

adidas-Salomon Stakeholder Dialogue in Turkey

Worker-Management Communication Workshop, 5.-7. and 13. October 2004

Location	: Nippon Hotel, Istanbul, Turkey
Workshop for managers & supervisors	: 05 October 2004
Workshop for workers	: 06-07 October 2004
Joint session with all participants	: 13 October 2004
Participating factories	: Factory A, Factory B, Factory C, Factory D
Workshop facilitator	: Gul Kircil and Olgun Kircil Sekoya Danismanlik Ltd.

Objective of the Project:

To improve communication between management, workers and supervisors in supplier factories

Methodology

Analyses if implemented communication systems are working effectively by running separate and joint workshops for management, workers and supervisors working with a participatory approach.

Approach:

Two separate workshops: one for managers and supervisor and another one for workers

One joint session: all three parties, to discuss the findings of the separate sessions, to discuss areas which can be improved and to develop an action plan how to move forward.

A new communication model is introduced to the participants to improve the delivery and effectiveness of communication in their factories.

Workshop Content

- What does good communication mean?
- What is the criteria / benchmark for effective communication?
- Why is effective communication in both directions important?
- What are the advantages of effective worker-management communication?
- Is there a link between good communication and the general environment in a factory?
- Does communication work effectively in both directions or not?
- If it does not work in both directions, does it work in one direction?
- What does work well and what does not work well?
- What are the hurdles?
- What could be improved and in which way?
- Are there best practices with regard to communication?

1. Workshop for Managers and Supervisors

1.1. Analysis of existing communication issues (current situation)

The first day of the workshop was for managers and supervisors. At the introductory session, general communication problems at work places were presented by the consultants especially emphasizing how communication problems affect work results. At the end of the session, participants from each factory were asked to work in groups to identify communication problems in their factories and the related results.

Communication Problems identified by managers and supervisors (below points are direct quotes from the flip chart of each group):

- Lack of communication between departments
- Lack of sharing information
- Ineffective meetings

- Lack of coordination between departments
- Middle management fails to establish dialogue between upper management and workers
- Instructions of managers are often misunderstood by workers
- Instructions coming from customers are not often properly distributed to the planning and manufacturing departments

Some of the “work related” results of the problems (below points are direct quotes from the flip chart of each group):

- High rate of defective products
- Constraints from top management
- Low morale and lack of motivation among the work force.

Observation notes from the consultants about the factories:

“During this session, groups from Factory C and Factory D acted as a team and produced ideas. The group from Factory B could not act as a team as the general manager dominated the group and the others just followed him. The group from Factory A could not produce ideas on the subject; they behaved as if they do not have any communication problems at all.”

1.2. A model for effective communication: “Four Mental Frames in Communication”

After the introductory session, a model for effective communication was presented. In this model, various real cases taken from the textile industry were explained and the participants were asked to visualize effective and ineffective ways of communication. In the course of this exercise, the topic on “how effective communication can change work environment and work outcomes” was discussed with managers and supervisors. Special emphasis was put on their current and “to be” roles as managers.

This model does have four different mental frames with four different “communication windows”. People can open one of the four windows in communication settings and the results of communication are shaped according to the window opened. The first three frameworks result in ineffective communication. Only fourth framework provides effective results in communication. This framework is referred to as a good communication practice.

Framework I: “I will lose, you will win”

Individuals often use this mental framework when they communicate with their superiors. They position themselves into an inadequate and powerless position in their mind against people around them. They feel small, inferior and dependent. They feel they depend on other people to be cared and protected. They need someone to help them against the threats. They expect other people to tell them what to do. They can not assert themselves most of the time in communication settings. When they even know what to do or to say, they feel constrained to do so. They always try to find ways of avoiding conflicting situations. They do not have high expectations of themselves. In every communication setting, they play the game as “I will lose, you will win”.

