

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYEE  
COMMUNICATION MEETINGS AND PATTERNS OF  
GRIEVANCE AND CONTROLLABLE  
ABSENCE

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As an employee and participant observer, this investigator had first hand knowledge of the events at the General Motors plant in Oklahoma City prior to this study.

In April 1979, General Motors Corporation began producing cars at its plant in Oklahoma City. General Motors developed a plan that was informally identified as its "southern strategy". This plan was to open a number of plants throughout the Southeast and the Midwest which would not be unionized. The assembly operation at Oklahoma City was a key determinant of whether or not General Motors' "southern strategy" would be successful. The corporation widely publicized the fact that the Oklahoma City plant would utilize participative management methods characterized as the "team concept". The team concept consisted of teams of eight to twelve employees from the same work area who meet voluntarily on a daily basis to identify, analyze, and solve problems of production, quality and work schedules. Individual members of a team accept responsibility for the team's success or failure regardless of the extent or quality of their particular performance. The team concept gives employees a voice in the workplace to allow them to solve problems using their own creativity.

Abuses of the team concept by local plant management occurred as a result of not having an understanding of participative management



theories. For example, many meetings were cancelled to make up for lost production, and team decisions were often overruled by the supervisor.

The team concept was commonly viewed by the workforce as a ploy whose only purpose was to keep the union out. In August, 1979 the United Auto Workers (UAW) union was certified by a vote of the plant workers to be their bargaining agent. One of the first actions that the newly formed local union took was to demand that the team concept not be used in Oklahoma City. This demand was granted, although not officially.

As a result of the history of the Oklahoma City plant, local human resource development personnel are limited in their attempts to tap the resources of the workforce. Any attempt to have employees working in groups or teams in order to increase employee performance is viewed by many as another form of team concept and, as such, anti-union. As a result, alternate methods to enhance employee performance are needed.

Employee communication meetings were developed as an alternative method to team concept. This study intended to identify employee performance differences in grievances and absences between participants and non participants and between participants before and after participation.

### Problem

The problem was the unavailability of an alternative to team concept for enhancing aspects of employee performance.

## Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a relationship between participation in employee communication meetings and employee performance in terms of employee grievances and controllable absences.

## Research Hypotheses

### Ho<sub>1</sub>

There is no difference between the number of grievances filed by groups with volunteer participants in employee communication meetings and by groups without participants in the meetings before and after a series of meetings.

### Ho<sub>2</sub>

There is no difference between the number of controllable absences taken by groups with volunteer participants in employee communication meetings and by groups without participants in the meetings before and after a series of meetings.

## Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for purposes of this study:

Committee Person - One union representative for every 250 employees at every plant covered by the General Motors - United Automobile Workers national agreement. The representative's full time job is to establish validity for hourly-rate employee complaints and grievances, and to attempt to negotiate settlements of those complaints

and grievances with management. The representative, prior to the election, must work in the area that he represents and is elected by the union members in that area.

Communication Networks - The primary means of communication within an organization.

Controllable Absence - The missing of work that has not been approved in advance by the supervisor, and is not contractually specified such as vacation or holidays.

Employee Communication Meetings - Approximately 25 to 40 employees from the same work area who meet voluntarily and on a regular basis to establish a flow of information related to all levels and areas of the organization.

Facilitator - The person directly responsible for moving the employee communication meetings through various stages, including all premeeting and postmeeting arrangements.

Grievance - A formally registered appeal for relief from treatment perceived as unjust.

Performance - The behavior of employees or organizations with respect to some standard or goal. In addition to productivity, employee performance can also be described in terms of turnover, absenteeism and number of grievances.

Series of Meetings - Approximately 13 employee communication meetings conducted prior to the final data collection period.

#### Assumptions

It is assumed that all information given to employees at the communication meetings was true and factual. Data collected from

groups with volunteer participants in the communication meetings was assumed to be representative of employees in those groups, even though some employees in these groups did not volunteer to participate.

