Communication for Organizational Assimilation

Honors College Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to investigate the adaptation of communication channels in regards to the reduction of uncertainty during organizational assimilation within the professional setting. For newcomers and interns entering into a new work environment they must seek feedback to successfully socialize and assimilate within the organization. This project will explore the use of traditional communication (face-to-face) compared to advanced communication and information technologies (ACIT's). The aims are to understand the role of emerging ACIT's, whether they have replaced traditional communication in organizational assimilation, and why newcomers must reduce uncertainty to assimilate into an organization. The different channels will be compared through literary analysis in attempts to discern if advanced technologies are replacing or simply aiding in the rapid advancement of communication within the process of organizational assimilation. The benefits of this project will display the importance of newcomer assimilation in their professional setting and the best communication channels by which to reduce uncertainty.

Communication for Organizational Assimilation

For newcomers in a professional environment, they must actively seek out information to reduce their uncertainty about the organization, its values, and their role within the organization. To successfully assimilate, new employees need information and feedback to learn about the organization's value system and enact behaviors that promote its beliefs (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995). Traditionally, to seek feedback and reduce uncertainty, an employee would speak face-to-face with a supervisor or a co-worker. However, times have changed, and according to D'Urso and Pierce (2009) communication technologies (CTs) have become the new cornerstone for workplace communication efficiency. Through the use of CT channels such as email, text messages, or even reading an organization's webpage, new employees are quickly finding information to help assimilate into the work environment. Seeking feedback via communication technology may seem easier, but it is also a more informal method of communication. This research will examine and compare the benefits between traditional communication and technology communication that best suits organizational assimilation.

To think of an organization one may consider a team, a club, or a business with whom they are associated. An organization constitutes as an administrative and functional structure, such as a business or political party (Webster's Dictionary, 2017). For the purpose of this thesis, an organization will be defined solely as a business organization in which the employees and managers work to produce materials, services, or goods for sale and profit. Each year, thousands of college students graduate and seek out employment in many for-profit organizations. These students will have to undergo an initial process of contact, meeting and interviewing before they can be placed within an organization. Across the world, millions of people are undergoing each

day the initial stages of organizational entry, where they hope to find satisfying work and a stable career amongst colleagues of reputable nature.

Organization Socialization

After securing employment, employees will enter into the organization's work force. Organizational assimilation is the process by which an intern or new employee engages in communication flow and practices to reduce uncertainty, gain information and become accustomed to workplace structure by "learning from the inside" is termed organizational assimilation (Waldeck, 2004). The process of socialization between new hires and upper level management supervisors, or other long-term employees allows the new hires to observe and learn the organization's standard operating norms. Depending on an organization, the flow and channels of communication can exist in a variety of forms. Organizational communication is a socialization process in which newcomers adapt to their surroundings and learn about their fit within the work structure. To successfully assimilate, new employees need information and feedback to learn about the organizations value system and enact behaviors that promote its beliefs (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995).

Assimilation and the socialization processes can be defined by Jablin's information exchange cluster (2001). Organizations have different constructs of groups with clusters of interrelationships. Networks and communication are contained within the core principles held by current employers and workers (Jablin, 2001). The exchange cluster, according to research, contains six elements; information, networks, uncertainty, message, load and the inevitable expansive usage of technology to enact communication (Jablin, 2001). The information can vary in quality and density, but essentially, travels in a mechanical manner through internal networks of the organizational members. This information takes on the form of a message for the new

employees and the load of the information can be adjusted or manipulated on its journey. The

receivers, the new hires, may obtain the information through different channels or mediums,

especially in a virtual format as technologies garner conduit superiority in our expanding work

focused world (Jablin, 2001). As the new employees search for meaning about their potential

job, their roles and fellow workers, they partake in these six elements to attempt to assimilate

into the organization's pre-existing culture. Further into their journey, they may attempt to adjust

this culture as they further socialize, but first they must become accustomed to existing

constructs.

Organizational assimilation, stated earlier, is used to aid in the reduction of uncertainty

for newcomers. The new hires attempt to seek information for themselves through different

communication channels to understand the values and standards of the organization, as well as

the role they play in its layout. Most new hires are required to attend tutorial informative

meetings or watch videos. Others learn on the job and are expected to quickly adhere to the

organization's set pace. During either organizational entry method, newcomers are involved in

socialization amongst co-workers and an individualization process (Mignerey, 1995). The

previous studies researched the effect of the manager's style of communication, the employee's

socialization tactics and its impact on new hires.