Framework II: “I will lose, you will lose”

When individuals communicate with each other, they often feel themselves inadequate and powerless against people in higher positions. They share the same inadequacy and powerlessness. They see themselves hopeless and less enthusiastic to do something. They project the feeling of inferiority to each other in communicating. In this setting, all communication patterns are demotivating and deactivating. Those who are sharing this mental framework do not have high expectations for themselves. They always complain to each other in all communication settings, they express discontent; however they never take the initiative to change the situation for any better. People who hold this position in communication have low expectations of themselves; therefore they continuously demotivate each other. They play the game “I will lose, you will lose”.

Framework III: “I will win, you will lose”

Those who hold managerial positions might often use this framework. They feel themselves adequate and powerful while they like to see their subordinates inferior and incompetent. Therefore, they belittle them and they act with aggression and despise. They never listen to them or ask for their opinion. They do not care about other people and they only dictate them to do something. They communicate with other people in a way as if they do not expect them to do something good. Since they do not expect subordinates doing something good, they do not try to motivate them while communicating. They play the game “I will win, you will lose”.

Framework IV: “We will win”

In this framework, individuals have high expectations of themselves and of the people around them. In any communication setting, people do not feel themselves inferior against those who hold managerial positions. They express what they think and feel. They have self confidence and are ready to take initiative to improve any problematic situation in communication. They feel they are capable of self development. Instead of complaining to their co-workers, they express both problems and suggestions to their superiors. Same approach is valid for the superiors also. In this framework, superiors give value to other employees and ask for their opinions. They play the game “we will win”.

1.3. Group Work on Effective Communication

At the end of the first day, a session was held on “what should be done for effective communication at the work place”. Participants from each factory worked in small groups to develop ideas for improving communication at their work places. At the end of the group work, some ideas were produced, but without being concrete.

The following points were mentioned (below notes are direct quotes from the flip charts of each group):

- To be open to different ideas
- To work more in teams
- To motivate workers
- To make workers feel themselves as members of the team
- To learn effective listening

- To learn supportive attitudes
- To make more social activities to lower work related stress
- To make workers aware of the shared goals
- To attempt to solve problems instead of punishment

2. Workshop for Workers

2.1. Analysis of existing communication issues (current situation)

Similar to the first day of the workshop with managers and supervisors, at the introductory session, general communication problems at work places were presented by the consultants especially emphasizing how communication problems affect work results. Like in the first group participants were asked at the end of the session to work in groups to identify communication problems in their factories and related results.

Communication Problems identified by workers (below points are direct quotes from the flip chart of each group):

- Difficulties in communication with supervisors
- Underdeveloped social relations between workers
- Inability to communicate with those in managerial positions
- Managers organize a meeting only if a technical problem occurs, in case of human problems they don't seem to care
- Lack of communication between departments
- Managers act as if workers do not have a personal life after work

Some of the "work related" results of the problems above (below points are direct quotes from the flip chart of each group):

- Being nervous and stressed all the time
- Managers carry their stress to the workers
- Conflicts can not be managed
- Lack of harmony between supervisors affecting workers' morale

Observation notes from the consultants about the factories:

"During the workshop, all the groups had high level of motivation and they could express themselves freely. One of the line managers from Factory A indicated that they are going to write down some problems, however that does not mean they have serious communication problems. Considering the attitudes of managers from this factory in the previous day of the workshop, we had an impression that they do not want to appear as having communication problems in their work place."

2.2. A model for effective communication: “Four Mental Frames in Communication”

As a second session on this day the “Four Mental Frames in Communication-Model” was introduced to the workers. Especially assertiveness and cooperation were emphasized to be important points in solving communication problems?

2.3. Role Play: “Practicing Effective and Ineffective Communication Patterns”

At the beginning of the second day with the workers a role playing session was held. Each group developed a scenario taken from a work setting, and performed two role plays based on two different scenarios; one with an ineffective communication style and the other one with an effective communication style as it is described under the framework IV. All the participants experienced the two different communication styles. It clearly showed that although the scenarios were the same the outcomes were different.

