

EFFECTS OF VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION ON THE BUSINESS SUCCESS OF THE COMPANY

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Abstract: Communication plays an important role in achieving business success, which is why increasing attention is being paid to the study of verbal and nonverbal communication. Through the buying and selling of goods or services, and through communication, we enter into various relationships with people and organizations. In today's environment, organizations undergo various organizational changes, and managers at different levels recognize the need to improve communication methods, yet they are often unsure how to organize and implement them. Likewise, the efficiency of an organization's functioning is influenced by well-developed internal communication channels.

This paper describes the concept of verbal and nonverbal communication as one of the key elements in increasing a company's business success. The subject of the paper is the issue of engaging available human resources within an organization, improving and implementing verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as its effectiveness, simplicity, rationality, and cost-efficiency. The aim of the research is not only to provide a theoretical overview of verbal and nonverbal communication but also to demonstrate its impact on the business success of a company.

Keywords: verbal communication, non-verbal communication, company success, efficiency, organization

Introduction

Communication holds immeasurable significance for the emergence of human society. The realization that the power of communication contributed to the development of humankind and civilization as a whole allows us to conclude that the achievements of civilization exist thanks to communication. Enterprises, as systems with an organizational structure, are composed of individuals and groups who work together to achieve the goals for which the enterprises were established. In order to found a company and define its business objectives, communication is essential—employees must be able to present and implement their ideas and thoughts. The foundation of any enterprise lies in its people and their mutual communication.

The success of every company is preceded by effective communication that eliminates or at least reduces the misinterpretation of messages. It is extremely important that the message sent is understood in the way the sender intended, as the dissemination of information directly impacts the functioning of the enterprise and the establishment of business relationships with other systems.

Communication represents one of the fundamental human needs. Successful communication and the development of quality interpersonal relationships are key goals for every business professional. Effective communication requires the fulfillment of certain conditions. Appearance and speech are elements through which others form impressions about a speaker's competence and credibility. A message, whether spoken or written appropriately, plays a decisive role in resolving both routine and extraordinary situations, such as conducting business meetings, building strong relationships, successfully closing deals, and more.

Communicating in a way that allows us to better understand others and more effectively express our own ideas and opinions has a direct impact on the quality of life and business success. The simplest communication model involves two subjects—the sender of the message and the receiver. Every human being is biogenetically and psychosocially equipped for this type of communication. Communication inherently includes feedback, which is the receiver's response to the sender. This feedback represents the connection between the sender and the receiver, completing the communication process.

Communication is a force that brings people together and fosters an atmosphere of mutual understanding. In a company, effective communication is essential because it connects all employees, regardless of their hierarchical position. It links managers and employees, motivates individuals to improve their work, and contributes to the achievement of organizational goals. Good and effective communication is not only vital for interpersonal relationships but also significantly influences the overall business performance of the company (Laketa & al. 2017).

The Concept and Definition of Communication

The word *communication* originates from the Latin word *communicare* and carries several meanings:

1. communication, presentation, lecture,
2. traffic, connection, the link between two points.

To communicate means to be in contact or to establish a connection, while a communicative person is someone who is resourceful in interacting with others, approachable, and talkative. The concept of communication implies interaction through signs, a process of creating meaning, and a process of mutual exchange of meaning (Bašić & al. 2005).

The communication process involves at least two individuals who influence each other. In the process of communication, it is essential to be familiar with the person receiving the message and to understand the context, as the situation determines what type of messages are necessary. In practice, people often interpret the same words differently. This indicates that meanings reside in people, not in the words themselves. Messages are selected based on needs and desires, and their meanings are shaped by prior experience and expectations (Bašić & al. 1994).

Communication has both denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meaning of communication refers to the naming of objects, phenomena, and relationships—it is descriptive in nature. The connotative meaning is oriented toward emotional experience and does not have the same content for all individuals (Reardon, 1998).

