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INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATIONS AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

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ABSTRACT

Internal Communication in Organizations and Employee Engagement

by

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Employee engagement is a fairly new phenomenon that continues to gather the attention of and implementation into organizations. While communication has been identified as a factor affecting engagement, no scientific research has concentrated solely on the relationship between the two. Taking this into account this study sought to find whether there is a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.

Results indicated that there is a positive relationship between factors of internal communication and factors of employee engagement. The current research found that internal communication is linked to commitment, discretionary effort, and meaningful work; all factors of engagement. In addition, results also indicated that communication channel satisfaction and channel combinations were linked to employee engagement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a fairly new phenomenon that continues to gather the attention of and implementation into organizations. Consulting firms and survey administrators have identified it with reducing turnover, increasing shareholder value and as the catalyst for outperforming the competition (Woodruffe, 2006; Harley, Lee, & Robinson, 2005; Watson Wyatt Worldwide, 2004). Research has also purported that a key driver of engagement is internal communication (Baumruk, Gorman, & Gorman, 2006; Hoover, 2005; Woodruffe 2006; Yates 2006) and organizations that effectively communicate with employees experience higher levels of engagement (Baumruk et al., 2006; Debussy, Ewing, & Pitt, 2003; Yates, 2006). While consulting firms have identified communication as a means for improving engagement, no scientific research has concentrated solely on the relationship between the two.

Significance and Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to first, determine whether a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement exists. The second purpose of the study is to determine in what way internal communication affects employees and their level of engagement. My experience has been that organizations that communicate effectively with their employees create an atmosphere where employees appear to believe in the

organization's goals and therefore exhibit more effort during their workday. If scientific research could support this notion, internal communication would be viewed as integral to engagement.

Past research has provided some information on internal communication and its relationship with job satisfaction. However, there is limited empirical research that can support the link between internal communication and employee engagement. The data available are largely comprised of surveys and research conducted by private consulting firms that contain minimal information on communication and engagement.

The current study will provide empirical data on the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement and provide research on how internal communication affects employee engagement levels. The next section provides an overview of internal communication and employee engagement. First discussed are the shifts internal communication has experienced through several decades of research and structure changes within organizations. Secondly, a definition of employee engagement is provided along with information on its recent introduction into organizations.

Shifts in Internal Communication

This study examines both organizational communication and the method through which messages are disseminated, referred to as communications. Internal communication is operationally defined as the exchange of information both informal and formal between management and employees within the organization. Communications are operationally defined as the technology and systems used for sending and receiving messages. Communications may include: newsletters, circulation materials, surveys,

meetings, in-house television, face-to-face interactions, email, hotlines, suggestion boxes, Intranet, Internet, telephone calls, videoconferences, memos, letters, notice boards, formal presentations, reports, open forums, blogs, and wikis (Argenti, 1998; Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Baumruk et al., 2006; Debussy et al., 2003; Goodman & Truss, 2004; Hunt & Ebeling, 1983; Yates, 2006). This study recognizes that all the above-mentioned elements in the communication process are a combination of both the message and medium. The purpose of this study is to examine whether employee engagement is influenced by both of these elements.

While research on internal communication spans only a few decades, it has experienced a number of organizational shifts in that short time. In 1982, D'Aprix wrote of a critical time for communicating with employees and called for the reevaluation of internal communication. In regard to communication within organizations, he believed there existed a "lack of definition, inadequate budgets, limited professional staffing, and nearsighted vision" (p. 30). This "nearsighted vision" coupled with changes occurring in the workforce, demanded improvements in internal communication. D'Aprix expanded, "companies are dealing with a different kind of employee than heretofore an employee who is looking for job satisfaction, who believes in personal options, and who wants meaningful work" (p.30). Prior to the introduction of employee engagement ,organizations focused on measuring employee satisfaction to gauge how their employees felt about where they worked. D'Aprix speaks of a change in employees where they now demand more from their organization than a paycheck. Employees now looked beyond their pay for additional qualities in a workplace. They desired a company they could believe in, and a genuine feeling that what they did everyday made a difference. With

these changes the old measurements used to gauge employee's opinions about their organization had to be reevaluated.

Research that measures internal communication's link to job satisfaction finds there to be a causal relationship between the two (Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Goris, Pettit, & Vaught, 2002; Hunt & Ebeling, 1983; King, Lahiff, & Hatfield, 1988). However, while the wealth of research supports the link between internal communication, job satisfaction, and productivity, "there was nothing strategic or business-focused about these communications" and "strategically managed employee communications is a relatively new phenomenon" (Holtz, 2004, p. 8). The shift toward internal communication being strategically aligned with organizational goals is in response to the changing business environment. It brings new ways of reaching employees to ensure organizational success. Holtz explained:

> Given all the changes to the world of work, the function of communication to employees have evolved from the kind of reporting that populated most "house organs" - the name given to fluff-filled company publications-to a strategic business activity, the kind that (in the words of a 2002 study by the Society of Human Resources Managers (SCM)), "influence internal perceptions of organizational reputation and credibility" (p. 12).

What Holtz explains is the major shift in the way businesses structured their internal communication. Employees would no longer be satisfied with "fluff-filled" company propaganda and demanded honest and direct communication. Members of the *SCM* Editorial Board were brought together in 2006 to discuss major trends in organizational communication. They believed that because of growing public distrust in big business

there existed for employees "an erosion of trust" toward management (SCM, p.17). This distrust posed challenges for internal communication in creating campaigns that solidified the organization's values, beliefs, and the credibility of its management (p. 17).

Strategic communication goes beyond announcing birthdays, births, and bar mitzvahs in the monthly newsletter to an integration of all communication messages along with the internal marketing of that information. The variables for internal communication and job satisfaction do not encompass the depth that organizations now demand. Organizations can no longer get by with a survey that says their employees are happy; they must develop methods for engaging the workforce. However, organizations with a formalized way of communicating with employees on a regular basis are not necessarily successful in business. Merely communicating with employees does not secure an organization's success, rather those who have a formalized method for effective communication find they stand out from the rest. The Watson Wyatt Worldwide (2004) survey found that, "organizations that communicate effectively overall are significantly more likely to be effective in a number of aspects of communications" (p. 5). The hierarchy of effective communication is comprised of three tiers: foundational, strategic, and behavioral. The foundation tier establishes "a strong foundation by addressing process and resource issues" (p. 6). This tier includes a formal communication process, employee input, linking desired behavior to employee compensation, and the effective use of technology (p. 6). The strategic tier is utilized once the foundation is in place and moves towards a "more strategic and targeted approach more directly linked to business results" (p. 8). This tier focuses on facilitating change, continuous improvement, and connecting employees to business objectives (p. 8). The final tier is behavioral, "where the most

significant increase in shareholder value can be realized" (p. 10). At the behavioral level businesses focus on communication that drives or changes the behavior of management and creates a "line of sight" where employees clearly understand their role in the organization's success (p. 11). Watson Wyatt summarizes, "creating a communication program that encompasses each of the three tiers of the communication and all its underlying elements will open the pathways of communication within the workforce and enhance the value of the organizations significantly" (p. 6).

There has been a shift in the way businesses must communicate with the workforce of today in order to see results, however not a lot is known about how they can strategically communicate to shift employee engagement. In addition there is limited research and corporate understanding of employee engagement.

Employee Engagement

Moving beyond job satisfaction, consulting firms and researchers encourage organizations to find ways of measuring employee engagement. Engaged employees are operationally defined as motivated, self-improving, and productive (Harley et al., 2005, p. 24) while understanding and aligning themselves with their company's culture and business strategy (Coleman, 2005, p. 66). According to Sias (2005), the engaged employee is, "an employee being fully intellectually and emotionally committed to a particular job, so that he or she wants to give to that job what is known as discretionary effort" (p. 29). This discretionary effort is not necessary for the employees to give, but they have an innate desire to give anyway. Employees who provide this extra effort often demonstrate these traits: positive attitude towards the job; believes in and identifies with

the organization; works actively to make things better; treats others with respect and helps colleagues perform more effectively; can be relied upon and goes beyond the requirements of the job; acts with the bigger picture in mind; keeps up to date with the field; and looks for and is given opportunities to improve organizational performance (Harley et al., p. 24). Most importantly, these key traits are also delivered on a consistent basis. In addition, Baumruk et al. (2006) found these three general behaviors in engaged employees: advocates organization with co-workers and customers; desire to be part of the organization despite other opportunities; exerts extra time, effort, initiative to contribute to the success of the organization (p. 24).

The recent shift has changed the focus from job satisfaction to multifaceted commitment and positive attitude toward the organization (Coleman, 2005, p. 66). Coleman explains the evolution over the past decade and a half:

> Fifteen years ago, it was enough to simply ask staff if they were happy in their job. A decade ago, the emphasis shifted away from satisfaction towards commitment and the measuring of positive attitudes towards the organization. The focus is changing again, this time towards levels of employee engagement and measurement of that (p.66).

Employee engagement goes beyond employee satisfaction and therefore traditional measures of satisfaction need to be updated to include employee engagement scales (Harley, 2005, p. 25). With the introduction of employee engagement some of the new variables for measuring effective internal communication include: trust, credibility, organizational goals, identification, internal and external alignment, accuracy, openness, transparency, timeliness, receiver relevance, using numerous channels, and message

management to name a few (Asif & Sargeant, 2000; Goris et al., 2002; Holtz, 2004; Hoover, 2005; Ruppel & Harrington, 2000).

The limited research that has been conducted on employee engagement identifies numerous variables for measurement, however its relationship to internal communication has not been fully developed. Just recetly we have seen the employee dynamic change. As D'Aprix explained, employees are looking for more than a paycheck from their organization, they want and need more from that relationship. Organizations have come to realize that there is a gap between what employees want and what they are receiving from their workplace. They have found that measuring job satisfaction no longer captures what employees really want from them. Employees are looking for a company they can believe in; share values and goals with; meaningful work; an emotional and intellectual connection – all of this plus job satisfaction. Researchers have identified all of these new factors and more as employee engagement. However, existing research in this area is very slim and could benefit from additional support. Academic research could provide organizations solutions for better understanding and interacting with their employees. In addition research may provide specific areas for organizations to focus on to best enhance the engagement of their employees.

For the current study, we will take one possible solution, communication, and examine how it may or may not influence engagement.

Link between Internal Communication and Employee Engagement

There are many variables that may contribute to promoting employee engagement. These include coaching, career development, recognition, rewards, accountability, satisfaction, meaningful work, perceived safety, adequate resources, individual attention, alignment with organization's values, opinion surveys, effective communication, management's interest in well being, challenging work, input in decision making, clear vision of organization's goals, and autonomy (Baumruk et al., 2006; Kahn, 1990; Woodruffe, 2006). Internal communication serves as an avenue in which these variables many be disseminated, supported, and communicated. The proposed link between internal communication and employee engagement, whether implicit or explicit, should lead to an area of research that either supports or refutes this notion.

