AN ASSESSMENT OF THE RELEVANCE OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION TO ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: THE CASE OF UNIFREIGHT (2005 – 2011)

By

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Awarded by

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
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DECLARATION

_Student Declaration_ - I, Obert Mutonhori, do hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigation and research, except to the extent indicated in the Acknowledgements, References and by comments included in the body of the report, and that it has not been submitted in part or in full for any other degree to any other university.

Student Signature ___________________ Date____________________

_Supervisor Declaration_ - I, Dr. Nyasha Kaseke confirm that the work reported in this dissertation was carried out by the candidate under my supervision as University supervisor. This dissertation has been submitted for marking with my approval as University supervisor.

Supervisor Signature____________________ Date____________________

Graduate School of Management

University of Zimbabwe
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my wife Mufaro and OUR three children, Nyashadzaishhe, Ruvarashe, and Atidaishe.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am humbled by the love and support from many that made this project a success. I am grateful to all who generously and patiently extended their precious time and expertise, wisdom, and encouragement to me during the research study. Special mention goes to my dissertation supervisor Dr. N. Kaseke who was always by my side guiding me every step of the way. I am grateful of his excellent insight, advice, guidance, and enthusiasm, without which the journey would have been in vain.

I also want to express my deep and loving appreciation to my family, my wife, Mufaro Mutonhori, daughters, Nyashadziashe Mutonhori, Ruvarashe Mutonhori and son, Atidaishe Mutonhori for the firm support, and fortitude over the entire period of study. I am also grateful to my mother, Rosewitta Ndakaitesi Mutonhori who is my inspiration.

Special thanks go to all my lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe, Graduate School of Management for administering the course and providing guidance on dissertation writing. I also deeply extend a warm thank you to my Group Chief Executive Officer for Unifreight Ltd for the sacrifice and support during the study period. The participation in this research study of all the employees and managers of Unifreight as well as customers is indeed appreciated.

Finally, I give glory to the Lord whose mercy, grace, and love endures forever. He looked after me and guided me throughout the period of the degree program.
ABSTRACT

This research study investigated the relevance of organizational communication on organizational effectiveness in Unifreight. The study came as a result of the poor performance of the company against other transport companies in the same industry. The main objective of the study was to determine whether or not the devastating performance of the company was due to communication systems failure. A secondary research was done to review literature related to communication and business effectiveness. The review covered previous authors view on aspects such as the flow of information, communication channels, barriers to communication and the types of communication.

The study followed phenomenological and ontological research philosophies which provided theoretical and methodological rigour as well as practical relevance to the Unifreight case. The population for the study was 646 employees comprising of all managers, and non managerial employees from which a sample of 138 respondents were selected. Simple random stratified sample was conveniently selected. A total of one hundred and thirty eight (138) questionnaires were sent out, thirty (30) to Unifreight management and one hundred and eight (108) to its employees across the whole country. The overall response rate was 83%. The results of the survey were analyzed and collated using the spreadsheets.

The study findings indicated that the overall communication environment is not conducive for effective communication and has resulted in Unifreight failing to attain its objectives. Management has failed to effectively create structures that facilitate improved communication and subsequently improved effectiveness. The study concluded that poor communication has had a negative effect on Unifreight's effectiveness. The researcher recommended that for Unifreight Ltd to improve effectiveness the artificial barriers to communication should be removed by having an open door policy. Management should also prioritise organisational communication as a strategic imperative.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION
This study is an assessment of the relevance of organizational communication to organizational effectiveness and focused on Unifreight as a case study within the period 2005–2011. This study took a close look into organizational communication at Unifreight, an organization that operates in the courier industry of Zimbabwe.
This chapter starts by presenting the background to the study through an account of Unifreight and its industry. This includes a brief history of the organization and the major change programs implemented in the organization as well as a SWOT analysis of the organization and an analysis of the industry using Porter’s five forces model and PESTL. The chapter also includes the statement of the problem which highlights the major communication challenges and how it is affecting Unifreight. The research objectives which highlight what the researcher wants to achieve with the research are also found in this chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE ORGANISATION

The report shall focus on Unifreight (Pvt) LTD. The Unifreight Group incorporates Swift, Unifreight Logistics, Engineering, Finance and Human Resources Division. Revenue for the whole Group is generated by the two operations Divisions which are Swift and Unifreight Logistics. The other three are support divisions. Swift transport is a general freight hauler with thirty-two (32) depots throughout Zimbabwe. The company offers a guaranteed twenty-four hours freight delivery service to those various destinations per day. It has a staff compliment of six hundred and forty six (646) and has a substantial asset base. Unifreight Ltd was incorporated in 1954 under the Companies Act, Chapter 24:03 as a private limited company with a mandate to transport goods. Its head office is in Harare and located at number 5 Hood road, Southerton, Harare.

1.2.1 Vision

To be a leading transport, Logistics and Distribution Company in Zimbabwe and the Southern African region.

1.2.2 Mission

Unifreight’s strategic imperatives are deeply embedded in its mission. The mission clearly indicates that Unifreight’s desire is to be recognized as the “quality and cost leader in transport and distribution services in every market and geographic segment in
which it operates.” From the mission it is evident that Unifreight is chasing a bi-polar strategy with cost and quality being the focal points. The cost leadership strategy was being pursued from the early 2000s. It was characterized by employee layoffs, closing of unprofitable divisions and depots across the country.

1.2.3 Organizational Values

Unifreight’s code of ethics and values states that Unifreight is committed to ensuring that customers are always satisfied and this is achieved through accountability, authenticity, innovation, performance driven, customer focused professionalism and reliability. However, these values do not form part of the organizational culture since they are poorly communicated. There are not recognized structures that help in instilling these values as such instead of upholding them they remain as part of management hearsay. This lack of communication means there is no commonality that exist between departments. Resultantly, departmental values and culture is set around the personality of the departmental head. The innate differences in personality have degenerated into a disjointed organization.

1.2.4 Organizational Structure

The group is headed by the CEO and there are 3 directors who report to him. These directors head the three respective divisions which are Swift, Human resources and Engineering. Swift, being the income generating unit, has regional managers who report to the director. The company has geographically divided its market into three regions. Under these Regional managers are depot managers who with the assistants of functional managers run the depots.

On issues of HR, the Depot managers are responsible and they report to the Group HR Manager who in turn reports to the HR Director. The same applies with engineering division. The engineering foreman reports to the Depot manager and the Depot manager reports to the National workshops manager. The foreman also reports directly
to the national workshops manager. The national workshops manager reports to the Technical director who in turn reports to the CEO.

Figure 1.1: Structure of Unifreight Ltd

Source: Unifreight Ltd' Annual Human Resources Report (2010)

The above structure shows that Unifreight has a tall structure which distances top management from what is actually happening on the ground. This tall structure dilutes the impact of vertical communication in the company. Both downward and upward communication is not effective in Unifreight. There is a long chain of command meaning there are various noises that disturb the message from either top to bottom or vice versa. As a result the CEO is far away from the shop floor and subsequently he is a
stranger to his employees as well as the actual operations on the freight shed and the market. Subsequently the decision maker has a vague idea of the things he is supposed to decide on.

1.2.5 Staff and Productivity at Unifreight

Unifreight has got 646 employees throughout all its distribution centres. 8% of the employees are in management, 15% are supervisors, 2% are secretaries, 25% are drivers, 20% are lorry mates who assist the drivers while 15% consist of all employees who do clerical jobs. Unifreight employs at least 100 casual laborers per day who perform the rudimentary duties. Figure 1.2 below illustrates the employee composition of Unifreight Ltd.

