discussed as human relation and human resource theories.

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**Communication Implications of Major
Organizational Theories**

The development of what we call the Integrated Perspectives school can be traced to criticisms of Scientific Management and Human Behavior approaches. In the Integrated Perspectives approach, we ask questions about how structure, technology, and people relate to their environments. We become concerned with relationships among organizational design, employee motivation, communication participation, and organizational values, because these factors relate to the organization's ability to function in its environment.



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Communication Implications of Major Organizational Theories

Finally, Postmodern, Critical, and Feminist Perspectives present a critique of power and domination in organizations. These perspectives challenge rationality as described by the Scientific Management perspective, and seek to examine the privilege of certain organizational members and the marginalization of others.

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The Scientific Management School

1. In his classic work *Principles of Scientific Management* (1913), Frederick Taylor described the Scientific Management school when he attempted to convince readers the inefficiency in most organizations is caused by a lack of systematic management and that “the best management is a true science, resting upon clearly defined laws, rules, and principles, as a foundation.” This foundation, from the Scientific Management point of view, rested on “scientifically” designed organizations characterized by carefully developed chains of command and efficient division of labor. Three men—Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol, and Max Weber—were largely responsible for developing the major concepts of the Scientific Management approach. All three were contemporaries living and writing during a period from the middle of the nineteenth century to World War I. The approaches of Taylor, Fayol, and Weber are used to describe the Scientific Management Perspective



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Principles and Basic Activities for Scientific Management

Frederick Taylor (1856–1915) is often referred to as the father of Scientific Management. Taylor's work experience, ranging from common laborer to chief engineer, served as the basis for the development of the four essential elements he viewed as the foundation of scientific management: (1) careful selection of workers, (2) inducing and training workers by the scientific method, (3) equal division of work between management and workers, and (4) discovering the scientific method for tasks and jobs. Taylor (1913) held management responsible for devising the scientific method of work. He believed management is responsible for identifying "one best way" to perform tasks and that management should be exacting in teaching workers this scientific method for task performance. Taylor believed close contact between management and workers would eliminate the necessity for peer communication and what he called "soldiering," the unhealthy influence of the peer group.



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Principles of Management

Henri Fayol (1841–1925) is credited with the first known attempt to describe broad principles of management for the organization and conduct of business. A French mining engineer, Fayol spent his working career as an engineer and later managing director of Comambault, a floundering mining company before Fayol assumed leadership. Fayol enjoyed enormous success as director of Comambault and was widely credited with turning a financially troubled company into a stable and thriving institution. Fayol founded the Center for Administrative Studies and, as a leading industrialist, attempted to influence the French government to apply his principles of administration. His early papers on general administrative theory became the influential text *General and Industrial Management*, first published in 1916.



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Principles of Management

In General and Industrial Management (1949), Fayol proposed fourteen principles of administration or management that he viewed as essential for effective organization. Management was responsible for developing well-defined assignments for workers. Fayol placed responsibility for the exercise of authority with management. He also emphasized a difference between authority as a result of job title versus what he called “personal” authority, authority based on intelligence, experience, moral worth, ability to lead, and past service. Although he did not describe it as such, Fayol recognized the importance of what is now called credibility in leadership



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Principles of Management

- He contended orders should come from only one superior and that a bypass of the chain of command would be a source of problems. He generally believed messages should move from supervisors to subordinates following the formal organizational chart. Fayol described the scalar chain as the movement of messages both vertically and horizontally throughout the organization. Fayol defined the scalar chain as “the chain of superiors ranging from the ultimate authority to the lowest ranks. The line of authority is the route followed— via every link in the chain—by all communications which start from or go to the ultimate authority.” Fayol described the chain as carrying messages in vertical directions. As such, the chain would have an equal capacity to carry messages vertically, both downward and upward.

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Principles of Management

Fayol also valued what he called equity, or a combination of kindness and justice toward all. He viewed equity as necessary to encourage workers to carry out duties with devotion and loyalty. Another principle of administration Fayol emphasized was initiative, the ability to think through and execute plans. He considered the manager who permitted the exercise of initiative within a work group to be superior to the one who could not. In addition to his principles of administration, Fayol identified five basic activities of management. These activities—planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling—encompassed all his principles of administration and served as a summary of Fayol’s view of the overall responsibility of management

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Principles of Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy Organizations based on formalized rules, regulations, and procedures, which make authority rational as opposed to charismatic or traditional.