External prestige, also referred to as "construed external image", is the term used to describe how employees think external audiences either positively or negatively view their organization (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994, p. 239). According to Smidts, Pruyn, and Riel (2001) and DeRidder (2004) internal communication is a factor contributing to external prestige and when that external image is positive, employees experience a greater sense of identification with the organization. Organizational identification is a variable of employee engagement. Regardless of whether an internal communication campaign is effective or not, it is still no match for the overload of external messages the mass media provide. It is via these external messages that employees receive the majority of information about whom they work for (Hoover, 2005,

p. 25). Faced with this reality of information flow, how do organizations engage the workforce despite these external challenges?

While effective communication should be the goal of any organization, merely communicating is the first step. An organization that is silent can experience the worst outcomes as it forces employees to speculate, listen to the grapevine and turn to the media for information about their company (Hoover, 2005, p. 25). In times of change and challenge, communication can be the key to sustaining the business. As Hoover elaborates, "even in a time of crisis, good communication keeps employees engaged and the organization moving forward" (p. 25). On the contrary, the lack of communication can create a "disparity between what employees hear from their manager and what they see in the media, it leads to distracted, de-motivated employees who feel a lack of trust caused by lack of transparency –whether that is real or perceived" (p. 25). Organizations can be most effective by developing a communication plan that focuses on internal messaging and media, but is also equipped and able to evolve around external messaging.

In an interview with Hewitt Associates a global human resources outsourcing and consulting firm, Baumruk et al. (2006) outlined five steps to increasing engagement. The fifth step is communication that includes "frequent and scheduled interaction and sharing of information, feedback and ideas. Listen, understand and respond appropriately" (p. 25). Here we see at a very basic level the importance of internal communication in engaging employees.

Research by Welsch and La Van (1981) found that communication was a factor in overall organizational climate. Organizational climate is the link between individuals and the organization and as Guzley (1992) further explains; it represents employee's

standardized beliefs and attitudes about the organization they work for (p.382). Communication was just one of five variables Welsch and La Van (1981) introduced, but they found it to have the strongest correlation to commitment with 38% of the variance (p. 1086). While they were able to find that communication affected the overall feelings employees had toward their company, Dennis (1974) conceptualized communication climate as a separate construct from organizational climate. He defined communication climate as:

> A subjectively experienced quality of the internal environment of an organization: the concept embraces a general cluster of inferred predispositions identifiable through reports of members' perceptions of messages and message-related events occurring in the organization. (p.29).

Dennis' communication climate survey includes five factors: (as listed in O'Connell, 1979) superior-subordinate communication, quality of information, superior openness/candor, opportunities for upward communication, and reliability of information. Determining the communication climate at an organization will provide insight into employee's perceptions about the communication they receive, the quality and reliability of the messages, and the transparency of their workplace. In the present study, Dennis' communication climate survey will be utilized in a questionnaire to gauge an employee's perceptions about their organization's internal communication practices.

A limited amount of research has been able to link internal communication to variables of employee engagement. Organizations that communicate effectively experience less turnover and resistance, higher shareholder returns, increased commitment and higher levels of employee engagement (Goodman & Truss, 2006;

Guzley, 1992; Sias, 2005; Yates, 2006). According to Yates, "effective communication practices drive employee engagement, commitment, retention, and productivity, which, in turn translate into enhanced business performance that generates superior financial returns" (p. 72). The Watson Wyatt Worldwide study of 2002 found that organizations that were, "highly effective communicators were 4.5 times more likely to have highly engaged employees, which positioned them for better financial results" (Yates, p. 73).

The subjects discussed above are examined further in the next chapter with a look into the research available within each area. A literature review of internal communication, employee engagement, and a summary of both are presented in chapter 2. Chapter 3 offers the hypotheses and methodology utilized in this study. Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the study. Finally, chapter 6 closes the study with further discussion of the results and any implications the results leave for future research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Past Research on Internal Communication

The development of business communication experienced two eras in its early history. Hay (1927) wrote of the pre-behavioral era crediting Carnegie as the first person to bring attention to businessmen about communication in the 1920s (p. 7). The second was the human relations era, founded by the Hawthorne studies of 1927 (p. 7). Although not a communication effort, the Harvard Graduate School of Business led by Elton Mayo provided their findings on issues with employee communication (Redding & Sanborn, 1964). The Hawthorne study produced a "noteworthy pioneering effort in the area of industrial communications" (Hay, p. 8). Direct observations were used to yield information on social structuring of employees, their interactions, and communication in general among same ranking employees. Extensive interviews were also used to gather more information on "industrial communications". They found that "the attitudes of the employees were more important than the physical conditions as determinants of efficiency" (Redding & Sanborn, p.5). In 1938, Barnard's book *The Functions of the Executive* claimed that, "the first function of the executive is to develop and maintain a system of communications" (Barnard, p. 226). Barnard not only purported that managers have communication responsibility he also authored the first key requirements for message acceptance within the organization: communication must be understandable,

messages need to be aligned with company purpose and employee interest, and the employee must be able to psychologically and physically act upon the message (p.165). Barnard's notion that management's role is to foster employee communication is still supported today.

In the 1940s, large-scale projects in communication research focused on war efforts. The films *Why We Fight* were designed to teach soldiers facts about the war as well as shape their interpretations and opinions. When these films failed to produce the desired results, the war department called upon a team of researchers, many of whom were communication scholars, to find out why. They found that the films were very limited in their persuasive effects. These evaluative studies set new standards for communication research by successfully using the before and after approach with a control group (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995).

In the meantime more research was concurrently underway on internal communication. Heron in 1942 wrote *Sharing Information with Employees* and added goals, attitudes, and criteria for effective communication. He is most known for introducing the new world of organizational communication to implementing two-way communication between employees and management and encouraging an environment of open and honest communication. He stated, "communication is a line function; it is a two-way sharing of information; it is not a persuasion or propaganda campaign; it requires the freedom and opportunity to ask questions, get answers and exchange ideas" (Heron, 1942, p. 197).

In the late 1940s, Pigors (1949) published *Effective Communication in Industry*, which introduced a collaboration model for management and employees. Pigor thought

that effective communication could only result if produced through a joint process between the management and employees (Hay, 1974, p. 9). His research indicated that employees were just as important to the success of internal communication as were the leaders of the company.

It was in the 1970s that the internal communication model began to fail due to a rapidly changing work environment (Holtz, 2004). Businesses became increasingly complex and were constantly evolving, leaving employees behind. It was at this time that the employee dynamic changed. Employees had typically been committed to one organization for their entire career and now that loyalty had changed. Holtz identified the change in organizational atmosphere; loyalty among employees does not exist; business is increasingly complex; and the old military style of communication would no longer work. These shifts called for a new ways of communicating with employees.

Contemporary Research on Internal Communication

In recent years the approach to internal communication has been forced to adjust to numerous changes in the workplace. Argenti (1998) writes of changes in organizations that affected the workplace and, in turn, employees. He wrote, "the overall environment is more competitive than ever before, more global than in the past, and more interdependent on other organizations...These changes put pressure on today's employees and create the need for a more coordinated approach to employee communications" (p.199). To deal with these changes, a study conducted by the Conference Board, a business membership and research organization, asked managers from over 200 companies what they considered effective employee communication. The

board believed that effective communication should: improve morale, create a positive relationship between employees and management, inform employees about internal changes, explain employee benefits, and increase understanding about the organization's goals and culture (Troy, 1988). These goals demonstrated the beginning of a shift from simple one-way communication toward the development of strategic communication plans. Argenti identified issues in employee communication, the function of key players, and two-way communication, but research on the relationship between employees and internal communication had yet to be explored.

The function and structuring of internal communication has experienced minor changes in recent years and is possibly undergoing what could be its biggest shift yet with the introduction of employee engagement. The dynamic changes occurring in the workforce that Argenti and the Conference Board point out call for a new approach. To date, the wealth of research on the impact of internal communication has been dominated by its relationship to job satisfaction and productivity. These studies have focused on the act of communicating and the effects it has on how employees feel towards the organization they work for. This study seeks to explore whether internal communication, including both the act of communicating and the media utilized, affects employee engagement.

Research by Hunt and Ebeling (1983) examined the implementation of an "organizational communication intervention program" at a medical manufacturing facility (p. 60). The Hunt and Ebeling study included two research questions. The research questions inquired whether the levels of satisfaction would improve following the implementation of the structured communication program. They also examined

levels of productivity in relation to the implementation of the communication program. The ten-week longitudinal study included 90 members of a work unit. The researchers observed ten weekly meetings where management lectured to front line employees. These employees also completed several attitude and job satisfaction questionnaires. The intent of the intervention program was to "communicate, *downward* management to the members" and included specific information on the unit's performance, their role in relation to the plant, and the plant's relation to the overall company (p. 61).

While results for productivity were mixed, they found a significant relationship between the communication program and job satisfaction (p. 64). However, it was also noted that the communication program was only one contributing factor to satisfaction and the satisfaction level is also the result of employees feeling appreciated (Hunt & Ebeling, 1983, p. 65).

Other researchers (e.g., King, Lahiff, & Hatfield, 1998; Asif & Sargeant, 2000) hoping to prove that communication was central to many positive variables, sought to study the relationship even further. Founded in Discrepancy Theory, King et al. posited three hypotheses testing the relationship between communication and job satisfaction. The study administered questionnaires to 184 undergraduate students and each was asked to think of their current or previous job when answering.

The results of the King et al. (1988) study showed that, "consistently strong and positive relationships exist between the communication employees report receiving from their supervisors and their satisfaction with both supervision and the job in general" (p. 41). These results were expected as previous research had already found these correlations.

Asif and Sargeant (2000) sought to define effective communication processes and develop a model for internal communication. Although they provided no research questions or hypotheses, they stated that the purpose of their study was "to explore a variety of internal communication issues within the context of two major High Street Banks" (p. 303). Their qualitative approach included personal interviews with 31 employees over a period of six months. Through these interviews they found that effective internal communication produced six key outcomes: shared vision; job satisfaction; service focus; empowerment; commitment; and loyalty (p. 309).

Asif and Sargeant (2000) were able to identify new variables for internal communication. These variables were more complex in nature by going beyond measures of job satisfaction. The study introduced new relationships between internal communication and employees and therefore demanded the examination of these additional variables. However, the study did not explore whether a link between these new variables and employee engagement existed.

Researchers (e.g. Smidts, Pruyn, & Riel, 2002; DeBussy, Ewing, & Pitt, 2003; DeRidder, 2004; Holtz, 2004;) began to find that communication not only improved employee satisfaction but also produced organizational identification (Smidt et al.), trust, support in organizational goals, commitment (DeRidder), reputation, credibility, retention, and shareholder value (Holtz). Smidts et al. (2002) conducted a study on the impact of internal communication and external perceptions of the company and how it affected an employee's identification with the organization. The study was based on social identity theory or the "cognition of membership of a group and the value and emotional significance attached to this membership" (p. 1051). They presented five

hypotheses focusing on the affect of employee communication on external prestige and organizational identification. Over 5000 questionnaires were mailed to three diverse organizations with a response rate of over 40% (p. 1054). The data showed a significant relationship between positive internal communication climate and organizational identification (p. 1056). Smidts et al. found that employees who had positive feelings towards the internal communication they received in turn identified more closely with the organization (p. 1057).