![Employee Composition Diagram]

**Figure 1.2: Unifreight Ltd’s employee composition**

**Source:** Unifreight Ltd’ Annual Human Resources Report (2010)

The age range for staff is 30 to 65 years with the average age for management being 45 years. Most of the young and economically active employees are found doing clerical and freightshed work. However, it is in this level of the hierarchy where employee morale
is at its lowest. This could have emanated from poor communication during the changing times. Non-performing divisions were shut-down and some employees were transferred to departments where their skills were not matching their new requirements. Not much respect and value is given to the lower level employees who end up feeling detached from the organisation. This is mainly due to their exclusion in almost all decisions that affect their work.

1.2.6 Further comments on communication at Unifreight Ltd

The structure of the organization’s communication structures has stifled lateral communication channels within the organization. This has given rise to territorialism between the different departments. Territorialism often occurs when members of a department control task-related activities within a defined and fixed jurisdictional area” and as a result “regard others’ involvement in that area as territorial encroachment”. Some departments value their turf and strive to protect it (Schaap 2006). For instance there is a well known tussle between Traffic control and Fleet control departments with regards to vehicle control. Another problem that has resulted from this lack of lateral communication is overspecialization. This overspecialization has alienated the operations of one department from the other. This has resulted in a lack of synergy between departments. Unifreight traditionally has functioned under rigid authority structures with fixed lines of communication, values and expectations that members have acquired under the current systems inhibit attempts at horizontal communication.

Horizontal communication within Unifreight often fails simply because employees are unwilling to expend the additional effort that it requires to coordinate between departments. The channels and rules of interaction may be unclear. Sometimes the need to communicate between departments or depots at the same level requires effort and because of the poor motivational levels in the organization no one is willing to expend such effort.

In 2009 Unifreight management set to improve the communication between office operations, freight shed operations and delivery/collection zone operations. This was to
be achieved through the use of a mobile hand held computer. This handheld computer was set to give a platform for exchange of information between the mentioned operational sides. There is seamless communication between the handheld computer and the freight handling system (Freightware). The mobile computer also allows the customer to input information into the system. Such information includes comments about the collection crew or the freight itself. The mobile computer allows the customer to input his/her signature.

However, the mistrust and resentment between management and their subordinates meant that the communication benefits of the mobile computer are eroded. The drivers refused to let customers use the handheld computers. Their argument was that if the customer was to damage the mobile computer management would punish him instead. Management on the other hand failed to guarantee job security in case the customer is responsible. This standoff created a crippling level of paranoia within the drivers. This situation meant that although Unifreight invested heavily in new communication technology, it did not reap the full benefits of the new communication frontiers.

Unifreight has also failed to embrace new changes in communication technology. There are various developments such as internet based calling platforms such as Skype which are quicker and sometimes more effective than the normal email and telephone lines. Besides, the majority of the workforce has no emails or computers to use for communication.

**1.2.7 Methods of communication**

The most recognized form of communication between managers in Unifreight is mainly via Email. This form of communication is mainly vertical with managers passing information to subordinates and at times subordinate giving feedback to their superiors. The grapevine at Unifreight is also very vibrant. This mode of communication has gone uncontrolled and has had mostly detrimental effects to the organization. It has been instrumental in distorting the once clearly laid down communication structures.
Company initiated meetings have been a rarity for low level employees. They have to wait for mandatory meetings such as works council meetings.

1.2.8 Company statistics

Unifreight performance statistics for the period under study were painting a rather gloomy picture. Staff turnover and training cost were exorbitant, losses due to damages were high and revenue per kilometer travelled was declining. The statistics are briefly discussed below.

1.2.8.1 Staff turnover and training

Employees were leaving the organization at an alarming rate. Skilled labor was leaving the organization due to low levels of morale. There were two major retrenchment exercises in the mid to late 2000s which resulted in a dampening of employee morale. In between these exercises were numerous talks of layoffs which however did not materialize. These developments increased uncertainty and compounded the employees’ fears of losing their jobs. Work relations were disturbed and the remaining workforce was not happy with how the departed employees were handled. Some lost relationships and some lost their entire work group. Subsequently all the employees who had to leave left on voluntary basis as well. The company was forced to recruit and train new employees. This culminated in an upsurge in training cost.
Figure 1.3: Training costs

Source: Unifreight HR report 2010

The retrenchment program was not well communicated and increased skepticism for those who had remained behind. Majority of employees were opting to leave the organization thereby increasing the necessity to employ new staff which was expensive to train. In 2008 alone USD30,000,00 was spend on training of new recruits (Unifreight HR report 2010).

1.2.8.2 Damages to Customer Goods

Besides the direct costs of training the company was also hemorrhaging as a result of low competence levels of these new recruits. As shown by statistics, amount of revenue lost due to damages also increased during this period of high labor turnover.
Table 1:1 Losses due to damages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Damages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$75,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$91,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$140,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$180,00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$220,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$280,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Uni freight Annual report 2010

These damages, besides the direct costs of replacing the goods also contributed heavily to the high customer defection rate which reached its peak of 15% in 2008 (Uni freight Annual report 2010).

.1.2.8.3 Revenue per Collection and Delivery kilometer travelled

Another measure that has shown that company effectiveness has not improved is the dollar revenue per travelled kilometer. As shown in the diagram below the increase in C&D Kilometers traveled per day did not have corresponding increase in revenue. The Ratio still stood at approximately at $150, 00 for every Collection and Delivery kilometer travelled.
Facts on the ground indicated that drivers were not aware of standard kilometers for their particular delivery/collection zone. This communication breakdown meant that no one adhered to these standards. Operating costs increased since more kilometers meant more fuel consumed and more wear and tear.

1.2.8.4 Payroll

Although the headcount of the company decreased by 56% from 1355 in 2001 to 646 in 2010, there was no substantial decrease on the payroll (Unifreight Annual report 2010). A comparison between the targeted labor cost and the actual labor cost shows the retrenchment exercises did not achieve the desired results. Senior management had a misconception about the employee to workload ratio. They managed to reduce the number of employees but did not reduce the labor hours. This resulted in most of the staff incurring overtime which to Unifreight is 58% more expensive than normal time.
Senior management also had a misconception on the size of the fleet. They thought a leaner fleet would allow them to save in terms of maintenance costs. Their idea was based on achieving faster turnaround for these vehicles. However, what was not communicated to them was that the fleet that Swift ad was not suitable for that kind of strategy. The vehicles were old and required constant repair which was quite expensive. This disrupted service delivery since vehicle availability was at a minimal. In 2008 Unifreight had its worst statistics as far as vehicle availability is concerned. This shortage of equipment resulted in poor services and increased customer defection rate. The Unifreight marketing report 2009 indicated that Unifreight lost 15% of its customers in 2008.
Table 1.2: Vehicle Availability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vehicle category</th>
<th>Collection and Delivery Vehicles</th>
<th>Shunt vehicles</th>
<th>Trunk vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted availability</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual Availability</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrepancy</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unifreight Operations Report 2009

Another factor that contributed to low vehicle availability was low staff morale within the engineering department. Vehicles were taking longer to come out of the workshop. In 2007 B servicing a vehicle was taking an average of 48hrs when 6 hours is the stated standard (Unifreight Operations Report 2009)

1.2.8.6 Overall Productivity

Comparison of performance statistics between 2005 and 2010 has it that there was no significant improvement in overall productivity for Unifreight. Although the number of employees decreased drastically there was no sales revenue growth and as a result the overall organizational productivity declined. From 2005 to 2008 the economy was contracting however in 2009 to 2010 productivity did not rebound on the back of an improved economy as expected.
Table 1.3: Unifreight’s Productivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
<th>Sales turnover (000)-USD</th>
<th>Productivity (000) USD/head</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Q1</td>
<td>1355</td>
<td>2076</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Q2</td>
<td>1339</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1.46</td>
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<td>Q3</td>
<td>1319</td>
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<td>1.44</td>
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<td>1299</td>
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<td>1266</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
<td>1252</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>1238</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q3</td>
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<td>1200</td>
<td>1.02</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>1150</td>
<td>1185</td>
<td>1.03</td>
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<td>1005</td>
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<td>Q3</td>
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<td>945</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Q4</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>1324</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Swift’s Annual Financial Reports (2010)

The above statistics shows that something was not well within the organization. Unifreight was not excelling in any one area of its business and almost all set targets were not meant. All the strategies that were used were not effective enough to take the company were it desired to be.
1.3 SWOT Analysis

Table 1.4 below is a summary of Unifreight strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. This was meant to highlight the challenges and positives emanating from both the internal and external environment.

