Executive Summary

This research paper presents the key concepts and theories from the Master of Science in Administration 601 course “Organizational Dynamic and Human Behavior” and applies these key concepts to an administrative issue. Organizational behavior investigates the impact individuals, groups, and structure have on behavior within organizations for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization’s effectiveness. Organizational behavior is illustrated as it relates to the individual, the group, and the entire organization.

The purpose of this research paper is to study the effects that poor communication may have on project success; in relation to the author’s project management concentration. The overarching question is: What are the effects of poor project management on the overall success of a project at SignArt, Inc? Communication is essential to successful project management. In order to better address the overarching question, it is necessary to first understand the impact of communication as it relates to the issue. The organization of focus is SignArt, Inc. in Kalamazoo, MI; a full-service sign company with a team of sales specialists, sales support and project managers who lead the projects completed for SignArt’s local and national accounts.

A literature review of resources outside of the course was completed and is presented in this paper. The topics of focus include leadership, team dynamics and performance, and organizational structure. These topics are important in organizational behavior and references from several studies are present to support their importance. Each topic also relates to the author’s project management concentration and administrative issue sub-question.

The topics covered relate to project management because an organization’s structure and culture impact projects within the organization. The effects of poor project management communication are examined, and recommendations are made for a communication plan. The recommendations
include developing a formal communications plan, which can be adjusted to fit the needs of each individual project. Communication plans are crucial to maintaining effective communication throughout the life of a project. Resources are referenced in the research paper to support the findings that poor communication of a project manager at SignArt, Inc. with the project team impacts the success of projects.
Paper 1: The Effects of Poor Communication on Project Success

MSA 601 Organizational Dynamic and Human Behavior

MSA 698 Directed Administrative Portfolio

Central Michigan University

Submitted by:
Leslie Runyon

Instructor:
Dr. Michael Dillon

May 21, 2018
Table of Contents

Introduction ........................................................................................................... 6

Section I MSA 601 Course Overview ................................................................. 6

Course Highlights .............................................................................................. 7

Section II Literature Review ............................................................................... 8

Leadership ........................................................................................................... 8

Team Dynamics and Performance ..................................................................... 11

Organizational Structure ..................................................................................... 12

Section III Relation to Concertation: Project Management............................ 13

Section IV Application to Effects of Poor Communication on Project Success .... 14

Section V Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations ............................. 16

References ........................................................................................................... 17
Introduction

Project managers play a vital role in the success of a project. Project managers are responsible for planning, executing, monitoring, and controlling a project from start to finish. To be successful in completing a project, the project manager must effectively manage the project team and stakeholders. One of the most important factors in management is communication. Without effective communication, a project can end in failure. Poor communication often starts with the project manager.

The organization selected for this research paper is SignArt, Inc. in Kalamazoo, MI. This organization is made up of approximately 60 full time employees in office, manufacturing, and field settings. SignArt, Inc. is a full-service sign company; providing services from design to installation and maintenance. The company has been in business for 47 years under the same ownership. A team of sales specialists, sales support, and project managers lead the projects completed at SignArt’s local and national accounts.

The administrative issue related to the author’s Master of Science in Administration (MSA) concentration is; What are the effects of poor project management on the overall success of a project at SignArt, Inc? What can be done to solve this problem?. The sub-questions related to the MSA 601 course is; What is the impact of poor communication between the project manager and project team members on project success and what communication system can the project manager incorporate? The main concepts of MSA 601 will be illustrated and relative concepts will be applied to the administrative issue.

MSA 601 Course Overview

The Master of Science in Administration Course 601 is titled Organizational Dynamic and Human Behavior. The course focuses on how all aspects of an organization interact and
ways to design effective organization. The course describes various ways to understand, analyze, and direct behaviors in complex organizations. The MSA 601 textbook defines organizational behavior as “a field of study that investigates the impact individuals, groups, and structure have on behavior within organizations for the purpose of applying such knowledge toward improving an organization’s effectiveness” (Judge & Robbins, 2016, p. 10). The core topics covered are motivation, leader behavior and power, interpersonal communication, group structure and processes, attitude development and perception, change processes, conflict and negotiation, and work design.

**Course Highlights**

The first portion of the course focuses on organizational behavior as it relates to the individual. Some of the key concepts include program evaluation of a company’s diversity program, relationships between leadership style and employee engagement, the role of emotional intelligence in job performance, identifying personality types for team assignment and development, relationships between organizational ethics policy and employee morale, and analysis of team performance as it relates to motivation. It is very important to understand the behaviors of individuals in the workplace because their behavior impacts the groups and organization as a whole.