Weber (1947) identified three types of authority: charismatic, traditional, and bureaucratic. Charismatic authority is based on the specific characteristics of the person exerting authority. Personal attributes of the individual inspire others to follow. This authority is nonstructural (does not go with specific jobs) and usually nontransferable from person to person. In other words, charismatic authority is individually based, and when the charismatic leader leaves the organization, the authority or ability to influence leaves with him or her. Weber believed charismatic authority contributed to unstable organizations and disorderly transition of power from one person to another.

Traditional authority, according to Weber, is associated with the customs of a group or society. Although generally more stable than charismatic authority, traditional authority passes from individual to individual based on custom or tradition rather than ability or task competence.

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Principles of Bureaucracy

Weber believed bureaucratic authority represented the ideal for organizations. Bureaucratic authority was to rest on formalized rules, regulations, and procedures that made authority “rational-legal,” not based on personal charisma or tradition. Bureaucratic leaders were to be selected according to rules and regulations designed to promote the most competent for the particular job. Weber called for division of labor and for task specialization. He supported a formal chain of command and hierarchical structure. Impersonality in interpersonal relations was valued, and employment selection and promotion were to be based on competence.



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Communication Implications of Scientific Management Theories

Communication, from the Scientific Management point of view, was to be a tool of management designed to facilitate task completion and as such was to operate as one of many organizational variables. Communication activities were to be specialized, as were tasks and jobs. Specifically, communication was required to train workers and give daily instructions concerning job requirements. Communication activities were to be formal, and interpersonal communication of a social or personal nature was to be discouraged, particularly among peers. Horizontal communication was to occur infrequently and only when following the chain of command was too time-consuming and cumbersome. Scientific Management theorists envisioned more messages flowing from supervisors to employees than from employees to supervisors. Status differences between managers and workers were to be encouraged and were believed essential for enforcing organizational rules and regulations.

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The Human Behavior School

- The Human Behavior school shifts the emphasis from the structure of organizations, work design, and measurement to the interactions of individuals, their motivations, and their influence on organizational events. The Human Behavior Perspective assumes work is accomplished through people and emphasizes cooperation, participation, satisfaction, and interpersonal skills. Theorists representing this viewpoint see organizational design and function as reflections of basic assumptions about human behavior

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Principles of Coordination

Parker Follett is famous for her psychological foundations of the smoothly operating organization. Although less well known than Scientific Management theorists, Parker Follett, in her shift to the psychological and motivational processes of workers, made significant contributions to the emergence of behavior theories for understanding organization



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The Hawthorne Effect

The Chicago Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company was the site of the research. In 1927, Mayo led a research team from the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration in a series of experimental studies designed to improve the physical working environment for increased productivity. Management at the Hawthorne plant was aware that severe dissatisfaction existed among workers, and previous efforts by efficiency experts had failed both to reduce tension and to increase productivity. Mayo and his colleagues began to experiment with altering physical conditions to determine a combination of conditions that would increase productivity. They worked with factors such as lighting, noise, incentive pay, and heating. As the studies progressed, they found little support for the expected relationship between improved working conditions and improved productivity. They became aware that other unexpected factors were interacting with physical factors to influence work output. During their study of changes in lighting intensity, Mayo and his colleagues observed that work output increased when lighting intensity increased.



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The Hawthorne Effect

That was a result that could be interpreted in terms of Taylor and the Scientific Management viewpoint. Yet they also observed that work output increased when they decreased lighting intensity. That result ran counter to not only Taylor but also any previously established principles of Scientific Management. In fact, output increased no matter how the physical variables changed. Mayo and his colleagues (1945) came to understand that a powerful and previously unrecognized influence in the experimental setting was the attention the researchers were paying to the workers. The attention encouraged a group norm that emphasized increased production no matter how the researchers altered the physical environment. This effect, widely known as the Hawthorne effect, was the first documentation in industrial psychological research of the importance of human interaction and morale for productivity. The Hawthorne studies became the first organized attempts to understand the individual worker as key to the overall production process. As a result of the Hawthorne research, production could no longer be viewed as solely dependent on formal job and organizational design.