Complete and professional communication occurs when messages are sent deliberately, in a planned and conscious manner, with efforts made to obtain and receive feedback regarding how the messages are received. Communication is a means of establishing contact, transferring information, and influencing others,

but it is also important for its impact on the psychological and social development of individuals, and on the formation of one's "self" through interaction with others. A person's self-concept is built through interpersonal relationships, which is what makes a human being a unique individual (Bratanić, 1993).

Communication is a complex socio-psychological phenomenon, as the flow of human interaction and information exchange takes place within social interaction. The communication process depends on individual psychological processes such as perception, learning, memory, thinking, motivation, emotions, and abilities. Through communication, compromises are reached, and harmonious relationships with others are built. The human ability to stimulate rapid and effective communication has made globalization possible.

Communication has been defined in various ways (Banković, 2013).

- "Communication is the process of transmitting a message from one person to another." – Weick & Browning

- "Communication is any behavior that results in the exchange of thoughts." – American Management Association

- "Communication is the process by which information is transmitted between individuals and/or organizations so that a response is elicited which confirms understanding." – Peter Little

- "Communication is the exchange of facts, ideas, opinions, or emotions between two or more persons." – Newman & Summer Jr.

- "Communication is the process of transferring information and understanding from one person to another. It is essentially a bridge of understanding. By using that bridge, we can safely cross the river of misunderstanding." – Keith Davis

- "Communication is everything a person does when they want to achieve understanding by others. It involves a continuous process of speaking, listening, and understanding." – Louis A. Allen

Two fundamental elements that are prerequisites for successful communication are **exchange** and **understanding**. Accurate reception of information—both in terms of content and the meaning intended by the sender—constitutes effective communication. The ability to understand messages received from others, and the meaning assigned to words or facial expressions, is influenced by one's experience, education, and personal needs. The understanding and interpretation of messages are shared between the sender and the receiver, whether individuals or organizations.

The success of a company depends on effective and efficient communication. Communication occurs within the company, among market participants, between employees, between owners and employees, between buyers and sellers, service providers and service users, and public representatives. All these types of communication influence business operations. When conducted with care, communication can promote business interests; if neglected, it may portray the company in a negative light and harm both its business interests and public image (Laketa & al. 2017).

Communication Rules by Paul Watzlawick

In his theory, Paul Watzlawick established a set of principles of communication that describe, facilitate, and enhance the understanding of human interaction. These principles help clarify the nature of conversations between people.

1. **It is impossible not to communicate.** Every behavior, in any given situation, carries the character of a message. This means that communication occurs not only through words but also through behavior as a whole. Even refusing to communicate is a form of communication—silence itself conveys a message.

2. **Every communication has both a content and a relationship aspect.** These aspects are always present and continuously influence one another. The content aspect refers to signs or symbols that indicate features of objects, people, or events. The relational aspect refers to how one perceives the information and the other person, and it shapes the interpersonal relationship between communicators. This, in turn, affects the content interpretation.

3. **The nature of a relationship is determined by the punctuation of communication sequences.** Each participant in a conversation tends to perceive their own viewpoint as the starting point of communication. This subjective “punctuation” influences how individuals interpret causes and effects in communication. People affect each other’s behavior through their own actions.

4. **Communication occurs both digitally (verbally) and analogically (non-verbally).** Verbal (digital) communication involves the exchange of information through words. Non-verbal (analog) communication expresses attitudes and relational messages via facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, and speaking style. These forms of communication take place simultaneously. Problems arise when there is a discrepancy between the verbal and non-verbal messages, or when non-verbal cues are misinterpreted, especially since non-verbal communication often operates outside of conscious control.

5. **Human relationships are either symmetrical or complementary.** In a symmetrical relationship, participants interact as equals. In a complementary relationship, the roles are differentiated—for example, manager and employee, or supervisor and subordinate. Each type of relationship influences the form and outcome of communication ¹.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication involves the use of words and serves as a medium for transmitting information through symbols and signs in a way that can be commonly understood. The primary focus in verbal communication is on the spoken or written word, as language is the central channel of this form of communication ².

