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MASTERING THE ART OF ENTREPRENEURIAL COMMUNICATION: STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS GROWTH

BERNICE OLUWALANU SANUSI PhD[1], BOLANLE, S. JOLAPAMO[2], NYEUMAZU, GOODLUCK AGWOLO[3] & MEMUNAT ABIOLA AZEEZ[4]

[1]Department of Mass Communication, Redeemer's University Ede, Nigeria
Phone No: +2347037205256. Email: sanusib@run.edu.ng
[2]Department of Mass Communication, Redeemer's University Ede, Nigeria
Phone No: +2348068030360. Email: jolapamobolanle@gmail.com
[3]Postgraduate Student, Department of Mass Communication, Redeemer's University Ede, Nigeria
Phone No: +2347067556927. Email: umazugoodluck@gmail.com
[4]Postgraduate Student, Department of Mass Communication, Redeemer's University Ede, Nigeria
Phone No: +2348068030360. Email: abolore17@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

There is the need for any one saddled with the responsibility of establishing, owning or running any business enterprise to learn the mastery of communication. This is because no business outfit can successfully traverse the complex terrain of the world of business without effective communication. Just as technical, marketing, parenting, etc. skills can be taught and learnt, entrepreneurial communication skills can equally be learnt. Adopting a conceptual approach, this study unveils the principles guiding effective entrepreneurial communication, the challenges confronting it and the strategies to be adopted in order to ensure effective leadership and business growth. Some of the recommendations include the need for entrepreneurs to expose themselves and their staff to seminars and workshops on entrepreneurial communication. And for business outfits to carry out periodic review of their communication system to forestall any break down that could lead to leadership failure and business decline.

Keywords: communication, effective leadership, entrepreneurial communication, business growth, communication strategies.

1.0 Introduction

Communication is the life wire of any enterprise without which effective leadership and business growth are only a mirage. This is because it is a means of unveiling one's mind, plans and expectations to anyone, group or enterprise. Communication, although basic to all living things especially humans, can equally be learnt, enhanced and deployed for a business success. It is the deployment of communication for business growth and development via effective leadership that can be described as entrepreneurial communication.

Entrepreneurship is gender blind and as such open to both male and female genders. Uche (2023) posits that entrepreneurship is the art and science of identifying opportunities, marshaling resources, and taking calculated risks to create, develop, and scale innovative solutions. It is about turning ideas into reality and reshaping industries by introducing new products, services, or business models.

Entrepreneurship communication therefore is now the game-changer as it relates to effectiveness in leadership and business growth. This paper therefore explores the various communication strategies and tactics employed by business owners to navigate the business landscape in order to ensure collaboration, innovativeness, and sustainability in business growth and development.

2.0 Conceptual Review

2.1 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is the process of generating, establishing and running a business concern. It is open to all races, at all places for individuals who desire to be their own bosses and as such call the shots in the business world. Entrepreneurship is the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities, establish and run an enterprise successfully. It is the process aimed at merging creative, innovative ideas and actions with management as well as organizational skills which are essential towards mobilizing people, money and other resources in order to meet specified needs; thereby creating wealth in the process.

Entrepreneurs are those who take the factors of production – land, labour and capital, and use them to produce new goods and services. The entrepreneur perceives opportunities that others do not see or care about. Entrepreneurs are the ones who develop new ways to use the other economic resources more efficiently. They acquire materials, employ workers, invest in capital goods and engage in marketing activities (Inegbenebor, Esene, Egwuelu, Ugorji, Awoniyi in Uche et al., 2021).

In order to excel in entrepreneurship, several skills, qualities and qualifications are needed. Uppermost is that of vision. Without it, entrepreneurship becomes an illusion. The difference between a job seeker and a job creator is entrepreneurship (Uche, 2021). The researcher posits that entrepreneurship entails the possession and development of certain qualities which he describes as the nine qualities an entrepreneur should possess:

(1) Creativity: Uche (2021) likens creativity to vision. He posits that entrepreneurs should be able to see solutions to societal needs in their mind's eyes before they become obvious. Creativity he avers is a divine attribute in man as God is the epitome of creativity. Therefore, entrepreneur is one who can tap into this gold-mine. In other words, the imagination should be filled with innovative ideas, or new ways to look at old problems. Entrepreneurs bring tangibility from the labyrinth of abstraction through their creative ability. Entrepreneurs through the power of vision see in their mind's eye the solution to societal need(s), and go ahead to satisfy the need through product or service.