A shift in internal communication came with the introduction of applying marketing strategies to employees. Debussy, Ewing, and Pitt (2003) write, "the notion of internal marketing, in which companies are considered markets and employees as internal customers, emerged during the 1980s" (p.149). In the same way that loyalty of external customers is driven by their satisfaction, so to is an employee with their job satisfaction. Debussy et al. conducted a study on the dimensions of internal marketing communication and the use of new media in organizations. Their theoretical framework was comprised of stakeholder, communication, public relations, and marketing theories. They also purported that internal communication was comprised of four constructs, "ethical work climate, mutual trust, attitude to innovation, and employee/organization goal alignment" (p. 152). They noted that internal marketing should include a two-way communication process between management and employees and that its significance lies in its ability to "reach and motivate lower level employees within organizations" (p. 153). Their study included five propositions with three showing significant results. Proposition one showed that the use of new media in the workplace is positively related to the perception of an ethical work climate and mutual trust within the organization (p. 156). Proposition two

found a positive relationship between new media and organizational attitudes towards innovation and the alignment of an employee's goals with those of the organization (p. 156). In addition, Debussy et al. found that the use of new media, in particular the Intranet, positively affected internal marketing communication (p. 156). DeBussy et al. discovered organizations that strive to effectively communicate would benefit from the use of new media channels. He also found that organizations who recognized their employees as key stakeholders were more effective (p. 157).

Keller, Lynch, Ellinger, Ozment, and Calantone (2006) wrote that, "internal marketing adopts the traditional tools of marketing to develop and distribute job products to employees, (the) internal customers" (p. 110). They defined job products as: information, knowledge, physical and social environment, and tools necessary to employees to successfully perform their job while also achieving organizational and personal goals (p. 111). Keller et al. also introduced "internal promotion" as effective internal communication through the use of face-to-face interactions, recognition, and rewards. Their study found that by treating employees with the same customer service level provided to external customers and applying traditional marketing strategies, there was an increase in employee satisfaction (p. 122).

In 2002 the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Council of the Public Relations Firms, conducted a random survey among human resource professionals and households in the United States. The survey, in consideration of current corporate misconduct, sought to answer how well organizations demonstrated their commitment and credibility to employees. The study yielded 671 completed surveys from human resource professionals and 609 currently employed individuals (p. iv). Results of the

SHRM study concluded, "many (companies) are relying on employee communication to influence internal perceptions of organizational reputation and credibility. By doing so they hope to increase employee morale, productivity, performance and retention" (p.2). The results showed a direct link between effective communication and an employees' perception of their company's credibility and appreciation for them.

The act of merely communicating with employees is just the beginning of a strategic plan necessary for effective communication. The medium chosen for communicating is also important depending on the receiver and type of information being disseminated. Dobos (1992) studied gratification models of satisfaction and choice of communication channels. Telephone interviews were conducted across 241 organizations in the United States. Dobos believed that organizational communication served three basic functions: production, maintenance, and innovation or adaptation (p. 33). Production communication concentrates on task-related information (p. 33). Maintenance communication refers to, "the development and maintenance of relationships and the promotion of member integration and teamwork" (p. 33). The third function of innovation or adaptation communication focuses on generating new ideas for improving current processes and procedures as well as supporting adaptation to change (p. 33). Dobos found that the gratifications obtained significantly improved explanations of satisfaction and choice of communication channel (p. 41). This supports that an employees satisfaction and channel choice will be consistent with the communication channels used in the past. The Dobos study also found that channel "habituation" is common within organizations. Habituation occurs when organizations continue to use

the same channels even though more effective and efficient channels are available for use (p. 35).

Waldeck et al. (2004) examined the relationship between three channels for information seeking and perceived socialization effectiveness. In addition, they looked at predictors for employee selection and use of Advanced Communication and Information Technologies (ACITs). The three channels included in the study were ACITs, tradional media, and face-to-face communication. ACITs include email, Internet, Intranet, online chats, voicemail, cellular telephones, online databases, PDAs, instant messaging, videoconferencing, pagers, and fax (p. 165). Traditional media includes: memos, newsletters, and employee handbooks (p. 162). Responses were collected through questionnaires at four organizations comprised of hotels, finance and real estate. Research question one addressed the relationship between an employee's selection and use of information-seeking channels and their perceptions of assimilation effectiveness. The study found that face-to-face, ACITs, and traditional media all were significant predictors of assimilation (p. 175). Respondents also expressed the need, "to supplement the information the acquired through ACIT use with information from some other ACIT, a more traditional technology, or face-to-face communication" (p. 175). This study also found that ACITs were used more frequently for specific purposes. Employees used ACITs to communicate with additional people and for information-seeking tasks (p. 176). This study supported the notion that communication channels can work in conjunction with one another as supplemental information and that employees prefer specific channels depending on the related task or desired outcome.

According to a Watson Wyatt (2004) study, "organizations that communicate effectively use technology to amplify their messages" (p. 7). They found that at organizations who were rated as highly effective in communication had employees who used the Web to "communicate, collaborate, and share resources" (p. 7). In addition these organizations continually use the technology to provide employees with important information about the business and their benefits. Highly effective organizations utilized the web and Internet at a rate of 54.7% compared to others. They are also share information on total retirement income projections and total compensation using the same technology.

In 2007, Watson Wyatt conducted a study on employee perspectives on health care. The study examined "how employees view, learn about, use and pay for health care" in addition to "employee views on plan design, health improvement programs, provider quality, communication and behavioral change" (p. 1). They found that when it came to communication on their health benefits, employees preferred specific communication channels over others. They rated mail sent to their home at most preferred, followed print materials at work, the Internet, face-to-face, and least desired are conversations with the Human Resource department (p. 10).

With the wealth of research available, organizations have recently begun to view internal communication as not just an avenue for the monthly newsletter, but rather as a critical driver of success. Organizations who effectively disseminate their message would have employees who feel valued, and the two could once again be working towards the same goals. Smidts et al. (2002), Debussy et al. (2003), DeRidder (2004), and SHRM (2002) were able to expand upon past research by finding the link between

communication and employee perceptions about their company. Organizations were provided with research that told them how their communication could be utilized for far more than just one-way information dissemination. Internal communication was seen as a medium for creating change among employees, change that would benefit the company and the bottom line. The details about how organizations create this change were still not known, but further research could provide avenues for moving forward. One possible area being explored is employee engagement. Engaging employees may be the catalyst for inducing positive change among employees and, as a result, boosting an organization's success.

Contemporary Research on Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a new phenomenon with less than two decades of research. In 1990, Kahn conducted an instrumental study linked to employee engagement. His study built upon the research of Hackman and Oldham (1980), which linked internal motivation at work to specific psychological conditions. Kahn introduced psychological factors that determined whether employees engaged or disengaged at work. He defined personal engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" (p. 694). Kahn felt that employees unconsciously asked themselves three questions for each situation they encountered. The answers to these questions would determine whether they would engage or disengage. The three questions were: how meaningful is it for me to do this? How safe is it to do so? How available am I to do so (p. 703)? From these questions three psychological states for the

employee were developed: psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety, and psychological availability. Psychological meaningfulness was defined as a feeling that there would be something gained (p. 703). There were three factors to psychological meaningfulness including task characteristic, role characteristic, and work interactions (p. 704). Psychological safety was defined as feeling that there would be no negative consequences to personal image or status (p. 703). Four factors influenced psychological safety: interpersonal relationships, group and intergroup dynamics, management style and process, and organizational norms (p. 708). Psychological availability was defined as feeling one has the physical, emotional, or psychological resources to engage in the situation (p. 703). The fours types of distractions that detracted from psychological availability were: depletion of physical energy, depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity, and outside lives (p. 714). Kahn's study included two contrasting organizations, a summer camp and an architecture firm. He utilized qualitative methods of observation, document analysis, self-reflection, and in-depth interviewing for collecting data (p. 695).

Kahn's study (1990) purported that employees would engage themselves in situations when there were perceived benefits, guarantees, and necessary resources. The results showed that individuals were engaging in situations with more psychological meaningfulness compared to those situations with less psychological meaningfulness (p. 704). The data also linked engagement to psychological safety (p. 708) and psychological availability (p. 714). Kahn's research brought forth a multifaceted framework for how employees engage or disengage in the workplace. The data pushed organizations to reevaluate the way they approached employee relations and

communication. Organizations were faced with major adjustments given a changing workforce. Therefore, employee satisfaction gauges would no longer be able to accurately measure the opinions employees held for their organization.

May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) sought to build upon Kahn's three psychological conditions with a new theoretical framework highlighting the functionalist and the humanistic paradigms. While Kahn's study supported psychological factors for engagement May et al. introduced the concept of human spirit in the organization. They described the engagement shift as the unleashing of "the human spirit in organizations" evoking "that part of the human being which seeks fulfillment through self-expression at work" (p. 12). The researchers proposed nine hypotheses for the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Three hypotheses were proposed for psychological conditions and engagement. In addition, three hypotheses were also offered for mediating effects of the psychological conditions. The study included 213 surveys from employees of a large insurance firm (p. 20).

The field study data indicated that the psychological conditions of meaningfulness and safety exhibited positive correlations with engagement, with meaningfulness having the strongest correlation (May et al., 2004, p. 23). May's findings were consistent with Kahn's. It was evident to researchers and businesses that the days of simply measuring an employee's perceived happiness with his or her job was no longer relevant.

Measures of job satisfaction from the late 80s and early 90s were thought to no longer be sufficient given the recent discoveries. Baumruk et al. (2006) pointed out the need and "genesis" of change:

> Employee satisfaction was really a measure of 'how people like it here' as opposed to measuring behaviors that will help organizations become more successful for employees, shareholders, and customers. So, we turned to identifying the types of behavior that would actually have an impact on results. This was the genesis of our work on engagement (p. 24).

The only way businesses would see this as worth their time was if it was proven to actually be worth their time. Woodruffe (2006) found that organizations that continued to surpass their competitors were those who realized the value of their workforce. He stated, "it is a matter of sheer commercial logic that an organization's people represent the most crucial weapon in its bid for competitive supremacy" (p. 28). Organizations in the service industry have especially come to the realization that "there is not much point in employing people at all if you are not going to take steps to make them want to give their best to you" (p. 28). Hewitt Associates, a human resources research firm, has found through their research a correlation between engagement scores and shareholder return (Baumruk et al., 2006, p. 24). Companies that reported 60 percent or more of their workforce as engaged experienced an "average five-year total returns to shareholders (TSR) of more than 20 percent" compared to "companies where only 40 to 60 percent of the employees are engaged, which have a TSR of about six percent" (p. 24). Coleman (2005) states that the engagement shift involved much more than producing shareholder return, it encompassed "how closely workers align(ed) themselves to an organization and its culture and objectives" and included not only an understanding of their company's culture, but overall business strategy as well (p. 66).