Such socialization tactics allow managers and supervisors to control the information

received by newcomers, shaping their communication flow in the workplace and creating a set

mode of work structure. However, recent studies examined the process of communication and

assimilation as a two-way channel. While newcomers are learning about the company and

reducing uncertainty the flow of communication and the variety of channels may also impact the

upper-level workers, shedding light unto new ideas that can benefit the organization. The

approach which many managers take to train new hires can be affected by whether they are human relations based or human resources based. Human relations approaches will emphasize the importance of human needs within the organization while human resources concentrates on all employee efforts combining to achieve the organizations goals (Miller, 2015). Most organizations will adopt the human resources approach because the main focus is the overall benefit of the business or company.

For an organization to properly function, it is best to think of the whole organization as a team in which each worker has a place and must be trained to effectively work with others. This requires a sense of purpose for the workers, they must know their position and be able to fulfill their duties. This metaphor also requires effective communication, especially when a new player is stepping onto the field for the first time. The socialization of these new players, or new employees, is essential for organizational success as well as for individual success attained by the new hire. According to Korte (2007), socialization decreases employee turnover rates, has long term effects on employee attitudes and behaviors, allows for organizational maintenance, and is the critical element in whether new employees adequately learn the social and political norms of their new work place (2007). New hires need effective communication channels in order to seek new information and to reduce uncertainty.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

In assessing the assimilation and socialization process it is important to understand the theoretical frameworks that shape the concepts of considering the communication channel advancements. The first theory in the assimilation processes framework is Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT). URT is a social relationship theory of development and proffers that, "there is a requirement to attain data about other individuals via correspondence to be better capable of

foretelling and describing the actions of those people" (Nugent, 2013, p. 1). During the entry

process newcomers experience heightened levels of uncertainty about the organization's mission,

values, or the role they will play. Papa (1992) stated that during these crucial interactions, the

new hires weigh the importance of future interactions based on the initial communication as well

as the value of the interaction. Certainly the channel through which initial interaction occurs

impacts the conversation and feelings a new employees derives from the meeting. How much

can one learn if they speak on the phone as opposed to meeting in person? Uncertain about their

role, they fear being left out, uniformed or dismissed, and so are driven to actively seek

information (Mignerey, 2016). The newcomers are motivated to reduce their uncertainties so that

their work environment is predictable, more understandable, and to feel in control of their

position (Saks & Ashforth, 2007). To reduce uncertainty they must utilize various

communication channels. These channels can vary based on confidence levels of the new

employee who may actively seek social interactions. Factors also depend on the size of the

organization, and the available flow of communication, and whether it is primarily vertical,

horizontal or a combination.

Communication Channels

Communicating across channels allows for greater flow of both information and creative

thought, which depending on the company can lead to beneficial innovations. When such

communication is allowed and encouraged in new employees the URT loses its terrifying grasp

on the new hires. They may feel more quickly accepted, in addition to a stronger connection with

their new, organizational culture. Harrison, stated the true information that the growing

workforce is composed of tech-savvy millennials (2017). According to Harrison, 87% of C-suite

executives claim that this new workforce lacks the essential skills to thrive and succeed in the

company. Harrison allows for management practice on these new hire millennials and the leadership development, or lack there-of, that may lead to the lack of desire skills. Millennials, as many new hires preceding them, should have mentoring programs and more collaboration efforts in communication between generations to encourage ideas that could benefit a company's workflow. As this generation will make up some 75% of the workforce by 2025, Harrison suggested that senior supervisors and company leaders harness their technology skills and utilize these into new methods for both teaching and learning.