(2) Leadership: This quality is very important in a life of an entrepreneur. Without this quality, one's business will crumble. It is the ability to recruit, manage and influence others to achieve the goals for which the business was set up. The author argues that an entrepreneur must know how to hire and fire. Duties must be performed without shirking. No buck-passing. A leader is trusted and trusts others. Leaders delegate and deregulate. Business owners who do not have or imbibe this quality of good leadership sooner than later lose their business, he avers.

(3) Enterprise: An entrepreneur must be a person of enterprise. Such should possess the ability to think and develop projects and make them successful. Without this ability or quality, there is no entrepreneur because entrepreneurship is hinged on enterprise. If one must succeed, one should be quick to think and come out with solutions to societal needs and challenges.

(4) Foresight: An entrepreneur should be able to see things before they become obvious. The must have the ability to sense, smell and sight what should be done to improve society. This ability is very crucial for any business man or woman. It is more effective when combined with hindsight—which is the ability to sense and recall what transpired in the past. Knowledge of the past enables an entrepreneur to see the future and plan ahead.

(5) Risk taking: Every business-minded person must be a risk-taker. However, there are levels of risk-taking. The author argues that if one is averse to risks, one cannot be an entrepreneur. He posits that it is a greater risk not to take risks. However, in taking a risk, it must be an informed risk. The impetus needed to take risks is courage—the ability to make decisions and act on the decisions taken.

(6) Observation: This has to do with environmental sensitivity and sensibility. It involves being able to notice things around and being conscious of what people think, speak or complain about. An entrepreneur, therefore, has to be very observant. Entrepreneurs should be concerned with the why and how of things. It is not just good enough to know the what. They should explore the reason behind the what. They should ask why and why not, how and how best. It is in proffering and providing answers to the whys and hows that positions one as an entrepreneur. And by leveraging on that, a company's profitability and continuity are guaranteed. Entrepreneurs should be eagle-eyed. It is in listening, watching, and observing trends and issues that provide them with the needed business opportunity. When such an opportunity is spotted, the savvy entrepreneur appropriates and maximizes it.

(7) Studentship: This is the quality of constantly learning. An entrepreneur should be an apt student. Entrepreneurs should possess the ability, the flair for learning and understanding, constantly learning, improving and enhancing. This singular quality is the major reason behind the different editions and models of work, product and services. Microsoft is still growing today because it believes in learning, improving what is and has been. It is this issue of studentship that informs the decision to train and retrain staff of major companies and corporations. Informed entrepreneurs invest in learning. They attend seminars, workshops and business tours. They read and study great books, listen to tapes and watch educational videos. It must be stated here and now that the mind that reads continually never grows old.

(8) Millionaire mentality: According to Uche (2021), every entrepreneur must possess the mentality of a millionaire. Thought are potent seeds that give rise to giant trees.

(9) Persistence: An entrepreneur is one who is not easily discouraged. Such rarely takes "no" for an answer. Entrepreneurs believe that success is sure, inevitable, and attainable. They keep on keeping on knowing that their answer lies in the womb of time. Their character is coterminous with that of the captain who after leading his troop across a bridge burnt it,

signaling: forward ever, backward never! This quality is very essential for success in any venture. Persistence is the only antidote to discouragement and despondency.

All the nine above qualities articulated by Uche (2021) are very essential in ensuring success leadership and business growth when combined with entrepreneurial communication.

2.2 The concept of communication

Communication is the act of passing ideas, information, messages and feelings from within oneself to oneself, oneself to others, or even within a group or from a group to an individual or other group (s).It is a distinguishing feature of the living as opposed to the dead. It happens round the clock among all living things including plants and animal. When it occurs within humans, it is described as human communication.