#### Limitations

The study was restricted to identifying relationships between participation in communication meetings and employee performance in terms of numbers of grievances and absences in large assembly operations.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature was conducted to determine what information was available which related to the use of communication as a tool to successfully improve employee performance. This chapter will review the following topics:

1. Employee Satisfaction and Performance
2. Prominent Effects of Employee Communication on Employee Performance
3. Communication as a Function of Organizational Climate
4. Relationship of Communication Networks and Employee Attitudes
5. Literature Related to Employee Communication Meetings
6. Summary

#### Employee Satisfaction and Performance

A substantial body of literature indicates that employee satisfaction has been a major study of scholars in a wide variety of disciplines for more than half a century (Hoppock, 1935; Morse, 1953; Locke, 1969; Richmond & McCoskey, 1979; Hershey & Blanchard, 1982). Despite this proliferation of research, there was little consensus as to the causes of nature of this satisfaction and its relationship to employee performance.

While much of the research to date has been concerned with the

relationship between employee satisfaction and productivity, the findings have been mixed, with some indicating a positive relationship (Dunnette, Campbell & Jaastad, 1967; Locke, 1969) and some failing to find such a relationship (Brayfield & Crockett, 1955). The research suggests that employee satisfaction may increase job performance under some circumstances, in some types of organizations. What contingencies must be present for this relationship to exist has not yet been determined.

While the association between satisfaction and performance remains unclear, there is substantial evidence to suggest that employee satisfaction is negatively related to absenteeism and turnover rate (Daly & Hamblin, 1964; Baum & Youngblood, 1975). The theoretical explanation for this association is apparent. Happy employees want to come to work and it takes more for them to quit and take another position. A possible explanation for the lack of similar association between satisfaction and performance is that while moderately satisfied employees may be more productive than dissatisfied employees, the moderately satisfied may be more a part of a social group than a work group (McCloskey, Larsen & Knapp, 1971). In any event, it would appear that the concern of both researchers and managers with employee performance is not misplaced. Even if dissatisfied employees are not less productive, they are more likely to participate in problems regarding absenteeism and turnover, both of which are costly to organizations in terms of finances and managerial effort.

Prominent Effects of Employee  
Communication on Employee  
Performance

In the ongoing effort to examine the effects of communication upon performance, there has appeared considerable research examining productivity and communication. One of the major concerns evidenced in reviewing these studies and attempting to derive solid conclusions is a definitional one. Performance has been employed in a variety of these studies as a variable (Jenkins, 1977; O'Reilly & Anderson, 1980). Performance involves the behavior of workers or organizations with respect to some standard or goal. In addition to productivity, worker performance might also be described in terms of turnover, absences and number of grievances.

The measurement of performance varies somewhat in the literature. A multi-dimensional view of performance was employed by O'Reilly & Roberts (1977) and O'Reilly & Anderson (1980). In the studies reviewed, the views of performance were somewhat similar. A single-item performance instrument was utilized in a study by Hazen and Balthrop (1975). In all other studies reviewed, subordinate performance or productivity was evaluated. As Downs and Hain (1982) have suggested, linking performance with productivity has become standard practice. It is reasonable to assume that with improved organizational behavior, organizational output increases.

Various types of employees were surveyed in three of these studies. For example, Jain (1973) examined data emanating from a cross-section of service, technical, and professional hospital employees. In several of the studies surveyed, more than one

organization or population was analyzed (Jenkins, 1977; O'Reilly & Roberts, 1977). Various types of organizations were represented in the studies.

Communication measured in these studies essentially as a correlate to performance, has been conceptualized in several ways: (1) as communication satisfaction (Hazen & Balthrop, 1975); (2) as supervisory communication effectiveness (Jenkins, 1977); and (3) as managerial communication (Penley & Hawkins, 1979).

#### Communication as a Function of Organizational Climate

Organizational climate has been described in the literature from three perspectives (James & Jones, 1974). The first views climate as a set of attributes that belong to the organization. The employee, in assessing this climate, is assumed to be as objective observer of it.

The second perspective of organizational climate assumes an interaction between organizational attributes and the employee view of them. This perspective suggests the integration of both an objective and a subjective assessment. With this perspective, climate becomes a function of the way in which sub-groups within the organization choose to describe it.

The third perspective of climate involves a totally subjective assessment by each individual employee. In this case, how other employees perceive the organization is immaterial. The individual makes a judgment on the organizational climate on the basis of his/her encounters within the organization.

