

An Empirical Study of Information Acquisition Process and Employee Communication: Implication the E-mail Marketing Conceptual

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Abstract

This article examines employee communication concerning the use of e-mail. An empirical study used to create a survey of employee perceptions of e-mail use. The survey findings showed that although most employees found e-mail to be highly useful from information perception. The findings also suggested that employees feedback and acceptance varied by information acquisition process. Information perception was related to data and interest in data, understanding of data and information and misunderstanding of information was related to e-mail usage. The characteristics of data and information were related to specific make-up of information, credibility of the information, interest in the information, information highlights.

Keyword: e-mail Marketing, Information Acquisition Process, Information Perception, Employee Communication.

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Introduction

Most experts on organizations, management and leadership, assert that effective communications was the foundation for effectiveness in any type of organization. Effective organizational leaders understand the crucial role stories play in an increasingly complex business world. Today's technology, such as e-mail, allowed employees to communicate to more people in their organizations faster and with greater impact than ever before. Also, by listening to people, leaders can discover what was

important to them. Internal communication was considered a vital tool for binding an organization, enhancing employee morale, promoting transparency and reducing attrition. Ironically, while everybody understands and talks about the significance of internal communication, very few are able to manage it efficiently. Both the long-term and short-term fallout of ineffective internal communication can be damaging for an organization. It can start from the spread of rumors to disillusionment among employees to a gradual destruction of the company's brand image. This study objective: (1) to investigate the relationship between information perception and employee communication by e-mail usage. And (2) to investigate the sources of information and employee communication by e-mail usage.

Conceptual Framework

This study proposed model of E-Mail marketing is shown in Figure 1. The internal marketing concept treats all employees as internal customers. Management focused to make clarity in internal communication. The information perception and source of information as independent variables, meanwhile employee communication by e-mail usage which showed their feedback by e-mail.

Internal Marketing and E-mail in Organization

Internal marketing is the philosophy of treating employees as customers - indeed, "wooing" employees - and is the strategy of shaping job products to fit human needs (Cahill, 1996, p. 3). Since its adoption as a business tool in the 1980s e-mail has been extensively studied. However, to date commentators and researchers on e-mail in organizations have confined their studies to two main areas: (1) E-mail linguistics - "the study of languages", and (2) E-mail field studies which probe either how e-mail is used in organizations, as part of a wider study on the impact of new media (intranets, the internet and e-mail), or its impact (again as part of a wider, new media context) on internal marketing. Hallowell (1999) points out that the increasing use of e-mail and voicemail inside companies can alienate employees - from each other and from the organization.

Information Perception

Perception is the process of making sense out of an experience - the imputing of meaning to experience (Burgoon 1994). Perception is how we see things as well as how we hear, touch, taste, and smell them; although the most commonly used senses were sight, sound and touch (Wakefield 1976). There were five determining factors of how one selectively perceives

Acuity of Sensory Equipment. As individuals, most of us were not equipped with perfect sensory organs. Sometimes people can't hear something like a stool running unless all other sounds were completely silent. Even then one may choose to ignore it.

Physical point of view. The physical proximity to an object, person, or event influences our selection. It's

obviously difficult to determine if someone is using your weedwacker unless people can distinguish theirs from other just mythe mere sound of it.

Psycho-Physical Condition. An existing mood or feeling dictates to some degree what we perceive. Coming home from a long day's work may leave people exhausted enough to refrain from noticing every stimulus that surrounds them.

Past Experiences. As indicated earlier, the past experiences play a vital role in perception. People respond to given situations because of their former experiences and, thus, pick out what will be perceived. Oh the countless times people have enjoyed episodes of the outrageous, unpredictable humor of Homer, Bart, Marge, Lisa and Maggie.

Present Needs and Purposes. The demands of the present situation dictate what will be perceived. People perceive whatever will satisfy current requirements. The only thing people need after a hard day is to relax and laugh a little.

Selective perception doesn't happen all at once but occurs in five different stages- exposure, attention, comprehension, distortion and retention.

