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Making Communications Efficient To Improve Productivity

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Abstract:
There are several productivity paradigms in management such as Lean, Toyota Production System, and Just-in-Time etc. Indeed an entire discipline of Industrial Engineering and Operation management tries to improve productivity through work flow and time and motion study. However while adequate attention has been paid to improving operational efficiency, very little attention is devoted to improving communications efficiency. This is surprising because almost 30% to 80% of time at work place is spent in communication of some sorts – verbal, written etc. This paper makes a case for examining the benefits of improving communication efficiency.

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I. Introduction

It is estimated that in an organisation almost 30% to 80% of time is spent in communication – verbal, written and even non-verbal. It should be very obvious that if communication is made more efficient, more work can be done in less time. And that means that you can reduce costs, increase profits and increase efficiency.

Beginning in 20th century considerably effort and study has gone to make operations more efficient. Beginning with Scientific Management of Fredrick Taylor and Frank Gilbert, considerable research and study has gone to make operations efficient. These methods included time and motion study and work flow analysis.

Indeed there is entire discipline of Industrial Engineering and Operations Management, entirely devoted to making operations more efficient. That is very vast field and much studied area.

However what is surprising is that very little effort has gone to making communications efficient. After all if people spend almost 30 to 80% of time communicating, the area that will yield greatest benefits in improving productivity is enhancing communications efficiency.

And it is easy to improve communications efficiency. After all even school children are required to attempt Precis, in which they reduce the size of text by 66% to 33% of its original size. Clearly if that kind of efficiency is applied to organisations given that 30 to 80% of time is spent in communications (verbal, written etc), then it is possible to gain at least 20 - 50% improvement in productivity.

This paper explores this rather important but scarcely discussed topic.

Industrial Engineering and Operations Management

Industrial Engineering is an engineering profession that is concerned with the optimization of complex processes, systems or organisations by developing, improving and implementing integrated systems of people, knowledge, information or equipment. Industrial engineering is central to manufacturing operations. There are several industrial engineering principles followed in the manufacturing industry to ensure the effective flow of the systems, processes and operations.

Operations Management is an area of management concerned with designing and controlling the process of production and redesigning business operations in the production and redesigning business operations in the production of goods or services. It involves the responsibility of ensuring that business operations are efficient in terms of using as few resources as needed and effective in meeting customer requirements.

This paper is not related to Industrial Engineering and Operations management. But if sufficient to say that enough engineering and management efforts has gone to make industrial operations efficient by optimizing processes and redesigning operations.

What about communications efficiency?

Communications efficiency is the ability to deliver clear message in the shortest possible time. That is how efficiency is defined. Efficiency is ratio of output to input.

When industrial engineering and operations management are tried to optimize processes and redesign operations, is is wrong to question, if similar efficiency can be brought in communication.

Some people may argue that efficient communication could be curt and abrupt. And yes initially people may take time to get used to efficient communication, when they are used to long speeches by politicians and long discourses by religious leaders and unending television serials.

However after some time people will start to adapt to communication efficiency.

On average workers spend 30% of time communicating. Some professionals spend almost 80% of time in communication. While the importance of efficiency in other areas is realized communication efficiency is not given adequate importance.

Isn't it equally important to find ways and means to be more efficient in communication? Of course this cannot be achieved by default. Just as scientific management, industrial engineering and operations management brought about efficiency in processes, systems and operations, so also a systematic approach to communication can bring about efficiency in communication with demonstrable financial benefits for organisation.

Of course, this will require language experts to work on this. But the importance of communication efficiency cannot be underestimated.

Conclusion

People spend more than 30% of time in communication. It is important to make communications efficient, so that it can reduce costs, improve production thus increasing productivity led financial benefits in terms of more profits, faster growth and greater revenues.

However while industrial engineering and operations management have brought about significant improvements in efficiency of operations and processes, adequate attention has not been paid to communications efficiency.

But if communication takes so much time, it is obvious that communication efficiency can reduce costs and increase production and enable greater profits.

This paper opens up the issue of communication efficiency and argues that industrial engineering and operations management should look into communications efficiency as much as efficiency of operations and processes.