The second portion of the course focuses on organization behavior as it relates the group. Some key concepts include relationships between group decision making models and team performance, designing a communication process for an organizational change, utilizing both transactions and transformation leadership principles for team performance, designing the optimal organizational structure to achieve team goals and designing a conflict resolution process. Groups and teams can be very beneficial to an organization, but they can also cause
problems if not properly formed and monitored. Therefore, it is important to understand group behaviors and develop plans/processes for monitoring groups.

The final section of the course focuses on the behaviors of the organization as a whole. Some of the key concepts include analysis of organizational culture and impact on employee behaviors, design a training program for new employee orientation, planning an organizational change to promote behavior change with minimal impact on morale, and connection of employee performance evaluation and organizational goals. All the behaviors of individuals and groups make up the culture of the organization just as the culture can influence the individuals. Organizational culture is defined as “a system of shared meaning held by members that distinguishes the organization from other organizations” (Judge & Robbins, 2016, p. 527). Organizational culture is a descriptive term that measures how employees see their organization. It is important to understand an organization’s culture and function of the culture.

An Organizational Behavior (OB) model can be used to understand and identify the key parameters, concepts, and relationships and to develop an approach to organizational behavior management. The OB model presented in the MSA 601 textbook is made up of three types of variables at three levels of analysis. The variables include inputs, processes, and outcomes while the level of analysis include individual, group, and organizational (Judge & Robbin, 2016). The inputs lead to processes and the processes lead to outcomes of the interrelationships of each level of analysis presented in the preceding sections. The core concepts of organizational behavior will be referenced as they relate to my concentration and research topic.

**Literature Review**

The purpose of this section is to review and analyze literature related to organizational behavior topics and concepts. Extensive literature exists about this subject; a number of which
resources have been selected and organized into sub-topics that best relate to research topic. The topics include Leadership, Team Dynamics and Performance, and Organizational Structure. These topics are best suited for the presentation of literature because they are directly related to the subject and research sub-question related to MSA 601.

**Leadership.**

Although a project manager is not always a permanent employee of an organization, (s)he holds a leadership role throughout the life of the project, and in some cases beyond project completion. Leadership is important as it relates to employee engagement, team performance, motivation, achievement of goals, and much more. “It is well established that leadership serves as a critical input for influencing group processes and output, and that leaders can shape followers attitudes, beliefs, and values” (Legood, Lyubovnikova, Mamakouka, & Turner, 2015, p. 61). In addition, the behavior and style of a leader has an impact on their organization, or project. “Research on effective leadership shows that applying five specific leadership behaviors when working with each team member will improve your organization” (Smith, 2018, p. 20). These five behaviors are inclusion, respect, rewarding, improvement, and modeling. “Each of these behaviors will make a difference in leadership outcomes if the behaviors are consistently and tactically implemented one-one-one with each team member” (Smith, 2018, p. 20). Maintaining such behaviors can help to increase employee engagement and efficiency.

An article on racial incidents at the University of Missouri from 2015 demonstrates the importance of developing and maintaining leadership communication. In April 2015, a student at University of Missouri was arrested for property damage in the form of drawing a swastika with the word ‘heil’ in a dormitory stairway. Racial occurrences increased through the fall following this incident, including a racial slur against the Student Body President, who was African
American. In October 2015, a student activist group attempted to confront the president of the university, but he refused to discuss the matter. This started a series of protests by the student body and in November 2015, the university president resigned from his position. Prior to his resignation, the university leaders and staff worked to address the situation, but they were too late. These racial incidents at the university resulted in a national response and initiative to support diversity.

This case highlights the central role of leadership communication and the amplification of its impact. While the leaders worked behind the scenes to address the issue, the upper administration neglected to publicly response to the issue. This is an example of the negative impact that poor leadership and lack of communication can have on an organization.

Leaders in organizations of all types in all sectors play a pivotal role in developing the communication interactions needed with internal and external stakeholders. Their role is especially critical in guiding organizational behavior, recognizing the potential impact that their communication may have on the direction of the organization (Fortunato, Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017, p. 204).

