

THE ROLE OF ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION
SKILLS IN ORGANIZATIONAL TRAINING
AND DEVELOPMENT

By

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PREFACE

The study is concerned with the role that oral and written communication skills play in Organizational Training and Development. The purpose is to provide a descriptive analysis of the attitudes toward communication competency, causes of breakdowns and types and sources of training programs. Also, the study describes the importance of communication in the organization, determination of training needs, measurement of communication effectiveness, and the goals and objectives and training programs.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the last ten years, emphasis in the speech field has moved from concentrated studies in public address and forensics to interdisciplinary work in the behavioral sciences such as organizational psychology, sociology, and human relations. This move is justified and serves a definite need to organizations. As Dawes and Lord (13) point out: "Management at all levels is becoming sensitive both to the waste involved in inefficient communication and to the importance of proficiency in communicating skills" (p. 212).

Due to this new awareness, management has placed responsibility to account for communication problems on training and development departments within the organization. This practice is reiterated by training specialist, Ida Hoos (23).

Communication skills within the organization itself or in relation to the world around us are important as never before. Human intelligence is required in the generating of ideas and in the expression of them. Technology merely spreads them. And the worth of such dissemination depends entirely on the value of the original thought.

Herein lies a mandate for all training executives.... Production workers, clerical staff, supervisors, and management must be encouraged to improve their language skills. A high degree of literacy may well turn out to be the prime asset of our computerized age. This becomes increasingly apparent as functions are done mechanically and the task of interpretation gains importance (p. 13).

The trend toward effective communication training is not without its problems. According to a recent article in the Training and Development Journal (42):

American business pours over a billion dollars into various types of communication programs ranging from house organs, bulletin boards, and millions of worker hours of meetings and conferences to advertising campaigns and public relations programs.

An enormous amount of this investment is ineffective because companies are misdirecting their communication programs or are doing it on a superficial level (p. 18).

In addition to this problem, consistent inattention to communication (its functions and malfunctions) hampers efficiency and profitability of our organizations and stifles the development of those who inhabit them (5).

As Schien (35) states:

There has been a very rapid growth in this field and, at the same time, an increasing amount of reappraisal and testing of the fundamental assumptions which underlie organizational development....

Unfortunately, however, our technology in this area has outrun our theory and research. We are able to do lots of things, but we are not clear about when and why and on whom to do them (p. 46).

Purpose of Study

In light of the increased concern with communication skills in training and development and the apparent lack of theory and research in the area, a question arises: What is the role of communication skills in organizational training and development?

The purpose of this study is to answer this question. An extensive review of the literature reveals the relationship between communication and the area of training and development. Three major

areas are reviewed: 1) Training and development, 2) Communication in the organization, and 3) Communication training in the organization.

A survey of a randomly selected group (N-500) of training directors in business and industry asked specific questions. These questions focused on the attitudes of business concerning communication training, types of training programs used, and sources for these programs. Also questions concerning the importance of communication, the assessing of training needs, and the objectives and goals of communication training were asked.

Justification for Study

According to Dawes and Lord (13), communication plays several different roles in the operational efficiency of a firm. These roles are 1) that of a decision-making tool, 2) that of providing the firm with the knowledge of its identifiable publics--and thus making it well informed, influential, prosperous and highly competitive, and 3) that of making the firm a progressive, energetic pacesetter in the field.

Bormann et al. (6) see communication as playing a key role in the organization from the discussion and establishment of overall goals to the final decision-making process, the feedback of results, and the final evaluation and review.

It is apparent that communication skills play a key role in an organization, more specifically, in training and development within the organization. But as Schien pointed out earlier, we are not clear as to when, why, and on whom training should take place. Our theory and research has not advanced with our technology.

This study of the role of communication skills in training and development is therefore justified. It will advance theory and research which, according to Schien, is lacking. It will provide valuable information in the effective development of communication programs in business, industry, and educational institutions. The study will provide specific information on the needs of business in relation to communication and on the practices currently used in the training field.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Training and Development

Since training is the first and in a sense the focal point of the three areas of the literature to be reviewed, it is appropriate to begin with a solid definition. The 1958 Government Employees Training Act from the U.S. Congress (46) defines training as:

The process of providing for and making available to an employee and placing or enrolling such employee in a planned, prepared, and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system, or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, fiscal, administrative, or other fields which are or will be directly related to the performance by such employee of official duties for the government; in order to increase the knowledge, proficiency, ability, skill, and qualifications of such employee in performance of official duties (p. 1).

This definition applies equally to business and industrial training and provides a broad description of what training has involved for hundreds of years.

Before discussing specific types of training and development such as communication, it is necessary to review the evolution of training.

Historical Background of Training

During the Middle Ages, training was on a person-to-person basis and ended with performance of a prescribed task or the production of

a "masterpiece" which demonstrated that the apprentice had learned his craft well.

With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution in the 1800's, the individual craftsman was threatened by mass production of crude machines driven by steam or water power. It was an age of simple machines, and there was plenty of labor available. Little attention was given to working conditions; management was dominant; the margin of profit was so great that there was no need for refined organization. Labor was in ready supply, and the main inducement to productivity was fear of unemployment. Training was a simple matter; the worker achieved proficiency for mere survival (44). The Industrial Revolution speeded the decline of the craftsman because the skills needed by workers were few, simple, and easily learned.

Formal training programs originated in the late nineteenth century with the corporation schools. Clark and Sloan (45) state that at least five corporation schools were established between 1872 and 1900 and that by 1916 some 60,000 boys were enrolled. The schools were established so that industry could meet its need for skilled labor at a time when vocational education programs were too new and too few to meet the demand.

As technological advancement made industrial development more and more complex, management and administration entered a new and critical phase of their development thus accounting for the contemporary emphasis on management problems and management training.

This need for trained managers became apparent around 1901. The ideas of Frederick Taylor reflected the need for management that was capable of coping with this emergent technological complexity. His

scientific management movement identified management as a separate and distinct discipline. The aim of the movement was to increase productivity and worker motivation through "mutuality of interest."

Following Taylor's ideas, the human relations movement evolved from the research at the Hawthorne Plant of Western Electric. This study conducted by F. J. Roethlisberger and William J. Dickson applied theory, concepts, and research methodology from the behavioral sciences to training in organizations. Their works revealed that the behavioral sciences were essential to the understanding of organizations and advanced the notion of training (34).

The human relations movement began to fade around 1960. Evolving from its basic notion, a new movement called Industrial Humanism emerged. This movement advocated that democracy was infinitely more desirable and beneficial than bureaucracy. The industrial humanist's program included changing management's mind as to what was good administration of people. Their theoretical foundations in the applied sciences suggested that the human relations and Industrial movements were one. The behavioral sciences approach became a logical extension for achieving a more rational means of the utilization of human resources (36).

The Current State of Training

With all of the movements and new ideas influencing it, training in business and industry is still practically impossible to define and describe. Ginzberg and Hepburn (20) state: "We know very little about the total training structure in the United States because it is so diffuse that nobody has an overview of it" (p. 2).

In an effort to learn more about training in the United States today, Tracey (45), through a review of literature on training, sought to gather specific information about the scope of training. He was particularly interested in five areas: 1) number of companies that conduct training, 2) number of staff assigned to training activities, 3) number of courses or training programs offered, 4) number of personnel trained, and 5) training costs (salaries; materials, aids, and equipment; maintenance and repair of facilities and equipment; and total costs). His search yielded 250 citations and 95 journal articles, none of which contained any of the data needed.