Considerable variation is evident in the literature in regard to



the organizational climate. While nearly all these studies show what might be viewed as "communication type" dimensions, the Likert (1976) version is most reflective of a communicative orientation:

(1) leadership processes, (2) character of motivational forces, (2) character of communication processes; (4) character of interaction influence processes, (5) character of decision-making processes; (6) character of goal setting, and (7) character of control processes.

Conflicting evidence is available in regard to a possible relationship between organizational climate and performance. Friedlander and Greenberg (1971) found that performance among the hard core unemployed tended to increase with a psychologically supportive climate. In contrast, Kaczka and Kirk (1968) failed to note an increase in performance where a supportive climate was evident. Finally, Cawsey (1973) noted conflicting performance findings as a function of need orientations and organizational technology.

Redding (1972) described "ideal" communication climate in terms of five dimensions: (1) supportiveness; (2) participative decision making; (3) trust, confidence, credibility; (4) openness, candor; and (5) high performance goals. Dennis (1975) described managerial communication climate in terms of five dimensions: (1) supportive communication; (2) quality and accuracy of downward communication; (3) communication relationships with subordinates; (4) upward communication and upward influence; and (5) information reliability.

The causal sequence model developed by Likert (1976) described relationships among organizational variables. One of these variables he listed as causal is "organizational climate". Communication

and motivation are among those designated as intervening variables. One of the end result variables in the model is performance.

#### Relationships of Communication Networks and Employee Attitudes

It has been proposed that as employee participation in activities at work increases, communication between the worker and his coworkers and supervisors is also likely to increase. As a consequence the worker becomes less isolated from others in the work setting and thereby develops a wider perspective and more accurate knowledge of the organization (Jackson, 1983). The increased communication activity beyond the employees' own work areas and during communication meetings suggests that participants in the meetings will have greater knowledge than non participants about what is happening in the organization.

Literature about networks suggests that varying levels of participation in organizational networks have varying effects on organizational attitudes and behavior (Taylor & Bowers, 1972). In most circumstances participants in organizational networks experience greater job satisfaction and are more satisfied with communication within the organization than are non participants (McDonald, 1976).

Granovetter's (1983) theory of the strength of weak ties explains that employees who do not have access to information outside of their own work group are deprived of information from distant parts of the social system. These employees will be confined to the provincial news of their close circle of friends. This deprivation will not only insulate them from current information, but may put them at a

disadvantage in the organization, reinforcing poor attitudes, behavior, and performance.

### Literature Related to Employee Communication Meetings

The main premise for the development of these employee communication meetings was that the meetings would lead to increased performance. Literature on communication networks suggests that various levels of participation in networks have varying effects on individual attitudes and behavior (Pearce & David, 1983). Participation in networks is also related to organizational commitment (Roberts & O'Reilly, 1979).

Participants of meetings have links outside of their own work groups and this participation leads to increased trust and performance (Locke & Schweiger, 1979). According to Robson (1982), bringing experts into meetings to answer various questions gives the participants an opportunity to meet and talk to diverse organizational members and this process leads to a broader understanding of the organization.

In most manufacturing operations, quality of the product is an issue at all levels of the organization. The relationship between the quality of a manufactured product and employee communication is obscure. Stohl (1984) stated, "There has been no empirical research approach to the study of quality from the perspective of communication networks" (p. 162).

Literature about group facilitators implies that facilitators serving as liaisons perceive closer relationships between themselves

and others because of the greater amount of contact (Amend, 1971). Albrecht (1979) found that these "linkers" see themselves as knowledgeable and believe they have access and influence in the communication system.

It is generally felt that a commitment to succeed from the local union leadership is vital to all jointly administered activities. The support of and sanction by the local union is important to the success of any cooperative type program (Mills, 1978).

#### Summary

A number of variables operating within the organizational setting have been found to have impact on employee performance. Many of these have a relationship to communication among employees or between superiors and subordinates. Notable examples include working conditions (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939), job enlargement (Argyris, 1964), job enrichment (Herzberg, 1966), organizational innovativeness (Hurt & Teigen, 1977), and openness and trust (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). It is clear that communicative relationships may not be the most important determinant of employee satisfaction, but research has indicated that communicative relationships do predict meaningful variance in employee performance across a wide range of organizations. The review of literature was influenced by an ERIC search using the descriptors employee-communication-performance.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The methods used for obtaining information regarding the relationships of employee communication meetings to grievances and absences in large assembly operations are presented in this chapter. The sections include descriptions of the meetings, selection of participants, research hypotheses, collection of data, and analysis of data.

