COMMUNICATION: SUBORDINATE-SUPERIOR
Creighton University

Communication: Subordinate-Superior

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I. INTRODUCTION

THE PROBLEM

Not so long ago communications was largely a physical phenomenon. It had to do with sending and receiving sounds. Also, communications between people was taken for granted and not regarded too important. Typical cliches included: children are to be seen not heard; and superiors were the bosses and were to be followed with no questions asked. Then the only problem in human communications was to be heard loud and clear and firm enough. Since these dateless times our society has changed significantly and communication between people has become very important. Today more than ever the business community has an acute awareness of the importance of human communication. Many corporations are spending huge sums of money training their people on the techniques of proficient communication. Yet, in any maze of corporate hierarchies there still exist problems associated with human communication.

The problem develops from the human interaction of people in the business organization. Naturally, in order to conduct its business an organization requires that its people communicate. Typical types of communication processes in a business include: letters, memos, face to face, bulletins, phone, and in the pay envelope.\(^1\) There are also intrapersonal communications which are used in daily business affairs,

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such as, speaking, reading, listening, and thinking. It is within this context of formal communications and intrapersonal communication that the problem evolves.

In this study the participants in the communication process are the subordinate and superior, rather than group communication or a combination of a group and an individual. Further, the direction of the communication is upward, as versus downward. Therefore, the viewpoint taken is that of the subordinate. The type of subordinate considered here is one who is also a superior. Thus there is dual interplay in many of the areas discussed.

The type of upward communication coming from the subordinate is either a written or verbal report. These reports are recommendations for some type of change. Some example areas include: plant layout, personnel reorganization, financial matters (budget, costs) and departmental policies. These reports require action by the superior and the subordinate desires and expects either acceptance of some form or adequate reasons for rejecting the change.

The problem then results when this type of upward communication is not acted upon by the superior in the subordinate's desired manner. To recap, the problem is that the subordinate communicates a change recommendation to his superior and it is either not accepted or no reasons are given for the denial. Therefore, the premise is that there are reasons for this lack of action by the superior. Thus the barriers to upward communication associated with the superior are the central themes of this paper.

\[^2\text{Ibid, p. 1.}\]
3.

The following major areas shall be introduced to explain this phenomenon: (1) the theoretical aspects surrounding this unique subordinate-superior relationship, (2) the superior; his business environment, his attributes and his methods. These areas, as they are discussed, shall attempt to explain the barrier to effective upward communication and expand upon the problem encountered by a subordinate.
II. THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Before embarking on the barriers to upward communication associated with the superior, it would be appropriate to briefly discuss the communication process.

Communications, admittedly, covers a broad area. Also, certain theoretical fundamentals have universal application. As the term is used here, communication is the transferring and accepting of ideas, decisions and suggestions from the mind of one person to that of another with the intent of promoting action. Perfect communication is achieved when the receiver (superior) realizes the same idea, decision or suggestion as the sender (subordinate). Communication is so fundamental that without it a civilization could not survive. Moreover, a business organization would quickly collapse if it did not exist.

In fact many businesses today are conducting on job seminars dealing specifically with the subject of communication. Many such workshops begin with the development of the communication process. The concern for understanding the communication process at all levels of management has grown significantly in recent years.

Even though the communication process is basic, it is often misunderstood. In fact it should be obvious that the basic process of communication, if it is to achieve proper employee response, must of necessity give attention to three important and sequentially related

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3 From introductory material presented at a Western Electric Company workshop on Communication, 1965.
concepts. The previous definition of communication mentions two of these concepts and the third is included in the definition's broadness. First, the information must be transferred or transmitted in a proper manner. Secondly, the receiver must understand this information. Thirdly, and very important in the context of this paper, the receiver must accept the information transmitted to him. Unless these three concepts take place in this sequential order, the fourth and resulted part of communication, action will be stymied or out of control. Here we can see the very impact of such a simple process, in words, on a business organization.

As mentioned, part of the definition had to do with promoting action. In the problem this is what the subordinate desires. This simply means to motivate people to behave in a preferred manner. For almost every aspect of human behavior is in some way related to the transportation of ideas, decisions or suggestions. It is almost trite to say that the very heart of human relations is surrounded by the products of communication. Examples are numerous. A person's desire for recognition is satisfied when he receives some form of communication acknowledging a good job or feat. An individual knows they are "accepted" by a group when the group brings him into their confidence. Whatever the circumstances, communication is the very foundation of existence itself. It is difficult, in fact, to imagine even the simpliest, most elementary interpersonal activity which does not depend upon communication in one form or another. The basic reason for any kind of

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communication is behavioral. In the context of a business organization, the desired action or behavior is usually related, either directly or indirectly, to the efficient performance of job duties and responsibilities. This does not necessarily mean that the desired action is physical, such as telling a man how to operate a lathe and then he follows the instruction. For a great portion of our communication is intended to result in an attitudinal response, as the acceptance of a decision or the willingness to behave in conformity to plant policies. This introduces a sub-problem, how a subordinate must communicate to achieve a satisfactory attitudinal response from a superior.

Communication in every business organization has three dimensions. The one most frequently used is downward. This is transferring information from the top down through the formal lines of organization. It is commonly used to transmit company announcements, procedures, policies and so on. A second dimension is horizontal. As the name implies, this entails transferring information between departments of the same level. This direction is equally important for the efficient operation of a business. The third dimension of communication is upward. This is the dimension by which employees, subordinates, convey to their superiors ideas, decisions or suggestions. It is also the only channel by which top management can determine if its downward communication was received. Also, upward communication is very important because it is the primary way a superior knows if the needs of subordinates are being satisfied. Naturally, all three dimensions are important, but the focus here is

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5 Ibid.

6 Ibid, p. 259-60.
upward as seen by a subordinate.

Obviously, the understanding, acceptance and action are all dependent on how well the communication was planned and transmitted in the beginning. However, the sender often assumes that the receiver understands what was communicated to him. This is a typical assumption made by subordinates when communicating to a superior. The subordinate assumes that the superior has knowledge of the subject and therefore understands. What the sender must do is to assure himself that he has been understood. Many times this necessitates reversing the communication process. The sender becomes the receiver and the receiver the sender with the intent that mutual understanding is reached. The point is that the supervisory subordinate must know and accept this role of acquiring understanding, for only in this way will acceptance be accomplished.

Without acceptance by the receiver there will not be a desired action. For most people they must reasonably understand in order to accept. Here again one concept or process is related to an dependent upon another. As stated, this is a sequential process and must be followed. This communication process, even though it appears simple, is foreign to too many management people. For if they don't have a knowledge and understanding of communication processes they can not adequately cope with their responsibilities and problems as subordinates, let alone superiors.
In this section four theories are presented which reflect upon the subordinate-superior relationship. The purpose of this theoretical background is to give some insight and background to the relationship and to develop a better understanding of the barriers.

The upward communication process between the two participants becomes interpersonal. This is because people are involved. In this context the theory of human motivation as presented by A. H. Maslow in 1943 is a setting for the interpersonal relationship that develops.

