New Trends in Business Communication in Romania

Cristina ATHU
Ph.D Lecturer “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University, Bucharest, Romania
Email: cristinathu@yahoo.com

Abstract

Effective business communication is the central pillar of a business. Nowadays business communication trends and tools broadly deal with technological developments and applications connected to business processes that can relate to back office operations, data management and analysis, professional services and support, to mention only a few. They cover almost any type of businesses, in manufacturing and/or services. Some of the most recent and relevant ones are discussed in this article

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Introduction

According to Hartley et. al. (2002), business communication can be defined as any kind of business communication at the organizational level designed to provide a service, a product, an idea or even establish partnerships so as to enhance organizational or business activities. At any workplace, business communication plays a number of diverse roles.

To begin with, business communication has helped in the enhancement of all the functions in the organization.

That is, through business communication, the organizational functions at any workplace including stuffing, controlling, planning as well as selling and reporting are coordinated in a better way and with that comes efficiency at any workplace.

Guffey et al. (2009) notes that business communication is also critical when it comes to the execution of basic management functions by both the middle level managers as well as the top management.

According to Radulescu (2008) Effective communication requires developing a relationship that will lead to the fulfillment of consumer expectations, and long-term interests of the organization.
The Current Trend In Business Communication Worldwide

Business communication plays an important role as far as both the coordination and the direction of activities by the two levels of management which is being concerned. It is also important to note that through forum boards at any workplace, which is taken to be a method of business communication, individuals have been able to post data instantly in a centralized location. Business communication also enhances the interaction between managers and other clients and prevent conflicts, according to Radulescu (2012).

The importance of business communication skills is rising. Employees are increasingly being asked to present to international audiences the latest sales figures, to unveil the latest product, or to explain changes in strategy, and all in English.

Many factors can influence how well you communicate. These include your preparation, the type of audience, the room in which you talk, your level of English, your voice, the visuals you use, and whether you smile.

The list may seem depressingly long, but a good business presentation requires you to handle a few basics well and to avoid certain pitfalls (Gopal, 2009). Before reading on, ask yourself the following questions:

- What should I say in the first few minutes?
- What makes a good visual?
- What can I do to handle questions well?
- What cultural factors could influence the success of business communication?

Necessary Steps For A Successful Business Communication

There are four steps to be used in order to make a better business presentation.

**Step one: Good Planning**

Planning is the key to a good business presentation. This means considering the three “Ps”: people, place and purpose.

**People**

We need to think about our audience. Everything should be geared to its needs and expectations. So, who are they? What do they need to know? Do they want to just listen or to contribute? Do they value punctuality and good time-keeping? Do they prefer a flexible style to rigid structure? Do they see informality as a lack of professionalism? Do they see digression as irrelevant?
We also need to think about cultural differences. It is said that, typically, German audiences love to hear facts; US audiences expect a show; and Italian audiences love to participate (see also Business Spotlight 2/2001).

Place

If possible, visit the lecture room beforehand. How big is it? Are the acoustics good? How is the seating organized? Where can you stand to show visuals? Do you have the necessary equipment? Can you check that it works?

Purpose

Why are you giving the business presentation? This must be clear – both to you and your audience. Are you looking to inform, educate, persuade, entertain, motivate, get feedback, impress or create a relationship? Or you have a hidden agenda?

Step two: Getting started

We make a good impression by starting confidently.

Organization

When choosing content, we must follow a four-step process;

- First, collect ideas.
- Next, select the most useful ideas for your objective.
- Thirdly, group the points into logical units.
- Finally, sequence these units to create a clear thread.

Introductions

When making business presentations, first impressions count. You can win or lose an audience in the first few minutes. It is necessary to choose elements from the classic introduction in order to make a professional start, to make your objective very clear, and also plan to hook your audience at the beginning, to create an impact that will engage them and build interest for the whole business presentation. There are three simple techniques to be followed:

- **Surprise your audience**
  “Did you know that Cisco does 80 per cent of its business online? Now you know why I am talking about e-business today.”

- **Make an offer**
  “Imagine a consultant who could send you a 20% increase in your productivity in 12 months. Well, don’t just imagine it. That’s I intend to do today.”
Use rhetorical questions
“Why are you here today? Well, the subject is quality. Why quality? Because without it, you can’t succeed.”

Step three: Delivering

Psychologist and author Albert Mehrabian once famously analysed communication as being seven per cent verbal (the words we use), 38 per cent voice (tone, volume, etc.) and 55 per cent body language. While one can argue about these percentages, successful presenters clearly manage all three elements well.

Verbal

Language is the packaging for your message. Useful words and phrases, different forms and structures can enhance your message significantly. It is important to focus on the following ideas:

CLARITY

Structure your presentation explicitly and use “signaling” or “signposting” business language to guide the audience. For example: “OK, that brings me to the end of the first section. Now I’d like to move on to the second point”. Also, remember the somewhat clichéd but still relevant rule of “Kiss”: keep it short and simple. Use the sort of language your audience will understand.

