

THE USE OF ICT DEVICES IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

I. W. Akaenyi and G.E. Aniegwu

Abstract

Business communication is any communication used to promote a product, service or organization with objective of making sale to gain profit. To do this effectively in this present technological age, ICT devices must be employed. In this paper we have examined how ICT devices can be used in business communication to achieve the major goal of business activities. This can be done through the use of smart phones, PCs, computerized devices, CCTV, and usage of web site for receiving feedback from customers. One of the advantages of ICT usage in business communication is that business communication can be done twenty four hours a week. However, the paper recommends among others that tariff on ICT devices should be removed to reduce the cost of ICT devices. Effective usage of ICT devices in business communication creates good communication in business where both partners understand each other and creates trust and integrity in business operations.

Business is an economic system in which goods and services are exchanged for one another or money, on the basis of their perceived worth. Every business requires some form of investment and a sufficient number of customers to whom its output can be sold at profit on a consistent basis. It involves financial dealings buying and selling and mercantile transactions (Thinkexist, 2012:3). That is, the aggregate economic activities of an organization or of the commercial and manufacturing sectors of an economy are all seen as the business activities. According to

Sullivan and Steven (2003:29), “business is an organization engaged in the trade of goods, services, or both to consumers.” However, the exact definition of business is a matter of debate and complexity of meanings. But the practical definition of business is to solve a customer’s economic problem and create sustainable profits over time, and have impact on customers’ lives. Hence, its basic function is to reliably solve customers’ economic problem. And its basic purpose is to attract and keep customers through business communication, which is reliable, fast and consistent in terms of dissemination.

Business Communication

Communication is any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge or affective status (Adnan, 2008:2). Communication may be intentional or unintentional, it may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes. Or in simple words; “communication is the exchange of ideas, opinions and information through written or spoken words, symbols or actions” (Adnan, 2008:2). Communication is a dialogue, not a monologue. In fact, communication is more concerned with a dual listening process. For communication to be effective, the message must mean the same thing to both the sender and the receiver.

But business communication is any communication used to promote a product, service, or organization with objective of making

sale (Adnan, 2008). Business communication is the type of communication used in order to promote an organization, service and product, and to impart information towards employees (Exforsys Inc., 2008). It is used to relay information within the business or deal with legal and similar issues. It is also a means of relaying between a supply chain, for example the consumer and manufacturer. It encompasses a variety of topics, including marketing, branding, customer relations, consumer behaviour, advertising, public relations, corporate communication, community engagement, research and measurement, reputation management, interpersonal communication, employee engagement, online communication, and event management.

Business communication is nothing but, the communication between the people in the organization for the purpose of carrying out the business activities. The exchange of ideas and understanding, within and outside the organization to achieve the business goals is known as business communication. But business communication is goal oriented. The rules, regulations and policies of an organization have to be communicated to people within and outside the organization. Business communication is regulated by certain rules and norms.

It is very vital in every business to have a medium in order to communicate with employees, clients, service providers and others. It is not a simple call from the telephone as if you are talking to your friend or writing a letter to your loved one. There are standard rules to follow in order to be professional enough to deal with calls and writing letters. What makes business communication distinct from other types of communication is its formality. It makes it stand out from the rest of communication since there is this sense of professionalism, formality and etiquette that

should be followed in order to convey the right message or information (Exforsys Inc., 2008). However, business communication is somewhat different and unique from other types of communication since the purpose of business is to make money. Thus, to develop profitability, the communicator should develop good communication skills.

However, in early times, business communication was limited to paper work, telephone calls etc. But now with the advent of technology, we have cell phones, video conferencing, e-mails, satellite communication to support business communication through effective business communication which helps in building goodwill of an organization.

Types of Business Communication

Knowing the different types of business communication is important for using the right type at the right moment. There are two types of business communication in any organization. They are; internal and external communications. Each of these types of business communication can employ any of these methods of communication like oral, written, electronic and non verbal communication.

Internal communication: This is communication within an organization. It may be formal or informal or department providing communication in various forms to employees. It can be upward communication, downward communication or horizontal communication.

Upward communication is the flow of information from subordinates to superior or from employees to management (Adnan, 2008). Without upward communication, management works in a vacuum, not knowing if messages have been received properly, or if other problems exist in the organization.

Downward communication is information flowing from the top of the organization management hierarchy to the subordinates informing them what is important (mission) and what is valued (policies) in the organization. Downward communication generally provides enabling information, which allows a subordinate to do something. However, downward communication comes after upwards communications have been successfully established.