The shift from job satisfaction to engagement required an understanding and defining of the total employment package. Organizations that offered much more than a paycheck were finding that employees not only came to work each day, but they also demonstrated discretionary effort. Money is not the main motivator as Woodruffe (2006) explained, "people are more likely to be swayed by a range of other, non-financial, factors when deciding where they will work" (p. 28). Some of these non-financial motivators contributing to engagement are: advancement, autonomy, commitment to employees, exposure to senior management, praise when due, support, challenge, trust, respected organization, and respect for work/life balance (p. 29).

Human resource consulting firms have dominated the field in examining the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. Social scientific research on the subject has yet to surface. While this area remains untapped given its recent conception, research is available on internal communication and its link to specific variables of engagement such as improved morale, job satisfaction, turnover, and return on investment.

Hunt and Ebeling (1983) found that a relationship existed between communication and improved employee attitudes. The implementation of a structured communication program resulted in a positive change in the workforce. However, they also purported that the change in attitude could also be attributed to employees feeling appreciated once the communication program was implemented. Other research has shown that internal communication coming from an employee's supervisor affects that employee's job satisfaction. Data from the King, Lahiff, and Hatfield (1998) study showed a positive relationship between the communication employees receive from their supervisor and

their overall satisfaction with their job. This study fell short in its results write up by stating, "clearly, the data show support for H1..." with no further explanation offered. While several studies have provided data supporting internal communication positive affect on specific variables of employee engagement, there is no study that measures the sole relationship between the two constructs.

While internal communication has a wealth of social scientific research available, the sane us not true for research on employee engagement. Given that employee engagement is a fairly new phenomenon, research aside from consulting firm surveys is largely unavailable. Kahn (1990) conducted a thorough study on the psychological reasons for employees engaging or disengaging themselves in the workplace. He found that employees would engage themselves in situations that were psychologically meaningful, situations in which they were psychologically available, and situations were they felt psychologically safe. While he thoroughly explains each of the three conditions, the study fails to explain how organizations can create these conditions. In addition this study does not examine the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.

Summary of Literature Review

Several studies have shown that effective internal communication positively affects job satisfaction. In the business world of today it has become apparent that an employee's satisfaction has become more complex. The variables and measures once used to gauge satisfaction are no longer applicable. Recently a small number of studies have surfaced supporting internal communication's link to an organization's overall

success, however internal communication is presented as only one of many links. For internal communication, little research has gone beyond job satisfaction to address factors that affect employees and organizations of today. Consequently, empirical research on the link between internal communication and employee engagement is rare, if available at all.

While the area of research on organizational and internal communication has existed for several decades, research on employee engagement is a fairly new phenomenon. What we have found is that engagement is multifaceted and includes numerous psychological factors. Human resource consulting firms have introduced employee engagement as a key driver of organizational success. However, we have yet to see social scientific research that examines the existence of a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.

The current study will examine whether a relationship between internal communication and employee engagement exists. This study will explore the existence of internal communication within an organization, as well as any relationship that exists between effective internal communication and employee engagement.

Several past studies will lend to further research in the present study. Hunt and Ebeling (1983) found a significant relationship between a communication program and job satisfaction (p. 64). King et al. found that there was a relationship between communication and an employee's satisfaction with their supervisor and job (p. 41). The current study will build upon these previous studies by examining whether there is a relationship between communication and engagement. Engagement will be measured through commitment, discretionary effort, and meaningful work.

While the main focus is stated above, the current study will also examine whether two factors also have a positive affect on engagement: effective communication and channel use. Asif and Sargeant (2000) found effective communication to produce factors of employee engagement such as satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty (p. 309). Waldeck et al. examined the use of ACITs, traditional media, and face-to-face communication channels. They found that employees preferred to have supplemental channels along with ACITs (p. 175). The current study will build upon both of these studies by further examining employee perceptions of their organization's internal communication, including their channel satisfaction.

In chapter 3, the research questions are detailed and presented for testing. The methodology behind the proposed study is also introduced.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Very little research has studied the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. The information that is available concentrates on communication as a predictor of job satisfaction or engagement as a psychological condition. This chapter will detail the rationale and hypotheses for this study, and explains the data collection and analysis process.

Rationale and Hypotheses

This study aims to provide insight into the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. While past research has shown communication to positively affect job satisfaction and employee attitudes, it has not explored a majority of engagement variables. Since internal communication has been shown to affect satisfaction and morale among employees it should also contribute to overall engagement.

H1a: Communication with employees will be positively related to employee commitment.

H1b: Effective communication in organizations will be positively related with employee discretional effort.

H1c: Communication with employees will be positively related to employees who experience meaningfulness in their work.

While merely communicating with employees may affect engagement, organizations with better communication practices will experience higher levels of employee engagement.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between the quality of communication and employee engagement.

H2b: Employees who are satisfied with the communication channel utilized by their organization will experience higher levels of engagement.

H2c: Organizations that utilize a mixture of traditional and new media communication channels will experience higher levels of engagement.

Method

Data were collected through a survey instrument. According to Baxter and Babbie (2004) surveys have advantages and weaknesses. By standardizing the survey the researcher risks "fitting round pegs into square holes" by developing general questions relevant to all respondents rather than questions most relevant to each given respondent (p.199). In addition, survey research can be inflexible at times when the researcher is constrained to the original design throughout the study. The advantages of the survey method however, outweigh its disadvantages. The self-administered survey in particular, allows the researcher to gather large samples. The survey method also allows for flexibility in analysis given that many questions are asked about one particular topic. In

addition, there is strength in measurement given the standardized questions (2004, p. 199).

The study was conducted through a self-administered questionnaire. Each respondent received a survey as well as an informed consent form. The first section of the survey included a series of statements about the communication climate at their workplace. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement to each statement. In the second section, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with about the communication channels utilized in their workplace. The third section presented a series of statements about employee commitment to their company, whether they exert any discretionary effort, and dissatisfaction in their organization. As with the first section respondents were again asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements. The final section of the survey asked respondents about their current job status, gender, age, type of industry they work in, and their annual income.

Instrumentation

To gather data on internal communication practices within organizations, this study utilized Dennis' Communication Climate survey. Dennis (1974) originally designed the survey to study the inner environment of an organization. For the purpose of the current study, the survey instrument will be used to measure employee perceptions on how their organization communicates. Dennis divided the survey questions into five factors. As noted in O'Connell (1979) these factors were: superior-subordinate communication, quality of information, superior openness/candor, opportunities for upward

communication, and reliability of information. Lockhart (1987) reported Cronbach alphas for these factors as .94, .88, .89, and .83, respectively. For the purpose of this study the superior openness/candor factor was deleted as it is directed at management level employees. These factors were removed given the age and assumed work experience of the survey respondents who were all students. In addition, two of the items within the opportunities for upward communication factor were removed for the same reasons as noted above. This survey followed a five-point scale for each question ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The scale was coded from one to five, with one representing "strongly disagree".

The communication channel instrument was created to assess employee perceptions on their organization's channel use and how those channel choices affect engagement. In addition to determining the types of channels organizations most use today, this section will also determine whether certain channel choices or combinations of channels result in higher correlations with employee engagement. Specifically, how a combination of channels such as new and traditional media may affect engagement.

For measuring employee engagement this study utilized the Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and the Spreitzer (1995) Empowerment Survey. Mowday et al. (1979) created the OCQ in an effort to validate a measure of employee commitment in organizations. Their questionnaire consisted of 15 questions and it focused on three aspects: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization (p. 226). They report the OCQ with a Cronbach alpha ranging from .82 to .93, with a median of

.90. The OCQ includes several negatively phrased items that require reverse scoring. This survey included the entire OCQ, however it remained consistent by using a five-point scale instead of the researcher's original seven-point scale. In this study, the survey measured an employee's perceptions of their level of commitment and willingness to exert discretionary effort.

The Spreitzer (1995) Empowerment Scale was utilized to measure meaningful work. The researcher developed this scale to measure psychological empowerment in the workplace. Spreitzer measured psychological empowerment through four constructs: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (p. 1443). The researcher reported a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .72. It should be noted, however, that the present instrument only used Spreitzer's three questions regarding meaning. In addition, this study also utilized a five-point scale as opposed to Spreitzer's seven-point scale. The scale for each question ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" and was coded from one to five, with one representing "strongly disagree". In this study, the Spreitzer survey measured employee perceptions on the level of meaningfulness in their work.

The last section of the survey requested information on current job status and demographics. Job status questions included: current employment status, number of current jobs, whether the current job(s) is considered a career path, and job industry. These questions were included as different results may occur given the expectations an individual has for their organization's internal communication. Also when an individual considers a job a career path their level of expectation and engagement may differ with the organization. Respondents were asked to categorize their current occupation under

one of the 12 industries listed. The industry categories were borrowed from the Bureau of Labor Statistics under the U.S. Department of Labor. This question was included as data may show that employee communication expectations will differ depending on the industry they work in.

Demographic questions included: gender, age, and annual income. The demographic information will allow for further data collection. Gender may affect an individual's expectations about the communication they receive as an employee. Given that the sample will include a broad range of ages we may find that respondents answer differ depending on their age. Respondents were also asked to report their annual income. It is speculated that an individual's income may affect their internal communication expectation level.

Sample

The sample consisted of 334 undergraduate and graduate level university students. Participants were recruited from communication, journalism and media studies, and business administration classes offered at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Of those responding, 193 were female and 127 were male; 14 participants chose not to respond to this question. Ages ranged from 18 to 48, with 23 being the median.

The questionnaire assessed the state of the participant's workplace communication and measured their level of engagement as an employee. The scales utilized were designed to measure the presence, quality, and effectiveness of internal communication as well as the presence and level of employee engagement.

Procedure

Students were asked to participate during normal class time with no compensation offered. Students were given basic instructions, asked to sign an informed consent form, and then they were asked to voluntarily complete the questionnaire. Completion of the survey took approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes. A pilot test was conducted prior to general survey administration on two classes to determine if any adjustments needed to be made. Adjustments were made to the questionnaire based on the feedback gathered from these pilot test participants.

The next chapter presents the results of the data collected. Chapter 5 discusses the results further, as well as implications for future research.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter describes the analysis results generated from the data collected. The results are based on the Communication Climate scale for internal communication, the Organizational Commitment and Empowerment scales for employee engagement, as well as the Communication Channel instrument for employee media satisfaction.