#### Introduction

Data used to determine the success or failure of the employee communication process helped to identify the relationship of participation in employee communication meetings to the numbers of employee absences, and the relationship of participation in employee communication meetings to the numbers of employee grievances. This was accomplished by comparing the performance criteria of groups which had the opportunity to participate in communication meetings to others who did not have an opportunity to participate in the communication meetings. These comparisons were done before and after a series of meetings.

#### Description of the Meetings

Although the communication meetings were not a form of

participative decision making, they did act as an intervention. As employees participated in the meetings, they became more integrated into the organizational culture.

The need for an intervention was felt by the department manager and one of the four elected union representatives (committee person) in the current study. The human resource department was contacted to help design the intervention. The entire process was planned and designed by a committee. The committee was made up of four union representatives, four mid-level managers and two human resource personnel, one union, and the other management.

The communication meetings had a formal four-phase agenda. Even though the facilitator followed the agenda, the meetings were not heavily structured. The participants had the opportunity to ask questions at any time during the meetings. One of the objectives of the meetings was to establish an open line of communication between the participants, the facilitator, the group supervisor, and the committee person.

The first phase of the meetings consisted of the sharing of information by the facilitator about issues that were left open the prior week. The participants were not limited to what types of questions they might ask as long as they were related to the automobile industry. Questions could be specifically about their job, or as broad as wanting information pertaining to other General Motors plants. Many times questions were asked for which neither the facilitator, the supervisor, nor the committee person had the answer. It then became the facilitator's responsibility to research the answer before the next meeting. In order to carry out this task, the facilitator was required

to talk to the parties who had the information needed to answer the question. Various departments and individuals both inside and outside of the Oklahoma City plant became important and critical sources of information for the facilitator.

The second phase of the meetings dealt with new information. It was during this phase that supervisor and committee person shared information with the employees. Many times this phase of the meeting would turn into an open forum type discussion. The supervisor and committee person listened to employee responses related to certain issues or possible changes. Never in the communication meetings were employee grievances discussed. Problems on the plant floor for which a grievance had been filed by the committee person were not addressed at the meetings. The participants also agreed at the initial meeting that there would be no "name calling" or "finger pointing" during the meetings. The meetings were not an opportunity for the participants to criticize individuals or groups within the plant.

The second phase also allowed the facilitator time to share other information that was pertinent to the group. The facilitator talked about the product, personnel changes, plant closings, the parking lot, or whatever was of current interest.

During the third phase, the participants were asked to bring out any ideas or possible changes that may result in improving the quality of the product. As attention was focused on a particular issue, the facilitator again took that information and involved the individuals or departments with the expertise to use the information effectively. During this phase of the meetings, participants often discussed procedures, materials and tools. Whatever the issue, information was

returned to the participants regarding what was being done with their ideas.

The fourth phase concerned rumors or other information that the participants had heard that had not been validated. Participants also asked for clarification of certain issues or publications related to the automobile industry. If the facilitator, supervisor, or committee person could not factually answer the question, it was the facilitator's responsibility to research the answer to the question before the next meeting.

In attendance at the communication meetings were usually 25 to 40 employees from the same natural work group. The groups varied in size and all employees from the same natural work group. The groups varied in size and all employees from the groups selected were invited to attend. The committee person and supervisor were also present at the meetings, as well as a facilitator who coordinated the meeting process. The meetings were held after work and lasted 30 minutes. Each group met once each week. The employees were compensated at the rate of time and one half for attending the meetings. The meetings were held in an informal classroom setting near their work area.

A facilitator was chosen by the joint committee. All hourly rate employees in the department were given the opportunity to apply for the position which was full time. An application period was posted and all applications were reviewed by the committee. Six applicants were interviewed and a facilitator was chosen. An alternate facilitator was also chosen who would function in the facilitator's absence. After completing a two week training period emphasizing communication skills, the alternate facilitator returned to his job on the assembly line.