Horizontal communication normally involves coordinating information, and allows people with the same or similar rank in an organization to cooperate or collaborate. Communication among employees at the same level is crucial for the accomplishment of work.

Have it that, effective internal communication is a vital means of addressing organizational concerns. Good internal communication helps to increase job satisfaction, safety, productivity and profit and decrease grievances and turnover in organizational business.

External communication: This is communication with people outside the organization. The supervisors communicate with sources outside the organization, such as vendors and customers. External communication leads to better sales volumes, public credibility, operational efficiency and organizational profits (Adnan, 2008). It improves overall performance, public goodwill and corporate image. Ultimately, it helps to achieve organizational goals and customers' satisfaction. It is a means of interacting with the environment as an open system of operation.

Importance of Business Communication

Communication is one of the most basic functions of management in any business organization. Its importance can never be over

emphasized. It is the process of transmitting ideas, thoughts, information, opinions and plans between various parts of business organization, or sometimes to those outside the business organization who have a vested interest in the business and need to know the information (Sigma, 2010).

Good communication means that message is being sent and those receiving it clearly understand it in its entirety. Because of this, they are more likely to respond to it in a positive manner. When this occurs, it means the message was communicated effectively. A customer who receives poor communication from an employee of a business organization will most likely have an unfavorable response to the organization. The reason for this could be because the person listening does not possess a clear understanding of what the person doing the talking is actually saying. Perhaps the request is unclear, or may be the person listening did not pay enough attention. However, good communication is very vital for effective communication in business.

Human relations in business cannot be present without communication (Sigma, 2010). Good and effective communication is required for both personal relationship and successful business relationships. You can use business software and other popular applications for writing, or you can utilize the telephone and in-person methods for the spoken part. According to Sigma (2010), no matter how you communicate, make sure there are both talking and listening going on and that you take the time to carefully consider what is being said.

In business, reputation and credibility need to be built up in order to get clients' trust and confidence. Having a sense of professionalism will bring a lot to the business, especially in a long term relationship with employees and clients (Exforsys Inc., 2010). There is need to make sure that every business

deal is attended to promptly. As we have seen above, business communication encompasses not only employees within the organization. This will aid the business in being well organized and every matter, whether it is a problem, an inquiry or a sales letter will be attended to properly and promptly. It does not mean that only a client's inquiry should be responded promptly but also feedback or problems arising inside and outside the business as well. This is done to have a balance within the internal and external factors, especially in relation to dealing with people, whether they are employees or other external contacts for the overall attainment of the goals of organizational business (Exforsys Inc., 2010).

Meaning of ICT

ICT is an acronym that stands for Information and Communication Technology (or technologies). It has no universally accepted definition. This is because the concepts, methods and application involved in ICT are constantly evolving on an almost daily basis (Akaenyi & Madiche, 2010). And it is difficult to keep up with the changes since they happen very fast. But a good way to think about ICT is to consider all the uses of digital technology that already exist to help individuals, organizations, business and the entire humanity to use information (Akaenyi & Madiche, 2010). However, ICT is the use of computer and computer technologies in information systems to produce, store, communicate and process information (Madiche & Akaenyi, 2010). It is a general term used to describe producing, storing, communication and processing information using computers and other forms of electronic technology (Knott & Waites, 2000). It covers any product that will store, retrieve, manipulate, transmit or receive information electronically in digital form. ICT refers to any product that allows the transfer or manipulation

of digital information (Ben, 2012). ICT, as defined by Information Technology Association of America (ITAA, 2002) in Aniegwu (2009:3), "is the study, design, development, implementation, support or management of computer-based information systems, particularly software applications and computer hardware". The term is sometimes used in preference to Information Technology (IT), particularly in education and government. Generally, ICT has revolutionized man's activities especially in business and even how man relate to one another in business activities. It permeates the business environment and underpins the success of modern corporations (Aniegwu, 2009).

Aims and Objective of ICT

ICT is a term that refers to all the hardware and software that people use to send and receive information (Kinyanjui, 2012). Its aim or objective is not just to send and receive information but some of them are:

- i. To help one become competent and confident user of ICT in this computer age who then can use the basic knowledge and skills acquired to assist his daily activities.
- ii. To help one to have an open and flexible mind to enable him adjust to the inevitable future changes in ICT.
- iii. To equip one with the appropriate social skills to cooperate with fellow ICT users for effective usage.
- iv. To facilitate good communication between the users, thus promoting better social understanding.
- v. To allow the public to easily access the necessary information over the internet in form of research or otherwise.
- vi. To facilitate different methods of learning like distance learning programs (Kinyanjui, 2012).