The outstanding characteristic of the relationship between subordinate and superior is the dependence the subordinate has on his superior for satisfaction of certain needs. In a primitive sense the subordinate is dependent upon his superior for his job, for advancement, for salary increases, for promotion, for recognition, for achievement and for other motivation need satisfactions associated with the work situation.

However, it appears that there is a corollary to Maslow's dependence concept. This phenomenon would be the reverse of the above. That is the superior is also dependent upon the subordinate for need satisfaction. The various satisfactions are naturally transmitted by interpersonal communication from the subordinate to the superior. In many cases if the superior rejects the upward communication from the

Ibid, pp. 122-44
subordinate for any number of reasons, the superior is in turn frustrating his own need patterns and, as future communications are received, there is a snowballing effect. This is not to say such superiors refuse all and every communication, for that would be unrealistic.

The important factor associated with Maslow's theory is that he explains the dependence of a subordinate upon a superior as that of a child upon a parent. This is all a truism, but in any interpersonal relationship there exists a reverse dependence and thus a superior does depend on subordinates for need satisfaction. However, too many superiors do not realize this and create an ineffective work environment. When this occurs, there is frustration and a breakdown of the upward communication process. To state this situation another way would be to say that the superior does not know himself and thus hinders the process.

In order to get a better understanding of the need patterns associated with a superior it is appropriate to discuss the findings of Fredrick Herzberg published in 1964. His research revealed that there are 10 fundamental job attitude factors. He classified them as satisfiers and dissatisfiers. There are two dimensions associated with each factor: (1) its frequency and (2) its duration. His technique was relatively simple. He asked each participant to write a story associated with his job which gave him the greatest satisfaction. The results indicated that the five greatest satisfiers were achievement, recognition,

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work itself, responsibility and advancement. Achievement showed the greatest frequency while responsibility had the longest duration. Also, associated with achievement, a satisfier, was the relationship with a subordinate. Herzberg recognized that in these stories of job satisfaction a superior often related incidents which reflected the superior-subordinate interpersonal relationship. This is then a theoretical aspect associating job satisfaction of the superior with his relationship with his subordinates.

There is another advanced theoretical framework which encompasses upward communication. This theory is coined "organization equilibrium."\(^9\) Fundamentally, it is the decision to participate in upward communication. This theory was first advocated by C. Barnard in 1938 and then by H. Simon in 1947.\(^10\) They say that this organizational equilibrium reflects the organization's success and provides the theoretical framework for efficient upward communication.

It, therefore, seems appropriate to outline the central postulates of the Barnard-Simon theory as this is the necessary motivational theory needed to adequately understand the problem areas of upward communication. These postulates are as follows:

1. An organization is a system of interrelated social behavior of a number of persons whom we shall call participants in the organization.

2. Each participant and each group of participants


\(^10\) Ibid, Chapter 4.

\(^11\) Ibid, Chapter 4.
11.

receives from the organization inducements in return for which he makes to the organization contributions.

3. Each participant will continue his participation in an organization only as long as the inducements offered him are as great or greater than the contributions he is asked or expected to make.

4. The contributions provided by the various groups or participants are the source from which the organization manufactures the inducements offered to participants.

5. Hence, an organization is "solvent" -- and will continue in existence -- only as long as the contributions are sufficient to provide inducements in large enough measures to draw forth these contributions.

By making the following word substitutions in the five postulates, the meaning will be clearer and easier applied to the topic:

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<th>Substitute</th>
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<td>participant</td>
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<td>inducement</td>
<td>acknowledgement for upward communications</td>
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<td>contributions</td>
<td>upward communications in the form of recommendations for charges</td>
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By reading these substitutions into the postulates one can easily recognize the importance of this theoretical framework. For, if the superior does not recognize these motivational constraints and does not decide to participate in the inducement -- contribution process, he will block upward communication.

Of course, this theory is open for interpretation, but it does offer a different frame of reference for analyzing the uniqueness of the subordinate-superior relationship. It also hints to a possible factor affecting adequate upward communication in the form of decisions.

So far three theoretical areas have been discussed: (1) motivation-behavioral (2) attitude factors and (3) organizational equilibrium. There is a fourth which will give added dimension to understanding the problem. This area centers around the organization and the conflicts which exist within it. Conflict is a term of many uses. As applied here it is a break-down of the standard mechanisms of upward communication that alter the act of acceptance or increase the difficulty in selecting an action alternative. Thus, a conflict occurs when a superior experiences a decision problem brought to him by a subordinate. The superior's ability to handle this conflict determines his success in the organization, and with the subordinate. Many superiors believe, and practice, that the easiest solution to the conflict is non-acceptance with no feed-back.

Three classes of conflict phenomena are suggested by J. G. March
and H. A. Simon. These are: (1) individual conflict, (2) organizational conflict, and (3) interorganizational. It is interesting to note that the first category is also inclusive in the other two. The attention here is on individual conflict for this also means interpersonal communications problems between subordinate and superior.

March and Simon allude to some broad factors which lead to the unacceptability of communications presented by subordinates. These are: (1) munificence of the environment (2) amount of past experience (3) complexity of communication (4) aspiration level and achievement (5) subjective uncertainty, and (6) subjective unacceptability. All of these factors lead to perceived individual conflicts which affect human behavior in the complicated interpersonal communication process between subordinate and superior. Naturally, these are broad areas but they do enhance the theoretical framework of the breakdown between subordinate and superior.

To recap progress of the problem thus far it is noted that we have discussed the communication process. The intent was to introduce some concepts surrounding the process which applied also to the upward communication process. Also, four theoretical aspects of communication were introduced to facilitate a better understanding of the problem as viewed by the subordinate. At this point it was intended to relate these to the interpersonal communication process of the subordinate and superior. What remains is an evaluation of the superior and then the subordinate.

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12 Ibid, p. 112.
13 Ibid, p. 120.
IV. THE SUPERIOR

Who is a superior? There was a time -- when industrial life was simple and shops were small -- that the big boss could go into the shop on Monday morning and pick out from the rank and file a worker to take the place of the superior who had quit or dropped dead over the weekend. Today's superior, however, has to do more than boss a gang. He has to be able to operate in a management group that is specialized in its functions and complex in its interrelationships.

The job of a superior is to get things done, to utilize men, material, money, machines and methods in the most effective manner so that the purpose of the organization is attained. All of this is planned, organized, controlled, motivated, and coordinated through interpersonal communications.

So far, we have described what the superior does, but who. Basically and simply, he is a human being who experiences the same drives, joys, frustrations and the other complicated characteristics that are common to everyone. The question then becomes, what differentiates between one superior and another? This is truly a complicated question. No absolute answer will be attempted. However, it is intended to discuss the superior who employs interpersonal communications with subordinates and the circumstances and characteristics that differentiate between superiors to render them either effective or ineffective. For purposes of classification the analysis will be
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divided into three areas: (1) his environment (2) his attributes, and (3) his method.