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Theory X and Y

Theory X–Theory Y McGregor’s description of management assumptions about workers. Theory X characterizes assumptions underlying Scientific Management theory, and Theory Y is associated with assumptions common to Human Behavior perspectives. Theory X managers assume that workers dislike work and will avoid responsible labor. Theory Y managers believe that workers can be self-directed and self- controlled.

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Participative Management

Likert, in *New Patterns of Management*, set forth a new theory—participative management—that rejected many of the assumptions on which Scientific Management was founded. His employee-centered management was based on effectively functioning groups linked together structurally throughout the entire organization. In other words, Likert proposed the management process should depend on participative groups formed to have overlapping individual membership among groups. Figure 3.2 illustrates how an organizational chart using the Likert concept might look.

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Communication Implications of Human Behavior Theories in Contemporary Organizations

Effective communication was a cornerstone of the Human Behavior Perspective. Management was to trust employees, and employees were to feel free to discuss job-related concerns with their supervisors. Peer-group interaction was not only recognized but was also viewed as a potentially positive influence for productivity. The human behavior theorists recognized both formal and informal communication networks carrying task and social support messages. Interactions at all levels were expected to be extensive and friendly, with substantial cooperation throughout the organization. From the Human Behavior viewpoint, communication was vital to the use of human resources and good organizational decision making



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Integrated Perspectives Viewpoints

Both Scientific Management and Human Behavior approaches have been criticized for their failure to integrate organizational structure, technology, and people with the larger environment in which organizations exist. The Scientific Management theorists concentrated on organizational structure and work design with little attention to people and organizational environments. The Human Behavior theorists were concerned with people but also tended to ignore influences beyond organizational boundaries. In reaction to these criticisms, a number of organizational researchers have developed Integrated Perspectives viewpoints. These theorists attempt to explain how people, technologies, and environments integrate to influence all that happens in organizations

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Process and Environmental Approach

Process and environmental approaches to organizational theory attempt to describe how complex processes such as decision making influence the internal operation of organizations and are influenced by external environments. Researchers using these perspectives seek to explain how human and technical systems interact with the broader environments in which organizations operate and in so doing seek to test basic assumptions from both Scientific Management and Human Behavior viewpoints.

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Decision Making Approach

Herbert Simon (1916–2001) offered a description of organizations that differed from both the Scientific Management and Human Behavior viewpoints. Simon (1957) proclaimed organizational behavior is a complex network of decisions with decision-making processes influencing the behavior of the entire organization. According to Simon, organizations can be understood in terms of what types of decisions are made at various organizational levels and with what types of information. As such, Simon viewed the decision-making process as the essential organizational process.



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Decision Making Approach

Understanding the limitations of human decision making was important to Simon's model. Along with Richard Cyert and James March (Cyert and March, 1963), Simon introduced the concept of **bounded rationality** as a way to understand information processing and decision making. Specifically, the concept of bounded rationality assumed people intend to be rational, but with limited information-processing capacity, human decision making is based on selective perception and therefore exhibits "limited" rationality. Simon argued individuals often make organizational decisions while realizing their decisions are based on partial information. Simon called this process "satisficing," or the making of decisions with partial information in the hope the decision will be good enough, if not the best.

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Decision Making

- Decision Making The process of choosing from among numerous alternatives—decision making—is the organizing process of directing behaviors and resources toward organizational goals. Decision making, as with other organizing efforts, is accomplished primarily through communication



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Sociotechnical Integration

The concept of sociotechnical integration rested on two assumptions first described by Eric Trist (1911–1993) and his student Kenneth Bamforth¹ (1951) as a result of their work with a British coal-mining operation: (1) organizational production is optimized through optimizing social and technical systems, and (2) a constant interchange exists between the work system and the broader environment.

Communication in the sociotechnical approach related to work, to the needs of the environment, and to the personal needs of workers.