In 1968, Sommers (41) completed a pilot study of a survey on training in business and industry. His analysis of data resulted in the following findings:

1. Almost 35% of the firms with training programs had more than 2,000 employees, only 6.5% had 100 or fewer employees. Only medium-sized and large (over 500 employees) firms had any significant amount of training.
2. Most firms with training programs were in manufacturing or service industries; relatively few were in construction.
3. Only a small proportion of the firms kept records on trainees and training that could be readily transferred to a questionnaire form. Most of those were larger firms. Records frequently contained gross estimates for the company as a whole rather than detailed data.
4. Generally, respondents expressed no regret over a lack of records, which indicates that they felt little need for such records and that the effort to maintain records could not be justified by costs and benefits.
5. A uniform terminology for occupations and training programs was lacking.
6. Of the 842 specific training programs identified, data for fewer than one in four could be readily transferred to a questionnaire.

7. Data on turnover and upward mobility of trainees were generally unavailable.
8. There were readily transferable records for entry-level on-the-job training for only 41 programs and for on-the-job upgrading for only 29 programs.
9. Respondents refused to provide data for 32 classroom programs.
10. Detailed records on the costs of training were almost nonexistent (pp. 23-24).

Data on the number and type of training programs offered by business and industry are scarce. Probably the most widely accepted and used training activity in business is training for individual workers and management personnel. These programs may take many forms. Tracey (45) lists common types of training and development activities.

Individual Training and Development

1. Companywide training programs include:

- Orientation courses for new employees
- Tuition aid or remission programs
- Voluntary general education programs
- Safety training
- Human relations training
- Enterprise functions and process training
- Correspondence study

2. Manufacturing and production training programs include:

- Apprenticeship training
- Formal entry-level semiskills and skills programs
- Formal advanced level skills and technical training
- On-the-job training, both entry-level and advanced
- Cooperative work-study programs between company and school

3. Engineering and scientific training programs include:

- Non-degree in-house programs
- On-site degree programs for advanced degrees
- Part-time campus degree programs
- Engineering or scientific management programs

4. Marketing and sales training programs include:

- Sales training
- Sales engineering training
- Service engineering training
- Customer training
- Dealer training

Management Training and Development

1. Presupervisory training programs focus on the development of supervisory, human relations, and leadership skills. They include:

- Role and responsibilities of a supervisor
- Work planning and scheduling
- Delegation
- Communication
- Interviewing
- Employee training
- Performance rating
- Safety
- Company policy
- Relations with unions and organized labor
- Grievance procedures
- Practical psychology

2. Middle management development programs focus on management theory, decision making, and problem solving. They include:

- Assessment centers
- Case problems
- Critical incidents
- Discussion
- Simulation
- In-basket exercises
- Business games
- Rotational job assignments
- Committee participation
- Seminars and conferences
- College and university courses

3. Executive development programs focus on on-the-job development. They include:

- Participation in unstructured discussion
- Simulation
- Role-playing
- Business games
- Grid seminars

Out-of-enterprise seminars
Sensitivity-training sessions
College and university courses (pp. 36-38).

The Bureau of National Affairs (8) conducted a survey to determine the extent to which business and industry are using programs to meet the training needs of employee and first-line supervisory management. The survey did not include programs related to job performance and management development. Data were obtained from 286 executives. The findings were as follows.

Three-fourths of the companies conducted both formal and informal training programs for rank-and-file employees. Approximately one-fifth of the programs are completely informal, the remainder are completely formal.

Seven out of ten executives reported that training is given on company time only. When it is not, nearly two-tenths of the companies pay employees for after-hours training.

Over one-third of the firms conduct formal apprenticeship programs. Approximately one-fifth of the companies operate training programs under the JOBS program of the National Alliance of Businessmen. Over one-tenth of the companies operate training programs under the MDTA.

Retraining programs for employees displaced by automation are conducted by 15% of the companies. Approximately 30% have systematic upgrading programs to prepare first-line supervisors and rank-and-file employees for job advancement.

The cost of training and development in business is extremely difficult to determine because most companies carry training costs as sub-accounts of major accounts. Some consider training as an expense, whereas others absorb it in the cost of the product. Many companies do not identify training costs at all. In 1962, Machlup (28) estimated the training costs for the newly hired employee as \$3,054 billion for 1958. Decarlo and Robinson (14) in 1966 referred to a report by The Chase Manhattan Bank in 1962 in which the costs of training in business and industry were estimated at \$17 billion per year.

It was reported in 1972 that the total training cost per employee in large firms, including direct costs and lost productivity, was \$700 per year (\$200 in direct costs of training and \$500 in indirect costs). The annual average number of employees of private, nonagricultural, nongovernment establishments was 57,836,000 in 1971 (29). Assuming that two out of three of those employees received some training and assuming that the cost of the training averaged \$700, an estimate of the total expenditure for training and development in business and industry would be in the area of 27 billion dollars.

Training has evolved from simple person-to-person apprenticeships during the Middle Ages to a multi-billion dollar expenditure involving not only skills training but personal development of the individual worker and management.

The rapid social change in every area--the impact of minority groups, the role of women, the meaning of work, changing values and motivation, and technological change--forces training organizations to adopt new structures and systems and to find better means of utilizing human resources. A prime responsibility of the training

function is to communicate to all levels of employees the sweeping changes that are taking place in values, attitudes, behavior, culture, and technology.

These changes create demands for effective sources of training. The government sees training as a means of solving critical social and economic problems. Management sees training as a drain on enterprise resources with few returns on investment; women and the disadvantaged see training as a too-often denied right and the means of improving their status. Employees see it as a means of advancing their careers.

Training personnel are responsible for planning and conducting programs to meet the changing requirements and needs of individuals, organizations, and society at large. Training programs should effectively produce the needed results in a way that is thorough and satisfying to employee and management. And training programs should be efficient in that they increase benefits (16).

The next section of this paper will review what the literature has to say about communication study and its values in relation to organizations.

Communication in the Organization

In comparison to industrial training, study of communication as a process is relatively new, and very little systematic attention has been given to the problems of communication by people in industry. The concern with communication, on the part of industry, goes back not more than twenty-five years and perhaps less (11). It has been pointed out that ten years ago the typical supervisor in industry did not use the word communication, and he did not worry about communication with his personnel (11).

According to Litterer, organizations are characterized by the flow of material, of energy, of information (27). In general, this statement is only partially true. Litterer goes on to state that there is no flow of material, no flow of energy--only a flow of information. Communication is basic at all levels of this flow of information.

Communication involves transactions between people. Its interpersonal nature makes it singularly important for the study of organizations. The communication system of an organization is so essential that some analysts maintain that if we could identify all the channels conveying information and the means by which information influences the behavior of the organization, we would be close to understanding the organization itself (15).

The impact communication has on the organization is significant. It is the purpose of this section to discuss the nature of communication in the organization.

Nature of Communication

Communication can be defined simply as the process of sending and receiving messages. Brief and imprecise as this definition is, Redding suggests several implications of practical importance (4).