Communication flow affects how the new employees will access information to reduce anxiety and uncertainties. In a top-down communication model, the information is passed from the supervisors and managers to employees (Miller, 2015). No information is shared across the workspace amongst the employees nor is feedback from the new hires heard by the managers. This form of communication was coined by Fayol in his theory of classical management, where managers held command over specific sectors and controlled everything (Miller, 2015). The theory favors hierarchy, and is still used in some organizations. However, Fayol's theory failed to account for two way vertical communication between organizational managers and new employees. He also failed to incorporate the importance of horizontal flow between employees interacting with one another informally to better assimilate (Miller, 2015). Informal communication builds network connections between the subsystems of an organization. The different sectors that compose the functioning organization most often overlap in their work, creating an organization that is a complex organism. Far from the 'worker's work and manger's mange' styles of Fayol, these organizational systems require processes for all employees. Specifically for entry level workers, to reduce equivocality, uncertainty, and to acclimate them correctly if the company wishes to increase their success (Miller, 2015).

Business communication and workplace trust are the foundational blocks to building the loyal bonds between an employee and their organization. In Mackenzie's study (2010) he examines the shift away from the traditional face-to-face communication to that of the "e-management" style. This idea will be expanded upon further, as it relates to the formal and informal learning experiences new employees must undergo to acquaint themselves within the company structure. Successful socialization, assimilation, is only achieved when individuals are initiated to tasks, roles and fully comprehend the organizational evaluation system (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012). Trial and error is not an effective method for new employees to attempt to self-learn, and failures can lead to company loses in sales, client or products. The socialization process must be thought of as a cognitive and social learning process. Employees require interactions and should be encouraged to ask work related questions as well as participate in 'watercooler' discussions to find their role (Korte, 2007). Karen and Myers agreed, that newcomers must monitor existing organizational structures to adjust their behavior and attitudes so as to fit within the role, or to decide if the fit does not suit them (2010).

Communication assimilation is twofold, with multiple messages traveling between the agents. This research most heavily concentrate on the new employee or intern standpoint, but it must be recorded that the process is a dualism one. The primary dualism incorporates the individual, the manager or supervisor that presides over the new employee and the system (Jablin, 2001). In a 2006 study (Bel, Smirnov, & Wait) communication and managerial style were closely examined to determine how supervisor-subordinate relationships are formed, and how change such as technology innovations have an effect. The study conducted an employee-employer survey to 3000 commercial establishments with 20 or more employees. The study

examined change, particularly; if there had been a technological, organizational or product/service change at the organization.

Change could also be attributed to the addition of a new employee(s) in effect to the organization's structure and adaption on communication. The results found positive correlation between result-oriented managers, those who strive to achieve the missions and goals of the organizations and communication protocol. This induvial manager's communication tactics on the system, often a dyadic group or subculture, can positively or negatively impact their adaptation to the organization (Jablin, 2001). The study further found that effective change, effective assimilation in that right, often is optimal in small teams by reducing the need to attempt to communicate with the broader organization. The study supports Jablin's theory regarding the dominance of the induvial manager's influence over new employees (2010). The tactics utilized the flow of communication and the practices by which goals are shared as they can affect a new hire's ability to understand their place in the organization. From this viewpoint and regarding the findings about small team communication success, these scholars lean towards traditional tactics as the most appropriate strategy for effective assimilation.

Literary Analysis

This thesis proposes that face-to-face, traditional communication, is still most effective in newcomer socialization. In reference to informal and formal discussions, traditional communication incorporates the social cues. In a study conducted by Mackenzie (2010), 79 adult subjects were asked to answer a 22, question survey that included closed and open ended questions to gauge the areas of work place trust and communication methods within the system. The study concentrates on the impact of digital communication and how it effects on both managers and non-managers in developing an employee-manager relationship. In this

comparative analysis it is used as statistical support to both face-to-face and digital

communication in attempts to answer which proves more beneficial for new employees. The

subjects in the study were split into two groups, the first were individuals pursuing MBA degrees

and the second group, were individuals attending a regional conference. All who participated

were either managers within an organization or employed workers (non-managers). The subjects

of this study ae presented in the table;

Table 1
Subject demographics.

Seventy-nine (79) adult subjects participated in this study
Thirty-eight subjects (38) were female
Forty-one subjects (41) were male
Forty subjects (40) were self-reported as managers
Thirty-nine (39) subjects were reported to be non-management
    employees
Fifty-eight (58) subjects (73.4%) worked in companies employing 100
    or more employees
Twelve (12) subjects (15.2%) worked in companies employing
    100–250 employees
Forty-six (46) subjects (58.2%) worked in companies employing 251 or
    more employees
Twenty-one (21) subjects (26.6%) worked in companies with less than
    100 employees

The results produced low to moderate percentages for face-to-face communication between

managers and non-managers. As an example for the first article analyzation, the results are as

follows; 43% of the 79 participants reported higher volumes of technology communication via

email with their superiors. Just 71 participants reported an increase of 46.5% for email

communication over just the span of one year. From the manager's perspective regarding their

interaction with employees, they reported on average, 69.7%. In contrast, the 39 non-management

employees stated that they only partook in face-to-face interactions with their bosses a mere 49%.