Forms of verbal communication include **written communication** (reading and writing) and **oral communication** (speaking and listening). Studies show that people use only a limited portion of their reading capacity and spend little time reading—approximately 16%³. Writing accounts for about 9%⁴ of communication. Common forms of writing used to express ideas include books, poems, stories, letters, articles, scientific papers, greeting cards, postcards, and emails. A major advantage of written communication is its permanence and the fact that it can be preserved over time.

¹ <https://repozitorij.unipu.hr/islandora/object/unipu:848/datastream/PDF/view>

² <https://repozitorij.unipu.hr/islandora/object/unipu:848/datastream/PDF/view>

³ Miljković, D., Rijavec, M. (1997). *Razgovori sa zrcalom: psihologija samopouzdanja*. Zagreb: IEP

⁴ Miljković, D., Rijavec, M. (1997), citirano delo.

Verbal communication is primarily oral. In everyday exchanges, speaking constitutes around 35%, while listening accounts for approximately 40% of communication⁵. Speaking is a one-way process and represents the most characteristic form of communication—where information is given but not necessarily received. In contrast, conversation is a two-way process, where messages are both sent and received (Bašić & al. 2005). Messages transmitted orally often arrive at the recipient in a modified form. These modifications are typically the result of inattentive listening or the tendency to hear only what one wants to hear.

Listening refers to paying attention to what the speaker is saying and may be either active or passive. Active listening is essential for both verbal and non-verbal communication. It involves focusing on the speaker with empathy and intent to understand. Passive listening, on the other hand, involves minimal effort and often leads to neglecting the speaker's intentions.

The primary role of oral communication is to deliver messages and information. Direct and positive conversation can serve as a strong motivator and elicit feelings of importance and satisfaction. For communication to be successful, it is important that the message is transmitted without alteration from sender to receiver, understood correctly, evaluated appropriately, and responded to accordingly. Gaining the respect and trust of others is vital, whether the communication is oral or written.

In verbal communication, clarity should be supported by proper tone, gestures, and facial expressions to ensure the message is accurately interpreted. Every spoken word should carry a specific meaning to avoid misunderstanding.

The purpose of verbal communication is to inform us about surrounding events, express emotions and opinions, and enable conscious decision-making. Therefore, it is important to choose words and communication styles carefully, to ensure the message is understood. The efficiency of verbal communication can be improved by⁶:

- using language that is widely understood and minimizing the use of foreign words,
- eliminating ambiguities, especially in cross-cultural communication, where people from different cultural backgrounds may interpret messages differently,
- keeping messages short, simple, and concrete, adapting to the listener's speech style, and avoiding internal monologues,
- illustrating key ideas with examples or comparisons, such as visual aids or personal experiences,
- repeating and summarizing important points in long conversations to ensure message retention.

The effectiveness of verbal communication depends on both the **sender** and the **receiver**. Successful communication requires knowledge of language, verbal and non-verbal components, communication skills, attitudes, and cultural norms. One should always ask for clarification when something is unclear, as misunderstanding can lead to incorrect learning. It is advisable to treat others the way we would like to be treated in a similar situation (Miljković & Rijavec 1997).

⁵ Miljković, D., Rijavec, M. (1997), citirano delo.

⁶ http://www.skolamedvinogradska.hr/sites/default/files/PROFESIONALNA_KOMUNIKACIJA.pdf, 21.01.2023.)

Verbal Communication in Business

Effective verbal communication in business requires the knowledge and application of skills and strategies that lead to positive outcomes in professional environments. In the business world, verbal communication must adhere to the rules of formal language. Public speaking and business presentations must be continuously practiced and refined in order to advance professionally.

Business owners, managers, and employees utilize various methods and tools of communication to represent their companies, ensure understanding within teams, and improve business results. Communication skills are vital for successful management because they enhance teamwork, client relations, and overall business performance. Communication can take many forms, including intrapersonal (communication with oneself), interpersonal (with others), general and business communication, verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as media and digital communication. In the communication process, different forms often overlap, especially in modern business, where communication skills and strategies are measured by results and financial outcomes⁷.