Observation notes from the consultants:

“During the role-playing session, all the groups were surprisingly energetic and highly motivated. They took it really seriously, developed good scenarios and played their role lively. At the end of the session, it was concluded that all the participants were ready to take the initiative to improve the communication. It was observed that the effect of this communication model was higher for workers than it was for managers.”

2.4. Group Work on Effective Communication

After the role-playing session, workers from each factory discussed the topic “What should be changed in the factory to improve communication” in smaller groups.

The following suggestions were developed (below notes are direct quotes from the flip charts of each group :

- We shouldn't be reluctant to express ourselves
- We should face and solve problems instead of stepping back and waiting for someone to solve it
- We should be open to learn at the same time to teach
- We should think about what is suggested to us
- We should be open to criticism
- We should consider our job as important
- We should solve problems in our work team with open communication
- We should be aware of our responsibilities
- We should also learn to criticize ourselves
- We can solve problems with our supervisors if we can communicate effectively
- We should express someone's fault in a proper manner

Observation notes from the consultants:

The way workers expressed their suggestions shows the positive results of what they experienced in the previous sessions. Instead of alienating themselves from the communication process and problems resulting from miscommunication that is visible with

previous “it should be done” statements, they evolved into “we should” statements where they describe themselves as active actors of communication.

This evolution in the statements has been the most valuable outcome of the workshop and shows that Turkish workers received the correct messages in spite of the general culture where passive behavior is most common.

2.5. Team Work (Game)

The last session of that day was a team game. Every group was assigned with a difficult task. Full cooperation and supportive communication were required to complete the task.

Topic of the game: “Toxic Waste Dump”

Objectives:

- To experience team work
- To envisage good and bad communication practices
- To show how individuals play their role in communicating to accomplish objectives

Procedure:

The participants from each factory formed a separate team. Materials and the instruction sheet were distributed to each team. The tables that had a surface area of four square meters were provided for each team.

The following situation was described to the teams:

A cup of toxic popcorn situated in the middle of the table has contaminated all the surface of the table, even the area extending to the ceiling. If the poisonous popcorn is not transferred to a safe cup for decontamination, the toxic popcorn will destroy the population of the entire city. The popcorn is estimated to have a safe existence of 30 minutes before it explodes. Teams have to find a way to transfer the toxic popcorn to the safe cup carefully by only using the materials provided to them, which included rubber bands, sticks, a piece of string and adhesive tape.

Every team had 30 minutes to overcome the challenge and at the end, each team demonstrated its solution.

Observation notes from the consultants:

“In the briefing session, group has discussed to what extent the effective communication could contribute to the performance of the groups.

This game was very effective for the participants to make sense of their work setting. They experienced the importance of contributing to the results instead of merely performing their individual tasks. They realized the importance of being aware of the team objectives and how satisfactory it was to be a part of the whole.”

Each group was asked to discuss in their factories projects which they think would have a positive impact in their factories communication. They were asked to present their proposals during the next workshop which was planned to take place one week later. This session was a joint workshop for workers, supervisors and managers.

3. Joint Session for Managers, Supervisors and Workers

3.1. Projects related to improving communication

At the beginning of the joint session, workers and managers introduced the projects for improving communication in their factories which they had defined since the last workshops.

Various groups presented projects with the following titles:

“White table”

The aim of the project is to bring light into rumors floating around or issues which were just heard from anybody. The bulletin board is used as the main communication tool and all employees post papers on it about what they heard and want to be clarified. The first three weeks of each month would be used for posting papers, the last week is used for practicing “white table”. This means the manager in charge will try to answer all questions raised during the breaks.

“Suggestion Box”

Besides the general suggestion boxes in their factories, one group intended to have separate suggestion boxes for every department. At the start of a new process the project is introduced to all the employees to motivate the team. Employees can put their suggestions from Monday to Friday into the departmental suggestion boxes. On Friday, a nominated person from another department collects all suggestions. At the beginning of the following week, suggestions are examined and ways of remediation and improvement will be discussed jointly by all the department supervisors.