Selective exposure: From the variety of communication experiences available to them, people choose to expose themselves to communication that reaffirms preexisting ideas and attitudes, thereby bolstering their image of themselves and what they "know". Such behavior is founded on a basic aspect of human nature: The rationale behind almost all human activity is the strong need to protect, maintain, and enhance one's self-concept or self-image (Burgoon 1994).

Selective Attention: Attention is the taking possession by the mind, in clear and vivid form, of one out of what seem several simultaneously

possible objects or trains of thought. Focalizations, concentration, of consciousness were of its essence. It implies withdrawal from some things in order to deal effectively with others. This stage results in greater awareness of supportive information and avoidance of contradictory information (Assael 1981).

Selective comprehension: This stage involves interpreting discrepant information so that it is consistent with beliefs and attitudes (Assael 1981).

Selective Distortion is a term that refers to the tendency of people to interpret information in a way that will support what they already believe. Selective distortion shows how people change messages to match their self-concept or twist them to match their perception of reality. This concept, along with selective attention and selective retention, makes it hard for marketers to get their message across and create good product perception.

Selective retention: The key question is what information is retained in memory to influence future behavior (Assael 1981). The principle of selective retention states that people remember more accurately messages that were favorable to their self-image than messages that were unfavorable. In short, people remember the good things and forget the bad. Selective retention thus reinforces one's self-image.

Information Acquisition

To acquire information and learn about the new setting, the new employee relies on sources within the organizational context. A multitude of interpersonal and noninterpersonal sources can be useful during the learning process (Kozlowski & Ostroff, 1987; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Reichers, 1987). Among the interpersonal sources of information, supervisors, coworkers, and mentors have been

shown to play an important role in the learning process. Supervisors were important for the new employees' eventual success or failure mitigate the negative effects of unmet expectations and were critical for developing the shared interpretive system indicative of assimilation. Coworker relationships have also been shown to play a key role in socialization. Coworkers may help new employees integrate the various pieces of information in the setting and may communicate subtle values, norms or expectations that may not be well understood by supervisors or mentors. Mentors were believed to facilitate adjustment by providing support, advice and "inside" information, and by coaching and protecting employees.

Although a variety of sources can provide information, there were many different features to learn about from these sources. Theoretical explications of the content of learning during socialization indicate that the organizational context domains relevant to socialization include task demands, role attributes, work group norms, and organizational climate and culture. The group domain is concerned with coworker interaction, group norms and values, and the work group's normative structure. The organizational domain focuses on the politics, power, and value premises of the organizational stem, its mission, leadership style, special languages, and so forth.

The source of information acquisition process is the communicator or endorser – the person on business whose message is directed at the target audience. Three types of sources exist- (1) *Credibility* is the extent to which the perceive the source to be truth – full or believable. Highly credible sources tend to create an immediate change in attitude. Highly credible groups (such as the

American Medical Association) are even more effective source than highly credible individuals. Credibility depends on who related factors. The first is the expertise attributed to the source. Characteristics such as intelligence, knowledge, maturity, and professional or social status all lend an air of expertise to an individual or groups. The second factor determining credibility is the objectivity attributed to the source. (2) *Attractiveness*. The greater the perceived attractiveness of the source, the more persuasive the message (Burnett and Moriarty 1998). Source attractiveness is the extent to which the receiver identifies with the source. It results from similarity, familiarity, or likeability. Research suggests that the more receivers felt that a source is similar to themselves, or how they would like to think of themselves, the more likely they are to be persuaded. This similarity can be exhibited through ideologies, attitudes, and behaviors. The second source of attractiveness, familiarity, is normally created through past association. and (3) *Power* can make a source effective. Power depends on the receiver's perception that a source has the ability to administer rewards or punishments. It has three components: perceived control, perceived concern, and perceived scrutiny

Employee Communication by E-Mail.

Trevino suggest that intraorganizational communication can be ordered on a continuum from leanest to richest as follows: (1) numeric documents, (2) impersonal written documents, (3) personal letters or memos, (4) telephone, and (5) face-to-face meetings. Lean communication media, including e-mail, memos, and letters, might be appropriate for routine, analyzable tasks such as communicating rules, standard

operating procedures, plans, and schedules. Daft and Lengel (1984) regarded e-mail as a pure-text medium unable to subsume the requisite socioemotional quality necessary to reduce equivocality. However, Ronald Rice and Gail Love (1987) found evidence to suggest that active electronic conferencing users were able to add a socioemotional quality to their messages, thus making electronic text a richer medium than it was previously thought to be. Janet Fulk (1993) also found empirical support for a socioemotional component in that group members in one organization acquired shared meanings and behavior patterns through intraorganizational e-mail.