Table 1.4: SWOT Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>WEAKNESSSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Strong brand</td>
<td>• Lack of strategic awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wide coverage</td>
<td>• Slow to adapt to change (bureaucracy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Largest vehicle capacity in courier business</td>
<td>• Poor organisational structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Widest product range</td>
<td>• No performance management system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Low employee morale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Growing mining sector</td>
<td>• Competition from clients integrating backwards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Growing agricultural sector</td>
<td>• Political unrest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increasing pocket sharing with existing clients</td>
<td>• Bad publicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Could diversify into fuel sector</td>
<td>• Liquidity crunch in the country</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4 INDUSTRY BACKGROUND

Swift, being the productive division of Unifreight, competes with so many players in the transport industry. Within its strategic group, it competes with Biddulphs, One over
night, Colbro, J & J transport, Leo pack and Pioneer Clan Transport. To a relatively lesser extent it also competes with DHL and FedEx who both focus on the high end market. Swift used to be the market leader but Pioneer transport has edged ahead and has outdone Swift by bringing in new products which have a regional appeal. However, in order to assess the level of competition that Swift faces in the transport industry the researcher will adopt Porter’s Five Forces Model 2008.

1.4.1 Porter’s Five Forces Model

![Figure 1.6: Transport industry analysis]

1.4.1.1 Threat of New Entrants

The absence of strict barriers to entry and the prospects of high profit margins have resulted in the transport industry being very attractive to potential entrants. Over the past few years there have been numerous entries into the courier services and
countless entries in the Full Loads product category. Courier Connect, Overnight Express and Sprint Courier have all joined the Courier industry within the past six years and have played a major role in the fragmentation Swift's market share. This exerted a lot of pressure on Swift since all of the new entrances were competing for a piece of its market share.

Indigenous operators are still flooding the market. Because of their relatively lower overhead costs, they have come with lower prices as their brand discriminator. This strategy has triggered a price war which has left heavily capitalized entities like Swift reeling from reduced profitability.

1.4.1.2 Bargaining Power of Suppliers
Another form of competitive pressure which has impacted on Swift’s profitability emanates from suppliers. Fuel is the most important input in the Swift business process. However, the company has no influence over the suppliers. Increases in the fuel prices negatively affected Swift’s profitability by increasing total direct cost by 6% (Marketing Annual report, 2010).

Some of the suppliers are evolving into direct competitors by integrating forward. KAZA Motors which used to supply buses for Swift’s passenger services is now running a passenger contract for MIMOSA mining company which used to be exclusively Swift’s client. This also reduced profitability for Swift and increased comparative pressure.

1.4.1.3 Bargaining Power of Buyers
Buyers can also affect Swift’s profitability by exerting influence on pricing in their favour. Most of Swift major clients like Tanganda Tea, Nestle, Radar Metal and Zimbabwe Sugar Suppliers have negotiated for hefty discounts that have compromised desired revenue levels. Clients have been war mongers by instigating a price bidding war between Swift and its competitors like Western Transport and Biddulphs. Swift has reluctantly discounted its rates in a bid to attract and retain existing customers. These divide and rule tactics suits the buyer but compromises Swift business performance.
Dynamic clients such as Innscor, Zimplats, and Lyons have also evolved into direct competitors by having a fleet of their own. Business which used to go to Swift was now swallowed into their internal operations. Others like Innscor and Dairiboard went further to the extent of having spin-off transport and logistics companies that is ONE and NFLB logistics respectively.

1.4.1.4 Threat of Substitutes
The increase in popularity of the internet as a mode of communication has resulted in some customers using it as a substitute for Swift’s Express services. Inter-company documents are now being communicated through intranet. Comparison between Express business in 2006 and 2009 indicate a 40% decline in customers using express services (Swift Annual Marketing Report, 2010). Some customers have opted to use the unorthodox passenger services to transport their goods. They would accompany the goods themselves since in some cases it was cheaper.

1.4.1.5 Rivalry among Existing Firms
The profitability of the transport industry attracted numerous players. Corporates and individual indigenous players multiplied over the years, subsequently creating a market of more than 50 strong service suppliers. These players mainly include Biddulphs, Courier Connect, Sprint Courier, Western Transport, Sabot and Pioneer Clan Transport. As the transport industry matured and business levels decreased during the tumultuous years, the intensity of competition increased. The more than 50 players were now competing for a declining market, price wars became the norm. This mutually destructive phenomenon resulted in rates being heavily discounted by as much as 50% for the Full Loads product range (Swift Annual Marketing Report, 2010). Resultantly these price wars reduced profitability of the whole industry drastically including that of Swift.
1.4.2. PESTL Analysis of the Industry

The researcher also did an environmental analysis of Unifreight’s external environment. This was done based on Political, economic, social, technological and legal aspects of the business environment.

1.4.2.1 Political Factors

The Global Political Agreement (GPA) brought about a conducive environment for business. Compared to preceding tumultuous years the economy was going through a growth phase averaging between 5 to 8 % per annum (Treasury quarterly bulletin October to December 2009). This growth indicated that industry was producing more and the market was consuming more as well. This created high demand for more transport services since goods had to be moved from the manufacturer to the consumer. Manufacturing firms consist 80% of Unifreight’s major customers. The Global Political Agreement was a fore runner for a stable economy. Earlier on the political violence of 2008 had brought the economy to a standstill. Capacity utilization was down to 10% and this cascaded to Unifreight since it could not perform beyond the general economy.

Unifreight was also affected by its involvement in government initiatives such as the RBZ’s BACCOSI program. The company was the chief transporter used by the Bank. However payment was done in the local currency and considering that inflation rate was beyond 1000% the money ended up rotting in the bank. It therefore meant that Unifreight literally financed the government program for little or no return at all. This impacted negatively on the short to medium term performance of the company. Unifreight could not recapitalize to match its operations with the rise in demand after the GPA.

Speculation on elections and the expiry of the Global Political Agreement has increased uncertainty yet again. Calls for black empowerment through indigenization have also curbed economic growth which was still at its infancy stage. Although the economy has experienced some substantial growth, it is uncertain of the continuity of
such growth in the post election period. Indigenization has curbed foreign direct investment which was set to increase business of some of its clients. Organizations such as Cairns, Mutare board and paper mills which used to be major clients are in dire need of such funding. Unifreight’s business is derived from the performance of its Clients and ultimately if customers are not doing well so does Unifreight.

The accelerated land reform program disrupted the economy. The agricultural sector was incapacitated as a viable market for Unifreight. The manufacturing sector which is the backbone of Unifreight’s business faced raw-materials shortage because of this program and as a result their output level was reduced. This affected Unifreight negatively as performance statistics revealed a decline of business since the inception of the land reform program.