The facilitator played an integral part in driving the entire process that supported the communication meetings. The facilitator was the "connecting link" between the participants in the meetings and the rest of the organization. He took on the responsibility of moving the meeting through its various stages, monitoring the time, and calling on participants for feedback or question.

The communication meetings gave the supervisor an opportunity to establish a rapport with his subordinates that would be difficult to establish on the plant floor. Due to the nature of assembly line work, it is often difficult for a supervisor to establish a personal relationship with his subordinates. The meetings gave the supervisors the opportunity to present themselves in a more personal way. The supervisors were not limited to what they should talk about during the meetings, as long as it was appropriate and was of interest to the group.

The supervisors were available at the meetings to answer questions concerning work schedules or any other topic that were related to their roles as supervisors. The supervisors were responsible for monitoring the attendance at the meetings, and seeing that the employees who attended were paid properly.

Each committee person typically represented approximately 250 employees. With such a large number of constituents it was practically impossible to make personal contact with each employee on a weekly basis. The communication meetings were an effective tool which gave the committee person the opportunity to express his feelings and views from the union leadership standpoint. Feedback that he received during the meetings helped him to understand the views and concerns of his

constituents. The meetings also gave him the opportunity to share with large numbers of the employees he represented information pertaining to certain issues in which he was involved or of which he had knowledge.

### Selection of Participants

The population selected for this study consisted of assembly line workers at the General Motors plant at Oklahoma City. These employees make up eight separate and distinct groups averaging 43 employees each. Four of the groups work the day shift and four work the evening shift. Four of the groups will have an opportunity to participate in the employee communication meetings, two from the day shift and two from the night shift. All of the employees work in the same department and are involved in similar work activities. The selection of these specific groups was done by the committee person and the general supervisor of the area.

### Research Hypotheses

#### Ho<sub>1</sub>

There is no difference between the number of grievances filed by groups with volunteer participants in employee communication meetings and by groups without participants in the meetings before and after a series of meetings.

#### Ho<sub>2</sub>

There is no difference between the number of controllable absences taken by groups with volunteer participants in employee communication

meetings and by groups without participants in the meetings before and after a series of meetings.

#### Collection of the Data

Data were collected pertinent to employee absences and employee grievances. These data were collected for the purpose of identifying decreasing or increasing percentages of absences or grievances within groups containing employee communication meeting participants and comparing such percentages to those of groups without employee communication meeting participants.

A record of employee grievances filed is kept by both the committee person and the employee relations department. A record of the number of grievances filed by employees in the targeted areas was received from the committee person and verified by the employee relations department. Numbers of grievances filed for the three month period that began eight weeks after the communication meetings were initiated, grievances for the same three month period of the prior year and for the three month period just preceding a series of meetings were collected. The grievance records were collected for the four groups which included persons who participated in the communication meetings, and the four groups that were not given an opportunity to participate in the meetings.

Controllable absences were recorded by the supervisors and the attendance coordinator. A record of the controllable absences was received from the supervisor and verified by the attendance coordinator. Absentee records for the three month period that started eight weeks after the communication meetings began, records for the

same period of the prior year and for the three month period preceding a series of meetings were collected. The absentee records were collected for the four groups which included participants in the communication meetings and the four groups that were not given an opportunity to participate in the meetings.

#### Analysis of the Data

Data collected pertinent to grievances and absences were tabulated and presented in charts and in table form. Other findings were presented narratively. Statistics were used only in a descriptive manner.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between participation in employee communication meetings and patterns of employee performance in terms of employee grievances and controllable absences.

#### Attendance at Employee Communication

##### Meetings

At General Motors, hourly rate employees are compensated by increments of six minutes or one tenth of an hour. The communication meetings start six minutes after the end of the shift. The employees are not compensated for the six minutes after their shift ends, which is prior to the start of the meeting. Once the meeting begins, six minutes after the end of the shift, it will last 30 minutes or five tenths of an hour.

The designation is done numerically between departments, between groups and between shifts. The first number designates department. The second number designates supervisor's group. The third number designates shift. For example, 15-10-1 translates to department 15, group 10, first shift.