These employees and managers were not notably related by same company employment within

the study, however it supports the theory that employees and in extension new employees, are not

receiving the face-to-face interaction they require, and actually want. What was most revealing from the study was the high result of respondents for face-to-face flow. A high 89.7%, non-managers and managers alike, desired face-to-face communication as the best style for relationship-building opportunities in the workplace.

Table 4
Comparing responses – focus on communication and trust.

Questionnaire Responses	All 79 respondents	Manager-group	Employee group
% who chose *face-to-face communication* as top choice of relationship-building opportunities	89.7%	87.5%	89.7%
% of at-work time that managers interact with employees face-to-face (managers reporting)	–	69.7%	–
% of at-work time that employees interact with bosses face-to-face (employees reporting)	–	–	49.0%
% answering YES to the question, "do you feel you have a trusting relationship with your boss?"	62.0%	77.5%	46.2%
% answering NO to the question, "do you feel you have a trusting relationship with your boss?"	17.7%	17.5%	17.9%
Manager-only response to the question, "do you feel that your employees trust you? "		Yes: 87.5% No: 5.0%	

In this study, the traditional approach was preferred by both sides of the workplace spectrum, but the lower-leveled employees felt they did not receive adequate face-to-face interaction with their superiors. Without this vital communication the non-management participants felt a lowered connection and lowered trust rate with the bosses, which can lead to feelings of performance uncertainty. The nature of communication is changing within organizations, moving from the traditional face-to-face and unaddressed broadcast documents to computer generated communication (Huber, 1990). The shift may benefit the company's ability to mass communicate, but does it aid the workers in assimilating thus forming loyalty and trust bonds with the organization?

What happens to the control and association of power when technology is introduced? Referring back to Scott and Myers, the stages and phases of employee integration as well as MN's may be disrupted (2010). The stage and phase model believed newcomers to be passive receptacles of information, but recent studies prove that new hires are just as much a part of the receiving beneficiaries as well as message senders. The model is accurate in the basic stages of employment engagement, however. Beginning with the anticipatory phase the employee works to establish themselves and the power structures. With technology channels, an organization may either thrive or hinder the new hire's ability to gage that information. Feedback seeking behavior is, essentially, "a method of controlling a system" (Jablin, 2001, p.211). As previously mentioned in Miller's work, many organization's fit into the systems model of an organization functioning similar to a living being. With technology factors arise, generational gaps in technology knowledge, company size and misuse of ACIT's. Critics to this suggest the CT's and AICT's allow for interactions beyond the dyadic superior and supervisor model. This consideration of increased feedback exchanges at a more rapid rate allow for quicker uncertainty reductions through direct email questions or phone calls.

Other studies prior to 1960 will include certain communication theologies (CT's) under the traditional umbrella, including; telephone, voicemail and fax (D'Urso & Pierce, 2017). In today's environment, these technologies are even falling short of usage as new advanced technologies supersede. However, excellent research and data are presented by Waldeck, Seibold and Flanagin (2004) regarding communication and technology use. Focused on Advanced Communication and Information Technologies (ACIT's) the study determined that, despite media richness, face-to-face communication was one of the most prevalent predictors for assimilation effectiveness. ACIT's are "interactive, computer-mediated technologies" that allow

for multiple interpersonal communications through text, recorded or synthesized voice message, data, images or messaging content (Waldeck, Seibold & Flanagin. 2004. p. 164). For large scale companies, those that employ thousands of workers and many today that are national or globally spread, traditional communication is extremely difficult to achieve. In these cases, traditional communication, horizontal communication, between coworkers of similar ranking and across sectors can be feasible. However, it can be difficult for higher ups to personally communicate with each new hire individually. For many, email is the standard universal medium to transfer information and the most optimum medium for answering questions. Waldeck et als research raises interesting validations regarding ACIT, however it remains steadfast in the understanding that traditional communication is the best way to gain employee loyalty and reduce uncertainty during assimilation.