IMPACT

In today’s ultra – competitive business world, it is essential to be persuasive. There are a number of techniques to be followed:

- Repeating. Repeat key points using synonyms: “Our solution is very cheap, ultra-fast and extremely reliable.”
- Contrasting. This technique gives your business information a clearer focus: “Last year was only average. This year is exceptional.”
- Questioning. Rhetorical questions vary your rhythm: “So what is the problem? The problem is cash flow.”
- Energizing. Add energy by punctuating strongly with filling words: “OK.../So.../Right...”
- Engaging. Establish rapport with your audience by including an interesting personal anecdote.
- Personal Style. The words and phrases we use are often a question of personality, as is our style of delivery. It is important to know your strengths and weaknesses
and adapt to the needs of your audiences. Be aware of whether you make the sound “er” (or “uh”) when you hesitate. This is very distracting. It is better to think in silence. Record yourself - more than one “er” a minute is too many.

**Voice**

Using your voice effectively may involve changing the way you usually

Good speakers also use sentence stress to highlight the key words, as well as pauses and rhythm to create a natural, dynamic delivery.

**Body Language**

This is a subject that is often complicated by cross-cultural factors. Your audiences may have very strong expectations of how you look and how you move. Probably the best advice is simply to be yourself. If you are relaxed and confident, your body will follow and communicate that naturally. However, there are some things you can do to enhance your performance.

- **Move a little.** Don’t become too static. When taking a question, move toward the questioner.
- **Keep strong eye contact.** This suggests sincerity.
- **Maximize your body square.** Most of the time, your hands/arms should occupy the square between your shoulders and waist, with hands together or apart.
- **Use fingers** when describing points with numbers: raise your thumb for point one; thumb and index finger for point two and so on. The back of your hand should face the audience. Remember also that audiences are easily distracted by personal tics. Video yourself giving a presentation, and then watch for mannerisms that could be distracting.

**Step four: Finishing well**

Psychologists tell us that we remember best what is said at the beginning and at the end of a presentation. A strong finish is therefore essential. Make sure that you summarize clearly the main points of a talk; have a simple, short message your audience will remember; and have time for questions. The question phase of a business presentation is the most challenging, as it is the least predictable. Try to anticipate the questions that you might receive, especially the critical ones, and prepare answers. This will enable you to remain confident and to appear authoritative. Also, don’t be afraid to use the trick of planting someone in the audience to ask a first “friendly” question. When taking questions, remember the simple acronym RACE as a step-by-step guide of what to do:

**R= Respond**

This may be a positive response or a clarification of the meaning of a question. Clarification will mean you don’t waste time answering the wrong question.
A = Answer

Keep your answer concise and, if possible, link back explicitly to something you said in your business presentation.

C = Check

Always check with the questioner that you have answered the question. In more interactive meetings, you can always ask the questioners for their thoughts and opinions.

E = Encourage

This means invite, or ask for, more questions. Be sure to allow time for people to formulate their questions.

Here are some other useful tips for the question part of your business presentation:

- Never say “I don’t know.” Offer to find the answer to a question you do not know the answer to, and get back to the questioner.
- Throw back a hostile question with the question “What do you think?”
- Don’t enter into a debate with one person.

When questions are over, politely thank the audience for their attention. Plan to give them one more final message or observation to take away before you finish, and accept the rapturous applause!

Thomas Schulz is Head of European Project and Transition Management within the Asset Management division of Credit Suisse in Zurich. Within the company, he has to give one or two presentations a month in English, on aspects of strategy, business development, strategic projects and strategic control.

The new trend in making his business presentation more effective is using an extremely clear structure, which means he often introduces points before he explains them and then summarizes what he has said. This way the audience can always see where they are. In fact, it is very important to say key messages two or three times to give your audience a chance to better hear and understand them. Once is not enough.

The use of tricks in business communication can be replaced by jokes now and then. People who are having fun have more interest in a subject. Variety is also very important. If we try to vary our voice, our materials, for example from flip chart to beamer, the audience gets involved. Asking questions from time to time is also extremely efficient.

Taking into consideration cultural differences in business presentations it is said that the most exciting presentations are made by native speakers from the UK and the US. In the US especially, the focus is more on communication rather than the facts – more on the how rather
than the what. In German and Switzerland, there is a strong attention to facts and being correct, which may often lead to very uninspiring, boring presentations.

The main tip for German people is to prepare seriously, to be professional and also try to show your feelings never try to hide behind facts or behind your beamer. The best solution is to stand up and tell people what you really think.

Consequently, presentations in German and in English are completely different but following the already mentioned principles, we can feel confident that we can do a good job in both languages.

Conclusion

Social media means business. The coming years will see business exploiting and integrating social media networks and channels with their broader business processes. Social media will especially be important to those businesses relying heavily on business communication with a literate and accessible client base.

Most blogs on the internet are interactive and allows the reader to participate by leaving a comment of their own. Over the past six years blogs have come into their own and are set to take off as major vehicles of influences. Using tools like Facebook, blogs, public forums business can better know how to attract and keep their customers.

Technology will continue to advance and new communication devices will emerge. The trick to successful business communication is in keeping up with trends and learning how they can make your business better.

References


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