Data were collected for eight person groups. Groups 15-10-1, 15-10-2, 15-16-1, 15-16-2, did have an opportunity to attend the

communication meetings. Groups 15-04-1, 15-04-2, 15-12-1, 15-12-2, did not have an opportunity to attend the communication meetings.

The number of employees assigned to those groups are as follows:

<u>Group</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>
15-10-1	46
15-10-2	46
15-16-1	38
15-16-2	38
15-04-1	44
15-04-2	44
15-12-1	45
15-12-2	45

The number of employees attending the meetings gradually increased during the first eight weeks that the meetings were held. The number of employees attending the meetings during the period of 4-20-87 through 7-17-87 was consistent. This was the period that began eight weeks after the meetings started. The average number of employees attending the meetings for group 15-10-1 was 32 or 70 percent. The average number of employees attending the meetings for group 15-10-2 was 36 or 78 percent. The average number of employees attending the meetings for group 15-16-1 was 30 or 79 percent. The average number of employees attending the meetings for group 15-16-2 was 32 or 84 percent.

#### Data Summary

The data collected for this study was represented in six tables. Table I represents the number of controllable absences for the period

TABLE I  
CONTROLLABLE ABSENCES BY WEEK, FOR THE PERIOD OF 4-21-86 THROUGH 7-18-86

Group	Week Ending												Total
	4/25	5/2	5/9	5/16	5/23	5/30	6/6	6/20	6/27	7/4	7/11	7/18	
*10-1	4	2	4	2	6	1	3	0	2	0	3	0	29
*10-2	7	12	17	14	10	6	8	4	9	2	4	7	105
*16-1	2	3	3	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	2	20
*16-2	4	0	4	3	5	4	6	4	3	1	5	1	44
Sub Total													198
04-1	5	3	3	4	2	2	4	4	6	2	3	4	42
04-2	10	12	9	4	6	4	6	4	8	3	3	6	81
12-1	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	4	17
12-2	6	6	7	4	4	2	6	3	7	4	4	2	56
Sub Total													196
Grand Total													394

\*Group had the opportunity to participate in the meetings.

of 4-21-86 through 7-18-86. This time period represents the three month period of one year prior to the three month period that began eight weeks after the meetings started. Table II represents the controllable absences for the period of 11-24-86 through 2-20-87. This time period represents the three month period prior to the start of the communication meetings. Table III represents the controllable absences for the period of 4-20-87 through 7-18-87. This time period represents the three month period that began eight weeks after the meetings started.

Groups 15-10-1, 15-10-2, 15-16-1, and 15-16-2 did have the opportunity to attend the communication meetings. For these groups, Table III reflects a decrease of one absence, or 0.5 percent when compared to Table I. Table III also reflects an increase of four absences or 2.0 percent for these groups when compared to Table II. There was no meaningful change of the number of controllable absences taken by the employees in the supervisor groups that had an opportunity to attend the communication meetings.

Groups 15-04-1, 15-04-2, 15-12-1, and 15-12-2 did not have the opportunity to attend the communication meetings. For these groups Table III reflects an increase of 19 absences or 9.7 percent when compared to Table I. Table III also reflects an increase of 31 absences or 16.8 percent for these groups when compared to Table II. There was an increase in the number of controllable absences taken by the employees in the groups that did not have an opportunity to attend the communication meetings.

Table IV represents the number of employee grievances filed for the period of 4-21-86 through 7-18-86. This period represents the



TABLE II  
CONTROLLABLE ABSENCES BY WEEK, FOR THE PERIOD OF 11-24-86 THROUGH 2-20-87

Group	Week Ending													Total
	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6	2/13	2/20	
*10-1	0	4	1	4	2	0	4	3	3	3	0	4	6	40
*10-2	4	8	6	4	4	0	6	10	9	12	9	6	8	86
*16-1	0	4	0	0	0	0	6	2	1	0	4	4	2	23
*16-2	2	4	2	6	1	0	4	6	6	4	6	0	3	44
Sub Total														193
04-1	1	6	4	4	1	0	1	3	6	4	7	1	3	41
04-2	3	9	7	8	2	0	10	4	8	8	6	4	9	78
12-1	0	3	1	2	0	0	4	3	0	0	6	2	2	23
12-2	0	7	6	5	0	0	4	4	4	6	2	1	3	42
Sub Total														184
Grand Total														377

\*Group had the opportunity to participate in the meetings.