1. The word "message" does not mean idea or thought or information. It means only the physical signals (ordinarily light waves and air pressure waves) transmitted between message-sender and message-receiver. The mere emission of talk, or of written words, or of graphic symbols does not, in itself, guarantee that anyone understands or accepts the message-sender's ideas.
2. The only message that counts in terms of what the receiver does is the message received--not the message sent.
3. Messages may be unintentional as well as intentional.

4. Messages may be nonverbal as well as verbal.
5. Silence and inaction may constitute messages just as do words or overt behavior. In other words, anything interpreted by a person is, to that person, a message.
6. There are frequently unintended receivers as well as unintended messages.
7. The final message interpreted by the receiver can never be identical with the message as conceived and transmitted by the sender.
8. The message will always evoke some type of response (feedback).
9. Communication consists of sending and receiving messages, not of the media or channels by which the messages are sent (pp. 1-2).

This definition of communication is not the only definition.

There are several to be found in the literature. Thayer randomly lists four definitions of communication (43):

Communication is the process of effecting an interchange of ideas between two or more people.

Communication is the mutual interchange of ideas by any effective means.

. . . the imparting or interchange of thoughts, opinions, or information by speech, writing, or signs.

Communication is the arrangement of environmental stimuli to produce certain desired behavior on the part of the organism (p. 17).

Thayer goes on to state that such definitions have not contributed much to our understanding of communication. He cites several reasons for this inadequacy. 1) Our definitions have been limited by the implication that communication is the process one undertakes in order to do something to someone else. The implication is that communication is limited to instances in which one intends to affect another and that the intention is a conscious and a rational one. 2) Explanations of

communication imply far too much rationality and conscious awareness.

3) Communication is incidental and occasional. Communication from Thayer's viewpoint is a dynamic process that is fundamental to the living system--the individual or the organization.

Common in all of the definitions of communication are various types and levels of communication. Lee Thayer (43) has identified four levels of communication as interpersonal, intrapersonal, organizational, and technological. Other sources have included cultural, mass, and public levels of communication.

Communication, a process existing at various levels of interaction, can be viewed as serving specific, basic functions. Thayer lists two basic functions of communication (43).

The dominant function of communication for all living systems is adaptation. The fact that we are designed and programmed to be communicated to by our environment permits us to adapt to it and to maneuver our way through it enroute to our instinctive or purposeful ends. Our abilities to take into account certain features and events of our environment serve the purposes of establishing, maintaining, exploiting, or altering some relationship between us and our environment.

The other basic function of communication--which humans have developed to their extreme social advantage--is that of communication to some living aspect of the environment (such as a person) in such a way that we establish, maintain, exploit, or alter the relationship of that person to us.

The nature of communication is extremely broad and very difficult to define and describe. The following section views communication from a narrower perspective--in terms of its relationship to the organization.

Communication and Organization

When people organize themselves into a group, the effect is that the flow of information gets organized, not the people. Strategic relationships increase among the working parts of the organization. It is the communication that occurs and the patterns of intercommunication which ensue that define and determine the structure and the functioning of any organization (43).

Barnard (2) points out that in an exhaustive theory of organization, communication would occupy a central place because the structure, extent, and scope of organization are almost always determined by communication techniques. According to Likert, communication is essential to the functioning of an organization (26).

Simon (40) states, "Without communication there can be no organization" (p. 29). He defines communication itself as "Any process whereby decisional premises are transmitted from one member of an organization to another" (p. 29). Peter Drucker (16) sees communication in organizations, not as a means of organization, but as a mode of organization.

In 1937, Barnard (2) wrote: "An organization comes into being when 1) there are persons able to communicate with each other, 2) who are willing to contribute action 3) to accomplish a common purpose" (p. 126). The elements of an organization are therefore: 1) communication, 2) willingness to serve, and 3) common purpose.

Thayer (43) states that the way one is psychologically organized determines how he communicates with his world and how his world can communicate with him. But, at the same time, the communication system (organization) within which one maintains himself determines how he will be psychologically organized.

Redding (32) takes the position that a member of any organization is, in large measure, the kind of communicator that the organization compels him to be. In other words, a position in an organization determines many of the ways in which a person speaks, listens, writes, and reads. Redding and Thayer obviously feel that the organization significantly affects the communication behavior of individuals.

Redding suggests that no satisfactory terminology has yet emerged to provide a convenient label for this aspect of the human organization. However, such a terminology is offered by Thayer (43) when he considers that every organization's communication needs and functions are fulfilled through three basic communication systems:

1. The operational communication system, which conveys data about task related activities and operations.
2. The regulatory communication system, which conveys to the organization's members those orders, rules, and instructions which are intended to regulate their material and/or information-processing functions.
3. The maintenance and development communication system serves the purpose of providing feedback as to the condition of the people or the communication channels upon which the organization is dependent (p. 173).

Redding proposes another way to view this aspect of communication in the organization (32).

1. Personal communication which denotes the speaking, listening, writing, reading, and nonverbal communication behavior of individuals within the organizational setting.
2. Structural communication which denotes those forms of communication activity not primarily associated with an individual as sender or receiver, but representing messages required by the inherent structural demands of the organization (i.e. handbooks, bulletins, manuals, etc.) (p. 8).

Communication Networks

Perhaps the most obvious way in which the organization affects communication is that by definition the organization consists of both individuals and units of individuals all interrelated in some way. The interrelationship of these units and individuals creates networks or channels of communication. These channels can be upward, downward, horizontal, and diagonal. They also have been categorized as formal and informal. Formal channels are those used to describe the official lines of communication in the organization. Informal channels are those which are formed as a result of human interaction outside official channels.

March and Simon (30) have presented two hypotheses about the development of channels. First, the greater the communication efficiency of the channel, the greater the communication channel usage. The possession by two persons, or two organization units, of a common, efficient language facilitates communication. Thus, links between members of a common profession tend to be used in the communication system. Similarly, other determinants of language compatibility--ethnic background, education, age, experience--will affect what channels are used in the organization.

Second, channel usage tends to be self-reinforcing. When a channel is frequently used for one purpose, its use for other unrelated purposes is encouraged. In particular, formal hierarchical channels tend to become general purpose channels to be used whenever no special purpose channel or informal channel exists or is known to the communicator.

The same authors conclude that once a pattern of communication channels has become established, it will have an important influence on decision-making processes, and particularly upon non-programmed activity.

Organizational Factors that Influence Communication

A large number of factors can influence communication. This section will focus on the effects on communication of various organizational elements most frequently discussed in the literature. The elements discussed here are 1) job specialization, 2) leadership, and 3) hierarchy.

Keith Davis (11), discussing job specialization and departmentalization, points out that these processes are essential to the efficient operation of a business organization and that they have produced incalculable benefits in economics and technology. Davis also observes that the result has been an unbalance between the quality of technology and of human relations with more of the former tending to get less of the latter. It has been observed that specialization of jobs leads to separation of people: by groups, by space, by work assignment, and by status.

Job specialization gives rise to interdependency in the organization. March and Simon (30) point out that the capacity of an organization to maintain a complex, highly interdependent pattern of activity is limited in part by its capacity to handle the communication required for coordination. The greater the efficiency of communication within the organization, the greater the tolerance for interdependence.

