

Inefficient Communication amongst the Relevant Stakeholders in Manufacturing Operations: A Case of Simba PepsiCo, Johannesburg, South Africa

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ABSTRACT The main objective of the paper is to ensure that elements or causes of inefficient communication that hindered seamless execution in manufacturing operations are identified and eliminated. The research was focused on Simba PepsiCo, a Johannesburg based company. Questionnaires were sent through email access to 140 employees at Simba PepsiCo and a total of 103 participants completed the questionnaires. What emerged from the paper is that stakeholders were aware that communication inefficiencies existed within the organisation. Participants were able to identify themselves as part of the problem and as well being part of the solution. In general participants had a positive attitude towards the designing and implementation of communication strategies and expressed significant buy-in to the concept. Simba PepsiCo Leadership were respected for their roles, but it was felt that they too should get more involved and develop themselves to become even better leaders.

INTRODUCTION

Simba PepsiCo is the biggest snack and Beverages Company in South Africa. It is committed to bringing new and exciting products to market. At Simba PepsiCo, their mission is to be the world's premier consumer Products Company focused on convenient foods and beverages. In everything that they do, they strive for honesty, fairness and integrity. The research was focused exclusively on Johannesburg Simba PepsiCo's 750 employees in manufacturing operations (MOs). Inefficient communication can be described as communication systems that are disorganized, feeble, incapable, incompetent, ineffectual, wasteful and inefficient or ineffective time usage (Houghton 2014). Efficient communication is not only about conveying a message that you want said, rather it is more about conveying the message so that other people can understand it.

Motivation for the Study

The paper is aimed at investigating the elements that hindered efficient communication

within Simba PepsiCo. The underlying objective was to develop the design and implementation of better solutions that will ensure the enhancement of efficient and effective communication in Simba PepsiCo. It is envisaged that through systems interventions and management processes inefficient communication can be overcome. The paper also makes recommendations to the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry by identifying gaps that can be exploited by the industry to eliminate elements or causes of inefficient communication.

The findings of the paper, therefore, are intended to be of benefit to the FMCG industry in general and manufacturing operations in particular. The benefits include better planned orders which are achieved on time and in the right quantities demanded. Efficient communication will create good conversation amongst key stakeholders in manufacturing. In addition, it is foreseeable that better communication strategies, better quality assurance and procedures will be created that will benefit the industry and protect customers and/or consumers. PepsiCo Simba would be able to retain talent through effi-

cient communication because it creates healthy employment relations.

The national sphere of FMCG industry may also harmonize the manufacturing operation policy framework towards efficient stakeholder communication. The paper reinforces the understanding that the Manufacturing sector, although considered too inflexible, has potential to employ the strategic approaches to manufacturing operations at the same level as FMCG industry sector.

It is also hoped that this paper will confirm that the manufacturing operations communication approach can be used and is a useful tool for manufacturing sector programmes because these programmes have business and social benefit(s) that are difficult to measure either in return on investment or in time value for money.

Problem Statement

Due to poor leadership and competition amongst departments, inefficient communication affected MOs in that planned orders were not achieved on time and in the right quantities demanded. The improper communication tends to create dysfunctional conflict amongst key stakeholders in manufacturing operations. Quality assurance systems and procedures need a clear communication strategy to ensure that the business and customers / consumers are protected. Inefficient communication promotes unhealthy employment relations, which increases high turnover rates of employees in manufacturing operations. The paper therefore aimed to evaluate the quality of communication amongst the relevant stakeholders of Simba PepsiCo in Johannesburg and strives to bring to light any communication challenges that could be improved upon and used to enhance communications within Simba PepsiCo's manufacturing operations.

Literature Review

Communication could be considered as one of the primary essentials of the human condition. It is through communicating that people are able to express themselves and understand what another wishes to say or do. Unfortunately, there are instances where communication breaks down, frustrating all the parties involved. In the workplace, effective and/or efficient

communication among relevant stakeholders could determine the survival of organisations.

Communication

Broadly stated, communication is the process of exchanging thoughts, ideas, emotions, and understanding between entities. These entities are often referred to as sender (originator of message) and receiver (the recipient of the message). Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014) state that communication is a way of conveying information to others and making oneself understood by them. In this, it emerges that a very critical and fundamental component of communication is "understanding" or "to be understood". The end result of communication is that the message gets received as intended and results in a form of response (Guo and Sanchez 2005). In the words of these authors, "To make oneself understood as intended is an important part of communication." (Guo and Sanchez 2005: 78). Marques (2010) goes as far as saying that communication is the basis for successful human interaction regardless of the environment in which it occurs.

Communication Process

The communication process is thought to consist of 2 main players, the sender and the receiver (Guo and Sanchez 2005; Winer and Dhar 2011). The sender is the entity that originates the message. Because this entity serves as the source of the message, they are also referred to as the "source". The source can be a person, a department, a unit or a system within an organisation, *inter alia* (Guo and Sanchez 2005; Winer and Dhar 2011).

With the aid of words and symbols, the sender is able to code (or encode) the information that needs to be conveyed into a message for the receiver or audience (Guo and Sanchez 2005). In addition to words and symbols, Winer and Dhar (2011) include pictures as the third aid available to the sender with which to encode their message. The message is packaged in some form of medium or channel that is usually predetermined by the sender (Winer and Dhar 2011). The receiver, that is, individual(s) receiving the message, then decodes and / or interprets the message (Guo and Sanchez 2005; Winer and Dhar 2011). Decoding, however, is affected by the re-

ceiver's prior experiences and reference frames. According to Guo and Sanchez (2005), accurate decoding is the antecedent to effective communication. In other words, the closer the decoded message gets to the intent of the sender, the more effective will be the communication.