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Contingency Theory

- The contingency theory began with research by Joan Woodward (1916–1971) on one hundred British manufacturing firms in an effort to develop a list of characteristics that would indicate differences in organizational structure. Woodward's (1965) classification included organizations with little technological complexity and those with extensive reliance on complicated technologies. Her findings relating differences in technology to differences in organizational structure became the foundation of modern contingency theory, or the realization that differences in organizations are due to differences in goals and environments.
- Contingency theory rejects the “one best way” to organize as described by Scientific Management's theorists. Contingency theory also finds the Human Behavior approach lacking an explanation of the complex relationships among units within the organization and the larger environment in which the organization operates.

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The Systems Approach

Closely related to contingency theory, systems theory grew in direct response to criticisms of both Scientific Management and Human Behavior philosophies. The systems approach emphasizes interaction with the larger environment. In systems theory, the organization takes in materials and human resources (inputs), processes materials and resources (throughputs), and yields finished products (outputs) to the larger environment. Along with inputs, throughputs, and outputs, the ideal system should have a self-corrective mechanism whereby feedback or inputs from the environment can be processed into adaptation of throughputs and, potentially, outputs.



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Learning Organizations

the learning concept suggests organizations gain knowledge from continuous processes of information exchange between organizations and their environments

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Cultural Approach

cultural approaches to organizational theory explain organizational behavior in terms of the influence of cultures that exist both internally and externally to the organization. Cultural research attempts to identify how a unique sense of the place (culture) contributes to individual behavior and organizational effectiveness. Cultural research focuses on how cultures form, whether cultures are “strong” or unified how subcultures manifest themselves, and how organizational cultures respond to fragmentation.



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Cultural Approach

, Schein provides a model of culture with three distinct levels: (1) artifacts and creations, (2) values, and (3) basic assumptions. Artifacts and creations are the most visible level of culture, consisting of the physical and social environment created by organizational members. Artifacts and creations can be seen by members of the culture and by observers. Artifacts and creations include architecture, technology, furniture, dress, and a variety of written documents. Behaviors such as decision making, meetings, and networks also are included. The second level, values, refers to both individual and group preferences for the way things should be in the organization. Values are harder to observe, although relationships between values and behaviors have been established by a variety of scholars. Finally, Schein described as his third level basic assumptions. Basic assumptions are the core of what individuals believe to be true about the world and how it works. Basic assumptions form around humanity's relationship to nature, the nature of reality and truth, the nature of human nature, the nature of human activity, and the nature of human relationships



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Communication Implications of Integrated Perspectives in Contemporary Organizations

The Integrated Perspectives viewpoints present a diverse set of implications for organizational communication. The systems theorists all describe organizations with changing needs and environments, even though descriptions of the relationship to environments vary. Thus, the effectiveness of communication relates not only to what happens within the organization, but also to how the organization communicates with its environment, its customers, and community. The cultural approaches, on the other hand, are more specific about the importance of communication in carrying messages about the culture and influencing behavior through cultural expectations.

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Postmodern, Critical, and Feminist Perspectives

An additional communication dynamic that influences behavior is the use of power. In its most general sense, power has been defined as an attempt to influence another person's behavior to produce desired outcomes. As such, power is a neutral term subject to positive use as well as abuse. The power process occurs through communication and relates to resources, dependencies, and alternatives

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Communication as a Culture

- Organizing, decision making, and influence processes, when taken together, help us describe the culture of organizations by describing how organizations do things and how they talk about how they do things. Put another way, organizational culture is the unique sense of the place that organizations generate through ways of doing and ways of communicating about the organization. Organizational culture reflects the shared realities and shared practices in the organization and how these realities create and shape organizational events. Organizational culture is the unique symbolic common ground that becomes the self-definitions or self-images of the organization



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Communication Climate

- The culture of an organization describes the unique sense of the place, its practices, and how that organization describes itself. The reaction to an organization's culture is the organization's communication climate.

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Feminist , Race, and Class Perspective and Organizational Communication

- Feminist theory focuses on the marginalization and domination of women in the workplace and the devaluing of women's voices in all organizational processes. Although diverse in perspective and approaches, feminist theory generally attempts to move our society beyond patriarchal forms and social practices by critiquing power relationships that devalue women. Race perspectives and organizational communication currently are less developed, emerging, and of significant importance. Race perspectives focus on the domination of those not of a majority race and the uncovering of practices which both silence and devalue minority voices.



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