The effects of the leader on communication and performance of work groups is easily recognized in reviewing the literature. The leader influences the communication system in two respects. 1) He influences the selection of information that group members put into the system. By imposing certain constraints on the system itself, he prevents or at least hinders certain types of information from going through. 2) He determines the network, including the direction of channels, that will exist (39).

A person's position in the organizational hierarchy may bear a close parallel to his status position. Yet some aspects of communication have been more closely identified with a person's position in the organizational hierarchy than with his status. In one study of an organization, it was found that people higher in a company tended to communicate more; that is, the vice-president was found to spend much more time in acts of communication than a foreman. The same study showed that people higher in an organizational hierarchy had more information than those lower down. This was true even when the information concerned events at a lower level (12).

There are other effects that accompany hierarchy, however. Managers evaluate contacts with their superiors more highly than with their subordinates. This rating is apparently due to the fact that managers have far fewer contacts with their superiors and therefore, it is an unusual event (25). Zander (9) points out further that the superior has reward power over the subordinate, making any interaction a more significant event for the latter. This situation serves as the basis for one of the problems hierarchy places on communication. Subordinates tend to overinterpret and place too much importance on what

the superior says. Conversely, superiors tend to underevaluate interactions with their subordinates and miss the importance of things until too late (22). Subordinates sense this low rating placed on their comments, especially when they initiate them, and learn to hold them back except when they will give pleasure and, thereby cut down communication (25).

The organizational factors affecting communication, the complexity of the networks, and the very nature of communication itself create several problems and barriers to the effectiveness and efficiency of the organization. Drucker (16) points out:

We are to be sure still far away from mastery of communications, even in organizations. What knowledge we have about communication is scattered and, as a rule, not accessible, let alone in applicable form. But, at least we increasingly know what does not work, and sometimes, why it does not work (p. 86).

Redfield (33) states:

Producing, distributing, and service organizations no matter what their endeavors--are made up of individuals and groups whose work is related to the work of other individuals, groups and organizations as a whole. The process of getting all the different work routines to move along together smoothly calls for the highest order of decision-making, programming, controlling and reappraising. All these activities depend heavily, sometimes crucially on communication (p. 19).

The awareness of effective communication in the organization and the lack of knowledge in applying it has posed problems for the organization. In the next section of this paper the area of training in communication will be reviewed.

Communication Training in Organizations

As mentioned in the previous section of this paper, little systematic attention was given to the problems of communication until

about the time of World War II. Prior to that time, training in communication was not considered an important aspect of industrial training. Not until after the war did this type of training receive any serious attention.

Today, communication is recognized as a vital area of concern for business and industry. The need for training in communication is more apparent than ever before. In many organizations, formal conventional communication is no longer sufficient. A wide range of techniques must be employed in order to build and maintain an effective organization. The businessman who does not recognize his need to develop a broad spectrum of communication skills is limiting his ability to deal with today's problems (3).

According to Ivens, effective communication can make an enormous contribution providing that we are clear about our methods and objectives. Above all, we must not just think in terms of problems, techniques, media, and information systems. We must consider the people in industry who are talking, writing, arguing, and negotiating--in other words, the communicator (24).

The need for communication training is further emphasized by the Cornell Conference on In-Plant Communication (10).

Budget minded executives--and no executive can afford to forget a budget for long--will, ultimately attempt to justify any such non-production program as industrial communication by an appeal to the profit-productivity touchstone. Employees cannot or will not produce efficiently unless they have a) sufficient know-how on the job, and b) a continuous will to work. To provide such production centered information and motivation in ways and words acceptable to employees is the job of communication (p. 1).

Mayer (45) suggests that every organization has a need for training in communication. He points out that every organization apparently has

internal communication problems and conflicts between individuals and groups. As a result, the effectiveness of the organization suffers, and unnecessary strain is placed on individuals. Managers and non-managers usually find these the most difficult, nebulous, and frustrating of all their problems. Most often they feel they don't know how to handle them in a satisfactory way.

Although communication problems are inevitable, much can be done to reduce and prevent them. The approaches to improvement involve learning new skills and developing more self-awareness. The learning of new skills is important for the ability to cope with problems in the organization. It is equally important for determining success on the job. Tickner (44) states:

Nowadays, most large organizations prefer to fill these higher positions from within their own ranks if possible. Therefore, training for skills passes gradually into training for development. The advancement of potential candidates for higher posts, from first-line supervisors through to managers and executives, is currently being given close attention by the more sophisticated organizations. The philosophy is that the most effective management is best achieved by selecting at an early stage employees with the most likely aptitudes for administration and fostering and developing these aptitudes as they advance (p. 92).

We can identify these development skills of management as being personal skills in the sense that they reside in the individual; they are problem-solving and decision-making. This observation leads to the viewpoint that we can isolate "communication" in a category of its own.

Communication, as the term is being used here, is the highest form of managerial skill. Communication extends far beyond the power to express oneself accurately and efficiently through the written and spoken word. In broad terms, it means creating the right climate or

environment for productive corporate effort. Its immediate aim is to produce a readiness to communicate out of which a more productive and satisfying group effort can grow (21).

No matter how varied the activities or how special some of the skills involved, the job of every executive or supervisor is communication. Essentially, he must get work done through other people, and to accomplish this he must communicate effectively with them (17).

In order to accomplish effective communication, the field of organizational communication has developed at least two schools of thought. There are those who believe that the approach to individual understanding is through a study of interpersonal relations, and there are those who consider that teaching mechanics of communication skills is all important (7). The former may present too difficult a concept to most managers while the latter approach can easily become a series of gimmicks.

Both schools seem to enjoy equal influence in the field of communication training. Due to the scope of information in each area and the focus of this study, the area of communication skills training will be reviewed.

Communication Skills Training

Training departments in industry have gradually included more and more training in communication since the 1950's. In some companies this training started indirectly by the inclusion of communication skills within management and supervisory training courses. These emphasize practice in speaking, interviewing, and conference leading. Today, these skills are taught in well-organized programs. Their

length and organization vary considerably, but the common purpose is to develop the ability of all participants to the maximum. Many companies offer and administer these courses through their in-house training departments, employing outside consultants to their staffs.

Several surveys reveal high agreement among industrial training and management executives on how to develop communication skills. Eighty-two to ninety-four percent of industrial, business, and government leaders in 206 organizations representing 3,000,000 employees indicated a need for training in effective speaking, conference leadership, and personal relations (44). The gap between expressed need and actual training is gradually being narrowed. A 1962 publication by the Manpower Administration, U. S. Department of Labor, reviewed the results of a survey of training programs. It was found that about 37,000 trainees were receiving some type of instruction in the language arts, principally in effective communication which includes letter and report writing. As might be expected, most of these workers were in white-collar occupations: sales, managerial, professional, office, and clerical personnel. People in these areas constituted about half of all the trainees receiving this type of instruction.

Communication skills are part of the total development objectives of numerous companies. These companies include the following: General Electric Company, Standard of New Jersey, Johnson and Johnson, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, General Motors Corporation, IBM Corporation, Detroit Edison Company, ALCOA, Owens-Corning Fiberglass Corporation, United States Steel Corporation, Tennessee Valley Authority, The Port of New York Authority, and such organizations as the American Institute of Banking, American Management Association,

and the National Association of Manufacturers. If training in human relations were included as communication training, the list would seem endless.

