RECENT STUDIES IN INDUSTRIAL COMMUNICATIONS*

1. THEORETICAL DISCUSSIONS


Reports experimental studies of various patterns of organizational communication and their effects on human performance. These studies seem to indicate both the need for and the value of "systematic studies of actual operating organizations."


Describes a scale of human relations ranging from dictatorship to responsible participation, the third step of which is "communications."

"The variability on the scale from bottom to top is one of more and more participation by the employee in the decision making and policy planning at all levels," that is, it is "a scale of increasing 'consent.'"


Attempts to explain the increasing interest in communication, to summarize "the significant trends revealed in contemporary writing on communication," and to develop "a theory of industrial communication which can serve as a basis for the development of appropriate and effective techniques."


Barriers discussed in this article are those associated with status relationships, individual direct contacts, group direct contacts, and the written word.

* Items from this list should be ordered directly from the publisher. Addresses are given in connection with each reference.

Examines the strategic factors which make for success or failure in communication and discusses means for making it more effective.


Stresses "the fact that the real problems of communication in an organization are not primarily between large groups of people, to be solved by mass media, but are on the contrary a matter of face-to-face contacts between two individuals who work together" . . . "and that communication is a matter not only of words, but, even more, of day-to-day behavior."

2. LANGUAGE IN COMMUNICATIONS


———"Language and 'reality'—semantics of industrial relations: II."

These articles apply some of the principles of general semantics to the problems of verbal communication in industry.


An annotated bibliography of literature published from 1943 to early 1950 which includes 14 items relating to research in industrial communications, as well as background reading on the Flesch formulas and examples of their use in non-industrial situations.


Analysis, by the Flesch formulas, of typical letters in reply to employee suggestions showed that they rated "difficult to read" and "only mildly interesting." The authors point out the importance of writing rejection letters "in an unstilted fashion expressly for your particular audience."

3. GENERAL STUDIES OF COMPANY PRACTICES

Brief presentation of results of surveys conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation among several well-known companies as to the effectiveness of various techniques for communicating with employees.


Survey of company practices and opinion on "upward communications." Topics covered are formal attitude surveys, methods of upward communication, the union as a source of information, management interest in employees' personal life, and how good a job of listening management is doing.


From study of the experiences of a hundred or more companies, the author concludes that "subject matter and media for communication require frequent appraisal." He stresses also that a basic plan of organization is essential to "give direction to communications" and that timing and coordination of several media in releasing information are likewise important.


Based on a survey of practices in over 250 companies this report discusses how management gets the opinions of its engineers, what the engineers want to know about management policy, what media of communication are used, and the extent to which the management potential of engineers is utilized.


Describes the various media and methods in use for communicating with employees, techniques for evaluating these, and the fundamentals of a satisfactory program.


The author finds that practices, as revealed in a survey made by the Controllership Foundation, apparently take no account of recently developed theories about the importance of employee participation. He suggests ways to improve the situation.

A critical discussion of communication in American business which delves into the reasons for the failure of the "free enterprise" campaign, the techniques of communication in actual use, and the dangers inherent in the current "mechanistic approach" to communication problems.

4. CASE STUDIES


The aim of this study was "to discover what actually constituted 'communications,' to trace the channels which were used, and to evaluate the effectiveness of union and management communications." On the basis of their findings, the authors discuss factors which seemed of significance in successful communications.


An analysis of the strong and weak points in the communication systems of the Southern New England Telephone Company and the Connecticut Union of Telephone Workers.


A study tracing "development of a pattern of meetings and conferences" used for intra-management communication in an Australian automobile body plant.


A report on research projects undertaken at the Glacier Metal Company which covers important aspects of communication among worker and management groups.

Ulrich, David N., Donald R. Booz, and Paul R. Lawrence. Management behavior and foreman attitude; a case study. Boston 63. Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University. 1950. 56 pp. 75 cents.

Analyzes the nature of, and reasons for, the "gap in understanding and communication which the authors . . . observed to exist between the general management and the subordinate levels of the plant studied."