1.4.2.2 Economic Factors

Dollarization of the economy has resulted in price stability in the country and this has given most companies in Zimbabwe the confidence to focus more on increasing production levels. This has improved the company’s relationship with clients since prices are stable and are only changed if fuel costs increase. This consistency has resulted in customers trusting the organization more. This has also allowed effective budgeting and effective sales performance.

However the country is still facing liquidity challenges. Money supply is not matching demand. As a result Unifreight debtors are taking longer than usual to pay their dues. This results in a vicious cycle whereby Unifreight will have difficulties in financing its operations. On many occasions the company has failed to fund its salaries account on time. It could not pay for spares and vehicles took longer to repair. In the end business performance was negatively affected. This lack of liquidity is inhibiting the financing of the manufacturing sector which is the backbone of Unifreight business(Treasury quarterly bulletin October to December 2009).

The liquidity challenges have further been compounded by the increase in borrowing costs. High interest rates of above 35% have made it difficult to borrow money to
finance the recapitalization of the organization’s operations. Unifreight has also been failing to re-plough its earnings since it owes the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority three million dollars in taxes. All the above factors make it difficult for Unifreight to have a health cash position.

1.4.2.3 Socio-Cultural Factors

According to the Treasury quarterly bulletin (October to December 2009). The Zimbabwean population has witnessed the majority of able bodied people migrating to South Africa and Botswana. It is claimed that South Africa alone is home to 3 million Zimbabwean economic refugees. Locally this has shifted the transport sector in that movement of goods is no longer from urban to rural but is now Diaspora to rural. Coupled with the fact that local products are expensive rural business have not been doing well. Unifreight’s business’ in areas such as Gutu, Murambinda, Gokwe and Mutoko has been reduced drastically.

The HIV pandemic has also affected business. In Zimbabwe drivers are notorious for soliciting sex from prostitutes. Unifreight Training costs have been high since the drivers need to be replaced and health costs have skyrocketed since the workers get some treatment at the company’s clinics.

1.4.2.4 Technological

The ubiquity of the internet has negatively affected Unifreight especially its express service. Most intercompany documents are now being communicated through the internet. Job applications are also being done the same way. Because of these changes, the contribution of express business to overall revenue has declined from 8% in 2000 to the current 4%. The system which the organization is using is also outdated. The equipment is obsolete and no replacements can be found. The technological environment is changing rapidly and Unifreight needs to adapt. Although Unifreight is in the process of changing its computer system, the process has been slow because such technological endeavors are costly.
1.4.2.5 Legal Factors
The pricing of Express business (0-20kgs) is controlled by POTRAZ. This is a limitation because the organization cannot manipulate its pricing strategies for this service line in order to come up with acceptable sales/profit margins. This lack of control means that price cannot be easily used as a tool in Unifreight’s marketing mix.

The government has also put a ban on import of left handed trucks. However this can be a gain to Unifreight since most of its competitors were importing cheap left handed American vehicles. Unifreight imports its vehicles from Europe which are right handed vehicles.

1.5 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM
This study intended to evaluate communication within Unifreight Ltd and its role towards improving the organization’s effectiveness. During the period under review that is between 2005 and 2011 this researcher observed that the company was very far away from attaining its goals. A severe retrenchment exercise which reduced employees from 1355 to 646 and depot network from 40 to 28 did not yield the desired results. Revenue growth has been insignificant even with the coming in of the new economic dispensation. The organization has lost market share to new and more vigorous competitors while at the same time employee turnover is very high. The researcher also observed that communication channels were rather clogged and this resulted in poor communication within the organization. This made the researcher eager to investigate and evaluate communication as a way of improving Unifreight effectiveness. The researcher also wanted to know how much poor communication had contributed to low levels of effectiveness within Unifreight.

1.6 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The change program implemented by Unifreight in the 2000s brought a lot of challenges to the smooth running of the organization. First, the change program was not effectively communicated and faced a lot of resistance from the employees, most of whom lost their jobs and some lost relationships among other things. This had a strong effect on
the organizational culture which further affected the communication within the organization. Department to department communication was affected and till this day, departments are not supportive of one another. There is a lack of synergy between departments.

Unifreight has a tall structure which distances top management from what is actually happening on the ground. This tall structure dilutes the impact of vertical communication in the company. Both downward and upward communication is not effective in Unifreight. There is a long chain of command meaning there are various noises that disturb the message from either top to bottom or vice versa. As a result the CEO is far away from the shop floor and subsequently he has a vague idea of the things he is supposed to decide on. On the other hand, decision making in Unifreight is highly centralized and there is very little if any involvement of middle management and shop flow staff in strategic decision making. Employees are not given opportunities to contribute their ideas towards the success of the organization and the management style of the organization is not participative. There are no mechanisms for management to acquire views of employees on organizational improvement, employee concerns, and information about operational issues. The bureaucratic style stifles all forms of positive communication and builds mistrust between management and their subordinates and as a result, this has killed initiative from employees.

Generally, there is no openness and trust within the culture of Unifreight. Employees have become protective and therefore choose which information to communicate to their superiors or not and this has affected the organization. This has affected the free flow of information within the organization. On the other hand, downward communication is also not effective and as a result, middle management and employees do not understand their policies, practices, organizational vision, mission and goals and performance appraisals are not done, meaning employees are not aware of their own level of performance.
The fore-mentioned challenges and issues are causes of concern in the future of Unifreight. A further complacency and reluctance to deal with these issues is bound to get the organization into serious performance turmoil. The success of Unifreight is most likely to be unachievable unless the organization deals with its internal problems, the key element being its organizational communication. It is against this background that the researcher conducted an assessment of the relevance of communication to organizational effectiveness within a large organization with particular focus on Unifreight as a case study.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher sought to answer the following research questions;

i. What channels and methods of communication does Unifreight employ in their organizational communication?

ii. How does Unifreight’s organizational communication impact on its effectiveness?

iii. How important does Unifreight see organizational communication and is this part of its strategic priorities?

iv. What challenges are hindering effective organizational communication at Unifreight?

1.8 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study is to establish the relevance of organizational communication on the effectiveness of Unifreight Limited.

The following are the proposed sub-objectives of the study;

i. To identify the channels and methods of communication employed by Unifreight in its organizational communication,
ii. To establish how organizational communication influence productivity, volume of business, service delivery, profitability, customer trust, customer complaints, delivery times and service delivery

iii. To determine whether communication is part of the organization’s strategic priorities.

iv. To establish the challenges hindering effective organizational communication at Unifreight, and

1.9 RESEARCH PROPOSITION

In this study, the researcher proposes that improved organizational communication results in organizational ineffectiveness and poor performance.

1.10 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was an assessment of the relevance of organizational communication on organizational effectiveness and focused on Unifreight as a case study. On organizational communication the researcher looked at the direction of communication, channels of communication, communication climate, factors of quality communication and general communication satisfaction among other things. Organizational effectiveness was measured on variables such as productivity, efficiency, morale and the achievement of organizational goals among other things. The study focuses on all employees of Unifreight in all the 28 depots across Zimbabwe.

1.11 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study would benefit a number of stakeholders. However, the direct beneficiaries of the study include Unifreight Limited, the courier industry and the entire Zimbabwean industry as a whole, Zimbabwe as a nation and the academia. Each of these benefits in different ways.
Unifreight is the major beneficiary of the study. The company would greatly benefit directly from the study results and recommendations since these were mainly based on the findings from Unifreight. This would allow management of the company to look into the organizational communication and employ the necessary strategies to harness its communication. This would result in increased productivity, motivation, more accurate decision making and increased performance of employees. The area of organizational communication has not been widely researched in Zimbabwe and this would give Unifreight a leading role in this critical aspect of organizational management.