**HIS ENVIRONMENT**

By environment it is meant the total organizational framework within which the superior must operate. This naturally includes the formal and informal and all associated aspects.

**Formal Organization**

Within this context of environment there appears to be a relationship between informal organization and formal organization, and between formal and informal communication. In fact, it seems best to differentiate between the two. Formal upward communication is here defined as that communication which is sent to the authoritative level immediately above the sender and which is required by the positions of the sender and receiver without regard to the personalities of the people involved. It is the minimum upward communication required in fulfilling the demands of the hierarchical position. Formal upward communication takes the form of progress reports, answers to inquiries, or relays of information from a lower to higher level without attempts to change it, beyond, perhaps, digesting it. This type of communication, of course, is typically acceptable to the superior.

Yet, the formal communication network in itself can be a source of a barrier to effective communication. Often the structure

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14 Heckman and Huneryager, p. 261-62.
is rigid and the superior constantly expects certain responses from it. If the expected upward communications are not received from it, then other factors come into play and render some superiors ineffective in receiving the communication and they, therefore, reject it because it does not fit the status quo. This type of superior is not flexible in his methods, as will be discussed later.

**Informal Organization**

Informal upward communication is not limited to transmission to immediately higher authority. Furthermore, it is a direct reflection of the people involved: their needs, desires and goals. The content of informal communication may be viewed as including everything not strictly covered under the definition of formal. In practice the two are often interwoven. However, it is a borne fact that the problem area is most often associated with the informal communication; for it is the most interpersonal and, it also exhibits the greatest unacceptability rate for the subordinate. Thus, the formal and informal organization, as interpreted here, are an environmental factor which determine greatly the effectiveness and acceptability of communications from a subordinate.

There are three fundamental managerial concepts which today usually only receive a mention. Even though they are fundamental, if a conflict exists, it can lead to break-downs in communication. The reference is to unity of command, chain of command and span of control. These concepts are environmental whether within the formal or informal structure.
Unity of Command

Unity of command means that each subordinate has but one superior. The superior has direct authority and responsibility for his subordinates and, therefore, for their communicative processes. If a superior receives upward communication from a subordinate who does not come under his unity, he not only violates this principle, but he faces other dangers. This is especially true if the superior replies to the subordinate, so that the subordinate takes some form of action. Often superiors will simply reject the subordinate without consultation or referral. In these cases of unacceptability the subordinate remains unrewarded and unguided. Therefore, a superior who does not define the unity of command to a subordinate fails in his communication responsibilities and hinders upward communication.

Chain of Command

The chain of command concept denotes a path, and that is exactly what it is, a formal path to be used for authority, responsibility, accountability, and communications. The reaction within this concept is similar to those under unity of command. For, if a superior does not recognize and follow the respected paths, he renders himself incapable of handling even formal upward communication from subordinates.

Span of Control

The third concept, span of control, is even more an environmental factor leading to the unacceptability of upward communication. Span of
control means the amount of managing a person is able to do. This span is usually measured in people and other job complexities.

Besides the number of people a superior has reporting to him, there are other factors which can greatly limit his span which is his responsibility. These factors include: (1) time (2) distance (3) attention (4) knowledge (5) energy, and (6) personality. These factors are part of a superior's span of control. When difficulty arises within one of these, then there is a breakdown between the superior and the subordinate. This then means a communication problem. For example, if the superior is in one location and the subordinate in another, time and distance become limiting factors for the superior's span of control. Conversely, the subordinates span of response is limited by the same two factors. Now, if the subordinate desired to communicate a decision which he thought important to his superior, he might make an attempt which probably failed in the past. Most likely, though, no attempt of upward communication would take place. Here is a case of unacceptability without the transmission of the information. The point is, a superior who does not work effectively within his span of control and knows its limitations, finds himself not receiving the normal flow of upward communication.

It can be said then that these three working concepts, as they form part of the environment of a superior, can be recognized as possible circumstances affecting the acceptability of upward communication from a subordinate. For, if a superior does not have or develop an awareness of his environmental position, he will surely surround himself with self-made organizational barriers to upward communication.
Authority

The word authority was previously referred to as a vehicle which travels the path of the chain of command. Authority can be interpreted as environmental or attitudinal. Here it is considered a combination of both, one reflecting on the other. Usually, what makes it attitudinal is simply the connotations that are attached to its environmental position and usage. The place and significance of authority in an organization can have a great influence on the superior and on his acceptability of upward communications.

It is advocated by some that the word authority is developing strong negative connotations and as a result a negative attitude which is reflected in the interpersonal communication processes of an organization. The superior who does not look at the origins of the responses to authority places himself in an ineffective communicative position. For, each person develops an individual pattern of responses to authority and this becomes a part of the integrated personality. Consequently, the adult brings to his job and communicative process attitudes and behavior which are not simply a function of the behavior of the superior. The superior must realize, that however inappropriate the subordinate's behavior toward authority may sometimes be, it reveals a logic of its own toward authority. Also, the superior must recognize that this same dynamic is at work in the exercise of authority by himself.

Superiors too often reach a conclusion that attitudes toward

authority are too deep rooted to be eligible for change. This is a
lacking on the superior's part. For, by diagnosing attitudes, they
can be altered. The best evidence of a man's attitude comes from
his behavior. What does he do? How does he react to the authority
of others? How does he exercise authority himself? The answers to
these questions could easily relieve the communication impass that
develops between subordinate and superior. Too many superiors do
not seek the answers and therefore remain incapable and unreceptive.

In this section some broad environmental factors were presented
which are associated with a superior's job position. Each of these
factors is considered a potential barrier to upward communication.
Thus they represent possible reasons why a subordinate's upward com-
munication in the form of a recommendation for a change is not acted
upon by a superior.

Nearly all superiors find themselves within the same general
business environment. Not all barriers to upward communication are
due to environmental factors. On the contrary, most breakdowns are
attributed to the superior.

HIS ATTRIBUTES

Successful supervisory leadership in industry requires more
than the acquiring of a set of preferred characteristics and the
application of a set of rules. It requires, in addition, the superior
to study the situation and to find out what factors are going to place
limitations on his position. Furthermore, the superior must be prepared
to make adjustments in his operations in order to adapt them to the
situation and make himself effective. All this within the environment previously discussed. Therefore, what the superior brings to the work place greatly determines his success or failure.

The approach attempted here is to grasp both the narrow and pointed traits as well as the broad attributes which are associated with a superior. The superior is not only a victim of his environment, but more so of himself. This development will have a negative appearance as the traits whether negative or positive are attached to the ineffective superior who is unacceptable to a subordinate's communication.

Personal Traits

Whenever a superior brings to the job any of the following traits, one will find a superior who can not communicate and is without respect: (1) dishonesty (2) immorality (3) open, obvious, radical opposition, or (4) gross ignorance. These are obvious traits which seldom appear, but they are mentioned for just that reason. For the expectant superior is not so easily defined.