There are, however, barriers that may hinder, interrupt or disrupt the communication process. These barriers are often collectively referred to as "noise" (Guo and Sanchez 2005; Winer and Dhar 2011). Longest et al. (2000) classify these barriers as being either environmental or personal in origin. They describe personal barriers as arising from the nature of individuals and how they interrelate or interact with others. In addition, personal barriers are thought to arise from an individual's frame of reference, beliefs and values; and based on their socioeconomic background and experiences, which shapes how messages are encoded and decoded (Guo and Sanchez 2005). Environmental barriers, on the other hand, pertain to the surroundings that the individual(s) finds themselves. This could take the form of an organisational setting that is competing for attention and time between senders and receivers. According to Guo and Sanchez (2005) and Mphotwana (2013), these barriers tend to block, filter or distort the encoding of messages sent by the sender, and also exert similar effects on the decoding process when the message is received by the intended recipient(s).

Finally, feedback is the last critical component necessary to complete the communication process. Van Petten and Williams (2014), describe feedback as any information that individuals receive about their behaviour. The Oxford Dictionary (2015) mentions that this feedback is normally used as a basis for improvement. This description of feedback is perhaps a bit limited in that it creates the impression that the receiver is the one for whom the feedback, and subsequent improvement, is intended. Feedback, as intended in this study, refers more to the resultant actions of the receiver. In other words, did the communication process lead to intended action or inaction by the receiver.

Feedback forms a crucial component of communication because it facilitates the sharing of information between receiver and sender in a two-way process (Guo and Sanchez 2005). It provides a method for the source to evaluate whether the original message had its desired outcome. The feedback loop of the communication process

also involves the coding and decoding of a message. In this instance though, the receiver is the one that codes the message and the source then decodes it.

Effective Communication

Understanding communication within an organisation is challenging and is often a disruptive process, especially if measures aimed at addressing inefficient or ineffective communication are to be implemented (Suchan 2006). In addressing the challenges posed by implementing effective communication strategies, Suchan (2006) and Cummings and Worley (2014), proposed a framework that would assist top management communicate organisational goals, vision, mission and strategy using hardcopy. He mentions that there are two levels of employees' resistance to communication changes in an organisational setting, namely first-order and second-order change. These changes disrupted the traditional communication norms practiced within an organisation.

The first level of change resistance, first-order change, he described as small progressive changes within an existing framework that caused minimal disruptions and produced little improvement. In this type of change, people usually experienced minimal uncertainty and distress because the resultant actions arising from this type of change were sufficiently in agreement with their way of thinking. According to Suchan (2006), in most organisations these changes did not really destabilise stakeholders' cognitive and interpretive schemes (that is, message decoding mechanisms).

Suchan (2006) described second-order change as arising when first-order changes were implemented in a relatively short space of time. This caused inadvertent disruptions in an organisation's underlying thoughts about communication and the rules governing direct communication practices within the organisation. The reason for the disruption was that this change involved severing past communication assumptions and required that employees rethink and practice communication in novel ways. This may involve employees redefining and / or reconceptualising the systems that they traditionally used to interpret communicated messages in order to support very different com-

munication practices. Resultantly, this would solidify into new communication norms.

It is, therefore, evident that when any measure taken to improve communication will result in some form of resistance from relevant employees. Puvanasvaran et al. (2009) support this view. In order to implement communication measures that will enhance the communication process, it is thus important to understand the communication dynamics within the workplace and to investigate what methods would best suit that work environment. According to Lupu (2017), effective managerial communication can result in high motivation and high inspiration. This creates a positive vision on the future of the organization and can clearly show the importance of the individual's contribution to the organization. Higher goals are generated for individuals which improves not only the motivation but the team spirit of the whole organization.

Workplace Communication and Communication Technologies

The modern workplace is an environment, which relies significantly on collaboration (Turner et al.). The antecedent to successful collaboration, according to Turner et al. (2010), is effective communication among co-workers. These authors argued that effective communication allowed work colleagues to advance new ideas, establish common understanding and to cultivate complex interpersonal relationships. Guo and Sanchez (2005) go as far as terming employees as the "brain cells" of an organisation, with communication serving as the "nervous system" that carries information to vital parts of the organisational body. In saying so, Guo and Sanchez (2005) are essentially calling communication the "life line" of an organisation. Without it, there would be no coordinated action or effort towards the attainment of organisational goals. This view is supported by Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014) and stresses how vital it is for organisations to have efficient and effective communication systems in place. Communicative interactions among employees at the workplace could also serve to create and sustain work relationships among team and organisational members, as well as between those members and key organisational stakeholders (Myers 2009; Sias 2009). Communication that is based on shared values and reflects unified com-

mitments to organisational goals, in particular, enables co-workers to create and sustain productive relationships in organisations (Herriot 2002). Organisational performance can also be directly and indirectly affected by communication (Greenbaum and Query 1999). In addition, Jablin and Krone (1994) found that interactions and relationships in the work environment were impacted on by individual differences in communication (e.g. communication technology / channel preference, communication style, *inter alia*) and that these differences in turn affected co-workers' productivity and job satisfaction.

Communication technologies have also been found to impact on interpersonal relationships (Turner et al. 2010). According to Nardi (2005), successful interpersonal communication is dependent on an individual's readiness to communicate. In explaining this, Nardi (2005) states that communication technologies alone are insufficient in gearing individuals towards communication readiness. Rather, the combinational use of different communication media that is required to foster appropriate social bonds and commitments. In similar fashion, Olson and Olson (2000) found that irrespective of there being sufficient common ground and well explained responsibilities, distance collaboration was not very successful when stakeholders were unable to build interpersonal connections.

Interpersonal Relationships

Besides the communication technologies human communication and effective interpersonal relationships are necessary. Adigwe and Okoro (2016) analyzed the role of interpersonal communication in client counseling environments that establishes emotional stability and builds lasting effective counselor-client relationships. The study clearly established that communication is very important to a counseling practice.