Had the administration recognized what impact the racial incidents could have on the university and addressed the situation immediately; the outcome may have been different. “The inability of leaders at the University of Missouri to develop and maintain the necessary relationships through communication with key stakeholders perhaps contributed to an inability to fully recognize the severity of events” (Fortunato, Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017, p. 206). Communication from leadership is crucial to the given organization.
Team Dynamics and Performance

There are both advantages and disadvantages of teams; teams can accomplish tasks that an individual never could, but they can also be dysfunctional and become distracted from their goals. It is important to select the right type of team for a given project. The four common types of teams include problem-solving, self-managed work, cross-functional, and virtual teams (Judge & Robbins, 2016). Teams are impacted by many factors of organizational behavior including leadership styles and motivation.

Motivation, as it relates to organizational behavior, is defined as “the processes that account for an individual’s intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal” (Judge & Robbins, 2016, p. 209). It is important to understand what motivates different individuals when arranging teams in the workplace.

Due to their ability to more effectively respond to the dynamic and complex environments faced by organizations today, work teams have become increasingly prevalent in the past two decades. One of the key drivers of effective team outcomes is the motivation of team members (Hu & Liden, 2015, p. 1102).

The above exert is from an article written by Jia Hu and Robert Linden on a study of the link between motivation and team processes and effectiveness. This particular article focuses on prosocial motivation, which highlights the social aspect of work by emphasizing individuals’ concerns about how their actions can affect others’ well-being (Hu & Liden, 2015). The study findings support the hypothesis that team prosocial motivation contributes to effective team outcomes, including high team performance and OCB, and low voluntary turnover. “The compelling evidence thus opens up a new direction for understanding the underlying motivational drives for team members to engage in teamwork” (Hu & Liden, 2015,p. 1119). It is
important to understand what motivates individuals and groups/teams to create effective organizational behavior.

Students at University of North Carolina–Wilmington and Georgia Institute of Technology tested a hypothesis that organizational identity directly predicts those aspects of team functioning that enable, and are instrumental to, employee’s fulfillment of their identity with the organization; and indirectly predicts other aspects of team functioning not instrumental to organizational identity fulfillment (2015). The students used a meta-analytic path analysis conducted on effect estimated obtained from 132 independent studies of organizational and team identity. Their results showed that “whereas team identity fully mediates the relationship between organizational identity and team affective, organizational identity uniquely and directly affects cooperative team behavior and team performance” (Ascenio, DeChurch, Mesmer-Magnus, & Seely, 2015, p. 1530). It is important to understand the direct correlation between organizational behavior and team performance in order to plan for effective teams.

**Organizational Structure**

Organizational structure has a direct impact on factors such as communication, performance, and effectiveness of individuals and groups/teams. A study completed by Jasmine Tata and Sameer Prasad illustrates that the organizational system within which teams exist can have a significant impact on how teams function and that its impact has been largely ignored (2004). Their study sample consisted of 176 team leaders from 75 different organizations who were asked to complete packet of material that included measures of the independent and dependent variables. All variables were measured through give-point Likert-type scales based on previous research (Prasad & Tata, 2004). The results of the study showed high-levels of reliability and that the size of the correlations between level of self-management and
organizational structure suggests that self-management teams are often aligned with the structure of their organizations (Prasad & Tata, 2004).

Another study of three U.S. Navy organizations identified that group structure may act to affect the ability to transmit information necessary to coordinate activities and make effective decisions. Evidence from the study suggests that “communication is affected by structure with subsequent impact on performance” (O’Reilly III & Robert, 1977, p. 675). Much research exists on the correlation between organizational structure and the effects on communication, performance, and effectiveness. Organizational behaviors stem from the type of organizational structure and must be considered when forming teams.

**Relation to Concentration: Project Management**

The concepts of organizational behavior relate to the author’s MSA concentration of project management because several areas of the project can be impacted by behaviors of an organization’s employees. A project manager is not always a permanent employee for an organization where (s)he is managing a project. However, the project manager is influenced by the given organization. The culture of an organization can have a significant impact on a given project. “Projects that are seen as aligning with organizational culture may have smoother implementation and higher success rates compared to projects that conflict with those cultural norms” (Siddiqui, 2017, para. 3). It is important for an organization to recognize their culture to determine if a project will be successful.

A 2015 study by the Project Management Institute (PMI) identified several keys to creating a culture that embraces project management. These concepts include comprehending the value that project management provides, engaging project sponsors at the executive level, and aligning projects with organizational strategy (Siddiqui, 2017). Another study, completed in
2008, identified that organizational structure contributes to effective projects. Organizations with emphasis on participation and focus on shared values have the “strongest association with effective and efficient projects, along with organizational success” (Siddiqui, 2017, para. 10).