The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company's communication training is an example of what can be accomplished in a short, intensive program. Stressing effective speaking, leadership of meetings, interviewing, and writing, it covers basic principles and practice. Recognizing that this program is too short for training, the company offers longer courses in each of these subjects. The shorter course stimulates interest and further self-improvement. The Standard Oil Company of New Jersey brings executives to its New York headquarters for a full week of intensive training in speech and conference leadership skills. The Tennessee Valley Authority carries out extensive supervisory training programs largely by lecture and discussion as well as by case study group training in problems of human relations and communication.

To assist and improve line management, The Port of New York Authority training staff has developed a series of courses in the knowledge and skills involved in management and supervision. Among these courses are conference leadership, communication, human behavior, effective speaking, reading improvement, and business writing. The American Management Association's Executive program is one of the most comprehensive offered for industrial and business management in communication training.

The communication skill of conference leadership and participation receives even more attention than effective speaking skills. The E.I. DuPont de Nemours Company's course in discussion leading is a six-session program; Standard Oil Company of New Jersey has a

five-session program in addition to its forty-hour program; and many other companies and organizations, including government agencies, offer training in leadership skills. Among the latter, the Department of the Air Force has a program of training in leadership and provides a manual for the participant. Other agencies conducting such training are the Departments of the Army and the Navy, the Internal Revenue Service, the Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Agriculture (45).

Similar to training in leadership skills, Blake and Mouton's seminars on managerial style are extensively used by several organizations. The seminars are based on the managerial grid which designates various styles of leadership (5).

Interviewing skills and interpersonal relations are part of the training programs of many companies. Such training, from the standpoint of improving total company communication, is aimed at the supervisor's skill in working with subordinates, the salesman's skill in contacting clients, the secretary's skill in greeting callers, and all other interpersonal relationships. Programs such as General Motor's "Man to Man on the Job" are designed and offered to increase the supervisor's understanding of the worker as an individual and the development of his ability to conduct better interviews.

Industry recognizes the need for improved skills in writing. The types of written communication receiving most attention are letters and reports. The usual titles for these training courses, and their accompanying manuals, are "Letter Writing," "Report Writing," and "Effective Writing." The Department of Health, Education and Welfare has published a manual, "Getting Your Ideas Across Through Writing." Other agencies conducting similar programs include the Internal Revenue

Service, The Department of State, The Commerce Department, and The Atomic Energy Commission. In the private sector, such courses are offered by IBM, ALCOA, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, General Electric Company, and United States Steel.

In a survey of 13,586 of its college graduate employees, the General Electric Company found that the great majority of the non-engineers chose written and spoken communication as the college training that had contributed most to their business success. As was to be expected, mathematics was the first choice of the engineers for obvious professional reasons; however, they agreed with their non-engineer colleagues in their next choice (44).

It is apparent that the need for communication training and recognition of its importance exists in business and industry. The complexity of business and industry today demands sophisticated and highly effective training in communication skills.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the procedures used in this study including the development of the research instrument. A discussion of the research design, the questionnaire, the sample, and a summary of the procedures are provided.

Research Design

The research design used for this study is a cross-sectional survey. In this type of survey, data are collected at one point in time from a sample selected to describe some larger population at that time (1). The descriptive nature of this inquiry is to estimate as precisely and comprehensively as possible the role of written and oral communication skills in training and development. The survey instrument used is a mail questionnaire given to a randomly selected sample of training directors in business and industry.

Compared to other survey methods, such as the interview, the use of this type of survey instrument allows for a wider coverage at minimum expense in money and time. It affords a wider geographical contact and reaches people who are difficult to locate and interview. The wider coverage may yield greater validity through larger and more representative samples. The questionnaire permits more considered answers and is more adequate in situations in which the respondent

has to check his information. It provides for greater uniformity in the manner in which questions are posed. It gives respondents a sense of privacy. Finally, it lessens the interviewer effect (31).

Babbie (1) considers the questionnaire survey to be important and useful because of the large sample it can produce. The fact that many questions may be asked on a given topic affords the researcher considerable flexibility in his analyses. He also feels that standardized questionnaires have an important strength in regard to measurement generally. The researcher is bound to uniformity by having to ask exactly the same questions of all his subjects and having to input the same intent to all respondents giving a particular response.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of eight closed response and three open-ended response items (see Appendix A). Information is sought concerning the following areas:

1. Attitude concerning the adequacy of college graduates entering business
2. Attitude concerning the adequacy of communication skills of college graduates
3. Causes of communication breakdowns in the organization
4. Type of communication training programs used in organizations
5. Sources of training programs
6. Importance of communication at various organizational levels
7. Determination of training needs

8. Measurement of communication effectiveness
9. Communication objectives used in training programs
10. Goals of communication training

Development of the questionnaire began with a series of structured interviews with ten training directors. All participants were actively involved in training and development in their organizations either in the capacity of Training Director or Employee Development Coordinator. It was felt that the training directors who participated in the development of the questionnaire were representative of the prospective sample. The first five interviewees were asked to react to an initial set of questions to be included in the mail questionnaire. They were asked to review the list of questions and rank them in order of importance. In addition, each director was asked to suggest additional areas of inquiry.

The information obtained from these interviews was used to draft a questionnaire which was then pretested on a second group of five training directors. This group was asked to complete the questionnaire and react to the content, structure, and overall appearance of the instrument. The final draft of the questionnaire was revised accordingly and mailed.

The Sample

The type of sampling used was nonprobability. Despite the accepted superiority of probability sampling methods in survey research, nonprobability methods are sometimes used--usually for situations in which probability sampling would be prohibitively expensive and/or when precise representativeness is not necessary (1).

It was appropriate for this study to select a sample on the basis of the population, the elements, and the nature of the research aims. Therefore, the method of the sample was purposive.

The survey population used in this study was Training Directors holding membership in the American Society for Training and Development. The sampling frame was the society's official 1975 membership directory: Who's Who in Training and Development. This population and sampling frame were chosen because this mailing list was the most comprehensive list of training directors in business and industry. The list included more than 10,000 names from which 500 training directors were randomly selected.

The selection procedure consisted of assigning numbers to pages and columns of names on each page (each page has a total of five columns). A table of random numbers was used to select the page, the column, and the name in the column. This process was repeated 500 times.

Two hundred and twenty-three subjects (46%) returned the mail questionnaire. Ten questionnaires were returned as undeliverable. These subjects represented 38 states and sixteen different types of organizations. The breakdown of these organizations is as follows:

<u>Company Type</u>	<u>No. Returned</u>
1. Manufacturing	68
2. Sales	24
3. Banking	23
4. Communications/Utilities	18
5. Health Care	13
6. Insurance	18
7. Pharmaceutical/Chemical	12
8. Government	8
9. Service/Consulting	8
10. Engineering	7
11. Petroleum	5
12. Agri-Business	4
13. Transportation	2
14. Electronics	1
15. Mining	1
16. Law Enforcement	<u>1</u>
	213*

*Ten respondents did not indicate company type.

Limitations

Throughout the construction of the mail questionnaire, careful consideration was given to the major weakness of this type of survey: the problem of non-return. Wallace (31) concluded that the questionnaire must be short to have a greater probability of return. Norton (31) found 78.5% returned questionnaires with less than five questions. Stanton (31) reported 28.3% answered a double postcard containing a single question which could be answered by making a single check.