Communication is the means of interaction between and among humans right from the creation of the cosmos. It has various definitions from several communication experts and researchers. Generally, communication is the process of sharing information, entertainment, or providing education through speech, writing, space, gestures, or facial expression (Uche, 2023). Communication in its broadest sense is a process that involves the deliberate or accidental transfer of meaning. One person does or says something, thereby engaging in symbolic behavior, while others observe what was done or said and attribute meaning to it. Whenever you observe or give meaning to behavior, communication is taking place. Communication means the practice of encoding information through sounds, symbols, and actions in order to transmit that information to others. Communication also includes decoding that information and interpreting it to give it meaning (Paxson, 2010). Communication is the oil that lubricates the wheel of human existence. As Nayyar (2007) posits, communication-including state news, sports reports and gossip-helped in holding together people in a unified statehood. Communication also refers to the sharing of information or providing entertainment by speaking, writing or other means.

2.3 Forms of Communication

There are basically two major forms of communication:

1. **Verbal Communication:** This is when we make use of language to pass across or transfer information by speech. It is sometimes referred to as oral communication. This is because it takes place through word of mouth, conversation or spoken words. Thus, any information or messages shared or exchanged between individuals through word of mouth or speech is described as verbal/oral communication. It is the most common form of communication. Examples include: News casting, Public speech, TV and Radio commercial, mobile conversations among others.

2. Non-Verbal Communication: This communication that does not involve word of mouth, spoken words or conversation. Under this type of communication, there are two other forms, namely: written and visual.

Written Communication: This is when communication takes place through any written word or written sign. Examples: hand-written information or messages, typed words which can

appear in the form of letters, memos, newspaper, magazines, printed word documents, journals and books.

Visual Communication: This takes place through signs, symbols, pictures, artistic works, drawings, colours, sketches, charts, graphs, gestures, body language and facial expressions. Visual communication usually accompanies speeches and presentations to emphasize, underscore and aid understanding and memorization.

2.4 Levels of Communication

Communication happens at different levels which some writers also describe as types of communication. However, it is better described as levels of communication and they include: Intrapersonal communication, interpersonal communication, group communication and mass communication.

2.4.1 Intrapersonal Communication

Intrapersonal communication: this is the type of communication that takes place within oneself. It is personal and as such happens inside or internally. Hasan (2013) describes it as the communication that occurs when an individual sends or receives messages internally. When you are thinking the process involved is intrapersonal communication including smiling to oneself, talking to oneself (soliloquy), meditating, introspecting among others. In other words, intrapersonal communication involves our spiritual, physical and emotional sensations. It is common to all individuals. Nobody is exempted from intrapersonal communication. This is because all our thought processes are involved especially our intellect. Students cannot answer questions or understand what is being taught without constant intrapersonal communication taking place seamlessly and simultaneously alongside other levels of communication.

Intrapersonal communication usually takes place as a response to either internal or external stimulus or both. Internal stimulus is the one that is within the individual while external stimulus is from outside the individual. The process is that our peripheral nervous system (sensory organs) usually picks up stimuli which are transmitted to our central nervous system (the brain) for interpretation. This informs our individual responses. When all this is happening in an individual, intrapersonal communication is taking place. Therefore, intrapersonal communication is basic and the basis for other forms and levels of communication.

2.4.2 Interpersonal Communication

It refers to the communication between two or more people, in which ideas, information, or messages are exchanged through a given channel. It can take various forms and occurs in different contexts including face-to-face, telephone, e-mail, among others.

'Interpersonal' means anything that occurs between people. Thus, Interpersonal Communication refers to the communication that occurs between individuals. Interpersonal communication can take place between two individuals on a one-on-one basis, or within a group of individuals. Interpersonal communication occurs simultaneously with another person in an attempt to mutually influence one another, usually for the purpose of managing

relationships. It is special to humans as it is the form of communication we experience most often in our lives (Beebe, Beebe & Ivy, 2001).

Interpersonal communication entails the kind of interaction that is often referred to as conversation. More often than not, it is a person-to-person interaction. Interpersonal communication is a daily phenomenon; in other words, it takes place on a daily basis - thus, enhancing mutual relationship. It is the process of transaction aimed at creating meaning between individuals. Interpersonal communication can take place with acquaintances or with people we have just met. Every day we interact with friends, family and strangers through the process of interpersonal communication.

3.0 Effective leadership

This is leadership that works. In other words, it is the kind of leadership that inspires and motivates members of a given organization to always meet set goals in line with the organization's corporate vision and mission. Effective leadership entails that the lead respects the leader and the leader in turn gives the subordinates their due recognition and remuneration.