For example, recent research suggests that e-mail is preferred over face-to-face meetings for activities such as delivering documents or circulating memos, and e-mail is preferred over telephone communication for activities such as requesting information, answering questions, assigning tasks, maintaining an office schedule, coordinating activities, and drafting documents (Sullivan 1995). The academic literature is converging on the belief that e-mail is a more useful and versatile medium than are other forms of intraorganizational communication such as face-to-face meetings and telephone conversations (Adams, Todd, and Zack 1994; Markus 1994).

Employee feedback delivery and acceptance. Performance appraisals and feedback are widely considered to be a staple in the effective management of a high performing work system (e.g. Druskat and Wolff, 1999; Ouchi, 1981; Staw, 1980), and can enhance each the development, the communication, and the implementation of the company's strategy as well as influence individual performance. Research has shown that

even negative feedback can be a motivating tool for employees by effectively communicating expectations, as well as improving performance by demonstrating weaknesses in previously-used strategies (Hazucha, Hezlett, and Schneider 1993; Walker and Smith, 1999). However, these positive benefits of critical feedback must be balanced by the potential negative consequences. Some research suggests that negative feedback can at times create more problems than it solves

Research Design and Operationalization of variables

Data collection procedures

The research population of this study was the 22,275 Thai employees of 135 companies in the Eastern Seaboard Industrial Estate, Eastern Region of Thailand. They currently used e-mail in office; they had experience to use e-mail at least 1 month. The data collection occurred during Mar-May, 2007 (approximately 60 days) by convenience sampling, sample size was 284 employees.

Operationalization of variables and reliability analysis

The measurements used in this study concept involved a combination of scales, there were three variables such as Information perception, Information acquisition, and Employee communication. Information perception was measured using five dimensions (such as selective exposure, attention, comprehension, distortion and retention), 5-point scale borrowed from Burgoon (1994), and Assael (1981). Where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Information acquisition was measured using three dimensions (credibility, attractiveness, power), 5-point scale borrowed from, Burnett and Moriarty (1998) and Where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 =

strongly agree. Employee Communication was measured using two dimensions (feedback delivery, acceptance) , 5-point scale borrowed from Watson and Where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for Information perception scale was 0.8275, for Information acquisition scale was 0.8664, and for Employee communication scale was 0.8754. All operationalization variables were found to have good reliability In addition to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for all variables ranged from 0.7661 to 0.9282

Finding the respondent profile

The respondent profile showed that 70.1% of the respondents were female, 77.4% of them were university graduate, 60.4% was officer, earning range between 10,000 – 30,000 baht per month was 75%, and age of working mostly 1-3 year was 42.4%.

Testing the Hypothesized Relationships

This study used the multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses. In Hypothesis 1, *Information perception* positively related to *employee communication* based on statistically significant level ($F= 27.824$). In one hand, each dimensions of information perception also positive related to employee communication as well. *Attention* as strongly influence the employee communication, with statistically significant ($t= 6.271$). It supported the previous study that attention was the taking possession by the mind especially focalization, concentration, of consciousness that people must select the information to which people will give attention or else nothing will make sense (Burgoon 1994). Moreover, people remember the good things and forget the bad. Selective retention thus

reinforces one's self-image that information was retained in memory to influence future behavior (Assael 1981). Meanwhile, Hypothesis 2, *Information acquisition* positively related to *employee communication* based on statistically significant level ($F= 43.739$). In one hand, each dimensions of information perception also positive related to employee communication as well. *Credibility* as strongly influence the employee communication, with statistically significant ($t= 6.614$). It supported the previous researches that highly credible groups even more effective source than highly credible individuals. *Credibility* deal with intelligence, knowledge, maturity, and professional or social status as well as the objectivity attributed to the source.