The courier industry would benefit by using the results from Unifreight as a benchmark in organizational communication. Companies in the courier industry would also learn the basic aspects of organizational communication that are normally ignored and this would also increase the importance given to organizational communication in the industry.

The nation at large would benefit from the study through the increase in productivity at Unifreight and the courier industry. This also means more revenues for the country.

Lastly, the academic world would benefit from the addition to existing literature based on the findings of this study. Future research on organizational communication and related topics will have more literature to use and this will shade more light into the normally ignored critical aspects of internal communication.

1.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following limitations are anticipated in the study:

- There is not enough time to carry out a more comprehensive research. Hence, the researcher has to stream down the data collection techniques and only use those that would allow data collection to the completed within the specified time. This means other means of data collection such as focus group discussions with employees will not be employed.
1.13 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The study report is arranged into five chapters. The first chapter of the dissertation will introduce the entire research. It will mainly cover the background of the study, background of the company, the problem statement, research questions and objectives as well as significance of the study. Chapter two on the other hand focuses on literature pertaining to the aforementioned research topic. It seeks to identify gaps in literature and helps avoid repetition of what has been researched before. Chapter three covers the research methodology which involves how the research is going to be conducted. Research findings are going to be discussed and analyzed in Chapter 4. In chapter 5 conclusions are to be made and appropriate recommendations are to be suggested. The flow chart below shows the general structure of the dissertation will be as follows.

![Flow chart showing the structure of the study](https://www.studentnet.com)

**Figure 1.7: Structure of the study**

*Source: www.studentnet.com (accessed 14 January 2012)*
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In today’s knowledge economy the most valuable commodity is communication (Johansson, 2007). Demonstrating that sound internal communication activities within an organization have a positive impact on its outward performance is the starting point for this dissertation.

As globalization continues and customer expectations rise, internal communication will play an increasingly pivotal role in defining leading organizations from the also-rans. Indeed, for many companies in mature or declining marketplaces a robust internal communication strategy offers one last source of competitive advantage in aiding the eternal drive for greater efficiency.

In this chapter, the researcher previews literature on organizational communication starting with its definition and importance. Other aspects of communication such as the flow of information, communication channels, barriers to communication and the types of communication are discussed in this review of literature among other sub-topics.

2.2 ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Organizational communication is an academic discipline that includes the study of symbols, messages, media, interactions, relationships, networks, persuasion, and broader discourse within an organization (Johansson, 2007). It is the sending and receiving of messages by means of symbols that act as a key element of organizational climate with the basic function of affecting receiver’s knowledge or behavior by informing, directing, regulating, socializing, and persuading (Baker, 2002). Organizational communication in today’s organizations has not only become far more complex and varied but also more important to overall organizational functioning and success (Baker, 2002). Communication has become the most essential element in an
organization in determining organizational success. The communication between employers and employees is vital because through communication, the employer is better able to understand employees’ feelings and the employer can attempt to change an unsatisfactory situation into a satisfactory environment.

Although research in this field is now growing it is only in the past 20 years from 2012 that commercial enterprises have begun placing greater emphasis on organizational communication as a strategic function within their organizations. In 2004 global communication consultants Watson Wyatt published the most definitive study to date (subsequently updated year-on-year) linking organizational communication to financial performance. The return on investment study found that a significant improvement in communication levels is associated with an increase in market value of up to 29.5%. Companies with the highest levels of effective internal communication experienced a +26 percent total return to shareholders from 1998 to 2002, compared to a -15 percent return experienced by firms that communicated least effectively.

The assumption that effective internal communication is essential to the effective functioning of any organization is supported by voluminous body of theoretical and empirical literature. Hall (2002, p.165) proposes that effective communication should consist of “accurate information with the appropriate emotional overtones to all members who need the communication content. This assumes neither too much nor too little information is in the system and that it is clear from the outset who can utilize what is available”.

It is broadly recognized that effective communication also results in a number of positive outcomes for managers. These include increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, and greater commitment to organisational goals (Clampitt & Downs, 1993; Pincus, 1986). In turn, communication practices that succeed in maintaining an informed and empowered workforce offer many benefits to staff such as improved morale and better working relationships (Brooks, Callicoat & Siegerdt, 1979, p.134). Likert (1967, p.29) described communication satisfaction as an “intervening variable” of job satisfaction,
influenced by “causal variables” such as leadership strategies, organisational structure and climate. Subsequent studies have also reported that communication satisfaction plays an important role in overall job satisfaction (Carriere & Bourque, 2008; Pettit, Goris & Vaught, 1997).

Although scholars recognize the importance of good communication in organisations, in practice the efficiency, or rather inefficiency, of communication systems and structures is often overlooked. Greenbaum and White (1976, p.10) noted that “communication problems will always exist in complex organizations. The challenge for management is to minimize the level of dysfunctional operation”. However, identifying the causes of poor communication is a complex task. As Buchanan and Huczynski (2004, p.179) assert that the factors affecting communication are wide-ranging and often depend on multiple variables; “organizations systematically inhibit communication through hierarchical structures, power and status differences, the design and gendered differentiation of jobs, the nature of employment contracts, physical layouts, and rules”.

2.2.1 The flow of information

Components of organisational communication include the directionality of communication (upward, downward, lateral), communication channels (face-to-face, computer mediated communication, etc.), communication networks, interpersonal communication, as well as formal and informal communication (grapevine activity). Each of these elements has its own function which presents both problems and benefits to the organisation.

Tourish and Hargie’s (2004, p.188) succinct definition states that organisation communication “involves the transmission of information (messages) between sender and receivers (sources), utilizing a variety of means (channels)”. Early communication models, such as the seminal Shannon and Weaver model (1949), as cited by Fiske (1990, p.6), were concerned with the efficiency of message transmission and the element of what they termed ‘noise’, described as interference or unwanted information
that affects the transmission of the intended message. Noise may include the different meanings people associate with words, tone, gestures, and other body language.

![Shannon and Weaver Model](image)

**Figure 2.1: The Shannon and Weaver Model (1949)**

*Source: Fiske (1990, p.6)*

This rather simplistic model, originally developed to evaluate the efficiency of telephone cables and radio waves, has been superseded by numerous theoretical perspectives focusing on the multitude of factors that affect the transmitter - receiver relationship. Hall (2002, p. 163) asserts that “both individual and organisational factors contribute to communication problems, such as omission, distortion and overload”. Individual human factors affecting the flow of information may include motive, knowledge, experience, attitudes, values and beliefs while organisational factors may include technological sophistication, size, structure and complexity (Hall, 2002, p. 164-165).

**2.2.2 Communication Channels**

Interpersonal communication and collective understanding influence levels of innovation. There are a number of different communication channels available to an organization when it comes to innovation and readiness for change: face to face interaction, formal or informal group meetings in the workplace, social gatherings
outside the workplace, networking, the writing of letters and emails, the use of (mobile) phone, fax, teleconferencing or even television, radio, magazines and outdoor media (Jablin et al., 1987, Robbins et al. 1996; Shockley Zalabak, 1999; and Timm and Stead, 1996). Choosing the right channel at the right time is not only of importance for the building of relationships with staff and setting of the scene for innovation and change in the workplace, but also of importance for the building of a customer base.

Various studies have been conducted on how communication channels are used in formal networks and complex organizations (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Harshman and Harshman 1999), however few studies address informal and personal communication channels in the micro and small business environment in relation to innovation. Even though most researchers agree that the increasing emphasis on the development of faster and newer technical channels for information transfer will change the way organizations function for the better (Shockley-Zalabak 1999; Huang 1999; Van Akkeren & Cavaye 2000), not all businesses have readily taken up technology such as internet and customised websites (Van Akkeren & Cavaye 1999). There are a number of constraints in the uptake of technology in businesses, such as trust, type of business and leadership styles (Evans & Volery, 2000). This study suggests that knowing which channels to use and when, contributes to innovation, readiness for change and the success of business.