Key elements of verbal communication in business should be applied consistently. These include business negotiation, business etiquette, business presentations, and the use of electronic communication systems. Education and continuous training in accordance with the latest trends and findings in communication are essential for success in modern business. Through intrapersonal communication, individuals reflect on their own thoughts in order to convey clear messages to their colleagues. The oldest, simplest, and fastest form of communication remains face-to-face verbal communication⁸.

In addition to oral communication, many professionals prefer written communication due to the reliability and security offered by modern digital technologies. Message senders sometimes fail to consider the meaning of a message before delivering it or may feel nervous during conversations, which affects how the message is received. Some individuals speak too quietly—not due to a lack of knowledge, but because of external stressors or workloads that influence their communication⁹.

In today's business environment, etiquette is essential. It consists of rules of proper conduct based on social norms, which must be learned and respected. Some jobs demand high levels of concentration and attention, which may lead to overlooking social niceties such as greetings, questions, or responses. However, practicing professional etiquette can significantly improve workplace relationships¹⁰.

Communication plays a vital role in modern business. Many companies actively seek ways to improve communication both within the organization and with external stakeholders, in order to boost their business performance. Training employees to write business letters, memos, or conduct professional phone conversations is not a simple task. Effective communication and successful operations require managers to engage with all participants in the business process—especially with employees. This helps prevent misunderstandings that affect productivity, efficiency, and morale. Managers must share ideas, define goals, and communicate about projects clearly. The goal is for every team member to understand their task and the

⁷ <https://repozitorij.unin.hr/islandora/object/unin:1213/datastream/PDF/view>

⁸ <https://repozitorij.mev.hr/islandora/object/mev:496/datastream/PDF/view>

⁹ <https://proprium.hr/verbalna-i-neverbalna-komunikacija-u-poslovanju/>

¹⁰ <https://proprium.hr/verbalna-i-neverbalna-komunikacija-u-poslovanju/>

broader business objectives ¹¹.

Improving internal communication and communication with superiors involves interest, creativity, knowledge, and skills. Every company should have a clear work plan, defined tasks, and direct communication between employees and managers. This reduces stress, dissatisfaction, and conflict. Communication between staff and management includes reporting on completed work, presenting plans, ideas, opinions, and complaints.

Business associates should be engaged in business activities by seeking information about current results and future plans. Effective communication builds strong interpersonal relationships in the company, increases quality and productivity, motivates employees to perform better, and encourages them to propose their own ideas.

A manager should strive to maintain an optimal level of conflict within the company to support effective operations. Effective verbal and non-verbal communication is a key to business success, inseparable from ethics and professionalism. It forms the foundation of successful management and corporate development ¹².

Non-Verbal Communication

People express their attitudes toward themselves and their environment not only through words but also through non-verbal signals—what is often referred to as body language. Like verbal communication, non-verbal communication includes various behavioral strategies used in different situations and settings. Behavioral scientists, in collaboration with sociologists, educators, psychiatrists, and anthropologists, have estimated that as much as 80% of a first impression is based on body language, which often has a stronger impact than the spoken word (Pease, 1991).

We use body language to convey messages even before we speak—communicating non-verbally with those around us. Non-verbal communication is older and predates the development of verbal language in human society, although systematic research into it began just over forty years ago. People are aware that they present themselves through body movements, which may reflect gestures of courtesy or socially expected behavior. Non-verbal behavior is learned, and each person adapts it to community norms in anticipation of optimal interaction with their surroundings (Marot, 2005).

Studies have shown that non-verbal cues often influence us more powerfully than verbal ones. From an early age, children are taught proper behavior, including socially acceptable gestures and signs of impoliteness (e.g., pointing fingers, placing elbows on the table, etc.). These learned movements are consciously used and shaped by cultural differences. Polite behavior is not universally interpreted the same way across cultures. For instance, interpersonal distance during communication may range from 15 centimeters in intimate settings to over 3.6 meters in public speaking scenarios.