4.0 Business growth

Business growth refers to the progress made towards the attainment of set goals. It is that situation that exists when an organization runs profitably and expands both in human and material resources irrespective of competition and business climate.

5.0 Principles of effective entrepreneurial communication

Shribman (2023) avers that entrepreneurial communication is essential for success in the present unstable business landscape. It is a means of ensuring that ideas are relayed, relationship built through collaboration and cooperation with both colleagues and customers. He describes entrepreneurial communication as business communication which entails several activities ranging from verbal to non-verbal, interpersonal and written communication. He further specifies that the purpose of entrepreneurial communication is to build trust, promote understanding and cooperation.

He identifies four principles, describing them as the pillars of business communication. They include:

Clarity and precision: Shribman (2023) posits that clarity is one of the main principles of effective entrepreneurial communication. Any communication that is not clear often results in misunderstandings and errors that will have negative impact in any given business. To ensure that clarity and precision are met, he suggests revisited one's draft a day after before sending it out and seeking for a second opinion from a trusted colleague.

Message contextualization: Refers to the tailoring of message to fit each group of publics. Messages to different audiences call for different approaches. Communication pattern and style should be adapted to suit the needs of stakeholders such as customers, partners, customers and even staff.

Active listening: Communication involves speaking and listening. In other words, it is a two-way phenomenon. An entrepreneur must be an active speaker and listener to have an understanding of employees, prospects and customers' concerns and needs.

Nonverbal Cues: An entrepreneur should also pay attention to not only the spoken language but even the non-spoken aspect of the message. Nonverbal language also impacts on others. So, particular attention should be paid to the tone of voice, facial expressions and body language.

6.0 Challenges to Entrepreneurial Communication

There are a number of challenges confronting entrepreneurial communication. This is because effective communication is not often a straight-line or linear phenomenon. Thus, recognizing the challenges remains the major step towards mitigating them.

Language Barrier: businesses these days more often than not, interact with individuals from different and diverse backgrounds. This inevitably leads to misunderstanding which negatively impacts leadership on one hand and business growth cum development on the other. To overcome this challenge, Shribman (2023) recommends entrepreneurs to use translation services and to ensure language training for their employees especially when they recruit international staff.

Cultural Differences: Divergences and differences in culture greatly impacts how contents are created and consumed. It is a fact that what might be acceptable in a particular culture could be a put off in another. Thus, it becomes imperative to be sensitive to the culture of one's business partners, customers and prospects in order to forestall or mitigate conflicts and misunderstandings.

Under-communication: This is a situation where an entrepreneur is not communicating enough. When information or messages seemed to be hoarded from employees, business partners, and customers, many things go wrong. To the employees, they might resort to gossips, misinformation and outright lies since the chief executive seems to cherish incommunicado. This situation often results in frustration and confusion which in turn lead to low motivation and loss of business.

Over-communication: According to Shribman (2023), this situation can be as harmful as under-communication. When people are bombarded with too much messages from a company head or an organization to the publics can result in frustration and confusion. Thus, the rule is to ensure a balance by giving information when necessary and in timely manner too, allowing them to digest and respond accordingly with readiness to answer any of their concerns and questions.

Lack of Feedback: Effective entrepreneurial communication calls for feedback. This is like sounding the health of an organization's stakeholders. Knowing their feelings and level of understanding of communicated messages through feedback is essential in improving communication and enhancing mutual relationship. Through feedback, areas that need be improved are unveiled. The entrepreneur is therefore expected to institute a feedback mechanism within the establishment.

7.0 Strategies for entrepreneurial communication

7.1 Knowledge of the impact of effective communication

It is common knowledge that effective communication has great impact on leadership success and business growth. Some of the impacts include:

Increased productivity: Shribman (2023) posits that when everyone in an organization is operating on the same page, assigned tasks can easily be completed with fewer errors.

Enhanced collaboration: When there is effective communication, it engenders team spirit thereby ensuring that employees work peacefully to achieve their common goals and attain assigned targets. Thus, it is essential for business growth and innovative leadership.

Improved decision making: When an entrepreneur and other leaders in an enterprise communicate effectively with their teams, situations and circumstances can be accurately assessed. Opportunities can be identified and strategic decisions taken that will ultimately lead to business growth.