The concept of the ‘communication escalator’ (Quirke, 1995) demonstrates the role a balanced range of internal communication channels have to play in developing employee awareness. Working together these channels can influence employee action in the form of positive behavioural change.
Different communication mechanisms achieve different objectives. Communication channels such as staff newsletters and intranet sites inform and reinforce - helping to build awareness of important business news and information. However, they do not change people’s behavior in their own right. Quirke (1995) maintains that to truly engage employees to a level that they change their behavior, requires a more comprehensive mix of communication mediums. The emphasis is much more on closer communication acts such as frequent one-to-one meetings with line managers or talkback sessions that encourage group debate and buy-in.

2.2.3 Employee surveys

The style, scope and purpose of employee surveys vary enormously throughout the literature. As an instrument to measure communication performance, Roberts and O’Reilly (1973) suggest the Organisational Communication Scale (OCS). This survey consists of 35 Likert scale questions, which can be used to compare dimensions of
communication within organizations and as a benchmarking tool across wider industries. Similarly, Downs and Hazen (1977) put forward the Communications Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) – a 40-question survey that measures eight key communication factors. And Goldhaber (1976) promotes the Internal Communication Audit (ICA). This survey consists of some 122 questions that make up eight major sections. Using a similar scaling format to Roberts and O’Reilly (1973), the principle of the ICA is to match information needs in an organization to information actually required. Each instrument entails sound surveying methods but ultimately employee surveys limit the way forward for internal communication. Quirke (1995) questions whether it is actually right for internal communication to start from the basis of what information employees feel they need or how happy employees feel they are as both measures are highly subjective. The real starting point is more what information the organizations needs employees to know and understand in order to fulfill their roles more effectively.

According to Quirke (1995) much of the challenge with tracking communication performance and value is that communication itself is a process and not a static variable, which makes it extremely difficult to measure accurately. Behavioral observations are often impossible to make with any real validity and self reporting forms (like employee surveys) are usually phrased ambiguously and in a way that they only take a snapshot of the ongoing process at any one time. The employee survey is effectively a rather blunt instrument in measuring communication performance and value in real time. The speed of change in today’s marketplace often means that the findings of an employee survey (traditionally commissioned every one or two years) are outdated because external markets, internal business strategies and individual job roles have moved on.

Consequently, if employee surveys are accepted to be the common way of measuring internal communication performance the business function of internal communication will continue to be dictated predominantly by how improved employee attitude scores are. However, Dawsons (2004) employee satisfaction is dictated by a wider and more
complex set of workplace issues than merely communication quality alone. As a demonstrator of actual business value the link employee surveys establish between employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction and profitability is arguably too indirect and too cumbersome to be used on its own.

2.2.4 Downward communication

Downward communication refers to information that flows from positions of higher authorities to those of lower authority and may include information about organisational policies and practices, job instructions, organisational goals, and performance feedback. Downs and Adrian (2004, p. 54) note that there is often a discrepancy in organisations “between management’s perception of what employees need to know and what the employees say they need and want to know”. Nearly three decades ago, in his study on communication in libraries, Stevens noted a move away from more rigid organisational structures in an effort to involve more staff at all levels in the decision-making process. As a result this led to changing expectations of library staff who had come to expect “considerably more access to the information which is relevant not only to their immediate job but to the overall well-being of the library” (Stevens, 1983, p. 62). Downward communication is initiated by superiors and flows to subordinates as from the board of directors to executives, from a general manager to departmental foreman to his workers.

Participative management styles seeking to foster a climate of openness and trust ensure that mechanisms are in place to facilitate the free flow of information. In an open communication climate, upward, downward and lateral information flow is encouraged using both formal and informal communication methods. In contrast, more traditional management styles based on hierarchical organisational structures limit the flow of information by implementing policies and communication patterns that promote a predominantly downward flow of information (Euster, 1981, p. 25).

The importance of openness and trust has been recognized by many theorists and is echoed throughout the literature. Gibb’s (1961, p.44) theory of “defensive” versus
“supportive” climates postulates that open climates promote spontaneity, equality and empathy between workers making individuals more willing to contribute and feel more secure in their jobs; “the more “supportive” or defense reductive the climate, the less the receiver reads into the communication distorted loadings which arise from projections of his own anxieties, motives, and concerns”.

An open and supportive communication climate is also central to Herzberg’s (1968 cited by Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1993) motivation-hygiene theory which suggests that a democratic management style promoting growth, empowerment and job enrichment is necessary to motivate its workforce. Herzberg states that motivating factors such as recognition, responsibility and advancement lead to job satisfaction while hygiene factors such as relationships with superiors, work conditions and salary are essential to prevent dissatisfaction although do not, in themselves, create higher levels of motivation.

Similarly, Maslow’s (1954, cited by Mullins, 2002, p.431) classic hierarchy of needs model postulates that workers must satisfy basic needs (physiological and safety needs) before being motivated by higher level needs (social, esteem and self-actualization needs). Communication plays an important role in achieving a sense of belonging (social needs) and an even more crucial role further up the hierarchy if workers are to feel that they have achieved sense of contribution and self worth (esteem needs).

**2.2.4.1 Advantages of downward communication**

Hall (2002) highlighted that the most important advantage of downward communication is that it allows management to control the organization. According to Stevens (1983) management are the custodians of the mission and should therefore be communicating their expectations to their subordinates.

As explained by Downs and Adrian (2004) downward communication is a means of control. If performance of an employee is deviated from expectation, then through downward communication his or her immediate superior can warn him to
correct the fault. He also argues that new policies or any change in the existing policies can be informed to the employees through downward notices. Euster (1981) took a motivational approach to his argument he indicated that in downward communication superiors not only provide instructions but also provide inspiration to the employees. As a result relationship between top management and employees can be improved.

Ennis (2005) also indicated that an individual will not be able to perform his/her duty properly unless sufficient authority is given. Under downward communication system delegation of authority becomes easier through the chain of command.

2.2.4.2 Disadvantages of downward communication

However the disadvantage of having a predominantly downward communication culture is that managers have little feedback on their initiatives (Ennis 2005). Wang et al. (2008) also highlighted that it usually creates resentment on the part of employees. Such a kind of scenario rarely motivates the employees and according to Loop and Shneckenberg (2009) forms the basis of an autocratic leadership.

2.2.5 Upward communication

Upward communication refers to information that flows from subordinates to supervisors and managers and may include suggestions for organisational improvement, employee concerns, and information about operational issues. This component of internal communication is often cited as being the most deficient given the often critical or negative nature of upward feedback. Hall (2002, p. 170) argues that “people are unlikely to pass information up if it will be harmful to themselves or their peers” which may result in, as Downs and Adrian (2004, p. 55) suggest, a filtering out of “upward communication out of a need for self preservation related to their mobility aspirations and their desire to gain their managers’ trust”. However, it is widely acknowledged that “upward feedback, upward communication and open door policies deliver significant organizational benefits” such as enhanced participation, better decision making, and an enhancement of organizational learning (Tourish & Hargie, 2004, p.189 - 190). Barriers to effective upward communication include the organisation’s managerial style and philosophy, a
failure to act promptly on upward communication, the organisational structure itself and the people within that structure (Stevens, 1983, p. 33). As with downward communication, poor upward communication can have a significant impact on employee satisfaction, productivity and overall organisational health (Downs & Adrian, 2004, p. 55). Upward communication is initiated by staff and directed at executives. According to Dawsons (2007) it frequently takes the form of a complaint or a request. If a worker identifies a motivation problem, for example, he may communicate this upward formally to management and use rationalization to highlight the potential impact of the problem on profitability.