TABLE III  
CONTROLLABLE ABSENCES BY WEEK, FOR THE PERIOD OF 4-20-87 THROUGH 7-18-87

Group	Week Ending													Total
	4/24	5/1	5/8	5/15	5/22	5/29	6/5	6/12	6/19	6/26	7/3	7/10	7/17	
*10-1	6	2	2	1	4	3	3	5	1	0	6	7	3	43
*10-2	10	8	11	6	6	5	12	15	8	0	7	8	5	101
*16-1	2	2	0	5	2	0	4	3	4	0	0	3	0	25
*16-2	4	0	3	6	2	0	1	0	4	0	3	3	2	28
Sub Total														197
04-1	1	4	6	1	3	6	4	1	0	0	1	1	2	32
04-2	8	14	8	5	8	6	12	4	6	0	6	6	3	84
12-1	2	2	4	0	1	1	3	3	4	0	3	3	2	25
12-2	4	4	8	11	8	7	6	5	2	0	6	6	7	74
Sub Total														215
Grand Total														412

\*Group had the opportunity to participate in the meetings.

TABLE IV  
GRIEVANCES BY WEEK, FOR THE PERIOD OF 4-21-86 THROUGH 7-18-86

Group	Week Ending													Total
	4/25	5/2	5/9	5/16	5/23	5/30	6/6	6/13	6/20	6/27	7/4	7/11	7/18	
*10-1	0	0	4	2	0	1	0	3	1	2	4	0	0	17
*10-2	0	1	6	1	6	2	0	4	6	2	1	1	0	30
*16-1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	8
*16-2	2	2	2	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	1	14
Sub Total														69
04-1	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	10
04-2	1	9	1	0	2	2	1	3	4	0	0	0	1	24
12-1	1	2	0	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	11
12-2	3	4	2	0	0	0	1	0	4	4	0	0	1	19
Sub Total														64
Grand Total														133

\*Group had the opportunity to attend the meetings.

three month period one year prior to the three month period that began eight weeks after the meetings started. Table V represents the grievances filed for the period of 11-24-86 through 2-20-87. This time period represents the three month period prior to the start of the communication meetings. Table VI represents the number of employee grievances filed for the period of 4-20-87 through 7-18-87. This time period represents the three month period that began eight weeks after the meetings started.

Groups 15-10-1, 15-10-2, 15-16-1, and 15-16-2 did have the opportunity to attend the communication meetings. For these groups, Table VI reflects a decrease of 19 grievances or 27.6 percent when compared to Table IV. Table VI also reflects a decrease of 38 grievances or 43.2 percent for these groups when compared to Table V. There was a decrease in the number of grievances filed by employees in the groups that had an opportunity to attend the communication meetings.

Groups 15-04-1, 15-04-2, 15-12-1, and 15-12-2 did not have the opportunity to attend the communication meetings. For these groups Table VI reflects a decrease of 11 grievances or 17.2 percent when compared to Table IV. Table VI also reflects a decrease of 18 grievances, or 25.4 percent for these groups when compared to Table V. There was a decrease in the number of grievances filed by employees in the supervisor groups that did not have an opportunity to attend the communication meetings.

### Findings

As presented in Table VII the performance of groups with volunteer

TABLE V  
GRIEVANCES BY WEEK, FOR THE PERIOD OF 11-24-86 THROUGH 2-20-87

Group	Week Ending													Total
	11/28	12/5	12/12	12/19	12/26	1/2	1/9	1/16	1/23	1/30	2/6	2/13	2/20	
*10-1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	4	6	2	0	1	19
*10-2	7	9	7	4	1	0	6	5	7	8	1	1	2	58
*16-1	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
*16-2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	7
Sub Total														88
04-1	0	3	1	6	1	0	2	2	2	0	3	3	0	20
04-2	1	5	2	0	0	0	4	0	6	1	3	3	2	28
12-1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	6
12-2	4	0	0	2	0	0	1	4	3	1	0	0	2	17
Sub Total														71
Grand Total														159

\*Group had the opportunity to attend the meetings.