According to Kulkarni and Ross (2016), intimate partner violence (IPV) workplace disclosures can be serious in organizations in the absence of effective interpersonal relationships. In order to successfully address the destructive effects of IPV in the whole organization, workers require information, proper training and organizational support and the IPV policies and protocols must be clear and be specific.

Kang and Sung (2017) examined how a company's symmetrical internal communication efforts could influence employee percep-

tion of relationship outcomes. What emerged from the study is that employee/internal communication management is linked with employee engagement. In other words employee engagement enhances supportive employee communication behaviours and reduces turnover intention.

Fifty Years of Organizational Communication Research (1963-2013)

Garner et al. (2016) conducted a content analysis of 1,399 articles published in communication journals from 1963 to 2013. This was done to understand the identity and heritage of organizational communication scholarship. A number of conclusions were drawn from the findings. One of these conclusions is that more research is needed to explore alternative forms of organizing and to expand diversity scholarship beyond gender and nationality. The other important conclusion is that the percentage of studies using field work methods has gone down. This increases the risk that important contextual cues in the area of communication research may be missed.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Aim and Objectives of the paper

The aim of the paper was to ensure that elements or causes of inefficient communication that hinder seamless execution in manufacturing operations are identified and eliminated. The objectives of the paper, therefore, were:

- (i) To investigate causes of inefficient communication amongst relevant stakeholders in manufacturing operations.
- (ii) To design solutions that will enhance and enable efficient communication amongst relevant stakeholders in manufacturing operations.
- (iii) To identify how solutions can be implemented to enhance and enable efficient communications amongst relevant stakeholders in manufacturing operations.

Research Type/Design

The questionnaires were guided by questions, statements and concepts obtained from the review of the literature. These questions,

statements and concepts were adjusted to have relevance to the PepsiCo (Johannesburg) working environment. Every precaution was taken to ensure that the questionnaire was participant-friendly. This included making the questions or statements clear and unambiguous, the layout of the survey easy to work through.

The research focussed on the communication challenges faced by the employees in manufacturing operations. A quantitative approach was preferred because of the need to measure the prevalence of different observations and views in the selected sample.

Respondents

Population and Location of the Study

The targeted participants of the study were PepsiCo Simba employees in Johannesburg, South Africa. Study participation was extended to permanent employees from lower levels to Senior Directors. As communication and participation was almost exclusively through electronic means, participants with electronic mail (email) access were specifically targeted. Non-probability sampling (Convenience sampling) technique was used in the study. This was because of the need to collect information from members of the population who are conveniently available to provide it. This meant that only those employees who happened to have e-mail addresses and who chose to complete the questionnaire stood a chance of being selected as subjects of the study.

Sample Frame

The sampling frame is defined as a representation of all the elements in the population from which the sample is drawn (Sekaran and Bougie 2013). For the purposes of this paper, the shop-floor, operations, supply chain planning, finance, procurement, engineering, logistics, quality assurance, executives, human resources and research and development (R and D) departments served as the sampling frame from which the paper sample was selected.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was used to select one of the Simba PepsiCo branches in Johan-

nesburg, namely Simba PepsiCo. The study targeted only employees in MOs at Simba PepsiCo. The total population size of employees at Johannesburg site was 750. The paper, however, focused on staff members who had email access. Of the 750 employees, only 140 had email access. Consequently, the 140 employees served as the study population. From this population size, 103 completed the questionnaire.

Recruitment of Study Participants

Electronic invitations were sent to the targeted study participants to enrol into the study. The invitation gave an overview of the study, detailing its objectives and the need for their participation. It was made clear from the onset that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from participating at any stage during the study. Participant confidentiality was also assured. To maintain confidentiality, the researchers were kept blind as to who the participants were by getting an independent researcher to remove any participant identifiers that might have been given by participants in error. Data that was independent of participant identifiers was then given to the researchers to perform analyses.

Data Collection Strategies

A questionnaire was used to gather the biographical data of each participant as well as the information required for statistical analysis. The questionnaire consisted of 3 sections, each specific to the paper objectives. Each section was made up of questions that were aimed at addressing the relevant objective. The questionnaire was loaded onto QuestionPro, an electronic database, and invitations to study participants were then sent via electronic mail. Collected data was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Administration of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was coded and uploaded onto QuestionPro (an online electronic survey tool and database). A total of 140 email invitations were sent to Simba PepsiCo employees inviting them to participate in the online survey. Respondents were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire and those who were not able

to complete were given some extra time to do so. Queries or clarification on some of the questions were done at the point of collection. A total of 103 participants completed the study giving a response rate of 73.6 percent.

Construction of the Instrument

The construction of the research instrument was a multistep process. Objective-specific initial test variables were obtained from a review of the literature. These were collected and presented in an Adobe Framemaker document. The constructed instrument was then reviewed to ensure that they addressed the set objectives. Thereafter, the first draft of the instrument was piloted among 3 volunteers, 2 from within PepsiCo and a third non-PepsiCo employee. The first two served mainly to assess whether the questionnaire was relevant to the PepsiCo environment. The third participant served to test for readability and ease of use. The feedback obtained was then used to construct the second draft of the instrument. This was then piloted with another 2 PepsiCo volunteers. Upon satisfaction with the hardcopy of the research tool, an online survey was constructed using QuestionPro. The online survey served a dual purpose. The first was to ask respondents for their insights; the second was that it contained a background database. The online database was coded using the survey hardcopy as a template. Data coding involves assigning a number to the participants' responses so that they can be entered into a database (Sekaran and Bougie 2013). Once the online survey was coded for, it was then piloted with an additional 4 PepsiCo employees. Final feedback received from them was incorporated into the final version of the research instrument. This made a total of 9 volunteers that participated in the construction of the final version of the survey. Email invitations were then sent to all study participants.