Waldeck et al's research the notion that advanced technologies serve a socializing function in today's work atmosphere (2004). ACIT's expand the opportunities available for information seeking channels, which can enhance an organizations success (Waldeck et al., 2004). Unique to this study is that the assimilation process was viewed as ongoing, certainly part of a new employee's experience, but it continues throughout the employment of any worker. The ACIT's were believed to be an alternative, or addition to face-to-face communication extending the amount of people involved while maintaining lower cost for channels and initial training (Waldeck et al., 2004). The theory was that ACIT's were additional supplements within organizational information flow and uncertainty reduction, but face-to-face was the most prevalent way to assimilate. Within the study, four organizations staffed with 200-700 employees offered participants access to at least one ACIT. Questionnaires were distributed composed after interviews with the employees of each, individual organization regarding assimilation scenarios

the best fit within the organizational environments. Noted in the study, two of the four

participating organizations had members who worked in separate building from one another. In

these two, it was theorized that ACIT's would have a more dominant role for informational

communication. The assimilation effectiveness within the questionnaires was ranked on a five-

point Likert scale, used in previous socialization studies.

The results of the study found that ACIT's are related to assimilation effectiveness, but

that face-to-face (traditional) was the most important predictor of effective assimilation

(Waldeck et al., 2004). The study did also find that ACIT's act as a convenient and useful tools

for the informational seeking process, mainly for identifying codified policy rules and

regulations about the organization. Most interesting from this study was the finding that previous

traditional methods including handbooks, newsletter and even traditional phone conversations

were the least important for many participants as digital tools create faster, more easily

accessible channels for information exchange (Waldeck et al., 2004). Participants who choose to

utilize ACIT's choose ones with extensive media richness, based on the information being

processed and the requirements. The 'richness' of advanced mediums allowed for more

interpersonal interactions and social presence specifically in reducing uncertainty. Asking

questions via mails or being in constant contact with other employees through instant messages

were most identified in the feedback, demonstrating that ACIT's are rapidly evolving to aid

traditional tactics. Organizations are undeniably growing and new employees will continue to

enter and exit these workplaces. Waldeck's findings generate further analytical interest in

emerging communication channels for assimilation as they expand the opportunity of available

channels within an organization's internal networks.

Waldeck and Flanagin (2012) further expanded the studies, just as communication technologies rapidly extended across organizational use. Organizations in the past ten years have become far more decentralized as they disperse globally enlisting employees from different countries and languages to work under the same managers. Compared to the first study, the 2012 model conceptualizes the improbability of face-o-face assimilation, more between managers and employees. The second study stands to further support the emergence and now common use of ACIT's by new employees as interactive channels that create better opportunities for information-dissemination (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012). The study examined the interview process of socialization, assimilation, of new employees during which they; seek and are provided information, become proficient in their organizational roles, and become assimilated into those roles and with their coworkers and, or the managers (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012). Both of Waldeck and Flanagin's studies build off of the foundation created by the communicational theorist (Jablin, 2001) who describes the newcomer socialization process in stages.

The stages include first, anticipatory, seeking information prior to join the organization (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012). This facet of assimilation is most benefitted, according to theorists, by ACIT's because it allows new individual's to conduct online research or to virtually contact current employees to reduce initial uncertainty. If employees find that the position could offer benefits, then they have reduced enough preliminary uncertainty to entertain an interview. Likewise, the organizational managers utilize ACIT's, especially email and social media platforms to gain insight of the potential new hire. Computer-mediated technologies are the most common communication channels during this phases, and they prove beneficial to both the new employee and the organization to dispel ambiguity by providing general, easily accessible

information. The second phase, socialization and accommodation, occur as the new employee

observes the internal structure and begin to participate.