2.2.5.1 Advantages of upward communication

According to Edmunds and Morris (2000) upward communication usually has the effect of motivating employees. He also argues that it creates mutual trust between employees and their superiors’. Hargie and Tourish (2000) and also argues that upward communication leads to improved decision making. Better decisions are made when the actual people on the ground give feedback. The issue of feedback is one of the major benefits that come out of upward communication. As opined by Conroy and Shindler (1986) the only way that employees can give feedback is through upward communication.

Upward communication according to Stevens (1983) is a source of good ideas. Michaelson and Moully (2002) highlighted that quite often good ideas come from the shop floor and these can be passed up by means of upward communication. They also goes on to say that employee ideas are considered it will create an environment of mutual respect which subsequently results in high morale.

2.2.5.2 Disadvantages of upward communication

One of the Achilles heel of this kind of communication is that employees are usually not willing to communicate. According to Quirke (2008) employees have a tendency to keep thinks to themselves even if inseminating the information was going to assist the whole organization. It has also been noted that employees have a tendency to bypass formal
structures and in the process complicate the communication environment. This may lead to rumor mongering and gossiping

2.2.6 Horizontal communication

Horizontal or lateral communication refers to the sharing of information among peers and is usually the most frequent form of communication between colleagues. Downs and Adrian (2004, p. 55) assert that horizontal communication is usually informal in nature, is task-oriented or takes place for social reasons, often stimulating organisational commitment. Stevens (1983, p. 43) argues that “the most effective means of solving problems within organisational is that which provides for a high degree of lateral communication among and between first-line supervisors, and their staffs, as they jointly deal with the many problems of coordinating work flow.”

Experiments conducted by Bavelas (1950) and Leavitt (1951) investigating the effects of communication networks on performance revealed a positive correlation between high levels of social interaction and satisfaction. Staff in central communication positions who were well connected with others made fewer errors, required less time to solve problems and were more productive. In contrast, staff located in peripheral positions, with restricted communication opportunities, demonstrated dissatisfaction and hindered group performance. These findings present particular difficulties for large academic libraries which are often located on geographically dispersed campuses. As Euster (1981, p. 7) notes “communication challenges often arise from the physical distance and restricted physical contact between staff”.

2.2.6.1 Advantages of Horizontal communication

As postulated by Stevens (1983) the main advantage of horizontal communication is that it allows a good rate of ideas to exchange between departments. Besides smooth workflow between departments horizontal communication facilitates effective teamwork between workgroup members thus fostering team work in the process. According to Leavitt (1951) the more the people communicate the greater the chance of them hitting a great idea.
2.2.6.2 Disadvantages of Horizontal communication

Michelson and Mouly (2002) indicated that the challenge with horizontal communication is that when departments have equal powers decisions are hard to come. This makes decision making slower. Quirke (2008) supports this argument and claims nobody has the overall say and final decision. He goes on further to say that it can cause in house fighting if different opinions are allowed to boil over. Stevens (1983) also claims that one department may always have to check with another department before pushing anything through and in the process making the organisation lethargic. Bavelas (1950) also indicated that there is diffusion of responsibilities when horizontal communication is the predominant form of communication.

2.2.7 Informal communication vs. Formal communication

The grapevine is defined as “the informal network of communication that cuts across all levels of the organisation without regard to the organisational structure, the chain of command, or the rank and status of individuals” and plays an important role in virtually all communication systems (Stevens, 1983, p.35). However, as Michelson and Mouly (2002, p. 58) note, there has been surprisingly little research carried out on the subject of grapevine activity in organizations.

2.2.7.1 Advantages of Informal communication

Despite the negative connotations associated with the term ‘grapevine’ and its “potential to harm organisations through the transmission of inaccurate information” (Michelson and Mouly, 2002, p. 580), Conroy and Schindler (1986, p. 67) argue that a “lively grapevine reflects a healthy organisation, one in which people talk about their jobs and their organisation out of high interest and personal need”. Michelson and Mouly (2002, p.58-59) note several benefits of grapevine communication such as the preservation of group solidarity, which consolidates Maslow’s theory that social needs must be satisfied, as well as its use as a managerial tool to measure the early effects of new policies and procedures by gauging employee’s reactions to them. However, Conroy and Schindler (1986, p. 67) warn that “managers who do not accept and respect the
grapevine, or who do not cultivate open channels of communication to offset it, may soon find themselves out of touch with what is really going on”.

2.2.7.2 Disadvantages of Informal communication

Edmunds and Morris (2000) argue that there are some intrinsic dangers in bypassing the organizational channels to get to the facts of the matter. The main danger is that much of the information that gets spread through the grapevine is not verified. Some of the information is likely false and difficult, if not impossible, to verify. Ennis (2005) had the following argument with regards to informal communication “We discount information when the source is a known gossiper. But not completely. Even when the source is someone known to spread rumours, we believe that where there’s smoke there is a fire. Since we don’t know what part is fire and what smoke is, we accept the whole rumour. To justify our participation in spreading the rumour, we tell ourselves that part of it must be true. O’Kane et al. (2004) also pointed out that the main reason why we give credence to a rumour is that it seems to match what we think about the situation or person that the rumour is about. We also tend to believe the person sharing the rumour with us.

Another main disadvantage of grapevine communication is that it’s often used to spread more than rumours; it’s used to spread gossip. As highlighted by Daft (1983), the terms rumours and gossip are used sometimes interchangeably, but rumours are not quite the same as gossip. Both are pieces of information that can’t be verified, but rumours tend to affect organizations or groups of people, while gossip refers to more personal matters. When gossip is being spread through the grapevine, people’s reputations, careers, and lives can get destroyed very rapidly.

2.2.7.3 Advantages of Formal communication

Mondy et al. (1990) defines formal communication as a presentation or written piece that strictly adheres to rules, conventions, and ceremony, and is free of colloquial expressions. In essence it is the direct opposite of informal communication. According
to Oguntimehin (2001) formal communication facilitates the smooth transmission of official messages. He also argues that it has the advantage of documentary evidence which can be used as future reference.

For the achievement of the goal of an organization there must be coordination among different departments and employees. As pointed by Dawsons (2004) Formal communication enhances the coordination by using the official channels. He also argues that since it is documentary it is more reliable in terms of coordinating. Elving (2005) also adds that as information is transmitted by following organization hierarchy, discipline is strictly maintained.

Another advantage of formal communication that was also highlighted by Rapert and Wren (1998) is that because of documentation and proper coordination, accuracy can be ensured and chances of mistakes can be minimized. Clarity of the message is another considerable advantage of formal communication. As formal channel is used chance of ambiguity decreases.

2.2.7.4 Disadvantages of formal communication

Johannessen (2002) highlighted some shortcomings of formal communication. He highlighted that since a strict chain of command is followed during communication, flexibility is greatly compromised. Pearce (2001) also supports this assertion and further argues that because of lack of flexibility it is not suitable for motivation of employees. In case of formal communication lower level employees cannot exchange their views freely with the executives by breaking the chain of command. As a result sometimes it creates mental distance. Mazzarol (2002) also argues that another drawback of formal communication is lack of creativity observed among the employees. Lower level employees become more interested to comply with the instructions of the authority. Creative thinking not encouraged.