“Silent Communication”

The aim of this project is to improve the situation of handicapped (deaf-mute) employees. At the moment, various handicapped employees are working in different departments and having difficulties in communicating with other employees. In this Project, it is planned to gather them in the same department (for example embroidery). In this case, they can communicate with each other with their own language. The project also aims to encourage other employees to learn and use sign language especially for workers in the same department.

“Informing Employees”

This project is intending to inform employees on all business processes through meetings.

“Arranging Social Events”

This project is about arrangements of social and sport activities as an attempt to improve social relations between employees.

“Latest News notice board”

This project is about placing a separate smaller notice board next to the general notice board only containing the latest news and postings. The aim is to provide workers with an easy overview in the factory about new issues. At present time, workers might be easily lost amongst all the information at the notice boards and they might not know which one is new and which one is not.

“Communication Trainings”

This project is about arranging communication trainings for all employees within a factory to develop effective communication patterns.

“What we think?”

The project is an attempt to recognize the views of employees about themselves, their superiors and other departments. A nominated team would develop a questionnaire which would be sent to all employees. The results will be presented to the employees and evaluated with upper management.

At the end of the joint session, an evaluation of the program was asked from participants. All the responses reflect high-level satisfaction.”

The following points were most frequently mentioned (below notes are directly taken from the notes written by the participants):

- “I should tell what I gained in the workshops to those who have not participated the program
- “This program changed my point of view on communication”
- “Participating in this program gave me energy to overcome all the problems”
- “I plan to participate additional training programs for self development”

3.2. A Guide for Constructive Dialog

In addition to the “Effective communication model”, the following four action-oriented principles were introduced to the participants to be practically used in every dialogue.

- Separate the people from the problem
- Focus on interests, not positions
- Invent options for mutual gains
- Insist on using objective criteria

Observation notes from the consultants:

“Considering our impressions related to previous week, we did not expect original and practical projects, but on the contrary, both managers and workers presented very qualified projects. Some of them were creative. We were surprised how they developed these projects in such a short time (in five days).”

Overall Evaluation of the Workshops

Observation notes from the consultants:

“After four days, the most evident problem has been revealed as “one way communication” among the participating companies (from managers to workers). Most of the time, it contains only instruction and constraint. In cases of problems related to production, managers do not attempt to include workers to the problem solving process. Workers do not have relevant information to contribute to problem solving. Workers want to feel themselves as a part of the team, and to be treated as “contributing partners” not as “passive components of the production process”. Workers are eager to take on responsibility and ready to improve the current situation. High motivation has been observed especially at the joint session; where workers reflected how they are affected from the first workshop.

Managers also appear to change their views at the joint session as compared to the first workshop. The improvement projects they constructed reflect that they want to change their roles. However, the effect of the workshops on their attitudes varies from factory to factory probably due to unique managerial cultures in respective factories.

In these four days, the present group of workers and managers stated that they are satisfied with the results. This experience shows that the improvement of the communication patterns in these factories would be possible. However, the source of communication problems can be found on deeper levels of these organizations.

Considering the source of communication problems, it can be assumed that the ineffective business processes create the strain and urgency for on the time delivery. As a result, this strain is carried to the workers through successive management levels. Under these conditions “high concern for job and low concern for people” becomes the main behavioral pattern of all managerial levels; therefore, solving communication problems requires improving business processes.

4. Suggestions and Recommendations

Overall thinking is that the result of the workshop which covered a sample of managers, supervisors and workers has been highly satisfactory. Both managers and workers developed several improvement projects and the way they presented these projects reflected their motivation and determination to solve communication problems.

In order to obtain lasting results in these factories similar training programs should be implemented for all employees. It is not realistic to expect that this sample of employees disseminate the effects of this program to the rest of the employees. In addition, training programs should also cover process improvement and management systems to become more effective.