Analysis of the Data

Data obtained from QuestionPro was analysed using SPSS. Data analysis was almost exclusively descriptive. This tied in with the objectives of the paper as the aim was to get an overview of causes and remedies to "inefficient communication" from employees' viewpoint. Findings are presented using tables, pie charts,

bar charts and histograms. Most of the tables and graphs presented frequency distributions of employee responses.

Validity and Reliability

The research instrument was piloted among 9 volunteers. At each step, feedback was received and incorporated into the final version of the instrument which was then distributed to study participants.

The reliability of the instrument was tested via a consultative process. This process involved consulting with stakeholders to get a sense of some of the issues that hindered efficient communication and to get some insight into what suggestions they might make to improve things. Although every effort was made to refer to previous studies' so as to guide the construction of the survey, this did not prove very fruitful as these previous studies did not test the specific elements which were relevant to Simba PepsiCo.

Limitations

The study had the following challenges:

(i) Limited Organisational Support

Although written permission was obtained from PepsiCo to conduct the study, many of the target population were reluctant to do so in fear of potential negative consequence such as victimisation that might result for participating in the study.

(ii) Access to Study Participants

Simba PepsiCo's Johannesburg branch has in the region of 750 employees. Although every effort was made to get access to a comprehensive emailing list to invite as many employees as possible to participate in the study, this was, however, not possible. The study population was therefore limited to the emailing lists that were provided by the company officials. This may have excluded potential participants from the targeted population.

(iii) Technical Challenges with Getting Invite to Target Population

The survey invitation had to be resent several times to some participants because they claimed of not having received any email invites.

Ethical Considerations and Limitations

In carrying out the study it was crucial to ensure that ethical issues were adhered to. Before the study could be done permission had to be sort in the form of ethical clearance letter from the university through presentation of the study proposal and questionnaires. Written permission was also obtained from PepsiCo. Measures were taken to protect the autonomy of respondents and to prevent social stigmatisation and secondary victimisation of respondents. In order to abide with the institution's ethical policies the collection of data was not to include the following:

- (i) Access to confidential information without prior consent of participants.
- (ii) Participants being required to commit an act which might diminish self – respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment or regret.
- (iii) Participants being exposed to questions which may be experienced as stressful or upsetting, or to procedures which may have unpleasant or harmful side effects.
- (iv) The use of stimuli, tasks or procedures which may be experienced as stressful, noxious, or unpleasant.
- (v) Any form of deception.

An informed consent form was given to the potential respondent for their acknowledgement. The informed consent form noted that the participation in the study would be voluntary. The potential respondent had the choice to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences. It was highlighted on the consent documents and the questionnaire that confidentiality and anonymity was to be upheld (UKZN 2015).

RESULTS

This section presents the data obtained from the paper, findings and explanations. A total of 103 respondents participated in the study.

Demographics

In order to gain an overall impression of the research participants' backgrounds, demographic data for each of the participants was gathered. This section therefore contains participants' age ranges, genders, race, highest qualifications, number of years employed at Simba PepsiCo;

and job type / description. Each of these will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Participants' Age Profiles

The age spread of the participants is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

<i>Age range (years)</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
18-24	2	1.94
25-34	44	42.72
35-44	45	43.69
45-54	10	9.71
55-54	2	1.94

It can be seen from Table 1 that the participants most frequently fell within the 35-44 (43.7%) and the 25-34 (42.7%) age categories. Based on the findings in Table 1 it can be inferred that Simba PepsiCo is driven predominantly by young adults and middle-aged employees.

Gender

The gender composition of the participants is presented in Table 2. According to Table 2 male respondents represented 67 percent of the 103 participants, with females representing the remaining 33 percent. Based on the gender findings for the 103 participants, it appears that females are not adequately or equally represented.

Table 2: Gender profile of respondents

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Female	34	33.01
Male	69	66.99

Race

The racial representation of study participants is presented in Table 3. As seen in Table 3, Blacks made up the majority of the participants

Table 3: Employee racial classification

<i>Race</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Black	69	66.99
White	18	17.48
Indian	10	9.71
Coloured	5	4.85
Foreigner	1	0.97

(67%), followed by Whites (17%), Indians (10%) and Coloureds (5%).

Language

In order to investigate the languages spoken by the participants, each respondent was asked to indicate the language used at home. The results are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4: Home languages spoken by participants

<i>Language</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
English	23	22.33
IsiZulu	16	15.53
Setswana	15	14.56
Afrikaans	12	11.65
Sepedi	12	11.50
Southern Sotho	10	9.71
Xhosa	7	6.80
Tsonga	3	2.91
Venda	3	2.91
Ndebele	1	0.97
Swati	1	0.97

As shown in Table 4, English was the most spoken (22%) followed by isiZulu (16%) and Setswana (15%). Sepedi and Afrikaans each had only 12 respondents. Swati and Ndebele were the least spoken mother tongues, each with 1 participant speaking it at home.

Education

To assess the highest qualifications held by the participants each respondent was asked to select from six options. The options and counts are presented in Table 5. Diplomas were held by 30 percent of the 103 participants. It emerged that 53 (51.5%) of the participants were in possession of at least 1 degree. Seventeen participants had matric as their highest level of education, while 1 participant stated that he had never had any form of formal education.

Table 5: Participant's highest level of education

<i>Level of education</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
No formal education	1	0.97
Matric	17	16.50
Certificate	1	0.97
Diploma	31	30.10
Degree	25	24.27
Postgraduate	28	27.18

Job Description

Table 6 profiles the different stakeholders involved in the communication process by functional area or department in which they worked in. Shop floor employees were the most represented group in the study forming 27.7 percent of the participants. Operations (14%) was the second followed by Supply Chain planning (13%), Finance (11%) and then Procurement (10%).