The accepted distance between people during conversations varies across cultures. What is acceptable in one cultural context may be perceived as intrusive in another. For example, in many European

¹¹ <https://proprium.hr/verbalna-i-neverbalna-komunikacija-u-poslovanju/>

¹² http://seminarko.weebly.com/uploads/3/0/6/5/30656523/seminar_organizacijska_psihologija_komunikacija.pdf, (21.01.2023.)

Union countries, appropriate interpersonal distance during conversation ranges from 46 centimeters to 1.22 meters. In business settings, leaning toward or touching a conversation partner is generally avoided.

Non-verbal communication can be classified into several categories: body language, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and a range of combined movements. These gestures—whether conscious or unconscious—play an essential role in the communication process and can be perceived as either threatening or friendly. The speaker's body posture and behavior often align with their attitude, and understanding non-verbal signals helps to interpret intentions reflected in physical stance and movement. Discomfort, as expressed through posture, gestures, or facial expressions, may signal behavior that is socially unacceptable in a given context. Gestures may also serve as signals that reflect a person's internal state (e.g., covering the mouth or nose, avoiding eye contact, adjusting the collar—implying disapproval, discomfort, or dishonesty)¹³.

It is important to distinguish between unconscious body movements and consciously performed gestures. When studying greeting rituals, various elements that affect communication value must be considered, including (Pintarit, 2002):

- **Kinesic cues** (facial expressions, gestures, posture),
- **Superceptive cues** (feelings of sympathy, antipathy, empathy),
- **Tactile cues** (touch, handshakes),
- **Ritual signs** (kissing, waving),
- **Status symbols** (behavior related to age, education, social status).

Taking both conscious and unconscious aspects into account, we can distinguish five main types of gestures (Ekman, 1969):

1. **Emblems** – gestures with a direct verbal equivalent,
2. **Illustrators** – gestures that emphasize or clarify verbal messages,
3. **Affective displays** – facial expressions that convey emotions,
4. **Regulators** – gestures that help manage interaction flow,
5. **Adaptors** – gestures that reveal feelings or personal needs.

The non-verbal system categorizes communication into actions, gestures, signals, and signs. Body movements can be divided based on whether they are innate, self-developed, or adopted from others¹⁴.

Culture is a form of communication, and sentences may lack meaning without accompanying non-verbal cues. Non-verbal communication is often more impactful and is developed over a longer period. People are rarely willing to reveal their full selves instantly—trust and understanding take time to develop (Hall, 1976).

Non-verbal communication also includes behavioral norms that must be respected. Ignoring these norms can result in being perceived as impolite, causing discomfort or even social rejection. While we may be more aware of good manners in verbal exchanges, non-verbal behavior often operates at a subconscious level. By understanding the rules of non-verbal communication, we can project ourselves as self-aware and reliable individuals. Equally important, however, is our ability to read and interpret the intentions and reactions of the person we are communicating with¹⁵.

¹³ Pease, A. (1991), citirano delo.

¹⁴ Marot, D., (2005), citirano delo.

¹⁵ Marot, D., (2005), citirano delo.

Communication and Business Success

Communication among employees is a fundamental precondition for the functioning of any company—it represents its core. Without communication, an organization cannot exist (Mikić, 2010).

Key characteristics of effective communication include **accuracy, professionalism, clarity, and quality**—all of which are not innate but acquired through continuous learning and personal development. Efficient communication within a company requires knowledge, skills, and confidence. The fact that communication demands such competencies illustrates how complex the process truly is. Its influence on business success is reflected in the growing number of managers who study communication methods and enhance their skills by re-evaluating how they perceive this process¹⁶.