The second phase is usually the most complex and often most vague stage for new

employees. During this time, interpersonal relationships are critical and may be inhibited by

mediated communication (communication technologies such as email. "Some aspects of a

newcomer's role may be difficult to understand without face to face interaction and traditional

training" (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012, p. 145). As newcomer's become more comfortable in their

organizations they enter the final socialization phase of entrance (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012). In

this phase, they develop or engage in group conflicts and work to resolve the problems while

finding balance in company norms. During these phases Waldeck refers back to the URT and

states that internet-based information and communication technologies are most heavily relied

upon by newcomers for information seeking and uncertainty reduction (2012). In comparison,

traditional communication tactics were identified as more beneficial in the matters of persuasion

and problem solving during the socialization phases. Their work and organizational assimilation

model corresponds with the results found in Mackenzie's study (2010). Traditional

communication still plays, or at least should play, a pivotal role in the process.

Key Findings

The studies overall concluded that organizational uncertainty reduction is best achieved

during the socialization stage through traditional channels. However, the studies and research

have all, also, incorporated high volumes of positive feedback related to technology, specifically

CT and ACIT channels for new employees. The world is fast evolving and globalization has

already taken a deep roots in how organizations function. With this increase in technology use,

comes the new generation of workers who are as equally equipped to understand and utilize the

full benefits of CT's. D'Urso and Pierce conducted a study in 2009 entirely online to evaluate the

organizational landscape's use of CT's. In the study, 322 individuals of different organizations

were contacted via e-mail and invited to complete a Web-based questionnaire (D'Urso & Pierce,

2009). The average age of the participants was 37, with 16.8% part-time participants and 83.3%

full-time working participants. The survey did not inquire information from new hires, but

individuals already working at an organization. The majority reported working for respectively

for 7.7 years (D'Urso & Pierce, 2009). The study used fifteen measures to analyze CT usage

including experience, CT comfort, and need for specific technologies (D'Urso & Pierce, 2009).

The study incorporated 25 of the most popular CT's used in organizational structures

including e-mail, telephone (landlines and cell phones), internet and teleconferencing (D'Urso &

Pierce, 2009). Consider that this is demographic is older than most current intern demographics

and it must be taken into account their defined roles within their organizations. Despite this, the

study motions toward the adaption of the environment and works to reinforce the idea of how

new hires would communicate with and learn from personnel such as these respondents. From

the study it was found that respondents most commonly used email, 88.5% who have access, and

Internet, 84.7% for daily communication. Following those were telephone, voicemail and fax

(D'Urso & Pierce, 2009). The study found a broad range of CT usage, but most respondents

indicated a high average of experience and comfort, with 17 of the 25 CT's reported as

mandatory functions in their daily communications (D'Urso & Pierce, 2009). This work concurs

that CT's are becoming foundational cornerstones in the adapting workplace, with more

traditional CT's such as email and telephone dominating the environment. As of 2009

technology has rapidly expanded and increased in functionality, as a result employees such as

these are constantly adapting themselves to improve their communicative abilities within their organizations.

The key to effective technology use is to behave appropriately, by using technology communication channels consistently with established workplace members the newcomers can achieve their socialization goals (Waldeck & Flanagin, 2012). Coinciding with their work, Colbert (2016) amplified the growth of the digital workforce and the advanced speed by which technology has become accustomed in every-day workplace environments. Colbert exemplifies that today's workers are technology natives, they have grown up in a culture dictated by technology and now are renovating their work lives to fit this lifestyle. The use of technology however, can actually inhibit sense of self awareness and limits the ability to promote one's self authentically (Colbert, 2016). If new hires, those who are constantly in connection through social media, are further separated through ACIT's in the workplace then what does a company lose? Without authentic self and the ability to physically represent one's values and beliefs then the company can become stagnate. Likewise, if technology has diminished this ability to self-represent that employers do not gain a true sense of the new hire and this can negatively affect organizational productivity down the line.

Companies are now seeking new hires that are innovative, they are stepping away from traditional molds and driving new paths to be highly competitive. Likewise, new interviews need to enter with a highly competitive mindset, prepossessed technology capabilities, creativity and personality-but on the same level, be able to adapt to the organizational culture, replace their beliefs with company norms and provide ideas without overstepping boundaries. Leonardi, Huysman and Steinfield suggested that technology may not as a traditional communication channel, but as a platform where anyone can participate, at any time (2013). They discuss the use

of social media in the work place as a platform, a CT that allows for informal assimilation by

new employees. Terming it enterprise social media, the benefits act externally to display

company platforms and internally for employee social interaction. Enterprise social media

(ESM) allows for communication with specific workers, revelation of communication partners,

the ability to post/edit/or send files to themselves and others, and to view their messages and

connections.