Table 6: Job functional areas of respondents

<i>Job type</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Shop floor	28	27.18
Operations	15	14.56
Supply chain planning	14	13.59
Finance	11	10.68
Procurement	10	9.71
Engineering	7	6.80
Logistics	5	4.85
Quality assurance	4	3.88
Executive	3	2.91
Human resources	3	2.91
Research and development	3	2.91

Years Employed in the Organisation

Table 7 presents information pertaining to the employment history of the participants. Participants were asked to indicate how many years they had been in the organisation. The highest number of workers (43%) have been with the organization for 2-5 years. Eighteen participants were fairly new to the organisation with less than 1 year of experience.

Table 7: Number of years employed at Simba Pepsi Co

<i>Years employed</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
<1	18	17.48
2-5	44	42.72
6-10	23	22.33
11-15	9	8.74
>15	9	8.74

Barriers to Efficient Communication

Table 8 presents barriers to efficient communication. The lack of communication channels featured as the most frequent hurdle faced by participants in their work setting, followed by lack of knowledge sharing and then lack of involvement.

Table 8: Barriers to efficient communication

<i>Communication barriers</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (n=103)</i>	<i>Percent (n=234)</i>
Lack of communication channels	53	51.5	22.6
Lack of stakeholder knowledge sharing	45	43.7	19.2
Lack of stakeholder involvement	43	41.7	18.4
Lack of stakeholder interest	34	33.0	14.5
Competition between departments	32	31.1	13.7
Difficulty in understanding what is being communicated	27	26.2	11.5
Total	234		100

In order to assess which stakeholders responded most frequently to each of the communication barriers, cross tabulations were performed between the proposed barrier and the departments or functional areas that the respondents hailed from. In each barrier the top 2 or 3 departments were selected as presented in Table 9. Shop Floor and Supply Chain Planning Departments had the highest representation in terms of selecting the barriers listed in Table 9. Operations featured in the top 3 on 3 occasions, namely “lack of stakeholder knowledge”, “lack of communication channels” and “difficulty in understanding what is being communicated”.

However, grouping responses as proportions of respective departments revealed a very different picture of communication barriers thought significant in / by each department. These findings are shown in Table 10. All the Executives felt that the lack of stakeholder involvement was a barrier to efficient communication. Seventy one percent of the Engineers felt the same. With relevance to this barrier, the Shop Floor had the least among their ranks selecting it. The lack of stakeholder interest was seen by 60 percent of respondents from the Logistics Department as a barrier to efficient communication.

Only the two departments with the highest proportion of responses and the department with the least number of responses in each category are presented

Causes of Inefficient Communication

The causes of inefficient communication were also assessed to gain better understand-

Table 9: Departments that most frequently selected barriers to efficient communication

<i>Communication barrier</i>	<i>Department</i>	<i>% of total responses</i>
Lack of stakeholder involvement	Shop Floor	25.6
	Supply Chain Planning	16.3
Lack of stakeholder interest	Shop Floor	20.6
	Supply Chain Planning	17.6
Lack of stakeholder knowledge sharing	Supply Chain Planning	22.2
	Shop Floor	17.8
Competition between departments	Operations	17.8
	Supply Chain Planning	19.4
	Shop Floor	16.1
Lack of communication channels	Engineering	16.1
	Shop Floor	26.9
	Supply Chain Planning	13.5
Difficulty in understanding what is being communicated	Operations	11.5
	Operations	22.2
	Shop Floor	18.5
	Supply Chain Planning	18.5

Table 10: Responses to communication barriers as proportions of respective departments

<i>Communication barrier</i>	<i>Department*</i>	<i>% of responses within departments</i>
Lack of stakeholder involvement	Executives	100
	Engineering	71.4
Lack of stakeholder interest	Quality Assurance	25
	Logistics	60
	Supply Chain Planning	46.2
Lack of stakeholder knowledge sharing	Shop Floor	25
	Supply Chain Planning	76.9
	Engineering	71.4
Competition between departments	Finance	9.1
	Engineering	71.4
	Logistics	60
Lack of communication channels	Shop Floor	17.9
	Human Resources	100
	Quality Assurance	100
Difficulty in understanding what is being communicated	Logistics	20
	R and D	66.7
	Operations	42.9
	Shop Floor	17.9

*Only the two departments with the highest proportion of responses and the department with the least number of responses in each category are presented

ing of what participants thought was/were the root cause(s) of communication breakdown. The findings are presented in Table 11. As evidenced in Table 11, poor leadership was cited as the main reason for communication inefficiency. Here 63 of the 103 participants (that is, 61%) indicated that leadership was the main determinant of communication outcomes. The second most important foundation for effective communication indicated by participants was that of clear goals. Personal issues, demoralisation and cultural diversity featured among the least important causes of inefficient communication. Of

these, cultural diversity appeared to be the least contributor towards communication breaking down.

Table 11: Causes of inefficient communication

<i>Causes of inefficient communication</i>	<i>Frequ-ency</i>	<i>Percent (n=103)</i>	<i>Percent (n=223)</i>
Poor leadership	63	61.2	28.3
Unclear goals	57	55.3	25.6
Personal issues	35	34.0	15.7
Demoralisation	35	34.0	15.7
Cultural diversity	33	32.0	14.8
Total	223	-	100

Table 12 presents the impact of language and culture on inefficient communication. Language and culture were predominantly seen to have moderate to negligible impact on inefficient communication. In total, 74 of the 103 participants selected one of these two.

Table 12: Impact of language and culture on inefficient communication

<i>Response</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Significantly	29	28.16
Moderately	35	33.98
Slightly	39	37.86

An investigation was done to discover which race felt that culture and language played a significant role in the breakdown of communication. The findings are presented in Table 13. Blacks overwhelmingly felt that culture and language contributed significantly towards inefficient communication.