Taking a look at a list of other questionable traits, it is noticed that superiors exhibit many of them. Fortunately, it is usually a matter of degree. Many of these traits are self contained and others result in preconceptions of subordinates. In either case the superior is dropping the gate on effective interpersonal communications. Here is the list: sullenness, stubbornness, discourtesy, disloyalty, prejudice, conceit, uncertainty, worry, fear, grief, irresponsibility, unreality, dullness, lack of perseverance, lack of initiative, religious difficulties,
nationality, social differences, and family differences. Of course, the list is not complete, but it serves as a good representation to see the point. Can you imagine a superior exhibiting all this problem traits -- of course not? But, it is highly probable that if one thinks back to when his superior did not accept a truly adequate decision, idea or suggestion, the reason can be found in one of the above traits. To put it more bluntly, the superior who exhibits these traits to any dangerous degree is an ineffective superior. He blocks upward communication and the subordinate experiences great difficulty in getting his decisions, ideas, and suggestions accepted or acknowledged by the superior. The presence of these personal traits cause immediate and pronounced blocks to the interpersonal communication process.

What about the successful superior? The failure of some superiors has been ascribed to laziness, overwork, stupidity, drinking, dishonesty, unfriendliness, impudence, and many other things. All these and the previous descriptive words apply to the superior who is a poor communicator. But, they, such descriptive words, do not help in understanding the basic reasons why superiors act in such a fashion.

Research into the personalities of superiors, successful and unsuccessful, reveals that the outward behavior which leads to the incompetence of interpersonal communication is often an end-product and that the raw material of failure lies buried in emotions and attitudes. Among the more basic liabilities of unsuccessful superiors are these eleven traits:

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1. The inability to see the forest. What is required in superiors is the ability to grasp broad problems, weigh alternate courses of action, and then choose one course to act upon. If the man's organizing ability is really limited to concrete factors and details, it is unlikely that he will perform in an equally competent way.

2. Failure to carry responsibilities. Here there is a reliance on initiative and self-control. The way the superior regards his responsibility is an important one and failure to accept responsibility is failure to communicate.

3. Unconscious desire to be something else. If a superior does not find satisfaction in working at a particular job, it is inevitable that the quality of his performance will fall below his best. Yet often this lack of interest cannot be controlled at will.

4. A yen for express trains. A superior may be ambitious for broad power and success but so intolerant and bored with intermediate tasks such as communicating properly with subordinates.

5. Inability to make room for other people.
Superiors must cooperate with others, and must be able to give help and accept advice on mutual problems. This interaction is often with subordinates.

6. **Resistance to authority.** Many unsuccessful superiors fail in their communication task because they cannot accept direction and supervision of another person.

7. **Arrogance with subordinates.** Another area of behavior which relates to the superior's attitude toward authority is the way in which he uses authority on subordinates. This display of behavior, of course, affects all interaction with a subordinate, including communication.

8. **Prejudices which interfere with judgement.** The superior who reaches decisions because of systematic personal bias and interprets them in terms of his own fixed ideas can be sure of communication problems with subordinates. Often the prejudices come out of his background and they hobble him in dealing with subordinates. Exhibited prejudices quickly undermine a superior's organization. The reflection is not only seen in morale, production, quality, and safety, but also
9. **Overemphasis on work.** Some superiors live their work to an extraordinary extent. This channeling of interest and concentration of endeavor leads to a hypersensitivity to any frustration on the job. This hypersensitivity almost always leads to trouble if things are not going well. This type of superior usually develops little time or patience for upward communication.

10. **Gravitation toward self-destruction.** In some cases of failure the cause is connected on overwork. It might appear subtle and obscure, but it is commonly the case. Some superiors actually fear success. For when it comes to a reality, they are frightened by the necessity of taking responsibility for good work and cut themselves down. Too often this self-destruction manner finds its way to the subordinate and hampers the relationship.

11. **Mental ailments.** This term appears obvious except that in many cases the ailment is far from it. Superiors, being human, are subject to nervous and mental disorders. Sometimes, feelings of inadequacy or biased
judgment interfere with work long before the appearance of any more striking derangement. Such cases may be difficult to recognize, and are often difficult to handle. The subordinate will normally sense such a change before others. Most people are sensitive to their faults and deficiencies; this is true of even successful superiors. Superiors become unsuccessful when such ailments become noticeable to subordinates and, it is seen in the superior's judgment and handling of upward communication.

Here we have seen how research has borne out some of the attributes of superiors which make them unsuccessful in the fulfillment of their duties. Of course, one of the most important duties is the process of upward communication.

The activity of such personal traits usually leads to a "clash of personalities." According to this view, as applied here, the superior might perceive the behavior of a subordinate as a personal attack upon himself. He, therefore, feels the need to defend himself. In both his appraisal and reaction, the undesirable personal traits which distinguish his personality determine the outcome of the attempted communication. This interaction of two particular personality structures is very complex. This explanation serves to entertain the thought that a superior's character and personality traits greatly

determine his ability to communicate effectively.

It is difficult to completely leave the personal trait area, however, there are some broader attributes which are equally important. Naturally, overlaps will exist. These broader attributes, abilities or traits will illustrate the importance of an effective superior. Because, when a superior is lacking in these areas he renders himself ineffective as a communicator and the subordinate soon learns that his attempts at upward communication are unacceptable.

**Moral Attribute**

Communication involves decisions, for this is the way of the business world. Decision-making involves choice. These choices rest with people. To decide wisely on upward communication the superior must require relevant knowledge and practical understanding. He must think clearly and act with moral maturity. The definition of moral here is uncomplicated, it means knowing what is right. Unfortunately a superior can be fully aware of his moral responsibilities, and yet refuse to live up to them. Too often a gap exists between knowing what is right, what one ought to do, and what one actually does.

There are some theorists who believe business should have a moral code. However, many others point out that morality is a personal matter. They say that business should have a code of ethics. Of course, this is a topic itself. No stand is taken here, only to agree that business morality is a variable of the person. The offering here is that the superior must be morally guided in his communication endeavors and most specifically when making decisions relative to a subordinate.
Four guides are recommended to the effective superior. First, he must use moral virtue as the guide. Virtue to him should be synonymous with manliness, strength of character, and dependability. Secondly, prudence should be a guide to enable the superior to be humble and capable of intellectual honesty. Prudence calls a superior to look toward goals and objectives. It outlaws shoddiness. Also, it leads the superior toward prudential judgment and makes him a wise communicator. Thirdly, justice is considered a moral guide. It outlines the basic moral responsibilities of the superior. Lastly, social charity or social virtue is a guide to insure that the superior acts within the proper structure. This may sound a little unpractical but, the effective superior must realize that there are other criterions which should shape his communication processes besides profit, progress, and the stability of the company. Because, if the superior does not possess some moral guides for his decisions resulting from upward communication, he finds himself handicapped and unable to properly accept.