Sletto (31) found an altruistic appeal increased returns to 67% in a college trained population. It was found that a questionnaire

containing a 25 cent coin prompted a return of 52%; questionnaires without the coin produced a 19% return. The percentage of returns is about double for a regular stamped envelope over the business reply envelope.

In addition to these structural weaknesses there was concern for the notion that those who answer the questionnaire may differ from non-respondents, thereby biasing the sample. Also, validity depends on the ability and willingness of the respondent to provide information. Added concern for the possibility of misinterpretation of the question and lack of follow-through on misunderstood questions and evasive answers was given in the evaluation of the questionnaire before it was mailed.

Summary of Procedures

The data collected from this survey were used as part of a feasibility study for a communication career program at College IV of Grand Valley State Colleges, Allendale, Michigan. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) and cover letter (see Appendix B) were first mailed on November 20, 1975. One hundred and fifty-nine subjects or 33% of the sample responded to this mailing.

A follow-up mailing (see Appendix C) was sent two weeks later on December 11, 1975. An additional 64 subjects or 15% of the sample responded. This brought the total response to 223 or 46% of the total sample.

The questionnaire consisted of eleven questions concerning the role of communication skills in training and development. (Refer to the discussion of the questionnaire on page 31.)

The cover letter included with the questionnaire presented three areas: 1) purpose of study, 2) utility of findings to the respondents, and 3) time required to fill out questionnaire (see Appendix B).

Analysis of Data

The analysis of data for this study is univariate in nature. The purpose of this analysis is to describe the survey sample and, by extension, the population from which the sample was selected (1). All data is presented in tabular form with a discussion of the conclusions following each tabular presentation.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present a discussion of the results of the analysis. Included in this chapter are tabular presentations for each item on the questionnaire. Following each table is a discussion of the results presented. Conclusions and summary are found at the end of this chapter.

The tabular presentations were generated from each question on the survey instrument. The statements on the questionnaire serve as table headings.

For the descriptive purpose of this study, the tables represent the total number of responses for each question. In addition, each table illustrates the percentage of responses in each category.

Tables I-VIII represent closed response questions with an "other" category. Tables IX-XI represent open response questions. For descriptive purposes the responses for these questions were condensed into general categories. The percentages for the categories are listed in the tables.

Tabular Presentation and Discussion

TABLE I
 MOST COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE ADEQUATELY
 PREPARING THEIR GRADUATES FOR A
 CAREER IN BUSINESS

Agree	5	4	3	2	1	Disagree
Number	2	50	89	53	13	
Percent	1%	24%	43%	26%	6%	

In the first analysis it would appear that training directors are fairly non-committal in their opinion of college preparation for business careers. The results reflect a stronger tendency to disagree with the statement. Table I shows that only 25% of the respondents are in agreement with this statement. One training director remarked on the questionnaire that industry has to be more accountable for its results, therefore it does a better job today than academia. This opinion could provide some explanation for the small percentage of training directors who feel that college graduates are prepared for business. While Table I shows a somewhat non-committal attitude toward college preparation in business, Table II seems to project stronger opinions concerning college preparation in the area of communication.

In terms of written communication, only 18% of the respondents agree that college graduates have adequate skills; 50% disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.

TABLE II
COLLEGE GRADUATES ENTERING YOUR ORGANIZATION
HAVE ADEQUATE SKILLS IN WRITTEN
AND ORAL COMMUNICATION

Part A						
Written communication (letter writing, grammar, reading)						
Agree	5	4	3	2	1	Disagree
Number	3	37	69	88	21	
Percent	1%	17%	32%	40%	10%	
Part B						
Oral communication (speaking, listening, etc.)						
Agree	5	4	3	2	1	Disagree
Number	5	53	71	75	14	
Percent	2%	24%	33%	35%	6%	

Attitudes toward oral communication preparation tend to be neutral. Only 26% of the training directors surveyed agree that there is

adequate preparation in oral communication skills by colleges and universities.

Reviewing the two preceding tables, it would seem that a neutral attitude exists concerning preparation in oral and written communication skills. As one training director, who has worked in both the educational and industrial setting, noted on the questionnaire, these communication skills are deteriorating in general.

A Manager of Personnel Development responded to statement II by saying, "The oral communication of graduates does not seem to be as effective as their written and indeed, I feel could receive more attention in the colleges." His reaction is in opposition to the results of the survey when one compares written and oral communication. He goes on to say that graduate students are much stronger in these areas than undergraduates, and there is no reason why such training could not be implemented at the undergraduate level when such a need is evident.

The remainder of the questionnaire sought to gather information about the methods and programs used in training and development.

The third item of the questionnaire was to determine the major causes of communication breakdowns in the organization. This question indicated the effects of inadequate communication skills and at what levels this lack of skills is most evident. The question listed seven common causes of communication breakdowns in business and organizational settings. These seven were selected from a list of ten causes initially used in a study by the Communication Research Center, Purdue University (32). The Purdue study sought to determine how vital effective communication is in the operation of a modern business.

Table III shows the number and percentage of responses in each of the

seven causes. The table also shows additional causes listed in response to the "others" category.

TABLE III
WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CAUSES OF
COMMUNICATIONS BREAKDOWNS
IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Response	No.	Pct.
Lack of communicative ability in management personnel	106	57%
Lack of communicative ability in first-line supervisors	97	44%
Management withholding information from subordinates	94	43%
Little opportunity for upward communication	82	37%
Lack of communicative ability in subordinates	80	36%
Inadequate training program in communication	50	28%
Inadequate use of media	56	25%
<u>Others</u>		
Organizational climate	17	8%
Poor organization	6	3%
Lack of language skills	5	2%
Time	4	2%
Leadership	3	1%
Lack of cooperation	2	1%
Size	2	1%
Faulty inference	1	1%

Table III illustrates that the lack of communicative ability at the management level accounts for the majority of communication breakdowns. The American Management Association contends that no matter how varied the activities or how special some of the skills involved: in the final analysis the job of every executive or supervisor is communication. Essentially, he must get the work done through others. To accomplish this he must communicate effectively with them. Based on this notion, it would seem that the results of this question support the interpretation of Tables I through III concerning attitudes about educational preparation for business. The results, while differing from the Purdue study in some areas, are supported by it in terms of the lack of communicative ability at the managerial level.

The results of the first four tables show that training directors consider oral and written communication a major communication breakdown in the organization. These tables give an indication of the attitudes toward academic training and the major causes of communication breakdowns. Item four on the questionnaire asks about the types of training programs used by these training directors. The table represents six responses included on the questionnaire. Also listed are the programs generated from the "others" category included on the questionnaire.

The results of this item are significant. The closed choices show the highest percentage of programs concentrating on interviewing and listening skills. These percentages do not indicate at what employment level these programs are geared. However, in the "other" category virtually all the programs listed are focused on oral and interpersonal skills for management. This leads to the interpretation that a large

number of training programs in communication is centered on management. Comparing Table III and Table IV, it is apparent that the training programs are designed to cope with the major causes of communication breakdowns as considered by training directors.