Stakeholder Commitment towards Eliminating Barriers to Efficient

Communication

Information was extract from individual stakeholders on what contributions they would make towards eliminating inefficient communication in the workplace. Their responses are shown in Table 14. Stakeholders were most often committed to using honesty and integrity in their communications henceforth. This is evidenced by 73 of the 103 participants selecting this as a commitment that they were prepared to make.

Organisation's Contribution towards Eliminating Barriers to Efficient Communication

Table 15 presents data on individual stakeholders' measures they thought the organisation could make towards eliminating inefficient communication at the workplace.

Table 14: Individuals' contributions towards eliminating barriers to efficient communications

<i>Individual contributions</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (n=103)</i>	<i>Percent (n=370)</i>
Use honesty and integrity in your communications	73	70.9	19.7
Use the right communication channels	65	63.1	17.6
Get feedback from the receiver	63	61.2	17.0
Speaking face-to-face as often as possible	61	59.2	16.5
Understand that others see things differently to you	57	55.3	15.4
Use language that the audience understands	51	49.5	13.8
Total	370		100.0

tion could make towards eliminating inefficient communication at the workplace.

Based on Table 15, participants most frequently felt that management and colleagues needed to be kept well informed by the organisation. In this particular instance 77 percent of the 103 par-

Table 15: Organisation's contribution(s) towards eliminating barriers to efficient communications

<i>Organisational contributions</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (n=103)</i>	<i>Percent (n=370)</i>
Keeping managers and colleagues well informed	80	77.7	22.9
Room for feedback	63	61.2	18.0
Communication training	57	55.3	16.3
Clear organisational objectives	56	54.4	16.0
Clear organisational policy	51	49.5	14.6
Reduce formal restriction on who can communicate with whom	43	41.7	12.3
Total	350		100.0

Table 13: Cross tabulation of impact of culture and language by race

<i>Response</i>	<i>Race</i>					<i>Total</i>
	<i>Black</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Indian</i>	<i>Coloured</i>	<i>Other</i>	
Slightly	26	9	3	1	0	39
Moderately	20	7	5	2	1	35
Significantly	23	2	2	2	0	29
Total	69	18	10	5	1	103

ticipants raised this as an important area that the organisation needed to concentrate on to improve stakeholder communication. The opportunity to give and / or receive feedback also featured highly as an area of weakness within the organisation. This implies that by concentrated on improving feedback mechanisms, the organisation could contribute significantly to improving stakeholder communication. The least important improvement that stakeholders felt the organisation could make was to reduce formal restrictions on who can communicate with whom.

Envisaged Solutions to Enhance Communication

Table 16 presents data from participating stakeholders on what they envisioned could improve communication between them.

Table 16: Envisaged solutions to enhance communications

<i>Proposed solutions</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent (n=103)</i>	<i>Percent (n=370)</i>
Feedback updates	81	78.6	20.6
Proactive communication	79	76.7	20.1
System	55	53.4	14.0
Notice boards	48	46.6	12.2
Desktop / TV screens	44	42.7	11.2
Newsletters	44	42.7	11.2
Electronic mail	43	41.7	10.9
Total	394		100.0

Feedback updates had the most hits of the solutions proposed. This solution was selected by almost 78.6 percent of the participants and represented 21 percent of the 394 hits for this parameter. It can be deduced from this that feedback updates rarely or never occur within the organisation. Proactive communication was the second most frequently selected solution that participants thought could contribute towards improving communication with 20 percent of the 394 hits. Newsletters and electronic mail featured among the lowest envisaged solutions, each having 11 percent of the total hits. This perhaps indicates that these channels are already in extensive use as a means of communication between stakeholders.

Role of Shop Floor Employees in Designing Communication Solutions

Participants were also asked on the extent to which they thought that shop floor employees

could play a role in designing communication solutions. Their findings are presented in Table 17.

Table 17: Role of shop floor employees in designing communication solutions

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Very small extent	18	17.48
Small extent	17	16.50
Moderate extent	25	24.27
Large extent	29	28.16
Very large extent	14	13.59

It can be seen in Table 17 that most participants most frequently felt that shop floor employees had a large role to play in the design of communication solutions that could eliminate inefficient communication. Approximately 28 percent of the participants indicated that they felt this. A further 13.6 percent felt very strongly that shop floor employees were crucial in the design of communication solutions. Taken jointly, these two response types in favour of the instrumental role that shop floor employees can play in eliminating communication inefficiencies represented 42 percent of the 103 responses. Twenty five (24.3%) participants felt that shop floor employees could play a role, but not a very significant one. Thirty four percent felt that their role was either minimal [that is small (16.5%)] or negligible [that is very small (17.5%)].

Organisation's Success Rate in Implementing Change Management Initiatives

Change management implementation success rates are presented in Table 18.

Table 18: Change management implementation success rate

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Far below average	11	10.68
Below average	21	20.39
Average	42	40.78
Above average	23	22.33
Far above average	6	5.82

As can be seen from Table 18 the majority of participants viewed the organisation's success rate at implementing change management initiatives to be at best average. This is evidenced by almost 41 percent of the participants selecting this option. Only 28.1 percent of them thought that implementation was either above average

(22.3%) or far above average (5.8%). The remaining 31 percent felt it to be either below average (20.4%) or far below average (10.7%).

DISCUSSION

This section summarises the objectives and observations with studies available in the literature. It ties up the three objectives that the study sought to address namely, the causes of inefficient communication, eliminating inefficient communication and implementation solutions within manufacturing operations. It also summarises the observations with the studies available in literature.