Communication Ability

Communication is both a skill and an ability. Communication is the path to emotional involvement and this makes it interpersonal. Almost everything the superior does involves communication. The ability discussed here is his capability to receive upward communication from subordinates and recognize it as part of the interpersonal process. Furthermore, the obstacles to this skill are many, some of

these will be discussed. In any case, the superior must exhibit this fundamental ability or he becomes a problem to the organization, to himself and to his subordinates. The ability to communicate is the life-line of all successful administrators.

Communication between people involves understanding and, conversely, misunderstanding. Misunderstanding is a common reaction in the communication process, and it is the superior who must know how to handle this reaction. For if he can not, he again resumes an ineffective role.

F. J. Roethlesberger suggests five common ways of representing misunderstanding: (1) as a difference of opinion resolvable by common sense (2) as a clash of personalities (3) as a conflict of social roles (4) as a struggle for power, and (5) as a breakdown in communication. A superior should have knowledge of these five ways of understanding misunderstanding in order to be more capable. If he does not, the result by now is obvious.

For the advocates of common sense, the situation resolves itself quickly. This approach says that both parties can not be right, therefore, who is wrong? The common sense approach to misunderstanding is then to proceed in an orderly manner to determine who is right.

Another view says misunderstanding results from a clash of personalities. What is said here is that each person builds up certain defense mechanisms which naturally clash. In this case a mutual solution is seldom reached. To the subordinate this means unacceptability.

The third explanation is viewed as an interaction of social roles

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19 F. J. Roethlisberger, pp. 55-59.
rather than interaction between two personalities. Sociology explains that when two people in a relationship reach differing definitions of the situation, misunderstanding is likely to arise. Obviously this too can lead to the blockage of upward communication.

The fourth way represents another interaction. Misunderstand is not merely attributed to interaction between two kinds of institutionalized power. For example, it might precipitate from a power struggle between management and union. Or for that matter, a power struggle could exist between a subordinate and his superior. This struggle is also associated with authority. For, some superiors do not know how to use their authority. Many times they try to exercise it, but are unsuccessful. Authority ceases to exist when it cannot be exercised successfully.⁰²⁰ Again, it is obvious where and how upward communication can be hindered by the ineffective superior.

The fifth way of stating misunderstanding is simply there was a breakdown in the mechanics of communication. Usually, misunderstanding results here because the participants are not on the same wave length and as a result bypassing occurs.

This gives an idea to the views associated with misunderstanding. The question still remains to what is behind it or the roots of misunderstanding. Some of these roots were mentioned before as personal traits. However, there are further ideas on what facilitates misunderstanding on the part of the superior.

Often a superior makes value judgments. Some think this is the

biggest single block to interpersonal communication. Another view says that the superior does not listen and that this is a fundamental root of misunderstanding. Still another view is that a superior assumes things that may not be so. These assumptions are typically associated with the subordinate's behavior and lead to the personality clash.

In spite of the different terminology and emphasis on these views of misunderstanding, they all seem to point to certain uniformities in the interpersonal communication process, and more specifically on the ability of the superior. It is apparent that what is termed misunderstanding here means unacceptability to the subordinate.

Leadership

The superior is by position in a leadership capacity. Leadership is a complex topic. Much has been written on the traits of the successful leader, on the approaches, and on the types. The usage here is not intended to define leadership per se. Rather the superior is taken as being in a leadership capacity and the important question is whether his leadership ability is functional. Furthermore, the romantic conception of the leader, although widely prevalent, does not explain the phenomena of leadership. The leader, realistically and factually, is not a person endowed with a list of characteristics which make him what he is. Leadership then, as implied here, is conceived in terms of the dynamics of social human behavior and is a function of needs existing in a given situation where a relationship

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21 Ibid.

consists of a superior and a subordinate. The functional relationship exists when the subordinate perceives the superior as controlling means for the satisfaction of his needs.

This type of leader identification is secondary. In business and industry, the leader is of the appointed type; this is the primary selection and identification of a superior and this is the means by which a subordinate receives his superior or leader. The members of management are not selected by the group they are to lead, but are appointed. There are some very special problems faced by a superior selected this way. One of these is the ability to handle upward communication.

The appointed leader faces a difficult task. Most people feel that the individual is free to work or not and free to choose his employer. However, these choices are not free. Jobs are not always easy to get and there are advantages the subordinate obtains through seniority, and so on. As a consequence, the relationship of the superior-leader in industry to a subordinate is frequently one in which: (1) his objectives are not their objectives, and (2) the relationship is maintained and the subordinates accept the leadership only because to do otherwise would represent a serious reduction in need satisfaction. The superior who does not organize and direct the activities of his subordinates toward some organizational objectives proves himself ineffective and incapable of receiving upward communication.

Within this context, it is appropriate to examine the alternative methods which the superior-leader may utilize. Briefly, these appear to be four.

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1. The leader may direct the activities of people through his control of scarce means by forcing a choice of means the alternative to which a lesser means or none at all. The superior who uses this method of directing subordinates is holding over their heads a threat of dismissal if they do not accept his direction. It is an interesting fact that insubordination is a major offense in industry. Under most labor contracts, the subordinate can be fired summarily. The formula of this kind states that the subordinate does what he is told or else. The status of upward communication in this atmosphere is obvious. This kind of superior leaves no room for interpersonal upward communication. Actually, the superior is usually fearful of such interaction because of his other lackings.

2. The leader may attempt to provide adequate means for need satisfaction of his subordinates, in the hope they will accept his direction out of gratitude and loyalty. This is the paternalism concept of leadership. Just as in the previous method, there is no mutual identification of objectives. Also, this kind of superior is saying that his subordinates should do as he
says because he is kind to them. Here, there is upward communication, but only the chocolate coated variety. The superior receives the communication, but usually acts slowly on the undesirable decisions for they "rock the boat." He expects a lot, but actually gives little. This type of superior also faces communication problems.

3. The leader may direct the subordinates as a result of a bargain, in which he agreed to provide them with certain means in return for which they agree to permit certain direction of their activities within certain specified limits. This is a common situation in industry today. Of course, here again the superior has relinquished some of his control and, in doing so has handicapped his frame of reference for receiving upward communication.

4. The leader may create conditions such that the objectives he seeks and the objectives his subordinate seek have something in common. Then the direction becomes one of "mutual means." This method is often talked about in industry, but seldom utilized.

In the proceeding we have discussed four methods available to
the superior. But, there was more, for these four methods represented four broad types of attributal leadership. A superior could be any one type or a combination. The point is the superior that does not recognize his role as a leader leads himself to communication destruction, with the same consequences as previously mentioned.

**Decision-Maker**

One of the most important techniques, and an attribute, of superiors is that of decision-making. In order to organize, direct, or control responsible subordinates, superiors must make decisions which affect the behavior of those subordinates. The decisions of superiors should be made not to affect their behavior, but rather that of others. The decisions of superiors have a social import. Furthermore, decisions are made by subordinates which affect the behavior of the superior. These also have a social import. Thus, upward communication often becomes an interaction of these two imports. Part of the discussion which follows will give attention to the ability of the superior to both receive and transmit decisions from and to a subordinate within the social, interpersonal context.