Customer satisfaction: Effective communication also impacts customers and other stakeholders.

Customer satisfaction: Effective communication also impacts customers and other stakeholders. It helps to build trust with partners and customers; ensures timely responses to business enquiries thereby leading to business retainership and customer loyalty. It equally leads to positive reviews and recommendations for the business concern.

7.2 Selection of Appropriate Communication Channel

We are living in a highly interconnected world with several channels for communication. Every of such channels has its own pros and cons; strengths and weaknesses. In order to ensure effective and efficient communication that can engender business growth and development, selecting the appropriate channel of communication becomes a sine-qua-non.

Emailing: This is still a very strong entrepreneurship communication tool. Proper usage is however, the key. There should be prompt response to incoming mail. Updated information and messages to stakeholders should be assured while the subject should be well specified on the subject line.

Meetings and presentations: Shribman (2023) posits that meeting face-to-face via video conferencing or in person provides an avenue for a personalized and interactive communication. These are necessary for brainstorming, discussing complex subjects and building relationships. He advocates for the use of visual aids in presentations in order to engage and keep the audience enthused while also offering the opportunity of driving home the major points.

In-person communication: This is a situation where an entrepreneur attends outside meetings, camps, conferences, business summits and expos, trade fairs and business dinners in person and not through delegation, virtual attendance or by proxy. These meetings are key to proper networking and partnerships.

Social Media: New media platforms especially social media are becoming essential platforms for the promotion of brands and connecting with customers for businesses across the globe. While social media platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram are providing the needed channels for customers' engagement and feedback, it is important to maintain professional image across these platforms. They also help in building followership and brand loyalty. Shribman (2023) cautioned against discordant tones. To achieve an integrated marketing communication output, he suggests that CEOs should set up clear guidelines for their brand and ensure that all who posts anything for the brand abides by the established guidelines. Furthermore, contents must be reviewed severally before dissemination.

Instant messaging: Shribman (2023) avers that Microsoft Teams and Slack are collaboration tools that can be deployed alongside instant messaging for immediate and collaborative interactions. They offer opportunity for project management, file sharing and communication in real time.

Apart from the above, the following must be borne in mind and brought to bear, namely:
Clarity of vision: An entrepreneur should be able to communicate clear vision of their organization. Complex ideas and concepts must be simplified and concise enough for ease of understanding by the different publics. It is a fact that clear vision inspires and motivates stakeholders. An organization's vision, purpose, values and mission should be crafted in clear and concise terms.

Stakeholder interface: Leadership of any organization that wants to ensure growth and success should build a strong interface and relationship with the different publics: employees, customers, partners and investors. This calls for the building of trust, rapport and understanding leveraging on different communication channels including face-to-face, offline and online channels including social media platforms. This enhances meaningful connections and dialogue.

Innovative communication: This is necessary in order to foster open communication, generate fresh ideas, and solicit feedback from employees to drive continuous improvement and business growth. Innovative communication is the type of communication that allows each party and all stakeholders to freely make their own opinion about the products, services and programmes of an organization. In other words, there is the culture of open and unrestricted communication.

Conflict/crisis Communication: No organization can thrive without the experience of one crisis or the other. Nonetheless, acquiring the skill of proactive conflict or crisis communication is key to staying afloat. This skill is very important in order to mitigate reputation and integrity of the management. Transparency in communication must be maintained in order to preserve and corporate credibility.

8.0 Conclusion

As Shribman (2023) noted, nothing drives business growth fast as clear and efficient communication. An entrepreneur should therefore prioritize active listening, clarity of messages and appropriate various communication channels, ensuring clarity of vision, interfacing with stakeholders, innovative communication and skillful handling of crisis by

imbibing conflict and crisis communication expertise. The above steps would result in business growth and leadership success in any organization especially in this fast-paced business environment.

9.0 Recommendations

Based on the above discourse, the authors hereby make the following recommendations:

1. Entrepreneurs should expose themselves and their staff to seminars and workshops on entrepreneurial communication.
2. Communication professionals should be engaged as consultants by business owners for expert advice from time to time.
3. There should be a deliberate policy to recruit those who studied communication related courses as part of any business organization.
4. Business outfits should carry out periodic review of their communication system to forestall any break down that could lead to leadership failure and business decline.

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