This certainly sounds familiar to the millennial generation, 20 years ago jobs such as

social media coordinators and social blog writers were not viable professions. These electronic

platforms offer unique capabilities for uncertainty reduction. With ESM, the communicators

have the options to make their messages visible, exerting effort to find and send information.

Information in ESM has been codified and allows new workers the ability to learn from captured

experiences of others bounded in time and record (2013). An example of ESM is *Beehive*,

launched in 2007 to an IBM company that worked in a similar manner to Facebook. The

employees reported connecting with colleagues and periphery employee's alike, forming new

ties and strengthen existing ones (Leonardi et al., 2013). A form of internal company media, such

as this, can be thought of as a leaky pipe metaphor (Leonardi et al., 2013). This metaphor refers

to the direction of participatory communication on both superior's and subordinate employees

ends. A crafted message may be intended for a certain audience, but with social platforms,

unintended audiences have more viable ease of access to the conversations.

According to Mackenzie (2010), digital communication [that essentially is effective]

includes five assumptions; first, digital or CT method create structures for managers to work

through a virtual infrastructure. Second, technology communications affect how individuals

communicate with a shift away from the traditional channels to social controls and security

guards for new virtually platforms. Third, expanded geographical organizations benefit from CT's as employees can be more viably dispersed. The fourth assumption includes at-work relationships and trust in the leader which can be related to uncertainty reduction tactics. The fifth assumption is that face-to-face and digital communications are comparative models that base their differences on employee workplace perceptions of their organizational roles and the company's culture (Mackenzie, 2010). Mackenzie's work lends toward communication the benefits of the channel acting as another platform for new employees. In agreeance with the new studies and many other communication specialist opinions, it appears that technology may act as an additional tool to assist new employees.

In contrast to this stand point, Przybylski and Weinstein's research focused on how mobile technology influences face-to-face, interpersonal conversation (2012). In their study the idea of technology hindrance on human interaction and meaningful conversation was monitored through experimentation. 74 participants were assigned to one of two observed conditions; placed in a dyadic conversational setting where either a mobile phone was absent or present (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). The dyadic conversations were ten minutes at length with a "new" person, during the time participants were asked to discuss an interesting event they encountered within that last month (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). Relationship quality was measured on an *Intrinsic Motivation Inventory* scale model. The results found that dyadic conversations where the phone was present felt less close to the partners and reported lowered relationship quality (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). An informal setting such as provided by the experiment could function as equivalent to an employee's first days on the job, in just ten minutes they could form interpersonal relationships or find themselves feeling disconnected because of technological presence.

In their second experiment, Przybylski and Weinstein manipulated the content of the interaction to be either more meaningful or casual to view which setting was most impacted by the mobile phone's presence (2012). This study specifically analyzed interpersonal trust and partner empathy, two important concepts sought by employees during uncertainty reduction conversations and questioning. In this study, 68 participants were assigned to a conversation situation with either phone phone/non presence and in casual or meaningful topic settings (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). The results of the second experiment found that in casual conversations, the presence of the phone had little impact but during meaningful interactions the participant's felt low partner empathy and trust (Przybylski & Weinstein, 2012). The research studies have their criticisms including defining exactly "how" the phone's presence inhibits interpersonal connection. It is possible that the phones visible presence and use during meaningful interactions represent to the speaking participant that the listener is connected to vast social networks, meaning their attention is divided and not solely focused on the face-to-face conversation. The inclusion of the study acts a counter to the positives of technologies, presenting the possible downside effects in the way technology can create communicational distrust. Not focused on the conversational social platform, but more on the presence of technology as it may be a distraction to supervisors or fellow employees during new hire uncertainty reduction and assimilation.

Implications

This thesis finds that contrary to the belief that technology is an inhibitor, ACIT's and ICT's can be exceptionally beneficial is used in the correct capacities. As Papa defines it, employees need to re-invent technology to adapt to the organization's needs (1992). By re-invent he implies that by adopting technology then adapting it to fit communication channels,

organizations can limit errors and encourage innovation amongst employees for changing

conditions (Papa, 1992). Take for example the telephone, now the mobile phone that can be used

for initial employee screenings and informal interviews in addition to further informal

communication strengthens in-group bonds. However, cellular devices cannot act as the only

form of contact nor the only communication channel between new employees, or any employee,

and their superiors. The ICT acts as an aid to bridge long distance gaps or to offer wider efforts

of collaboration between different departments/organizations in significantly reduced time

compared to organizing a face to face encounter between several or more members.