Within the company, communication fulfills several essential functions¹⁷:

- **Instruction** – Communicating orders or directives from higher to lower levels in the organizational hierarchy, aimed at executing specific tasks.
- **Integration** – The consolidation function that coordinates activities across different departments within the company.
- **Unification** – Aids in harmonizing various managerial functions.
- **Information** – Notifying individuals or groups about specific tasks, procedures, or operations. This flow of information can move vertically, horizontally, or diagonally across the organization.
- **Evaluation** – Assessing the effectiveness of communication by measuring the contribution of individuals or teams to the company's overall performance.
- **Guidance** – Providing employees with directions necessary for task execution. These instructions can be either verbal or written.
- **Training** – For example, occupational safety training increases worker safety and reduces company expenses.
- **Influence** – Achieving influence over others or being influenced by them requires communication. A person with persuasive potential can easily convince others.
- **Image building** – A company cannot operate in isolation. It must foster trust within its environment, which is achieved through strategic communication.
- **Employee orientation** – Familiarizing new employees with colleagues, company rules, regulations, and organizational culture.

Problems stemming from misaligned or poor communication exist at all levels of a company and negatively impact business performance. Ineffective communication hinders team cooperation and may even cause negotiations to fail. Salespeople who fail to recognize and adapt to customer communication styles will be less effective. Suppliers who do not understand the communication norms of their counterparts may struggle to build rapport. Managers who neglect to adjust their communication with subordinates make their jobs unnecessarily difficult. These examples represent everyday business realities, though they are often overlooked. The core problem lies in the absence of clear metrics to quantify the damage caused by poor

¹⁶ Laketa, L., Laketa, M., Kolev, D., (2017), citirano delo.

¹⁷ Banković, M., (2013), citirano delo.

communication.

In most cases, people will not openly state that they disliked someone's communication style. A key prerequisite for successful communication is adopting the mindset of **"I'm OK, you're OK"**, which emphasizes mutual respect and the belief that all parties are equally important and entitled to understanding. Achieving one's goals while maintaining a healthy relationship with others is the ideal outcome¹⁸.

As companies strive to improve their operations, increasing attention is being devoted to communication. Simple, clear, and targeted communication serves as a tool for disseminating information and as a platform for successful business operations. At all levels of work and decision-making, communication acts as a driver of change—both locally and globally. A well-designed communication system ensures goal achievement, employee motivation, and transparency within the company. The growing significance of communication in modern times cannot be overstated. As a complex, dynamic, and all-encompassing activity, communication has become a central subject of academic and business research (Dobardžić, 2015).

Interest in this topic stems from the crucial role communication plays in business. Successful employee collaboration depends on information exchange, making communication essential for the establishment, continuity, and adaptability of any organization.

Communication serves as a mechanism for transferring information and forming the basis for cooperation, making it essential for all organizational interactions (Bismarck & al. 1999).

Effective communication strengthens employee trust in the company's vision and mission, facilitates development and necessary changes, and supports behavior change. It enhances the company's image, reveals new business opportunities, and determines how the company is perceived by society—based on how well its communication processes are conceived and implemented (Mucchielli, 2010).

Conclusion

Communication is a fundamental and indispensable part of everyday business operations. It represents an essential element of organizational success, encompassing not only verbal but also non-verbal forms that influence how messages are transmitted and interpreted. A well-established communication system within a company strengthens collaboration, builds trust among employees, and improves overall business performance.

The way we communicate has a direct impact on the quality of relationships within the organization and with external partners. Business success largely depends on effective communication between managers and employees, employees among themselves, and between the company and its environment. Clear, purposeful, and professionally conducted communication leads to better decision-making, problem-solving, innovation, and adaptability in changing market conditions.

In addition to verbal communication, which involves the use of spoken or written language, non-verbal communication plays a critical role in expressing emotions, attitudes, and intentions. The ability to align verbal messages with non-verbal cues ensures message clarity and helps build credibility and authority. Misalignment between verbal and non-verbal communication often leads to misunderstandings and reduces

¹⁸ Laketa, L., Laketa, M., Kolev, D., (2017), citirano delo.

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communication effectiveness.

Through communication, employees convey their ideas, attitudes, and feelings, participate in decision-making, and contribute to organizational goals. It is therefore necessary to continuously develop communication competencies at all levels of the company, through training, feedback, and awareness of cultural and interpersonal differences.

The success of a company depends not only on the quality of its products or services but also on how effectively it communicates internally and externally. By improving communication strategies and skills, companies can enhance their reputation, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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