General Findings

The participant sample consisted of 334 undergraduate and graduate students. Of the respondents who provided information on their work status, 78.7% are currently employed and 78.7% work for one company. A majority of respondents work in the leisure or hospitality industry (25.1%), with the wholesale or retail trade being the next industry at 19.2%. An annual income level less than $10,000 was reported for 39.3% of respondents.

Scale Item Analysis

Item analysis was performed upon completion of the surveys to determine the internal consistency of scale measures (e.g., quality of information, reliability of information, employee commitment, etc.). A .40 coefficient criterion level for inclusion was used to determine *a priori* (Spector, 1992), how individual items for each scale related to other

items. A Coefficient Alpha level of .70 (Cronbach, 1951) was established *a priori* for internal consistency. All scale items were determined to meet this criterion and were retained for consequent analysis. Remaining items were analyzed using principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation. Factor analysis was used to reveal any sub-dimensions within each scale-item array. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the number of factors best represented by scale items and to allow for the interpretation of factors (Spector, 1992, pp. 54-55). Once the number of factors had been determined, varimax orthogonal rotation was applied, to see if each item loads on one and only one factor as the ideal, with a minimum value of .40 *a priori* (Kim & Mueller, 1978a, 1978b; Spector, 1992). Hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics.

Internal Communication

Four factors from the Communication Climate survey developed by Dennis (1975) for internal communication were utilized. These factors were: Superior-Subordinate Communication, Quality of information, Opportunities for Upward Communication, and Reliability of Information. We found that the scale items for two factors, superior-subordinate communication and quality of information, were too large and through factor analysis we found that new factors emerged for both of these original factors. The new factors for both superior-subordinate communication and quality of information are explained in the following sections.

Superior-Subordinate Communication

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to analyze these results. A minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 and at least three loadings were required to

maintain a factor. For factor 1, Dennis had measured superior-subordinate communication by utilizing 21 scale items. During the current study's analysis these 21 items proved unwieldy and through factor analysis we found that three factors emerged from the original factor. These three factors are identified as: Positive Superior Communication, Open Communication with Supervisor, and Superior-Subordinate Understanding. The above factors accounted for 65.8% of the total variance. Table 1 summarizes the factor analysis for Superior-Subordinate Communication.

Factor 1, Positive Superior Communication (eigenvalue = 11.38), explained 54.2% of the total variance after rotation. It contained 14 items relating to a positive superior communication experience. These items were: "makes you feel that things you tell him/her are really important;" "you feel free to talk with him/her;" "expresses confidence in your ability to perform the job;" "encourages you to bring new information even if bad news;" "encourages you to let him/her know when things are going wrong;" "makes it easy for you to do your best work;" "has your best interests in mind;" "listens to you when you tell him/her about things that are bothering you;" "you can communicate job frustrations;" "you think you are safe to share bad news;" "superior willing to tolerate arguments and give fair hearing;" "understands your job problems;" and "is a really competent, expert manager." This 14-item factor reflected statements of positive communication between a subordinate and their superior because it covered exchanges of encouragement, understanding, and fairness between these two individuals.

Factor 2, Open Communication with Superior (eigenvalue = 1.38), explained 6.57% of the total variance after rotation. It included nine items: "has your best interests in mind;" "listens to you when you tell him/her about things that are bothering you;" "is a

really competent, expert manager;" "free to tell superior you disagree;" "can tell your superior about the way you feel he/she manages;" "you can communicate job frustrations;" "safe to tell superior what you are really thinking;" "you think you are safe to share bad news;" and "superior willing to tolerate arguments and give fair hearing." These nine items reflected a subordinate's feelings of support, their superior's competence, candor, and uncensored sharing with their superior.

Factor 3, Subordinate-Superior Understanding (eigenvalue = 1.06), explained 5.03% of the total variance. It was comprised of four items on understanding between subordinate and superior: "your superior thinks that you understand them;" "you really understand your superior;" "your superior thinks they understand you;" and "your superior really understands you." It reflected subordinates who believe they understand their superior and their superior understands them.

Quality of Information

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to analyze these responses as well. As with Superior-Subordinate Communication, we found that the study's analysis of the 12 items in Quality of Information proved unwieldy and through factor analysis we found that two factors emerged from this original factor. These two factors were identified as Effective Communication and Open Communication in the Organization. Each factor had a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 and at least three loadings. These two factors account for 59.32% of the total variance. Table 2 summarizes the factor analysis for Quality of Information.

Factor 1, Effective Communication (eigenvalue = 6.01), explained 50.08% of the variance. It was comprised of eight items: "pleased with management's efforts to keep

employees up to date;" "information from sources your prefer;" "notified in advance of changes;" "management provides the kinds of information you want/need;" "kept informed on how organizational goals and objectives are being met;" "rewarding and praising good performance;" "satisfied with explanations on why things are done;" and "job requirements are clear." This factor reflected employees who were pleased with the way management communicated, the sources they used to communicate, the rewards they received, and clear understanding of organizational goals and job requirements. This factor will be used for testing hypotheses.

Factor 2, Open Communication in the Organization (eigenvalue = 1.11), explained 9.24% of the variance. This six-item factor consisted of: "management provides the kinds of information you want/need;" "satisfied with explanations on why things are done;" "say what they mean and mean what they say;" "free exchange of information and opinions;" "encouraged to be open and candid;" and "top management say what they mean and mean what they say." This factor reflected top-down communication transparency. This factor looked at employee satisfaction with the information and explanations they received from management, the candidness across the organization and integrity of messages.

Opportunities for Upward Communication

Opportunities for Upward Communication included three scale items and through factor analysis produced one factor. Table 3 summarizes the factor analysis for Opportunities for Upward Communication.

Factor 1, Opportunities for Upward Communication (eigenvalue = 2.42), accounted for 80.76% of the total variance. It was comprised of three items: "your views have real

influence in the organization;" "recommendations you make will be heard;" and "your opinions make a difference." This factor reflected employee feelings about their views and opinions being heard and integrated into their day-to-day work life.

Reliability of Information

Reliability of Information included two unique scale items; therefore an exception was made and each item was treated as a separate variable. Item 1, asked the employee to rate how reliable they felt the information they received from management is. Item 2, asked the employee about the reliability of the information received from their colleagues. The internal reliability for this factor met the set criteria.

Communication Channels

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was also used to analyze these responses. The three factors were identified with a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 and at least three loadings. These three factors account for 52.55% of the total variance. Table 4 summarizes the factor analysis.

Factor 1, Newsletters and Videos (eigenvalue = 4.7), accounted for 33.59% of the total variance. This factor is comprised of eight items: blogs, e-newsletters, company television or videos, printed newsletters, at-home mailers, audio recordings or phone messages, Intranet, and other print materials. Factor 1 reflected all forms of print materials, video, audio and Intranet.

Factor 2, Face-to-Face (eigenvalue = 1.52), accounted for 10.88% of the total variance. This factor is comprised of five items: training classes, meetings with senior management, pre-shift meetings, employee recognition and rewards ceremonies, and

posters/flyers/brochures/banners. Factor 2 predominantly reflected face-to-face or in-person communication.

Factor 3, Email and Internet (eigenvalue = 1.13), accounted for 8.08% of the total variance. This factor includes emails and Internet. Factor 3 represents two channels that interface with an online network.

Employee Engagement

Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was also used to analyze these responses. The three factors were identified with a minimum eigenvalue of 1.0 and at least three loadings. These three factors account for 62.47% of the total variance. Table 5 summarizes the factor analysis.

Factor 1, Organizational Commitment (eigenvalue = 8.62), accounted for 47.91% of the total variance. It included 12 positively associated items and three negatively associated items. The 12 positive items included: "my values and the organization's are very similar;" "I talk up this organization to my friends;" "I am proud to tell others I am part of this organization;" "this is the best possible organization;" "extremely glad I chose this organization to work for;" "I would accept almost any job to keep working at this organization;" "organization inspires the very best in me;" "I really care about the fate of this organization;" "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to help;" "the work I do is very important to me;" and "my job activities are personally meaningful." The negative items include: "I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies;" "deciding to work for this organization was a mistake" and "not much to be gained by staying with this organization." This factor reflected statements regarding employee commitment to the organization they work for.

Factor 2, Meaningful Work (eigenvalue = 1.59) accounted for 8.82% of the total variance. It included six items, one being negatively associated: "organization inspires the very best in me;" "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort to help;" "the work I do is meaningful to me;" "the work I do is very important to me;" "my job activities are personally meaningful;" and the negatively associated item, "I feel very little loyalty to this organization." This factor included items stating employee feelings about whether their work was meaningful to them, their willingness to put in extra effort, and their loyalty to the organization.

Factor 3, Dissatisfaction in the Organization (eigenvalue = 1.03), accounted for 5.73% of the total variance. This factor was comprised of five items: "I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies;" "it would take very little change to cause me to leave;" "I could just as well be working for a different organization;" "not much to be gained by staying with this organization" and "I feel very little loyalty to this organization." It reflected employee dissatisfaction toward the organization they work for.

Hypotheses

The first hypothesis predicted communication with employees would be positively related to employee commitment. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics were used to determine relationships between communication and commitment. The independent variables for communication were comprised of Positive Superior Communication, Open Communication with Superior, Superior-Subordinate Understanding and Opportunities for Upward Communication. The dependent variable

was Organizational Commitment. Four correlations were found. A fair degree of relationship was found between Commitment and both Positive Superior Communication ($r = .42, p < .01$), and Opportunities for Upward Communication ($r = .49, p < .01$). A slight relationship was found between Superior- Subordinate Understanding and Commitment ($r = .28, p < .01$). A chance relationship was found to exist between Open Communication with Superior and Commitment ($r = .17, p < .01$). H1 was therefore supported.

H1b predicted that effective communication in organizations would be positively related to employee discretionary effort. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics were again used to determine a relationship between effective communication and discretionary effort. Employee Discretionary Effort is comprised of two items and correlations to communication were found among both. A slight relationship was found between the factor of Effective Communication and scale item "I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected" ($r = .24, p < .01$). A fair degree of a relationship was found between Effective Communication and scale item "This organization really inspires the very best in me" ($r = .44, p < .01$). H1b was supported.

H1c predicted that communication with employees would be positively related to employees who experience meaningfulness in their work. Two results came out of this analysis, a chance relationship between Open Communication with Superior and Meaningful Work ($r = .15, p < .01$) and a slight relationship between Opportunities for Upward Communication and Meaningful Work ($r = .27, p < .01$). The two other communication factors of Positive Superior Communication and Superior-Subordinate

Understanding produced no significant relationship towards Meaningful Work. H1c was therefore partially supported.

H2a predicted there would be a positive relationship between the quality of communication and employee engagement. Four correlations were found. The factor Effective Communication was found to have a fair degree of a relationship with Organizational Commitment ($r = .43$, $p < .01$). Effective Communication also produced a chance degree of a negative relationship with Dissatisfaction in the Organization ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$). Open Communication in the Organization was also found to have a slight degree of a relationship with Organizational Commitment ($r = .34$, $p < .01$) and negatively related to Dissatisfaction in the Organization ($r = -.23$, $p < .01$). The third factor of engagement, Meaningful Work, was not found to have a relationship between both Effective Communication and Open Communication in the Organization. H2a was therefore partially supported.