Objectives

To Identify Barriers and Causes of Inefficient Communication amongst Relevant Stakeholders in Manufacturing Operations

The majority of the participating stakeholders felt that the lack of communication channels was the greatest barrier to efficient communication. This indicated that stakeholders felt that the packaging and delivery of messages needed much improvement and would reduce any tension and / or stress related to communication between them. The lack of stakeholder knowledge sharing and involvement were also highlighted as critical barriers to efficient communication. This brought to the fore that stakeholders felt that they also played an important role in the communication process. This is a good outcome because it indicates that stakeholders were taking responsibility for their role in communication breakdown. It is therefore foreseeable that initiatives taken to eliminate barriers to efficient communication are more likely to be supported by stakeholders as they see themselves as part of the problem and solution.

The causes of inefficient communication were assessed to gain insight into what participants thought were the root causes of communication breakdown. Poor leadership was attributed as the main cause of inefficient communication according to the participants. This indicated that participants felt that Simba PepsiCo's leadership was not performing very well in communicating with relevant stakeholders and implies that communication should feature as part of the agenda at strategic meetings. In this way

communication gets prioritised. The perception that poor leadership was the root cause of inefficient communication could also be a consequence of other factors that the majority of stakeholders were unaware of. These may include transparency in the recruitment process, succession and promotion criteria and processes, or the lack of the ability of leadership to communicate with stakeholders effectively.

Participants also indicated that unclear goals were an important cause of inefficient communication. It is possible that current employees and new recruits lacked the ability to successfully decode messages communicated to them (for example, by leadership). It might be that leadership does state clear goals and that employees lack the necessary skills to interpret and understand these goals. This suggests that proper communication channels need to be set in place to assist relevant stakeholders to decode messages.

Language and culture were most often seen to have moderate to negligible impact on inefficient communication. However, Blacks predominantly felt that culture and language contributed significantly towards inefficient communication. This was perhaps a result of sheer numbers as Blacks constituted the majority of respondents. As a percentage of the total number of respective races that responded, Blacks were second to Coloureds in their view of the influence that language and culture had on communication.

To Identify Solutions to Enhance Efficient Communication

Participants were most often committed to using honesty and integrity in their future communications. This was in keeping with Simba PepsiCo's values and commitment to speaking with truth and candour and to show integrity in how they operated. Respondents also committed themselves to using appropriate communication channels, to give and receive feedback, and to communicate face-to-face more frequently. These findings are encouraging as they signify stakeholder buy-in to the concept of improving communication among them. In addition, participating stakeholders also felt that by following agreed outcomes, putting personal issues aside and understanding the organisation's communications culture would assist in eliminating barriers to efficient communication that they experienced. This possibly suggests that organisational culture should be adjusted

such that it becomes commonplace to practice good etiquette within the organisation. This should extend beyond stakeholder communication to embracing a culture that is courteous and respects all individuals.

Keeping managers and colleagues well informed was seen as critical measure that the organisation could put in place towards eliminating barriers to efficient communication. This implies that stakeholders felt that Simba PepsiCo was not doing enough to keep them well-informed. This is an undesirable situation as it can create tension in the workplace and reduce the self-worth of employees because they can become unwilling bystanders in corporate decisions that affect them. It may also lead to situations where rumours get spread in the organisation which may have negative impact on employee morale.

Employees also felt that presently they were not given much room for feedback. This was of grave concern to many participants. It also meant that by virtue of the lack of feedback, stakeholders were most often uncertain as to whether messages were encoded/decoded successfully. It also implies that there were many unresolved issues which stakeholders would have liked the opportunity to have addressed.

The least important improvement suggested was that the organisation reduced formal restriction on who can communicate with whom. This showed that employees understood that there were structures in the organization that caused segregation within the communication process. However, this segregation was not seen as a major factor. It may also imply that many employees did not experience restrictions on who they spoke to and that the organisation had some sort of open-door policy in place.

Participants most often felt that feedback updates were vital to the stakeholder communication enhancement process. This reiterates the need for Simba PepsiCo to have feedback updates for their employees in manufacturing operations. Newsletters and electronic mail featured the lowest envisaged solutions. This implied that these already existed and they were currently tools used to facilitate communication amongst stakeholders. However, there may be incidents where some stakeholders did not read the newsletters. As such, the use of this method, although used extensively, may not be as effective a tool in communicating to stakehold-

ers, especially if not supplemented with other forms (or channels) of communication. Most often newsletters served to keep employees informed on matters relevant to the organisation and may not necessarily have contributed towards enhancing communication between stakeholders. Electronic mail, on the other hand, tends to personalise communication. However, the overload of communication via this channel often resulted in employees not receiving (for example, full inboxes and filtering controls which treat some mail as spam) nor responding to correspondence in a timely manner.

Technology was also suggested as a possible solution to enhancing communication. This is very relevant to keep apace of advancing technology and the platform that it has provided for formal and informal communication. Applications such as WhatsApp forums (or groups) and SharePoint were proposed by participating stakeholders as applications (Apps) that could leverage efficient communication amongst the stakeholders. These Apps facilitate the exchange of communication in real time and could help to coordinate efforts.

Most participants felt that shop floor employees have a large role to play in designing communication solutions that could eliminate inefficient communication. This was particularly so because of the vital role that these employees play in converting raw material into finished goods.

The design of solutions should be done in-house because Simba PepsiCo understands its operations and culture better than any outsiders. This view was held by the vast majority of respondents. Some stakeholders were keen to lend a hand in the process because they had the necessary expertise and experience to do so. Internal solutions could translate to cost cuts for the organisation. Designing communication systems internally will therefore have the benefit of having more stakeholder buy-in and support (as they will be part of the solution) when compared to outsourced consultants. However, external consultants are often very experienced in identifying communication gaps and in finding systems that will address the gaps that they identify. This option should still remain open because there are instances where an objective party is able to see clearly what could be missed internally by an organisation.