It is not uncommon for project managers to lead a project over multiple organizations. In such situations, the project manager has to be familiar with the organizational behavior of each organization. (S)he must take the differences from one organization to next into consideration during project planning. Some organizations may require certain accommodations that others do not. This can present challenges in successfully completing projects. The following section introduces a real world example of poor project management and the influences of organizational behavior.

**Application to Effects of Poor Communication on Project Success**

Communication is one of the key components of organizational behavior. Communication serves five major functions within a group or organizations: management, feedback, emotional sharing, persuasion, and information exchange (Judge & Robbins, 2016). Communication is also critical to successful project management. A current administrative issue related to project management is the impact of poor project management on the success of a project at SignArt, Inc. A sub-problem related to organizational behavior is the impact of poor communication between the project manager and project team members on project success. Using concepts and theories from MSA 601, what communication system can the project manager incorporate?

Project managers at SignArt, Inc. are responsible for overseeing projects from start to finish. The average project includes providing quotes to customer(s), project initiation upon customer’s approval, obtaining site surveys (if necessary), obtaining appropriate permit(s),
producing work order for fabrication and installation (install if local), hiring subcontractor (for install out of service area), maintaining project budget and schedule, coordinating install with onsite general contractor, obtaining change order (if necessary), and project close-out. There are many stakeholders involved in the projects, and it is very important that the project manager maintains strong communication. Recently, SignArt has had issues with project success as a result of poor communication by one of their project managers.

SignArt’s project team, key stakeholders, generally includes the project manager, the director of project management, design and fabrication individuals (including directors), and self-perform installers (including director) or subcontractor. When the project manager receives any information or updates from the customer or subcontractor, such information needs to be shared with applicable team member(s). The recent problem involves the project manager neglecting to pass along pertinent information, which impacts the project. For example, if the production individuals are waiting on the customer’s approval to proceed with fabricating an item that was added to the initial scope of work, they cannot do anything until the approval is received. Since the project manager has direct contact with the customer, (s)he is responsible for notifying the team members of such approval. Therefore, if he does not do so immediately, the project may become delayed. Project delays can lead to added costs and customer dissatisfaction, which can impact SignArt’s relationship with the customer.

Poor communication by a project manager can also lead to lack of team member participation and productivity, reduced owner/project sponsor participation, and increased project risk. To help maintain strong communication throughout the life of a project, the project manager should develop a communication plans that fits the project needs. “A communications management plan can organize and document the process, types, and expectations of
communications” (PMI, 2018, para. 9). Some organizational behavior theories that should be considered when developing a communication plan are team context and composition, team composition, modes of communication and communication channels.

Team context and team composition are very important when creating effective teams; understanding both categories is also important for a project manager to develop an effective communications plan. Four factors that make up team context are adequate resources, leadership and structure, climate of trust, and performance evaluation and reward system. Variables that help determine how a team should be created are abilities and personalities of team members, allocation of roles, diversity, cultural differences, size of team, and members’ preferences for teamwork (Judge & Robbins, 2016). Each team is unique and therefore, teams have different needs and requirements. The project manager must identify a team’s communication needs and any obstacles that may stand in the way of effective communication.

Modes of communication are how groups members transfer meaning among each other; including oral, written, and nonverbal communication. While some groups may prefer oral communication, others may require written communication. Choice of communication channel is also important; channels differ in their capacity to convey. Channel richness varies from rich to lean is defined as “the amount of information that can be transmitted during a communication episode” (Judge & Robbins, 2016). Mode of communication and type of communication channel are also important for a project manager to include in the communications plan.

**Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

Organizational behavior identifies the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behavior within organizations and how the behavior impacts effectiveness of the organization. Organizational behavior impacts all aspects of in organization, including project teams. The
preceding sections identify key concepts of organizational behavior and a real-world example of an administrative issue and the relation of organizational behavior. Poor communication of a project manager at SignArt, Inc. with the project team impacts the success of projects.

Based on the information presented above, the author recommends that SignArt’s project manager develops a formal communications plan that can be adjusted to fit the needs of each individual project. The project manager should start by identifying how the project team was established, the organizational culture, and what their communication requirements are. Team dynamics and modes of communication should be used to help create a plan, specific to each project. The project manager should also identify any obstacles that may cause communication barriers. Once the appropriate information is identified, the project management can create a communications plan. Although a standard communications plans can be developed, it must be customized for each individual project.
References


