

The Role of Communication in New Process Implementations: A General Systems Theory Approach

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Abstract

Communication within human activity systems plays a critical role in organizational change but its impact is often not well understood from a holistic viewpoint. Consequently, this lack of understanding is a contributor to many project failures such as new process implementations. While many areas of research focus on communication as a tool to evaluate the current state of an organizational system, or as a vehicle to change the system, few studies look at the communication competence between managers or between managers and subordinates from a systems thinking perspective. In addition, there is a lack of formal systemic models describing the nature or behavior of communication. The goal for the research is to identify and describe communication as an emergent system from the interaction of elements and processes within the organizational practices as well as characterize its impact on human activity systems. In doing so, five propositions were presented and addressed through a comprehensive literature review and empirical research. Additionally, an ontological framework for the communication system was developed and tested in a case study with Boeing Portland. It is anticipated that this work will aid researchers to better understand and characterize communication theoretically, and practitioners by expressing the different factors impacting the success of the communication system. This research is presented by 1) discussing the purpose of the research, 2) synthesizing a literary exploration from which the ontological framework was developed, 3) describing the methodology for testing the framework and validating the propositions, 4) presenting three papers within the research, 5) discussing how the propositions were met, and 6) proposing future work on the research propositions.

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