An Independent Samples *t*-test was performed on two groups. Group one consisted of those who responded as being satisfied or very satisfied with communication channels. Group two included those who responded as being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with communication channels. The means for the two groups were then compared on the Engagement measure. The significance level was set at .05. H2b predicted that employees who are satisfied with the communication channel utilized by their organization would experience higher levels of engagement. The *t*-test found that Email ($N = 179$) was the communication channel most responded to by survey participants as satisfactory ($M = 60.16$). Therefore, it was deemed the most satisfactory channel and was used to address hypotheses H2b. There was a significant difference between satisfied and

dissatisfied respondents on this measure (t = - 2.40, Sig. = .025). H2b was therefore supported.

H2c predicted organizations that utilize a mixture of traditional and new media communication channels would experience higher employee engagement. The same Independent Samples t-test was utilized for this hypothesis. No significance was found between engagement and the communication channels Intranet, Internet, newsletter, posters/brochures/flyers, at-home mailers, company television or videos, audio recordings, and e-Newsletters. Significant differences between satisfied and dissatisfied respondents were found for Pre-shift Information (t = -2.05, Sig. = .05), Training Classes (t = -4.10, Sig. = .00), Meetings with Senior Management (t = -5.79, Sig. = .00), and Employee Recognition or Rewards Ceremonies (t = -4.52, Sig. = .00). In addition, significant relationships were found between Engagement and the new media communication channels of Emails (t = -2.40, Sig. = .03) and Blogs (t = -2.31, Sig. = .03). The results show that a blend of traditional and new media communication channels positively affected employee engagement. However, since a mix of traditional and new media channels were also found to be non-significant towards engagement, H2c is only partially supported (Table 6).

In the next and final chapter, the above findings are discussed. Chapter 5 will also review the strengths and limitations of this study, as well as implications for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this chapter, the results of this study are discussed and analyzed. The strengths and limitations are also presented, in addition to implications for future research.

Discussion

This section will discuss the analysis of internal communication and employee engagement, and the interrelationships of each factor derived from these larger constructs.

Internal Communication and Employee Commitment

As discussed in chapter 2, social scientific research on the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement is rare, if available at all. What past research has found is a link between internal communication and certain factors of engagement, such as commitment (Asif & Sargeant, 2000). The purpose of this study was to add to this fairly new area of research by examining the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement.

Through Pearson Product Moment Correlation, internal communication (Positive Superior Communication, Open communication with Superior, Superior-Subordinate Understanding and Opportunities for Upward Communication) was found to positively correlate with Organizational Commitment, a factor of engagement (Table 7). What this

tells us is that positive and mutual communication between an employee and their supervisor has an impact on that employee's commitment to the organization. Perhaps what the results also tell us is employees who have the opportunity to communicate with all levels of management, including senior management, feel greater commitment towards their organization. For organizations interested in reducing turnover rates, these results suggest that internal communication may be a means for doing so. Internal communication positively affects commitment and employees who are committed to their organization are less likely to leave. The study's findings imply to organizations that by harnessing internal communication you increase employee commitment. As a result of commitment, employee turnover may reduce and the organization will save money by having fewer employees to replace and retrain.

King, Lahiff, and Hatfield (1998) found a positive relationship between the communication employees receive from their supervisor and their overall satisfaction with their job. However, the current study found that Opportunities for Upward Communication had the highest correlation to Organizational Commitment. We could infer from these results that when an employee is provided ways to interact with upper management there is a greater impact on their commitment to the organization then when they experience positive or open communication with their superior or share mutual understanding. These results provide some insight into the importance of communication between employee, supervisor, and upper management. While supervisors may be a key contributor to employee commitment, it is the opportunity for communication with upper management that makes the biggest commitment difference.

Effective Communication and Discretionary Effort

While previous research and articles have discussed the outcomes produced when effective communication is present in an organization (Goodman & Truss, 2006; Guzley, 1992; Sias, 2005; Yates, 2006), they failed to clearly define what they meant by effective. Through factor analysis, the current study produced two factors for Quality of Information; factor 1 was labeled Effective Communication (Table 2).

Woodruffe (2006) explained that money is not that main motivator for employees. He believed organizations that offered much more than a paycheck would find that employees not only came to work each day, but they would also demonstrate discretionary effort. The current study has provided additional support for this. Effective Communication was found to correlate with two Discretionary Effort scale items (Table 7). Effective Communication was positively related to the statement, " I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected". This could mean that when an organization effectively communicates with an employee, that employee will be more willing to exert extra effort. The results also found that Effective Communication produced a positive relationship with the scale item, "This organization really inspires the very best in me." Perhaps when an organization effectively communicates with an employee, they are inspired to not only put in more work, but quality work as well.

These results are important in connecting communication to employee discretionary effort. Employees who are willing to go the "extra mile" for the organization may do more than what is normally expected of them. Organizations who effectively communicate with employees may find their employees are productive and motivated, and as a result, their organization is more successful.

Communication and Meaningful Work

While May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) found that meaningful work had the strongest correlation to engagement; they did not examine the relationship between communication and meaningfulness. The current study found correlations between two factors of communication and Meaningful Work. Open Communication with Superior and Opportunities for Upward Communication were both found to have a positive relationship with Meaningful Work (Table 7).

Here it seems that communication between the employee, supervisor and upper management had a positive effect on how meaningful work is to the employee. More precisely, open and candid communication between employee and supervisor seems to make that employee's day-to-day job activities more meaningful. The relationship to Meaningful Work was even stronger for those respondents that stated they had communication access to upper management. This suggests that when organizations foster a climate of open communication among all levels of employees, including upper management, they may positively influence the way their employees feel about their work.

On the other hand the communication factors of Positive Superior Communication and Superior-Subordinate Understanding had no positive relationships with Meaningful Work. Perhaps whether an employee's communication with their supervisor is positive or negative is not the key factor, rather it's the openness and candor between them that makes their work more meaningful. Understanding between an employee and their supervisor also seems to have no affect on how meaningful an employee's work is to

them. It does not appear that mutual understanding between employee and supervisor makes their work any more or less meaningful.

Quality of Communication and Employee Engagement

One goal in the current study was to examine whether a relationship exists between communication and engagement, as well as if the quality of communication also produces a relationship with engagement. This study found that positive relationships exist between several communication and engagement factors (Table 7). Both Effective Communication and Open Communication (communication factors) correlated with Organizational Commitment (engagement factor). These results may indicate organizations that effectively and openly communicate with employees will experience greater Organizational Commitment, a factor of engagement. To address open communication organizations should strive for transparency by providing information that is accurate, timely and reliable.

Effective Communication and Open Communication were also found to negatively correlate with Dissatisfaction in the Organization. What this states is organizations that effectively and openly communicate with their employees may generate greater satisfaction among their employees. These results provide further support for past research that linked communication and to employee satisfaction.

While H1c found that significant relationships exist between communication factors (Open Communication with Superior and Opportunities for Upward Communication) and Meaningful Work, no correlations were found for both Effective Communication and Open Communication in the Organization. While communication with an employee's superior and upper management may result in more meaningful work for that employee,

the same does not occur when there is effective and open communication present within the organization. One possibility for these results is that different communication factors were used in H1c and H2a and therefore, produced different results. Or perhaps Meaningful Work should be examined further to determine if it is a true factor of engagement. A relationship between communication and Meaningful Work was slightly supported, but it could benefit from further study.

Communication Channel Satisfaction and Employee Engagement

Watson Wyatt (2007) found that when it came to communication on their health benefits, employees preferred specific communication channels over others. Employees rated at-home mail as the most preferred, followed by print materials at work, the Internet, face-to-face, and the least desired being conversations with the Human Resource department (p. 10). In contrast, the current study found that in general the communication channel of Email had the greatest number of satisfied responses among respondents. These results tell us that when asked to rate their satisfaction with 14 communication channels, respondents were most satisfied with the email communication at their organization.

Email was also found to produce a significant relationship with engagement (Table 7). To determine whether the degree of Engagement was higher for Email, we also looked at the channel that generated the highest dissatisfaction scores among employees. At-home Mail was the communication channel shown to have the greatest level of dissatisfaction among employees and it had no significant relationship with employee engagement. These results infer that when an organization utilizes the channel employee's are most satisfied with, they also experience higher levels of engagement.

Traditional and New Media Use and Engagement

Debussy, Ewing, and Pitt (2003) found a positive relationship between the use of new media, organizational attitudes towards innovation, and the alignment of an employee's goals with those of the organization (p. 156). The researchers found that the use of new media, in particular the Intranet, positively affected internal marketing communication (p. 156). They also found organizations that strive to effectively communicate internally, benefit from the use of new media channels (p. 157). While several insights were produced by this study, it did not look at possible relationships between communication channels and employee engagement.

The current study found that four traditional (Meetings with Senior Management, Pre-shift Information, Training Classes, and Recognition and Rewards Ceremonies) and two new media channels (Emails and Blogs) were related to employee engagement (Table 7). These results seem to support the perspective that when an organization utilizes a blend of traditional and new media channels, they will improve employee engagement. However, no relationship was found between employee engagement and the majority of traditional and new media channels.

What is interesting about these findings is that all the face-to-face communication channels included in the scale instrument produced significant results with employee engagement. For an organization this provides important information on where to focus their internal communication initiatives. When employees have opportunities for in person, two-way communication there is reason to believe that engagement improves.

Another possibility to consider is that all six significant channels provide organizations methods for communicating immediate and up-to-date information. For

example, employee meetings can be utilized to update everyone on a recent merger and meetings provide an opportunity for employees to ask questions and get answers straight from management. Disseminating current information in electronic form can be done through Emails or Blogs. For example, in the hospitality industry email is sometimes used for sending out the latest occupancy rates, system outage alerts or entertainment cancellations. These channels are used because they provide a quick and immediate way to keep employees informed. As discussed earlier, when employees are provided the information they want and need: they are more committed to the company, are willing to exert discretionary effort, and their work is more meaningful. When an organization has employees with these characteristics, they have an engaged workforce.

While the current study examined employee satisfaction with 14 communication channels it did not ask respondents about their channel preference. In cannot be assumed that channel satisfaction is related to employee preference. Further research could provide additional insight on this area.

Strengths of the Current Study

Utilizing scale instruments from previous research proved to be a major strength in this study. Dennis' Communication Climate scale provided a wealth of scale items that addressed numerous areas of internal communication. The scale allowed for general feedback from employees on how they felt about the way their organization communicated with them.

For measuring employee engagement this study utilized the Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) and the Spreitzer (1995)

Empowerment Survey. The current study further showed that these scale instruments, as well as the Communication Climate scale both borrowed from previous researchers, once again proved to be reliable.