To decide means "to cut off." Decision-making involves a conscious choice or selection of one behavior alternative from among a group of two or more behavior alternatives. In making decisions the effective superior must become aware of relevant behavior alternatives, define them, and finally evaluate them as a basis of choice.

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There are three steps in the decision making process which are examined here so that the importance of a superior being a satisfactory decision-maker, is better understood. 25

1. Awareness of behavior alternatives. Before making a decision, a superior should become aware of all these behavior alternatives which are relevant to the decision to be made. But this is seldom, if ever possible. The superior then depends on his memory and experience for his guidelines. It is exceedingly doubtful whether most decisions are based upon the awareness of all relevant behavior alternatives.

2. Definition of behavior alternatives. This step also faces the problems of the first.

3. Evaluation of behavior alternatives. After the superior has become aware of certain behavior alternatives and has considered them, he must next exercise a choice.

This brief discussion of these three steps is abstract. Its meaning should not be. The process of decision-making involves the environmental factor, authority. It was stated that authority is used by a superior directly to affect the behavior of a subordinate. There are three ways a superior can so affect the behavior of a subordinate. 26


26 Ibid, p. 38.
1. The superior can impose constraints on a sphere of discretion of a subordinate, thereby limiting the subordinate's discretion to the behavior alternatives which remain.

2. The superior can completely eliminate spheres of discretion from the province of a subordinate.

3. The superior can impose a decision on the subordinate to the effect that the subordinate act in a particular manner.

Each of these devices which might be used by a superior stems from a decision made by him and results in some direct effect upon his subordinate's behavior. If the superior is the type that imposes continued constraints on his subordinates, then he is in effect blocking upward communication.

Other Attributes

Status

This heading is meant to be a catch all. Because, there are other attributes which superiors exhibit which render them ineffective in receiving upward communication. Status distinction is one. This occurs when a superior believes his status and that of his subordinate are distinct and impersonal. This type of attitude is a definite barrier.
Conformity

Also, there are superiors who feel compelled to conform to all and every traditional way of doing and viewing things. This type of superior resists all changes and deplores such communication from a subordinate. He also sets up immediate blocks to a subordinate who is attempting to communicate any type of change upward.

Judge

Then there are superiors who possess the idea that they must act as a judge in evaluating the subordinates communication based on past experiences. This evaluation by design, usually leads to rejection of the upward communication.

Knowledge

Another common attribute of superiors is their lack of knowledge of the over-all objectives of the company. They do not have these at their command when communicating with a subordinate, and then out of ignorance they reject an idea, a decision or a suggestion.

Know Thyself

Know thyself. This is a fundamental axiom of an excellent superior. Most superiors prefer to think of themselves as authorities, but not authoritarians. They also see themselves as coordinators of the work being done by their subordinates and are concerned with the broader picture. Many feel that they should pay due regard to each
subordinate. They want to know themselves better and use their potential better. However, too many superiors fail right here. They don't know themselves and consequently are frequently frustrated in dealing with a subordinate who presents an idea, suggestion or decision which is out of the normal context of business practices.

Truly many superiors who believe themselves to have certain characteristics but are seen quite differently by the subordinate. The fault can lie in the subordinate, if so he must recognize it and correct the distortion. The subordinate must know his own strengths and weaknesses in order to deal with those of a superior. Normally, the superior who does not know himself is not sensitive to the presence of upward communication. By sensitive is meant the state of being attuned to what the other person is really feeling, not just what he is saying. 

27 Usually superiors who don't know themselves are defensive and inhibited. Experience illustrates they have less success. This superior is often too concerned about his own frames of reference. In any case, the superior who doesn't know himself is a real handicap to effective upward communication.

As mentioned before, the superior is human and therefore complex. By discussing his attributes, whether personal or acquired, it is hoped that an awareness is created which better explains this phenomena of interpersonal communication from the subordinate's viewpoint.

HIS METHODS

A superior's ability and attributes usually determine his method. Each is a function of the other. Each can be learned. Here method also means skill, technique or acquired knowledge. A superior may work in the ideal communication environment and have adequate communication attributes, but be a failure in upward communication due to his methods. Often the line between a superior's method and his attributes is narrow. For it is found that one is dependent upon the other for proper execution. In some sense a superior's method is a further illumination of his attributes.

Previously, the ability to make decisions or the lack of this ability was discussed as a potential barrier to upward communication. This ability has a method which must be properly employed. Here is an account of a story about the first P. B. Armour of Chicago.

"In an expanding period of Armour & Company, Mr. Armour had an admirable plan for training his second and third echelons in the techniques of management. He organized about a dozen men into a junior board of directors and, from time to time, submitted important company problems to this group.

"One day, after a particularly lively discussion, a young man said, 'I move that we go ahead with this.'

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There was a second for the motion, and then Mr. Armour -- who was, of course chairing the meeting -- called for a vote. Everyone said 'Aye'.

"Whereupon Mr. Armour said, 'The motion is lost,' and went on to the next order of business.

"Here the depth of his experience and the breadth of his decision were far more important than the initial impression of men considering the matter for the first time."

Any interpretations of Mr. Armour's method are open for discussion. He had his method, most definitely. Whether he received results is another question.

There are numerous suggested methods for effective decision-making. These methods are important to a superior who is to receive upward communications: (1) give decisions only to people who are prepared to understand them (2) express decisions in the language of the recipients (3) verify that the decisions have been received properly, and (4) make decisions only at a rate in which the subordinate can absorb them. One can easily substitute upward communication for decision. The superior who does not utilize some method in receiving upward communication and then converting the information into some decision finds himself lost to the demands of subordinates.

Here is a pretty good description of a decision by an ineffective superior. His decision is frequently an imprecise, ambiguous, and essentially nonrational conclusion. The situation that exists is usually:
(1) information is always fragmented, often distorted (2) superior is emotional and non-factual and (3) communication is only one-way. This type of superior is unquestionably avoiding and blocking present and future upward communication, because he does not have a method of making decisions.

Previously, environment was a factor discussed as it related to the capability of a superior. Under the heading of method, we look now how the people process relates to communications. It's been said that every bit of our behavior is designed either to maintain or enhance our self concept. Saying this does not make superiors selfish people. By their nature everything people do, is designed to improve the picture. Superiors, like everyone else, have built in spontaneous defensive reactions designed to prevent tearing down or degrading this preconceived picture.

The fellow who wants to make a big hit, the Madison Avenue type or the guy who's out to impress everyone is a familiar individual in the industrial community. The reaction of most people to this person is that they'll attempt to poke holes in his balloon or cut him down. Here is a defensive reaction. Examples are common and numerous. This back and forth reaction wastes energy and the individuals are not communicating. This is where the saying originates, defense begets defense. On the other hand it is equally true that support begets support. It is up to the superior to determine which is his method and climate.