Considering the advancement in studies and new information on the subject matter, the

beliefs stated regarding traditional communication as the superior channel have been found to

not be entirely true. Best discussed by both Waldeck & Flanagin in 2012 as well as Leonardi in

2013, additional usage of technology promotes positive assimilation under the right conditions.

Gallivan's work corroborates with their studies in his discussions of technology beneficially used

and accepted in the workplace when the organization mandates for the innovations (2001).

Through a literary analysis and study of an insurance agency's adoption of technology it was

found that technology use and implementation varied in use across the managerial, independent

and member-groups. Within the IT department, for example, there was high success rates of

usage and implementation because of the department. In the overall study of implementing

technology usage into an insurance company, while the new CT's were meant to innovate the

business in both internal and cross-client communication, the organization followed a top-down

approach that was neither innovative nor substantially useful to the employees (Gallivan, 2001).

Despite the "lack of progress in role changes" the company was actually successful in achieving

more limited objectives in client/server technology systems (Gallivan, 2001, 54).

This leads to the rationalization that implementing technology and training methods for 'new' employees may be best through a combination of implementation, not just in a top down style. The vertical communication previously discussed is crucial in assimilation and reducing initial uncertainties, including forming strong ties to organizational goals. From Gallivan's study of the insurance company it can be concluded that technology has a place in the constantly growing work field, but new CT's and ACIT's must be both organizationally accepted and fit into the culture to work. For new employees, it must be used with caution and while it is more important than previously initially thought, technology channels should be discussed with new hires to ensure the most accurate assimilation techniques for continuous new workers. Referring back to Harrison's work, he supported the concept of reverse mentoring in regards to the social exchange theory for new hires, specifically discussing the growing millennial workforce (2017). Through this, Harrison described the use of technology as an aide in teaching and communicating with the new, younger workforce to both enhance their individual networks and encourage knowledge sharing (Harrison, 2017). In study frameworks it was fund that millennials engage well with ICT's and the channels can actually act as reverse teaching for more senior members for bi-directional practices (Harrison, 2017). His findings support ICT's and CT's as excellent additions in most training methods, but again, not as the sole method of training or communication.

By closely examining various literary texts and studies conducted within the current time period of technologies growth in the workplace, a great spring of knowledge has risen regarding innovations in organizational structure. Through the use of CT's in addition to growing ACIT's new employees may actually benefit in the process of hire and assimilation. Interpersonal communication is still critical to shaping bonds, just as seeking feedback is necessary in

uncertainty reduction described in Jablin's work. Waldeck makes excellent lee-way for the upcoming and coming innovations while still allowing for the traditional use of face-to-face communication to hold its place as a top communication channel. In comparison though, Waldeck's studies showcases the rapid, global expansions of organizations that makes such communication impossible in cases. This being the case, the growth and use of CT's could actually be extremely helpful in training new hires and promoting feedback through organization based media platforms such as was used at *Beehive*, the ESM in Colbert's text (2013). Even through email, employees can raise questions and find results more rapidly in these large organizational settings than they could through attempting to schedule and meet with a superior.

Conclusion

The comparison of these studies, those both in favor of ACIT/CT adoption as well as those who raise a more traditional approach have reshaped the initial thought in the approaching of this literary analysis thesis. The overall findings for this thesis are that, traditional face-to-face may be best but technology does indeed have a growing and needed place in the assimilation of new employees. With the workforce becoming increasing millennials and jobs turning to more online/social media based work it is only right to include this world-accepted form of communication that allows for collaboration, vertical and external communication. Perhaps the best new form of technology could prove to be video chat technology for new hire training and management, or video calling between new employees and superiors in addition to traditional channels and informal CT's. The combine efforts of traditional with CT's as a growing aide can improve the way in which new employees enter an organization by increasing their networks with other employees, their ability to receive feedback in a timelier manner and the availability of codified feedback that can be referred to for future questions. Technology is not the enemy, it

is an ally that if properly administered and used will assist new hire in more quickly adapting

into their organizations culture and structure.

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