ICT Devices

ICT device is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computers, network hardware and software, satellite systems and so on, as well as the various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning. However, in our daily life, we are being surrounded by example of ICT. For instance, if one owns a computer that is connected to the Internet, that person has a perfect example of ICT. Using a spread sheet to produce and process information, creating document, using word processor and saving it by storing the document in a hard drive, and sending e-mail by communicating electronically are all examples of ICT. A personal computer system is an obvious form of ICT, but there are many other examples that are perhaps not quite so apparent. For instance, ordinary domestic devices such as hi-fi systems, video recorders, telephones and all cell phones are all ICT devices. Some digital wrist watches can store information, perform calculations and even communicate with televisions sets. Digital cameras store visual information and can transmit images to computers. Many modern cars now have computer engine management systems (Akaenyi & Madiche, 2010).

ICT Devices in Business Communication

The current state of development of mobile information and communication technologies offer many opportunities for their massive deployment in the field of information support of business, business firms and their communication processes. Some of the ICT devices used in business and business communication are discussed below:

Smart Phones: A smart phone is often seen as more of a portable computer with a cell phone

than a phone with computer-like functionality. It offers features such as e-mails, video conferencing, text messages, e-book reading and global positioning system. It also offers easy access to the internet, coupled with the ability to send receive and read documents. All these and more make a smart phone very valuable tool for business communication between employee and clients. It gives room for prompt attention to request which is a sole of business and effective communication means. Smart phone is used for both internal and external business communication.

Personal Computers: In internal business organizations, personal computers are used in keeping permanent records of communication, encrypt messages and transmit media of all types in business communication (Ben, 2012). A range of office software programmes are utilized for this purpose like word processing packages, databases to hold records, stock details, etc. The spreadsheet packages can be used in PC for statistical record keeping and analysis. The financial section has access to accounts software that monitors revenue and cost and generates reports on the current financial status as well as historical data to enhance data analysis and inform decision making. These are very vital information for internal business communication that helps one to know whether the business is growing or not. They are effectively done by ICT devices. However, personal computer also increasingly plays a significant part in external business communication. Note that laptops have markedly boosted the mobility of business practices (Ben, 2000). With laptop having access to internet and having necessary information in the database, business communication and activities can take place anywhere effectively.

Computerized Device: This is also known as embedded computer and mainly used in production business. In production business,

most of the machine is controlled and monitored through computerized ICT devices for effective communication to the user and managers, in order to have effective production. Computerized ICT devices are used in controlling the temperatures of the machines. Moreso, computerized timing devices are used in cooling systems where it reads the time duration and communicate it to the switch to switch off automatically. This is a form of internal communication done for effective production. The effective production will reduce waste and ensure efficient operation.

Closed Circuit Television: Closed circuit television (CCTV) is one of the ICT devices use in monitoring people. It constantly monitors what one does once within the vicinity of CCTV. People are positioned to watch the cameras on regular basis. A business organization involved in production can use it to monitor her staff's performance. Once the staffs are aware of this CCTV being around they will be serious with their work thereby increasing production. The organization can use it to monitor security situation of the organization. In case of danger, it alerts the security officials for prompt attention which is a form of external business communication. CCTV is usually placed in banking industry for security and communication purposes.

Web Site: Business organizations now create web site for business communication. They use it to advertise their products and services and receive comments from the general public in respect of their products and services. This is a sort of feedback communication which is very important for business survival and growth. However, the feedback is usually received through e-mail or comment points on the web site. Moreso, the organization can receive high volume of orders through the web site and can process them quickly and securely by file

manager. Or the organization can use Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) technology to receive such orders.

Fax Machine: Fax is short for facsimile machine, a device that can send or receive pictures and text over a telephone line. It consists of an optical scanner for digitizing images on paper, a printer for printing incoming fax messages, and a telephone for making the connection. It can be seen as computer in a flexible form allowing transmission of a document directly from a computer file. This machine has been employed in business communication for sending and receiving information. It delivers the hard copy of the information to the recipient's immediate attention by printing the document out.