Gibbs' Findings

Dr. Jack R. Gibbs did a study in this area. He says there are
two methods: (1) supportive and (2) defensive. He defines each as, good communications and poor communications. Of course, much of this method or climate becomes the attributes of the superior. Dr. Gibbs presents six comparative methods for determining the environment, defensive versus supportive:

1. Evaluation versus descriptive -- this occurs when the superior both receives and transmits in an evaluative manner. He asks, "Where did you get that information," or "Why did you make out that report." In his communication endeavors he constantly evaluates everything the subordinate does or says, thus blocking effective upward communication. When a superior uses a descriptive method, he describes feelings, but does not evaluate. His questions are genuine requests for information.

2. Controlling versus problem oriented -- controlling is a method used by superiors which puts the subordinate on the defensive. Often the superior implies that the subordinate is ignorant, immature or not too bright. On the other hand the problem oriented method seeks to reveal the facts of upward communication. Here is emphasis on the discussed

29 From a lecture presented at a Western Electric Company training seminar.
problem, not the person.

3. Strategy versus spontenaty. A superior who
is a strategist in this sense is one who uses
people and manipulates them to his liking.
The reaction to this method by the subordinate
is defensive and blocks upward communication.
The superior who uses spontenaty requests
participation of the subordinate. He is
sincere and there are no hidden agendas.

4. Neutrality versus empathy. When a superior
is a neutralist who does not care about the
problem and the subordinate interprets this
as meaning that the superior does not care
about him. The subordinate says that the
superior is like talking to a brick wall.
The method characterized by empathy lets
the subordinate know that the superior is
trying to understand. By this method the
superior advances the interests of the
subordinate.

5. Superiority versus equality. The superior
who approaches his subordinates with an
air of superiority soon learns that it puts
them on the defensive. As a consequence
their upward communications are defensive
and the superior with another act of
superiority rejects them. However, the
superior who utilizes the equality method develops attitudes of mutual trust. Rank is not the sole criterion, rather interaction is man to man.

6. Certainty versus provisionalism. The certainty approach embodies the "allness" concept coined to by Professor Paul Haney. This method has the know it all attitude exemplified by the superior. The major purpose of this method is to win, not to solve. The provisionalism method instills the willingness to experiment and test approach. Here the superior investigates issues, rather than take sides with the subordinate, and make issues.

These six comparisons of methods or climates established by the ineffective (defensive) or the effective (offensive) superior illustrate again the reasons, the circumstances, and the characteristics that involve a superior which can and do make him incapable of receiving upward communication.

**Grapevine**

The grapevine is like the weather for most superiors. All of them have experienced it, but few know what to do with it. The grapevine is the communication system of the informal organization. Its members are subordinates that communicate upward. Proper utilization
of the grapevine can be an effective method available for the superior to receive upward communication. Conversely, ignorance or ignoring this universal phenomenon can lead to problems and disaster for the incapable superior.

The marginal superior prefers to leave the subject alone. They have their good reasons. The grapevine is intangible. Also, the superior lacks control of it, so they ignore it. A typical reaction is, "Don't talk to me about communicating through the grapevine, I wouldn't trust it for any purpose." The important point which a superior must recognize is that the grapevine is a natural, normal activity. It is an essential part of the total human-business environment, and it can be a useful tool for receiving upward communication. The superior who turns his back and mind on this method is blocking vital upward communication.

**Semantics**

It is acknowledged that the superior lives in an increasingly complicated network of communication, with lines leading up, down, and sideways. He must attempt to keep them open and clear, especially to those below. There is then a close relationship between communication and the unheralded science of semantics. For the truly capable superior this science is a method which he can use to his advantage.

**Semantics has been defined as "the systematic studying of meaning."**

30 It also includes other methods such as gestures, expressions

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and symbols. It goes beyond dictionary definitions; it attempts to evaluate what a speaker really means, as contrasted to what he says. The goal of semantics is better communication.

The major principle of semantics is to stop, look, and listen when a message is transmitted. With this method comes meaning. A superior who does not listen violates the principle and loses this method. More and better listening on the part of superiors can prime the pump for a flow of upward communications. The superior who does not know or practice the method offered by semantics finds himself a hinderance to continued upward communication. Here is another example where an incapable superior, due to improper methods, does not receive or accept upward communication.

In this section on methods it was attempted to present some methods which are available for the effective and capable superior. The point is that if a superior does practice and utilize such sound methods, he will be a detriment to upward communication. As a consequence the subordinate will find that due to this lacking of methods the superior does not accept the upward flow.

THE SUBORDINATE

As acknowledged, any responsive communication requires planning. Often the rejection by the superior is simply poor planning on the part of the subordinate. Usually he has not collected the relevant facts and information. Many times the subordinate believes he is prepared to see his boss, only to find that after the boss' first question he is confused. The subordinate must plan and be confident. What we
are saying here is that the subordinate himself is a circumstance to the superior and therefore a reason for the non-acceptance process.

In order to minimize poor communication the subordinate should know his goals for upward communication. For brevity and clarity, subordinates' goals may be classified into four main categories: 

1. fulfilling the minimum upward communication requirement of the position, including routine reports and any special information requested by the subordinate's superior
2. retaining some aspect of the job situation which the subordinate likes
3. changing some aspect which the subordinate dislikes
4. satisfying some personal need beyond the job environment.

The first goal is basic to any job position. The second and third are probably the most common goals that subordinates seek to attain through upward communication.

The fourth goal requires further explanation. It encompasses a multitude of possibilities. From a psychological standpoint, an attempt to satisfy personal needs beyond the job may well be an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. The first three goals may be differentiated from the last in that upward communication is used as a means to attain a goal, rather than as a possible goal itself.

A criterion for effectiveness would therefore indicate that the subordinate can do very little toward achieving personal goals through formal communication. Three reasons are:


communication, arising from the position and not from the person filling the position, does not take into account the fact that the subordinate is human, having personal wants which need to be communicated. (2) the subordinate cannot effectively use formal communication to serve his ends because he does not initiate it and, (3) a third inhibitor to goal satisfaction through formal communication is the fact that the subordinate does not have discretionary control over its content. In other words, formal communication does not leave room for personal communication, and for this reason, the subordinate's position in the formal communication network serves as a deterrent of acceptance by the superior.

It is easy to see that much that has been written in this paper can be applied to a subordinate. For in the beginning it was prefaced that each superior is himself a subordinate. All the barriers, lackings, and weaknesses referred to could apply to the subordinate. In this context the subordinate can be a circumstance causing the unacceptability of his own upward communication. Since this paper is from the viewpoint of the subordinate it suffices here to acknowledge that the subordinate can be considered a circumstance to the superior. The subordinate's viewpoint will be discussed in the CONCLUSION.
V. CONCLUSION

Before embarking on any review of introduction of the excellence of the effective subordinate, it is appropriate to present some pertinent data on upward communications. The factors and statistics which follow are taken from a Public Opinion Index for Industry. This study focuses on the subordinate's desire to be heard, the obstacles in the way of meeting this demand and the relationship between perception of opportunity to be heard and constructive work attitudes. This research was conducted among engineers, white-collar employees and their immediate supervisors in four companies in varying industries. It appeared appropriate to conclude with these findings as they represent the results of much of what has been previously discussed.