The Communication Channel scale instrument was created for this study and it provided a comprehensive overview of employee satisfaction with 14 communication channels. It was important that this scale measured traditional and new media channels because typical organizations utilize both. This scale provided insight – for the first-time in this type of study - into how employees feel about the use of traditional and new media channels within their organization. In addition, it provided results that point to certain channels and combinations of channels generating more employee satisfaction.

While all three of these scale instruments had been originally used in independent studies, the current study was able to incorporate all into one study and with reliable outcomes. It is believed that no other academic study has included scale instruments for internal communication, communication channels, and employee engagement.

Another strength of this study was the methodology. The respondents can be considered a fairly heterogeneous group as they represented a cross section of employees working in a wide range of industries – hospitality being the most represented industry. In addition, all 334 questionnaires were collected over a short period of time, were administered consistently, and were easily compiled for analysis.

Although this study covered two fairly large and general subjects, it was able to provide several insights into the relationship between internal communication and employee engagement. However, this study has only touched upon this area of research and it is clear that much more research is needed.

Limitations

An obvious limitation to this study was the use of university students. The sample could be considered a sample of convenience because it was solely comprised of this group. This should be considered when generalizing the results of this study, as they may not apply to the general public. In addition, university students may have less work experience than adults who are not enrolled in school. Using a sample with less work experience may have altered the results. It is also possible that the mean age of respondents (23 years of age) affected their perspective on internal communication within an organization. Individuals who are 23 may have a completely different perspective on internal communication in comparison to a respondent who is 44 years old.

Another limitation was that the Communication Climate scale was comprised of scale items predominantly stated in positive terminology. This only allowed us to examine positive communication interactions among employees and their organization. It did not allow us to examine the act of an organization merely communicating with employees. We do not know if the presence of communication, regardless of whether it is positive or negative, has an effect on employee engagement.

In addition, we did not originally identify effective communication as an independent variable. The original factor, Quality of Information proved unwieldy with 12 scale items and through factor analysis the factors of effective communication and open communication in the organization were produced.

Another limitation was the factor of Discretionary Effort. This factor was comprised of only two scale items. Additional scale items measuring discretionary effort could have provided greater support for the study's findings.

Future Research

While the constructs of internal communication and employee engagement are fairly large subjects, there are many implications for future research that this study provides. The results of this study show only a glimpse at the relationship between the two, but it has brought forth specific areas from each construct for future inquiry.

Further research is needed on supervisor communication and how it correlates to employee engagement. This study only touched upon the relationship between the two and the data show that there is reason to further examine the supervisor key group. It would be interesting to see further research on the communication climate among employees and their supervisors and whether it affects employee engagement levels. This type of research could provide organizations information on a valuable internal resource.

One surprising result from this study was that the highest correlation existed between opportunities for upward communication and employee commitment. It seems that having two-way communication between upper management and employees can be directly related to how committed employees feel toward their organization. The results showed a fair degree of a relationship and further research might provide additional data to support this correlation.

With the wealth of communication channels now available to organizations this subject could benefit from additional research. Some support was found for organizations using a blend of traditional and new media communication channels to enhance engagement levels. However, this study only examined channel satisfaction.

Future research could be conducted on channel preference and whether the type of communication causes channel preference to fluctuate.

Although a theoretical framework was not applied to this study, future research may benefit from being grounded in discrepancy theory. This theory explains the gap that may or may not be experienced based on what an employee expects and then how their organization delivers on those expectations. Originally applied to job satisfaction, discrepancy theory defined employee satisfaction being the difference between the outcomes a person seeks and the outcomes a person receives (King, Lahiff, & Hatfield, 1988). A discrepancy existed when there was a gap between what the employee sought and then received from their organization. We could use this theory when examining internal communication and employee engagement. An employee has many preconceived notions of how their organization should interact with them and communication may be one of those. If their organization does not meet their communication expectations, a discrepancy could be created. However, if that gap is small or there is no gap at all we may find that in addition to satisfaction there exists commitment and discretionary effort – all factors of employee engagement.

Conclusions

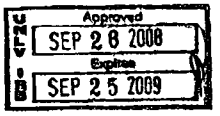
The larger purpose of this study was to determine if internal communication has an effect on employee engagement levels. Upon examining the factors of communication and engagement we found that a relationship does exist. The results indicated that organizations could utilize internal communication to improve employee engagement. It is unknown however, if these results – given the university student sampling – are true

for the general public. It certainly warrants further social scientific research in this area, possibly within an actual organization. This study did not find correlations between Positive Superior Communication, Superior-Subordinate Communication and Meaningful Work. Perhaps it was not designed appropriately to address that particular analysis.

While chapter 2 reviewed past and current research on internal communication and employee engagement it was noted that very few, if any academic research examined the relationship between the two. This study has provided data supporting the existence of a relationship and may provide useful information on how organizations can improve the employee experience and in turn perhaps support their own success.

APPENDIX I

RESEARCH APPROVAL



Social/Behavioral IRB – Expedited Review Approval Notice

NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:
Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: September 26, 2008

TO: **Dr. Paul Traudt**, School of Journalism and Media Studies

FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

RE: Notification of IRB Action by Dr. Paul Jones, Co-Chair PJ
Protocol Title: **Internal Communication In Organizations and Employee Engagement**
Protocol #: 0804-2727

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45 CFR 46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is September 25, 2009. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:
Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond September 25, 2009, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** *60 days* before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047

INFORMED CONSENT

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Hank Greenspun College of Urban Affairs
Department of Journalism and Media Studies

TITLE OF STUDY: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Paul Traudt, Principal Investigator; Lynn Hayase, Associate Investigator
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 0804-2727

Purpose of the Study
You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between internal or employee communication and employee engagement. We are interested in whether the communication received as an employee has an effect on levels of engagement.

Participants
You are being asked to participate in the study because many of you are employed or have been in the past. Your opinions and feedback on internal communication within an organization and your level of engagement are valuable to our research study. Participants of this study are enrolled in Journalism and Media Studies courses and are considered to be a healthy adult ranging in age from 18-100.

Procedures
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following: complete a questionnaire that addresses your thoughts and opinions on your organization's communication with employees and how you feel this may or may not affect your level of engagement with the organization.

Benefits of Participation
There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, after participating in this study you may experience the indirect benefit of being better informed about the subject matter of internal communication and employee engagement.

Risks of Participation
There are risks involved in all research studies. This study may include only minimal risks. For example, you may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions on the questionnaire. If this should happen, you may excuse yourself from the room, or simply not answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
INFORMED CONSENT (continued)

TITLE OF STUDY: INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
INVESTIGATOR(S): Dr. Paul Traudt, Principal Investigator; Lynn Hayase, Associate Investigator
PROTOCOL NUMBER: 0804-2727

Cost /Compensation
There will not be financial cost to you to participate in this study. The study will take approximately 25 to 30 minutes of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact Lynn Hayase at **(702)526-0884.** For questions regarding the rights of research subjects, any complaints or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted you may contact **the UNLV Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 702-895-2794.**

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study. You may withdraw at any time without prejudice to your relations with the university. You are encouraged to ask questions about this study at the beginning or any time during the research study.

Confidentiality
All information gathered in this study will be kept completely confidential. No reference will be made in written or oral materials that could link you to this study. All records will be stored in a locked facility at UNLV for at least 3 years after completion of the study. After the storage time the information gathered will be shredded and discarded.

Participant Consent:
I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I am at least 18 years of age. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____
Participant Name (Please Print)

Participant Note: Please do not sign this document if the Approval Stamp is missing or is expired.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Employee Communication Questionnaire

This questionnaire will ask you questions concerning internal communication within an organization. For the purpose of this study internal communication is defined as the exchange of information both informal and formal between management and employees.

When reading each question think of your current job when answering. If you are not currently employed, think about your most recent job when answering. If you have more than one job, think about the job you consider most important. It is recommended that you write down the first response that comes to mind.

PART I

COMMUNICATION CLIMATE
When answering the items below think about the company you currently work for, most recently worked for or consider most important.

Rate the following statements according to **how you feel about your relationship with your immediate supervisor.** Indicate your choice by placing an (x) under your answer choice.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1.	Your superior makes you feel free to talk with him/her.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.	Your superior really understands your job problems.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.	Your superior encourages you to let him/her know when things are going wrong on the job.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.	Your superior makes it easy for you to do your best work.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5.	Your superior expresses his/her confidence with your ability to perform the job.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6.	Your superior encourages you to bring new information to his/her attention, even when that new information may be bad news.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
7.	Your supervisor makes you feel that things you tell him/her are really important	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8.	Your superior is willing to tolerate arguments and to give a fair hearing to all points of view.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9.	Your superior has your best interests in mind when he/she talks to his/her boss.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10.	Your superior is a really competent, expert manager.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
11.	Your superior listens to you when you tell him/her about things that are bothering you.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
12.	It is safe to say what you are really thinking to your superior.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
13.	Your superior is frank and candid with you.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
14.	You can communicate job frustrations to your superior.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
15.	You can tell your superior about the way you feel he/she manages your department.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
16.	You are free to tell your superior that you disagree with him/her.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
17.	You think you are safe in communicating "bad news" to your superior without fear of retaliation on his/her part.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
18.	You believe that your superior thinks he/she really understands *you*.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
19.	You believe that your superior thinks that you understand *him/her.*	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
20.	Your superior really understands you.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
21.	You really understand your superior.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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PART II

When answering the items below think about the company you currently work for, most recently worked for or consider most important.

Rate the following statements according to **how you feel about the quality of information you receive in your current position.** Indicate your choice by placing an (x) under your answer choice.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. You think that people in this organization say what they mean and mean what they say.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. People in this organization are encouraged to be really open and candid with each other.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. People in this organization freely exchange information and opinions.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. You are kept informed about how well organizational goals and objectives are being met.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. Your organization succeeds in rewarding and praising good performance.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. Top management is providing you with the kinds of information you really want and need.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. You receive information from the sources that you prefer (e.g. from your superiors, department meetings, co-workers, newsletters).	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
9.	You are pleased with the management's efforts to keep employees up-to-date on recent developments that relate to the organization's welfare – such as success in competition, profitability, future growth plans, etc.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10.	You are notified in advance of changes that affect your job.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
11.	You are satisfied with explanations you get from top management about why things are done as they are.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
12.	Your job requirements are specified in clear language.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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PART III

When answering the items below think about the company you currently work for, most recently worked for or consider most important.

Rate the following statements according to **how you feel about your opportunities to communicate to upper management.** Indicate your choice by placing an (x) under your answer choice.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Your opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect your job.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. You believe your views have real influence in your organization.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. You can expect that recommendations you make will be heard and seriously considered.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

PART IV

When answering the items below think about the company you currently work for, most recently worked for or consider most important.