To Identify Solutions that can be Implemented to Enhance and Enable Efficient Communications amongst Relevant Stakeholders in Manufacturing Operations

Participants viewed the organisation's success rate at implementing change management initiatives as average at best, which is not good and not bad, but reveals that there is still room for improvement within the organisation. Stakeholders also had an overall optimistic view that implementing communication solutions would be of great benefit to all stakeholders. They were also prepared to play active roles in implementing communication solutions. This is in keeping with the Simba PepsiCo saying, "One team, One Goal and One Simba", which needs to be put into practice. Participants also felt they were in a position to share their knowledge based on their qualifications and experiences to the benefit of the organisation when implementing communication systems and or strategies. More informal communication amongst the stakeholders and teambuilding were highlighted as alternative methods that could be used to compliment / supplement the implementation of communication initiatives. Taken jointly, these two initiatives could break down walls that prevent effective communication between stakeholders and improve stakeholder relations.

From the feedback received it is evident that an open-door policy does not exist at Simba PepsiCo. Having an open door policy will benefit the organisation because people will be free to communicate any concerns or make recommendations to management and other relevant stakeholders. The feedback mechanism was suggested to be two way process from top down and bottom up.

Key performance indicators will be needed to periodically assess whether different elements of implemented communication strategies were meeting desired outcomes. This sentiment was expressed by participating stakeholders as a means that will also guide and monitor their performance. It was also suggested that Simba PepsiCo conduct surveys before and after the implementation of communication solutions. Training was seen to be foundation upon which implementation should be based on and was recommended for both management and frontline staff by participants. Participants also felt that rewards and recognition initiatives would motivate employees to strive towards better communication practices. Simba PepsiCo should there-

fore bare this in mind when strategizing the implementation of communication solutions.

This study sought to investigate the elements that hindered efficient communication within Manufacturing Operations at Simba PepsiCo in Johannesburg.

Observations with Studies in Literature

From a study by Garner et al. (2016) it was concluded that studies in field work have significantly decreased. This poses a problem as some important facts or results may be lost during such studies. In order to minimize the loss of some important results, field analysis was used in this study. Garner et al. concluded that qualitative approaches were taking over from the quantitative ones as preferred methods of research. This study shows that even though qualitative approaches were being preferred quantitative methods such as this one are still necessary. According to Lupu (2017), *the quality of communication in institutions is proportional to the functioning of the institution and this is very important to any institution. Also effective managerial communication can result in high motivation and high inspiration. This is supported by the results* to identify solutions to enhance efficient communication that were obtained in the study. Adu-Oppong and Agyin-Birikorang (2014) stressed how vital it is for organisations to use technology for efficient and effective communication at work place. The respondents in this study suggested the use of communication technology at the work place. Kang and Sung (2017) pointed out how a company's symmetrical internal communication efforts could influence relationship outcomes. This strongly agrees with the Simba worker's views that poor leadership caused lack of transparency in recruitment process and promotion. As a result it causes poor relationships among the workers. In addition there is a lack of the ability of management to communicate with subordinates effectively, Workers require information, proper training and organizational support and policies and protocols must be clear and be specific. This is clearly spelt out by Kulkarni and Ross (2016).

CONCLUSION

What emerged from the paper is that stakeholders were aware that communication ineffi-

ciencies existed within the organisation and could identify what they were. Participants also identified themselves as part of the problem as well also being part of the solution. Overall participants had a positive attitude towards the designing and implementation of communication strategies and expressed significant buy-in to the concept. Leadership were respected for their roles, but it was felt that they too should get more involved and develop themselves to become even better leaders. The predominant themes that emerged from the study were the need for better communication channels and the need for training of all stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper set out to extract feedback from stakeholders within Simba PepsiCo of barriers and causes of inefficient communication that they experienced at the organisation. Stakeholders were also encouraged to make suggestions of how communication between them could be improved. The following recommendations were made to help in the design and implementation of communication strategies that will improve organisational communication.

- (1) In order to eliminate existing barriers and causes of inefficient communication, the organisation should optimise the use of existing communication channels as stakeholders acknowledged the existence of these and felt that these were not being used to their full potential. Related to this, the organisation should consult with stakeholders on suggestions of incorporating new and / or appropriate communication channels.
- (2) Simba PepsiCo should also create a platform to facilitate the sharing of knowledge among stakeholders and create an environment that enables a feedback mechanism to allow for stakeholders to share their insights and concerns.
- (3) Stakeholders were very keen to embrace the concept of improving communication within the organisation and were prepared to give of themselves to improve communications. It is therefore recommended that Simba PepsiCo tap into this resource as they already have stakeholder buy-in.
- (4) Leadership should also play a proactive role in improving communication within

the organisation. This may entail implementing a communications training strategy for all stakeholders, including themselves. Partnered with this, leadership should also set clear organisational goals for stakeholders to adhere to.

- (5) The organisation was rated as average in terms of implementing communication strategies. However, employees were keen to play active roles in the design and implementation of communication strategies. Once again this shows stakeholders' commitment and support of the organisation in terms of improving communications. To keep stakeholder support, it is recommended that any communications strategies should be via an in-house consultative process. This is particularly important because stakeholders expressed their preference in favour of in-house solutions over outsourced ones.
- (6) Stakeholders also felt that an informal platform should be created for them to interact with each other and build relationships. This indicates that many stakeholders do not really know the people with whom they interact with. It is therefore suggested that facilities and events should be put in place to facilitate this. In addition, team building activities should become more commonplace.

Therefore, in order to eliminate the barriers and causes of inefficient communication, it is important that the organisation use a holistic approach in designing and implementing communication strategies that would improve organisational communication. This will help to bridge the existing gap in communications among stakeholders within Simba PepsiCo.

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