TABLE VI  
GRIEVANCES BY WEEK, FOR THE PERIOD OF 4-20-87 THROUGH 7-17-87

Group	Week Ending													Total
	4/24	5/1	5/8	5/15	5/22	5/29	6/5	6/12	6/19	6/26	7/3	7/10	7/17	
*10-1	4	2	0	0	0	0	7	1	2	0	0	0	1	17
*10-2	2	0	2	4	6	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	4	23
*16-1	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
*16-2	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	6
Sub Total														50
04-1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
04-2	0	4	3	8	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	19
12-1	0	0	0	2	2	4	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	12
12-2	1	0	0	0	1	4	0	4	2	0	2	2	1	17
Sub Total														53
Grand Total														103

\*Group had the opportunity to attend the meetings.

TABLE VII  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Group	<u>Controllable Absences</u>				<u>Grievances</u>			
	<u>Period</u>		Total		<u>Period</u>		Total	
	4/21/86-1/18/86	11/24/86-2/20/87			4/21/86-7/18/86	11/24/86-2/20/87		
*10-1	29	40	112		17	19	17	53
*10-2	105	86	292		30	58	23	111
*16-1	20	23	68		8	4	4	16
*16-2	44	44	116		14	7	6	27
Sub Total	198	193	588		69	88	50	207
04-1	42	41	115		10	20	5	35
04-2	81	78	243		24	28	19	71
12-1	17	23	65		11	6	12	29
12-2	56	42	172		19	17	17	53
Sub Total	196	184	595		64	71	53	188
Grand Total	394	377	1183		133	159	103	395

\*Group had the opportunity to attend the meetings.

participants in employee communication meetings and of groups without participants in the meetings were compared in terms of controllable absences, and the number of grievances filed. Based on the data collected, there were differences in both areas that were used to evaluate the success or failure of the meetings.

After participation there was a slight change in the number of controllable absences taken by employees in the groups that had an opportunity to participate in the meetings. After the series of meetings there was an increase in the number of controllable absences taken by employees in the groups which did not have an opportunity to participate in the meetings. This increase led to a considerable difference between the percentages of controllable absences taken by the participating groups and the non participating groups after the series of meetings.

After their participation there was a decrease in the number of grievances filed by employees in the groups that had an opportunity to participate in the meetings. After the series of meetings there was a decrease in the number of grievances filed by employees in the groups that did not have an opportunity to participate in the meetings. The percentages of grievances filed for both the participating and non participating groups decreased after the series of meetings. However, the decrease in the number of grievances filed for the participating groups was greater than the decrease for the number of grievances filed for the non participating groups.



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between participation in employee communication meetings and patterns of employee performance in terms of grievances and controllable absences.

Communication is one of a number of variables operating within the organizational setting. The results of this study will be useful in understanding the relationship between communication meetings and employee performance.

The population selected for the study consisted of approximately 346 assembly line workers at the General Motors assembly plant in Oklahoma City.

Reported were the number of controllable absences taken, and the number of grievances filed, by groups with volunteer participants in employee communication meetings, as well as by groups without participants in the meetings. Data were collected for periods both before and after the series of meetings.

#### Conclusions

As exhibited in Table VII, the number of grievances filed by

groups with volunteer participants in employee communication meetings decreased by an average of 35.3 percent, while the number of grievances filed by groups without participants in the meetings decreased by an average of 21.2 percent. The number of controllable absences taken by groups with volunteer participants in employee communication meetings remained relatively unchanged. The controllable absences taken by groups without participants in the meetings increased by an average of 13.2 percent.

While this study compared changes in employee performance related to grievances and absences with participation in employee communication meetings, it must be considered that other variables may have had an effect on employee performance during the time this study was done.

#### Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, it is recommended that the communication meetings be expanded to include a greater number of supervisor groups. It is also recommended that a future study be done defining performance in ways other than those of grievances filed and numbers of controllable absences. Other variables which may be related to performance should be controlled or avoided if possible, such as supervisors moving from one group to another and atypical times of the year in which data are collected.

#### Implications

One of the major disadvantages to assembly line work is the feeling of isolation felt by many employees. It is this loss of social interaction in the workplace that leads to employees not knowing what

is going on in the workplace, and growing not to care about what is going on. The communication meetings left the participants feeling more involved and with an active role in the organization.

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