Discussion

According to hypotheses testing, the information perception positively related to employee communication by e-mail. It is suggested that managers and administrators should formulate strategies for the utilization of cyber data and information that includes tools for promotion and training of employees for their acceptance of electronic communication. They should encourage the knowledge management society, reduce the barrier entry information. The learning development as managerial tool builds employee skill, and increase competence including distinct capability. Moreover the result of hypothesis testing, the information acquisition process positively related

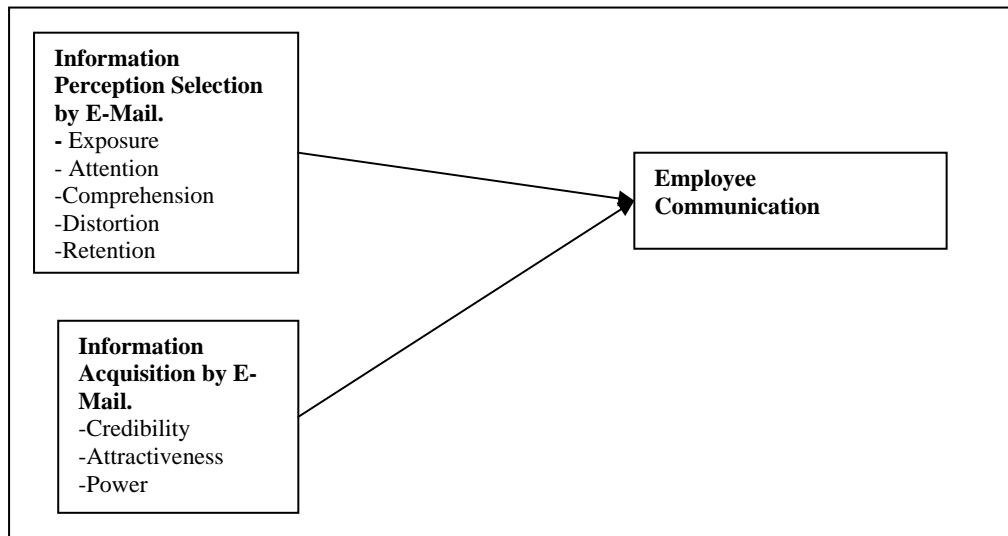
to employee communication. Policies should include aspects of persuasion, reinforcement, reminders and purchase precipitation for the increase of efficiency in communication. Information credible may be the confident expectation that people will do what they say they are going to do. This kind of credibility can be established and maintained by making and keeping simple day-to-day agreements including meetings, return phone calls and deadlines, and, by setting and following meeting guidelines such as attendance, involvement and roles. Alternatively, it may be reflected in a willingness to engage in reciprocal sharing and openness, to share relevant information when it is needed. However, internal communication is important integral part of employee development practice and is one of the core elements of implementing employee development. It is important to develop a formal, coordinate, and organization-wide internal communication system that facilitate the implementation and practice of employee development. Employee development can be used to change the attitudes and behavior of staff towards being more service and customer oriented and it is necessary to create awareness and understanding about employee development in a structured and consistent way. A lack of an internal communication system regarding employee development suggests that employee development information is not properly communicated to staff, which could hamper its effective implementation.

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Figure 1: Research Model of Information Acquisition Process and Employee Communication



Source: Druskat and Wolff, (1999); Burnett & Moriarty, (1998) ; Miller, (1995) ; Assael (1981); Greenberge & Miller (1966); Freiden 1984

Hypotheses

On basis of these review literatures, this study proposed the hypotheses summarized in Table 1

Table 1: Hypotheses

Hypotheses
H1: The information perception is related to employee communication
H2: The Information acquisition is related to employee communication

Table 2 Hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Coefficient	Overall test value (F-value)	Result
H1: The information perception is related to employee communication		27.824	Reject
-Exposure	5.275		Reject
-Attention	6.271		Reject
-Comprehension	5.568		Reject
-Distortion	2.338		Reject
-Retention	5.087		Reject
H2: The Information acquisition is related to employee communication		43.739	Reject
-Credibility	6.614		Reject
-Attractiveness	5.646		Reject
-Power	5.380		Reject