TABLE IV

PLEASE INDICATE THE TRAINING PROGRAMS YOU
USE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF ORAL AND
WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Response	No.	Pct.
Interviewing skills	131	59%
Listening activities	118	53%
Letter and memo writing workshops	99	44%
Team building sessions	96	43%
Speed reading courses	71	32%
No specific program	28	13%
<u>Others</u>		
Oral communication workshops for management	49	22%
Management development	22	10%
Interpersonal communication courses for management	18	8%
Management by objectives	7	3%
Transactional analysis	5	2%
Group dynamics	5	2%

Item five of the questionnaire sought to gather information on the sources of training programs listed in item four of the questionnaire. The results from this item are found in Table V. The table illustrates the responses to the four closed areas and the "other" category.

TABLE V
WHAT IS YOUR SOURCE FOR THESE COMMUNICATION
TRAINING PROGRAMS?

Response	No.	Pct.
In-house personnel	190	85%
Media (films, slide programs, etc.)	123	55%
Consultants	89	40%
Colleges and universities	52	23%
<u>Others</u>		
None	20	9%
Commercial courses	6	3%

This table shows that the majority of training programs are conducted by in-house personnel. A significant number of programs use media presentations either as support to their in-house personnel or as independent programs. One explanation of these data is that the known quantity factor appears to be more desirable than risking the

cost of outside consultation, either private or educational. This item does not reveal where and how much training these in-house people receive to adequately train in communication. This aspect needs further study.

The next table shows the results of item six which seeks to determine the level at which communication training is most important. Table VI illustrates the number and percentage of responses to each category of the item. Each respondent had the option to check one or more categories. The "All Levels" category is the result of respondents checking all three levels.

TABLE VI
AT WHAT LEVEL IS COMMUNICATION
TRAINING MOST IMPORTANT?

Response	No.	Pct.
Middle Management	184	85%
Top Management	137	63%
Subordinate	120	55%
All Levels	83	38%

Management seems to be the level at which communication training is deemed most important. Earlier, it was mentioned that communication was considered as possibly the highest form of managerial skill. The results found in Table VI seem to support this notion. The results

demonstrate that training directors recognize the importance that communication plays at the managerial level. More specifically, the results indicate that mid-management is the level at which communication training is most important.

Of special significance is the fact that only 38% of the training directors feel communication is important at all levels. This suggests a reason for the lack of effective up and down communication in some organizations.

One area of interest in focusing on the role of communication skills in training and development was assessment of training needs in the organization. The training directors were asked to indicate how they determined their training needs. The results are shown in Table VII. The table shows the number and percentages of the responses to the four methods of needs determination included on the questionnaire. In addition, the results from the "others" category are listed.

A pattern occurs in analyzing these results. It would seem that most needs assessment in training departments is conducted through the use of interviews. The high percentage in the "suggestions" category indicates that most needs assessment is done on an informal basis. Several training directors (24%) respond that they use performance analysis as a means of needs assessment. This category includes such things as productivity, profit, morale, turnover, etc.

TABLE VII
HOW DO YOU DETERMINE THE TRAINING NEEDS
IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Response	No.	Pct.
Interviewing	159	71%
Suggestions	120	59%
Surveys	115	52%
Questionnaires	88	39%
<u>Others</u>		
Performance Analysis	46	21%
Observations	16	7%

In addition to gathering information concerning needs assessment, data were collected on how companies measure communication effectiveness. Table VIII shows the number and percentage of responses to the four methods of measurement listed on the questionnaire. Also included in the table are the results obtained from the "others" category.

The results show a wide range of techniques used in measuring communication effectiveness. In addition to the given choices, several other methods are recorded. This wide distribution and the percentage of those indicating they did not measure effectiveness, leads one to conclude that measurement of communication effectiveness is not done. Or, if it is done, it is on an informal basis by observation of such aspects as feedback, climate, productivity, and profit.

TABLE VIII
HOW DO YOU MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
COMMUNICATION IN YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Response	No.	Pct.
Interviews	121	57%
Surveys	76	36%
Attitude studies	66	31%
Consultants	29	14%
<u>Others</u>		
We Don't	31	15%
Performance analysis	21	10%
Feedback	14	6%
Productivity	13	2%
Audits	7	2%

The final three items on the questionnaire are open response questions. For each of these final three items, 213 different responses were recorded. In order to manage and analyze the varied responses, they were grouped in terms of their similarity of wording and content.

In item nine, information was gathered on the most significant thing being done in the organization to improve communication. For this item, five general categories emerged. They are found in Table IX.

TABLE IX

WHAT IS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THING
BEING DONE IN YOUR ORGANIZATION
TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION?

Response	No.	Pct.
Communication Training	59	29%
Interviewing skills		
Listening skills		
Communication awareness		
Communication barriers		
Interpersonal skills		
Writing (report and technical)		
Public speaking		
Objectives and policies setting		
Improving channels		
Management Training in Communication	58	29%
Organizational Development	39	19%
Informal discussions		
Problem-solving sessions		
Feedback sessions		
Team-building		
Measuring Communication Effectiveness	9	4%
Surveys		
Audits		
Performance standards		
Evaluation		
Use of Media	13	6%
For personnel development		
As an information system		
To improve channels		
Publications		
Nothing	6	3%

Table IX indicates that management training in communication is considered significant by a large percentage of training directors. A number of these programs involve direct communication training for managers, while others list Management by Objectives and similar programs as the most significant thing being done to improve communication.

Based on the results shown in Table IX, direct training is the most significant thing being done to improve communication. A total of 136 (67%) companies provide communication training at all levels or at the management level.

Item ten seeks information about the objectives of the communication training programs. The results are shown in Table X. The results of this item are varied. A large number of the objectives are focused on providing an effective communication climate. Specifically, these objectives deal with improving channel effectiveness, team-building, and organizational development.

A significantly high percentage of the objectives in communication training programs center on effective management skills. This emphasis on management skills supports the previous findings concerning the levels at which communication training is most important (refer to Table VI). Company training objectives are directed toward improving written and oral communication skills. The results from this question seem to indicate that the primary purpose of communication training is to establish an effective working environment by concentrating on management communication skills. These skills seem to be primarily technical skills such as writing, speaking, and listening with some focus on interpersonal communication.

TABLE X
LIST YOUR OBJECTIVES IN YOUR COMMUNICATION
TRAINING PROGRAM

Response	No.	Pct.
To provide an effective communication climate	65	30%
To provide effective management skills	60	28%
To improve written and oral communication	49	23%
To improve interpersonal understanding	20	9%
To measure the effectiveness of communication	9	4%
To provide an effective media system	7	3%
No objectives	6	3%

Closely related to item ten, item eleven asks for specific information concerning the primary goal of communication training in the organization. The results are found in Table XI.

The data collected from this item are significant, especially when one compares it with the preceding item. Both items suggest a strong desire on the part of training directors to provide effective communication skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). It is apparent that training directors are concerned with the technical skills. Their immediate aim is to provide communication tools rather than interpersonal skills programs. Although interpersonal skills do not receive the same emphasis as technical skills, they are still considered important. Training directors simply appear to be more concerned with effective, efficient technical skills.

TABLE XI
WHAT SHOULD BE THE PRIMARY GOAL OF
COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING?