Rate the following statements according to **how you feel about the reliability of information you receive at your organization.** Indicate your choice by placing an (x) under your answer choice.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. You think that information received from management is reliable.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. You think that information received from your colleagues (co-workers) is reliable.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

PART V

The below items refer to the specific communication channels your company may use to share general company information. **Rate your satisfaction with the communication channels your company uses by placing an "X" under your answer choice.** Mark "does not apply" if your company currently does not use that channel.

Note: *The answer choices in this section are different from the previous section. Please review the new answer choices prior to making your selection.*

		Does Not Apply	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
1.	Intranet	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2.	Internet	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3.	Printed Newsletters	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4.	Blogs	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5.	Posters, flyers, Brochures, Banners	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6.	Emails	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7.	At home mailers	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8.	Employee recognition & rewards ceremonies or presentations	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9.	Training Classes	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
10.	Meetings with Senior Management	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
11.	Pre-shift information or meetings	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
12.	Company television or videos	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
13.	Audio recordings or phone messages	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
14.	e-Newsletters	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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PART VI

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AND MEANING

Listed below are a series of statements that represent possible feelings that individuals might have about the company or organization for which they work, most recently worked or consider most important.

Rate the following statements according to **how you feel about the particular organization for which you are now working, most recently worked for or consider most important**. Indicate your choice by placing an (x) under your answer choice.

Note: *The answer choices in this section are different from the previous section. Please review the new answer choices prior to making your selection.*

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
2. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization to work for.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
3. I feel very little loyalty to this organization.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
4. The work I do is very important to me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
5. I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
6. I find my values and the organization's values are very similar.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
7. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
8. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
9. I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
10.	This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
11.	It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
12.	I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
13.	There's not much to be gained by staying with this organization indefinitely.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
14.	Often, I find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies on important matters relating to its employees.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
15.	I really care about the fate of this organization.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
16.	The work I do is meaningful to me.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
17.	For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
18.	Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part.	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

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PART VII

Circle the choice that best corresponds to your answer.

1. Are you currently employed? Yes No

2. Do you currently work for more than one company? Yes No

3. If you answered "Yes" to question 1, do you consider your current job a career or possible career path for you? Yes No
(If you work for more than one company, answer thinking about the job your regard as most important.)

4. Your gender is: Female Male

5. Your age is: _____

Please mark an (x) next to the occupation that best matches your current position or most recently held position.

1.	Construction	( )	7.	Manufacturing	( )
2.	Education or Health Services	( )	8.	Natural Resources or Mining	( )
3.	Finance	( )	9.	Professional or Business Services	( )
4.	Government	( )	10.	Transportation or Utilities	( )
5.	Information	( )	11.	Wholesale or Retail Trade	( )
6.	Leisure or Hospitality	( )	12.	Other List here: _____	( )

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Please mark an (x) next to your annual income.

1. Less than $10,000 ( )
2. $10,001-20,000 ( )
3. $20,001-30,000 ( )
4. $30,001-40,000 ( )
5. $40,001-50,000 ( )
6. $50,001-60,000 ( )
7. $60,001-70,000 ( )
8. More than $70,000 ( )

END. PLEASE WAIT UNTIL THE SURVEY ADMINISTRATOR ASKS YOU TO TURN IN THE SURVEY. THANK YOU.

TABLES

Table 1

Factor Analysis - Superior-Subordinate Communication

Item	PSC	OCS	SSU
% of Variance	**54.2**	**6.57**	**5.03**
Makes you feel that things you tell him/her are really important	.77		
Expresses confidence in your ability to perform the job	.76		
Encourages you to bring new information even if bad news	.74		
Encourages you to let him/her know when things are going wrong	.73		
You feel free to talk to him/her	.71		
Understands your job problems	.70		
Makes it easy for you to do your best work	.70		
Best interests in mind	.63	.45	
Listens to you when you share things that are bothering you	.61	.47	
Competent expert manager	.53	.45	
Free to tell superior you disagree		.82	
Tell superior your feelings about way they manage		.76	
You can communicate job frustrations	.41	.69	
Safe to tell superior what you are really thinking		.65	
You think you are safe to share bad news	.40	.61	
Superior willing to tolerate arguments and give fair hearing	.49	.59	

Table 1 (continued)

Factor Analysis - Superior-Subordinate Communication

Item	PSC	OCS	SSU
Your superior thinks that you understand them			.85
You really understand your superior			.81
Your superior thinks they understand you			.66
Your superior really understands you	.46		.63

Note. PSC = Positive Superior Communication; OCS = Open Communication with Superior; SSU = Superior-Subordinate Communication

Table 2

Factor Analysis – Quality of Information

Item	EC	OCO
% of Variance	**50.08**	**9.24**
You are pleased with management's efforts to keep employees up-to-date	.82	
You receive information from sources you prefer	.74	
You are notified in advance of changes that affect your job	.72	
Top management is providing you with the kinds of information you really want and need	.71	.41
You are kept informed about how well organizational goals and objectives are being met	.68	
Your organization succeeds in rewarding and praising good performance	.66	
You are satisfied with explanations you get from top management abut why things are done as they are	.61	.44
Your job requirements are specified in clear language	.60	
People say what they mean and mean what they say		.79
People freely exchange information and opinions		.73
People are encouraged to be really open and candid		.72
People in top management say what they mean and mean what they say		.71

Note. EC = Effective Communication; OCO = Open Communication in the Organization.

Table 3

Factor Analysis – Opportunities for Upward Communication

Item	OUC
% of Variance	**80.76**
You believe your views have real influence	.92
You can expect that recommendations you make will be heard and considered	.90
Your opinions make a difference in the day-to-day decisions that affect your job	.88

Note. OUC = Opportunities for Upward Communication

Table 4

Factor Analysis – Communication Channels

Item	NV	FTF	EI
% of Variance	**33.6**	**10.88**	**8.08**
Blogs	.74		
e-Newsletters	.70		
Company television or videos	.66		
Printed Newsletter	.64		
At-home mailers	.64		
Audio recordings or phone messages	.63		
Intranet	.43		
Training classes		.78	
Meetings with senior management		.73	
Pre-shift information or meetings		.59	
Employee recognition or rewards ceremonies		.59	
Posters, flyers, brochures, banners	.42	.43	
Emails			.78
Internet			.77

Note. NV = Newsletter and Videos; FTF = Face-to-face; EI = Email and Internet.

Table 5

Factor Analysis – Employee Engagement

Item	OC	MW	DO
% of Variance	**47.91**	**8.83**	**5.73**
I find my values and the organization's values are very similar	.81		
I talk up this organization to my friends	.77		
I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization	.77		
For me this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work	.76		
I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I considered	.72		
I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organization	.70		
This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance	.70	.41	
I really care about the fate of this organization	.67		
I often find it difficult to agree with this organization's policies relating to employees	-.54		.44
I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this organization be successful	.52	.47	
Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake on my part	-.46		
The work I do is meaningful to me		.82	
The work I do is very important to me	.41	.77	
My job activities are personally meaningful to me	.43	.76	

Table 5 (continued)

Factor Analysis – Employee Engagement

Item	OC	MW	DO
% of Variance	**47.91**	**8.83**	**5.73**
It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave			.73
I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the work was similar			.64
There's not much to be gained by staying with this organization	-.51		.53
I feel very little loyalty to this organization		-.47	.53

Note. OC = Organizational Commitment; MW = Meaningful Work;

DO = Dissatisfaction in the Organization.

Table 6

Independent Samples *t*-test – Communication Channels

Intranet	Dissatisfied = 3	56			
	Satisfied = 93	59.39	-1.29	2.38	*ns*
Internet	Dissatisfied = 26	56.27			
	Satisfied = 164	59.8	-2.02	32.12	*ns*
Newsletter	Dissatisfied = 19	56.58			
	Satisfied = 100	59.95	-1.64	24.33	*ns*
Blogs	Dissatisfied = 17	54.41			
	Satisfied = 23	60.09	-2.31	35.94	.03
Posters, flyers, brochures, banners	Dissatisfied = 24	56.42			
	Satisfied = 173	58.75	-1.22	29.26	*ns*
Emails	Dissatisfied = 19	55.79			
	Satisfied = 179	60.16	-2.4	22.34	.03
At-home mailers	Dissatisfied = 19	59.1			
	Satisfied = 56	60.25	-.51	34.57	*ns*
Employee recognition or rewards ceremonies	Dissatisfied = 48	54.17			
	Satisfied = 122	60.83	-4.52	71.44	.00
Training classes	Dissatisfied = 48	54.71			
	Satisfied = 153	60.36	-4.10	72.76	.00
Meetings with senior management	Dissatisfied = 55	53.16			
	Satisfied = 127	61.49	-5.79	78.18	.00

Table 6 (continued)

Independent Samples *t*-test – Communication Channels

Pre-shift information	Dissatisfied = 37	55.97			
	Satisfied = 160	59.03	-2.05	54.19	.05
Company television or videos	Dissatisfied = 20	58.15			
	Satisfied = 76	58.99	-.326	24.48	*ns*
Audio recordings	Dissatisfied = 23	56.39			
	Satisfied = 79	61.30	-2.03	28.86	*ns*
e-Newsletters	Dissatisfied = 14	59			
	Satisfied = 58	60.84	-.68	16.79	*ns*

Table 7

Correlations

Hypotheses	Engagement
H1a Communication and Commitment Positive Superior Communication Opportunities for Upward Communication Superior- Subordinate Understanding Open Communication with Superior	**Commitment** $r = .42$ ($p < .01$) $r = .49$ ($p < .01$) $r = .28$ ($p < .01$) $r = .17$ ($p < .01$)
H1b Effective communication and Discretionary Effort Effective Communication	**Discretionary Effort** I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected. $r = .24$ ($p < .01$) This organization really inspires the very best in me. $r = .44$ ($p < .01$)
H1c Communication and Meaningful Work Open Communication with Superior Opportunities for Upward Communication	**Meaningful Work** $r = .15$ ($p < .01$) $r = .27$ ($p < .01$)
H2a Quality of Communication and Engagement Effective Communication Open Communication within Organization	**Commitment** $r = .43$ ($p < .01$) **Dissatisfaction in the Organization** $r = -.17$ ($p < .01$) **Commitment** $r = .34$ ($p < .01$) **Dissatisfaction in the Organization** $r = -.23$ ($p < .01$)

Table 7 (continued)

Correlations

Hypotheses	Engagement
H2b Communication Channel Satisfaction and Engagement	
Email (N = 179, M = 60.16)	t = - 2.40, Sig. = .025
H2c Utilization of Traditional and New Media and it's Relationship to Engagement	
Traditional Media Channels	
Pre-shift Information	(t = -2.05, Sig. = .05)
Training Classes	(t = -4.10, Sig. = .00)
Meetings with Senior Management	(t = -5.79, Sig. = .00)
Employee Recognition or Rewards Ceremonies	(t = -4.52, Sig. = .00)
New Media Channels	
Emails	(t = -2.40, Sig. = .03)
Blogs	(t = -2.31, Sig. = .03)

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