The first question is, what's on the subordinates mind? Foremost, subordinates want to communicate about things closely related to the job itself and their own future. Another desire is to get through to management, the opportunity of expression. Over 50% of the subordinates in the study complained of lack of opportunity to make contact with those above. The major reasons the subordinates submitted for upward communication blockage are: insecure superiors afraid of rocking the boat; a cumbersome chain of command; higher management is unavailable, busy, doesn't want to listen; and no system for listening.

Subordinates with low satisfaction on their opportunity to be heard revealed these statistics: 41% said the working relationship between subordinate and superior was poor; 38% said the quality of superiors was poor and; 23% said the ability of top management was poor.

Restricted chance to be heard goes hand in hand with the belief that the superior doesn't care about employees. On items having to do with the superior's concern for subordinate's welfare these ratings resulted: 60% said that superiors were poor in taking their interest into account for important decisions; 49% of the surveyed subordinates said that their superior was poor in making them feel an important part of the company and; 37% rated their superiors poor as not showing respect to them as individuals.

Subordinates had this to say about downward communication from their superior: 51% rated their superior as poor in not informing them promptly on changes affecting their work and; 60% rated their superior poor for not keeping them informed of what's going on in the company.

The opinion research survey resulted in classifying six obstacles to upward communication.34

1. The subordinate's idea that expressing their true feelings to a superior could be dangerous.

Most subordinates, 75%, feel reasonably safe.

However, at least half of the subordinates believed that they could get into serious trouble if they expressed all their feelings

34 Ibid.
to their superior.

2. The widespread belief that management (superior) is not interested in subordinate problems. A full seventy-two percent of the subordinates studied said that many problems important to a subordinate are not considered important by the superior.

3. Apparently superiors have not been taught how to listen well. Subordinates said that superiors lack skill in communications. Subordinates rated their superior as follows on ability to communicate: 76% said they were poor in ability to handle questions and complaints; 72% rated them poor in encouraging ideas and suggestions and; 71% rated them poor in their ability to handle meetings. By contrast over 50% of the subordinates rated their superiors high on technical competence and willingness to work on company goals.

4. The widespread belief held by superiors that upward communication is not an important part of their job.

5. The sharp difference between subordinates and superiors as to whether superiors make themselves available. Superiors are strongly in belief that they provide plenty for
subordinates to get things off their chest. Subordinates viewed things somewhat differently. Ninety-nine percent of the superiors said they were either always willing to listen or usually willing. However, sixty-three percent of the subordinates said their superior was difficult to see on a problem.

6. The conviction that superiors do not take prompt action. Subordinates, according to the survey, have a low opinion of superior's performance in responding to their demands for action on problems. Only 18% of all subordinates rated their superior satisfactory on taking action on their ideas, complaints, and problems.

These are the six obstacles to upward communication as classified by the survey. It is readily seen how these tie into the circumstances and characteristics that have been discussed in this paper. This survey illustrates further that this phenomenon is not fiction, but fact.

Throughout this paper the superior has been the villain. This was necessary for the viewpoint was that of the subordinate. The problem, as seen by the subordinate, was a superior who did not respond to interpersonal upward communication. Three broad areas were discussed; environment, attributes, and methods. With this classification we were able to examine the whys behind the problem. The opinion research survey bore out many of the whys.
The subordinate, too, has an active role in upward communication. He, too, is often a villain. But, a subordinate, despite any characteristics or circumstances of a superior can be effective. While it is true that the climate of the subordinate-superior relationship is established by the superior, it is also true that the talent, tact and adaptability of the subordinate play an important part in determining the nature of the relationship and the degree of its effectiveness.

The subordinate holds what J. M. Black calls the "secondary initiative." That is if he can win the confidence of the superior, he becomes an extension of the superior's authority and therefore greatly increases upward communication.

The essential characteristic of the effective subordinate is his main concern with accomplishment or achievement. A good subordinate is frequently the confidant of his superior, his sounding board for new plans, his alter ego.

The subordinate usually has an over-the-shoulder view of his superior's aims. His first concern is to advance the interests of his own superior. In doing so he advances his own. From his standpoint the relationship is more personal, influenced by human factors such as attitudes of his superior, his working methods and, his individual traits. The relationship is further complexed and influenced by the organizational environment. It is readily apparent that the most effective subordinate is the person who is himself prepared to be a good subordinate.

Mr. Black makes a rather obvious statement, but yet searching, he said, "The superior may make the initial selection, but it is the subordinate who ultimately decides whether or not he is being provided with the leadership that gives full scope to his ambitions." Of course, his statement assumes that the subordinate is competent and performs his duties satisfactorily. It is the subordinate's job to give full support to his superior's program and compliment his efforts.

There are some useful guidelines suggested for the successful subordinate in his relations with his superior.

1. Don't expect perfection. A superior has his faults as well as his virtues. Don't magnify either. Then the subordinate will not be disillusioned.

2. Be objective. Understand your superior's abilities and deficiencies. This permits the subordinate to compensate for the latter and increase his value to the department.

3. Keep your subordinate informed. Many of his decisions are based on information the subordinate has given him. Make sure what you say is accurate.

4. Learn to anticipate. The capable subordinate

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37 Ibid, pp. 50-51.
relieves his superior of detail. When you identify problems, try to find their solutions before reporting them. The more the subordinate can do on his own initiative, the better he will serve the superior and himself.

5. Give loyalty. A leader is entitled to loyalty. If the subordinate finds it impossible to give his superior loyal service, the subordinate has no right to work for him.

These are just a few of the guidelines for the capable subordinate. The same skills required for any effective leader are also necessary of the subordinate who wishes to achieve excellence.

It has been seen that the relatively isolated individual is faced with insurmountable difficulties in his attempt to achieve rational behavior. The decisions of subordinates operating as the managed through influence and other attributes shape the course of company operations. This is made possible in some of the following ways:

1. Communication of ideas, suggestions, or decisions to a superior are made which define enterprise purposes.

2. Subordinate must attempt to establish the criterion of rationality to guide communication with a superior. This criterion requires that a choice be made between

38 Ibid, pp. 51-52.
alternatives which will maximize results.

3. Subordinate must respect the formal lines of authority.

4. Subordinate should provide superior with relevant information.

5. Appeal to positive moods of superior (loyalty, duty, usefulness, service).

6. Refuse to respond or react in kind.

7. Eliminate the pressure of emotional feeling upon the superior, so that reason can be established.

Here again, are seen some guidelines for the subordinate. The thesis proposed here was that the effective subordinate can achieve excellence in the interpersonal communication process by observing certain guidelines and by analyzing the characteristics and circumstances surrounding the superior. Thus the subordinate must seek the desired capabilities of a superior in order to be effective himself, and to receive the requested action from his superior.
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