Response	No.	Pct.
Effective communication skills	95	38%
Interpersonal skills	68	27%
Effective channels	31	12%
Results and job performance	29	12%
Nothing	13	5%
Setting measurable objectives	9	4%
Better use of media	4	2%

Summary of Results

In the last decade, the field of speech communication moved from public address and forensics to interdisciplinary work in the behavioral sciences. This new focus serves a definite need for organizations. Management is becoming more aware of the impact inefficient communication has on organizational structure. This new awareness has led management to place responsibility to account for communication problems on training and development departments within the organization.

Unfortunately, this rapid growth of the field has caused our technology to outrun our theory and research. The purpose of this study was to advance the theory and research that is needed. It has provided information that can be valuable in the development of

communication programs in business and industry and educational institutions.

The study was a descriptive survey in the form of a questionnaire mailed to 500 training and development directors in business and industry. Two hundred and twenty-three subjects responded to the survey.

The results are as follows:

1. Only 25% of the respondents are in agreement with the statement that college graduates are adequately prepared for a career in business. The results show a noncommittal attitude toward this statement by a majority of the respondents.
2. Only 18% of the respondents agree that college graduates have adequate skills in written communication. Fifty percent disagree or strongly disagree with the statement.
3. Attitudes toward oral communication preparation tend to be neutral. Twenty-six percent of the respondents surveyed agree that there is adequate preparation in these skills by colleges and universities.
4. The survey shows that the major cause of communication breakdowns in the organization is a lack of communication ability at all levels.
5. Although training directors view oral skills as more adequate than written skills at the entry-level, most of their training programs focus on developing oral skills such as interviewing and listening.

6. A large majority of the training programs are conducted by in-house personnel, with a majority of firms using media either independently or as aids in their training programs.
7. Management, especially middle-management, is considered the level at which communication training is most important.
8. If determination of needs is done, it is done on an informal basis.
9. Measuring the effectiveness of communication is not a formal procedure in most organizations.
10. Training directors obviously feel that direct communication skills training and communication training for management are the most significant things being done in the organization.
11. The objectives of most organizations seem to be that of providing effective management skills in communication. An overall objective is to improve the communication climate of the organization.
12. The objectives and goals suggest a strong desire on the part of training directors to provide effective communication skills training (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

Conclusions

Further consideration of the results has led to several conclusions concerning the role of oral and written communication skills in training and development.

While there seems to be a non-committal attitude towards overall college preparation for business, there appears to be a slight tendency to disagree. Table I shows that 43% are neutral and 32% disagree while only 25% of the respondents agree with this statement. This could be interpreted as a negative attitude toward college preparation for business.

More specifically, attitudes toward preparation in written and oral skills can be interpreted as negative. Fifty percent of the training directors disagreed with the statement that college graduates have adequate written skills, while only 18% agreed. Attitudes toward oral preparation, though more neutral than attitudes towards written preparation, still tend to be negative.

All of these results could be interpreted as an indication that training directors feel colleges and universities are inadequately preparing their graduates in oral and written communication skills.

To overcome the lack of educational resources, business and industry have developed their own training programs using training personnel within their own organizations. What the survey does not reveal is the level of qualifications and training these in-house training personnel have in developing communication skills.

According to Table II, Part A, training directors feel that written skills are less adequate at the entry-level than oral skills. Yet, the majority of training programs are focused on oral communication skills.

Although little formal needs assessing is done by the organization, the objectives of most organizations seem to be to provide adequate management skills in communication and to improve the total

communication climate, thereby producing effective leadership and increasing results and productivity.

A final conclusion to be made is that it is apparent that training directors are still primarily concerned with the technical skills of communication (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), rather than the interpersonal focus. The study does not describe the actual content of training programs. Whether these programs are mainly focused toward interpersonal training rather than technical skills training needs further study.

In any case, the study has presented a clear picture of the role communication skills plays in training and development. Better understanding about attitudes and methods employed by businesses and industry should enable education to adopt programs designed to produce job-ready graduates.

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APPENDIX A

ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____ Company Type: _____
(Engineering, etc.)

Circle the most appropriate response.

1. Most colleges and universities are adequately preparing their graduates for a career in business.

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

2. College graduates entering your organization have adequate skills in:

a) Written Communication (letter writing, grammar, reading, etc.)

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

b) Oral Communication (speaking, listening, etc.)

Agree 5 4 3 2 1 Disagree

Place an (X) before your response.

3. What are the major causes of communication breakdowns in your organization?

- () Inadequate use of communication media
- () Lack of communicative ability in management personnel
- () Lack of communicative ability in subordinates
- () Inadequate training program in communication
- () Management withholding information from subordinates
- () Little opportunity for upward communication

- ☐ Lack of communicative ability in first-line supervisors
 - ☐ Others (please specify)
4. Please indicate the training programs you use for the improvement of oral and written communication.
- ☐ Letter and memo writing workshops
 - ☐ Interviewing skills program
 - ☐ Listening activities
 - ☐ Speed reading courses
 - ☐ Team building sessions
 - ☐ Others (please specify)
 - ☐ We do not have specific training programs for any of these.
5. What is your source for these communication training programs?
- ☐ In-house personnel
 - ☐ Consultants
 - ☐ Colleges and universities
 - ☐ Media (films, slide programs, etc.)
 - ☐ Others (please specify)
6. At what levels is communication training most important?
- ☐ Top management
 - ☐ Middle management
 - ☐ Subordinate
 - ☐ Others (please specify)
7. How do you determine the training needs in your organization?
- ☐ Questionnaire
 - ☐ Surveys
 - ☐ Interviews
 - ☐ Consultant recommendations
 - ☐ Suggestions
 - ☐ Others (please specify)

8. How do you measure the effectiveness of communication in your organization?
 - () Attitude studies
 - () Surveys
 - () Interviews
 - () Consultants
 - () Others (please specify)
9. What is the most significant thing being done in your organization to improve communication?
10. List your objectives in your communication training program.
11. What should be the primary goal of communication skills training?

APPENDIX B

INITIAL COVER LETTER

November 4, 1975

Dear

Are today's college graduates adequately prepared for a career in business? In your opinion, is your personnel effective in both written and oral communication?

As part of my responsibilities in developing a program for College IV of the Grand Valley State Colleges, I am conducting a study of business needs in terms of communication-skills training. The information you can provide will be used to develop further a degree in communication training. A successful conclusion to the project will in turn provide you and other trainers with specific information about improving communication skills.*

Your response to the one page questionnaire will aid in adapting our program to specific business needs. Trial runs on the questionnaire took ten to fifteen minutes. Won't you please give us that much of your time? We're eager to have your answers included in the data that we hope to assemble in time to offer the degree for our spring term.

Sincerely yours,

Paul R. White

*Please send me the results from your study ().

Enclosure

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP COVER LETTER

December 10, 1975

Dear Trainer:

This is a follow-up to the letter dated November 4, 1975, regarding business needs in terms of communications-skills training.

As you will recall, the information you can provide will be used to develop further a program to prepare a college graduate with effective communication skills.

The response we have received to date has been good and we will be able to use the data to adapt our program to business needs. I am sure it will also provide you with specific information on improving communication skills.*

Naturally, the more information we receive, the more significant our results will be. For this reason, we would appreciate your reactions.

Because it will be beneficial to you and to us, I hope you will take the time to respond to the questionnaire.

Sincerely yours,

Paul R. White

*Please send me the results from your study ().

Enclosure

VITA

Paul Richard White

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Thesis: THE ROLE OF ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN
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