Advantages of ICT Devices Usage in Business

The advantages of ICT devices usage in business are many, but some of them are:

- vii. It helps in sharing information easily by collapsing geographical boundaries and enhancing globalization.
- viii. It has opened up scope of direct communication through text messages, e-mail etc in business communication.
- ix. Business communication can now operate twenty four hours a week, even from remote location due to the usage of ICT in business.
- x. Internet businesses have made business to be productive, profitable and cluster free working condition due to ICT usage in business.
- xi. It has given room for prompt response to business activities and transactions and connects faster with other business outside their environment.
- xii. The sophistication of the modern work offices and general working conditions is possible only due to the development of ICT devices and application in business.

The Use of ICT Devices in Business Communication

- xiii. It has helped to minimize job stress level at work places.
- xiv. It has reduced repetition of tasks, loss due to human error, and risks involved due to negligence of timely upgrades.
- xv. It has also reduced paper-intensive business applications that result in the accumulation of unnecessary bulk (Borade, 2011).
- xix. Government should encourage business activities through internet by providing constant electricity and practically fight advance free fraud through internet.
- xx. Nigeria Communication Commission should ensure that the cost of having internet and maintaining internet with GSM operators is reduced.

Conclusion

The use of ICT devices in business communication is very important part of the business as it is currently the core and structure of all business activities. Effective usage of these devices creates good communication in business where both partners understand each other for prompt response. This prompt response removes doubt and ensures reliability, trust, and integrity in business operations. Moreso, ICT usage revolves around automated processes that require little or no human intervention at all. This in turn has minimized job stress level in business and repetition of tasks using normal procedure. However, all these helps in increasing productivity in business and creating more profit which is the main aim of undergoing business.

Recommendations

For the effective and continual usage of ICT devices in business communication, the following recommendations are made:-

- xvi. Due to rapid evolution and production of different ICT devices, continual seminar and workshops should be organized for the users so that they can be abreast with the new products and innovations.
- xvii. Tariff on ICT devices should be reduced or removed by government in order to reduce the cost of ICT devices.
- xviii. ICT related courses should be studied at all level of education as compulsory courses of study with emphasis on practical.

References

- Adnan, (2008) *Business communication and its types*. Retrieved online from [http://www. RizwanAshraf.com](http://www.RizwanAshraf.com) on 14th April, 2012.
- Akaenyi, I.W. & Madichie, J.C. (2010) The impact of information and communication technology (ICT) on the environment – A review. *ANACHEM Journal* 4(2),835-836.
- Aniegwu,G.E. (2009) *ICT in education: A means of achieving the millennium development goals in Nigeria*. A paper presented at the 9th National Conference in Skill Development in Science and Technology Education for the Millennium Development Goals held at Federal College of Education (Technical), Umunze in September.
- Ben, R (2012) *ICT devices used to improve communication in business*. Retrieved online from [http:// www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com) on 13th April, 2012.
- Borade, G (2011) *Advantages of information technology*. Retrieved online from <http://www.buzzle.com> on 17th April, 2012.

- Exforsys Inc., (2008) *The world of business communication*. Retrieved online from <http://www.exforsys.com> on 14th April, 2012.
- Exforsys Inc., (2010) *Importance of business communication*. Retrieved online from <http://www.exforsys.com> on 14th April, 2012.
- Kinyanjui, L (2012) *The aims & objectives of ICT*. Retrieved online from <http://www.ehow.com> on 14th April, 2012.
- Knott, G & Waites, N (2000) *Information and communication technology*. Great Britain: Business Education Publishers Limited pp 4.
- Madichie, J.C. & Akaenyi, I.W. (2010) *Exposure and utilisation of ICT among primary school teachers in Enugu State*. A paper presented at the 7th Annual National Conference of the National Association for Research (NASHER) held at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.
- Sigma, S (2010) *The importance of business communication*. Retrieved online from unidentified site on 14th April, 2012.
- Sullivan, A & Steven, M.S. (2003) *Economics: principles in action*. New Jersey, USA: Pearson Prentice Hall (pp 29).
- Thinkexist, (2012) *Business meaning and definition*. Retrieved online from <http://www.ThinkExist.com> on 14th April, 2012.

I. W. Akaenyi
Department of Computer Education,
School of Sciences,
Federal College of Education (Technical),
Umunze.

And

G.E. Aniegwu
Department of Computer Education,
School of Sciences,
Federal College of Education (Technical),
Umunze.