Another handicap of formal communication is that it is time consuming. Alexander (1985) explained that since information flows through the chain it takes long time to convey information from upper level to lower level.
2.2.8 The impact of technology on communication

Computer-mediated communication tools such as e-mail, videoconferencing and intranets have revolutionized organizational communication patterns over the past two decades. The pace of change has seen a recent acceleration with the surge of Web 2.0 innovations such as blogs, wikis and social networking applications. The proliferation of these new communication technologies brings with it obvious opportunities for organisations such as increased information flow and exchange, the elimination of space and time boundaries, as well as the enhancement of group collaboration, resulting in increased organizational productivity and efficiency (Hargie & Tourish 2000, p. 158).

Communication technologies have also contributed to the re-shaping of organisations as traditional hierarchical and departmental barriers are easily traversed by electronic media (Hargie & Tourish, 2009). O’Kane et al. (2004, p.87) assert that “the old adage “information is power” is particularly relevant to the changes that have occurred in employee communication”. It has been widely suggested that organisations that make strong use of communication technologies are often associated with flattened organizational structures, teamwork and the empowerment of employees. Schneckenberg (2009, p. 514) talks of the progressive “pancaking” of organisations brought about by Web 2.0 applications which has resulted in “a shift of decision-making from centralization to lateralization”, promoting the “empowerment of knowledge workers, who act as interconnected peers in increasingly hybrid or decentralized organisational structures.” However, such empowerment is afforded only to those who are willing to embrace technological change and may result in some employees being left out of the communication loop and Schneckenberg (2009, p. 518) suggests that age and IT proficiency are two factors that may influence the adoption and acceptance of emerging communication technologies.

Despite the apparent benefits of new technologies, the concept of “technostress” has provoked much discussion in the literature. Brod, as cited by Wang et al. (2008, p. 3003), describes the phenomenon as the "modern disease of adaptation caused by an
inability to cope with new computer technologies in a healthy manner”. Ennis (2005, p.10) identified six primary causes of “technostress” in academic libraries: pace of change, lack of training, increased workload, lack of standardization, reliability of technology, and the changing role of librarians. Given the tendency for innovation in university libraries in order to maintain their competitive advantage, job stress caused by the rapid implementation of technology is a real concern and can only be tempered by adequate training and organisational support.

Another problem generated by the prevalence of electronic communication technologies is the issue of information overload. Edmunds and Morris (2000, p. 18) argue that the “abundance of information, instead of better enabling a person to do their job, threatens to engulf and diminish his or her control over the situation.” In a survey conducted by The Institute of Management in 2000, (as cited by Quirke, 2008, p.278), ‘keeping up with emails’ was ranked number ten in a list of factors causing stress in the workplace. This is a major concern given that “the largest single use made of the Internet is for electronic mail” which is the preferred method of communication in most organizations’ (Edmunds & Morris, 2000, p.21). Similarly, the multitude of new communication channels available present additional challenges for the attainment of “communication competence” which “requires the selection of the most appropriate or socially acceptable channel, and the one that will be most effective in the accomplishment of relational or information goals” (O’Kane et al. 2004, p. 89). Conroy and Schindler (1986, p. 43) warn that communication channels may be selected “not because of their favourable impact on listeners/readers but because of habit or tradition or because they are quick and easy media for the manager to use”.

The issue of information overload presents particular challenges to part-time library workers who may work short and irregular hours and have limited time to digest the quantity of messages communicated to them. Quirke (2008, p. 16) suggests that staff develop coping strategies to deal with information overload such as deleting emails or waiting until messages are sent many times as a test of their urgency. However, Stevens (1983) argues that librarians screen out information at their peril, causing
employees to miss out on crucial pieces of information which may have negative consequences on an employee’s professional development.

Another consequence of increased electronic communication is the reduction in face-to-face communication. O’Kane et al. (2004, p. 89) argue that “people can become conditioned to mediated communications to the extent that they start to shy away from face-to-face contacts.” These new communication patterns have worrying implications for the development of interpersonal trust and strong relationships in the workplace. Hargie and Tourish (2000, p. 159) warn that “when human moments become infrequent, the communication process is marked by lack of sensitivity, self-doubt and abrasive curtness. This, in turn damages relationships, communication, and eventually, organizational effectiveness.” It is evident that communication technologies are not the solution to all communication problems and decisions concerning the implementation of new electronic communication channels require careful planning and consideration, ideally as part of an overall communication strategy.

2.3 COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

2.3.1 Defining Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness was succinctly defined by Daft (1983) as “the degree to which an organization realized its goals”. However, Mondy et al. (1990) defined it aptly as “the degree to which an organization produce the intended output” As Daft rightly argued. Organizations pursue multiple goals, and such goals must be achieved in the face of competition limited resources, and disagreement among interest groups. Oguntimehin (2001) submitted that organizational effectiveness is the ability to produce desire results. In this study, the researcher looks at various attributes of organisational effectiveness such as the ability of the organisation to effectively implement its strategy, ability to implement change, innovation, organisational identification and organisational commitment.
There are various models that are used to influence effectiveness. These models can also be used to analyze the effect of communication on effectiveness. One of these models is the ABC model. The ABC model as proposed by Mwita (2000) is based on antecedent (A) and consequential (C) factors that affect behavior (B). This model is based on the premise by Campbell (2000) which suggest that performance is behavior. Ayers (2005) argue that behavior is affected by the quality of communication between him and the rest of the organization. This idea is also backed by The ABC model is founded on the idea that performance can be improved by manipulating what happens either before or after the performers actions.

One thing that runs through this model and others alike is that communication of goals and objectives are key to any performance management initiative. According to Weismantel (2006) corporate goals should be personalized and communicated down to individual level if a business desires to be effective. These goals will align corporate objectives with individual performance.

Another imperative that can be deduced from the model is that communication is paramount to improving individual performance and overall business performance. Mwita (2000) suggest that communication is important in articulating goals and expectations. Other authorities Kaplan and Norton (2001) also suggest that communication is key to improving performance.

One of the causes of poor effectiveness is poor strategic awareness is the reliance of feedback control by management. As argued by Schreyogg and Steinman (2000) this kind of approach by management creates a delayed response to changes. By analyzing the end result the manager misses the examination of the process that has brought the results. According to Beer and Nohoria (2000) such a delayed response is a result of lack communication between the shop floor and management. If communication is delayed, the manager will only discover it during post-action control. In assertion Mwita (2000) identified this problem as common with organizations where leaders lead from the top by setting goals.
2.3.2 Communication and Key performance indicators

Effective communication is critical to any organization and can help it in many ways. As suggested by Rapert, Vellique and Garretson (2002), communication plays a role in product development, customer relations, employee management and virtually every facet of a business’ operations. Employees are a key audience because they often serve as the conduit to other audience’s. If employees are informed and engaged; communication with other constituencies is likely to be strong as well. Baker (2002), stated that an organisation which effectively communicates with all its stakeholders shall improve its effectiveness in various ways. The following ways of improving company effectiveness were stated, improving service delivery, improving productivity, reduction in customer complaints, reduced delivery time of goods, reduction in costs, improved volume of business, improved trust by customers and improved profitability of the business.

2.3.2.1 Organisational Communication and Company Productivity

Communication is an influential piece of productivity. Papa (1990) proved that communication behavior influences employee performance with new technology. In order to implement new technology, employees must interact in order to understand directions, discuss problem areas, and new ways to work as efficiently as possible with new equipment. He went on to show that if an individual’s productivity is dependent on his/her ability to use new technology, it is crucial to communicate with others in order to grasp the best understanding. The more an employee communicates with his co-workers about how to use a new computer system, the higher that employee's productivity is likely to be using that system.

According to Litterest and Eyo (1982), the purpose of employee communication is to increase profits. He also highlighted that the link between productivity and morale is high, productivity tends also to be high; when morale drops, there is a corresponding
drop in productivity. "Treat people well, and they'll work well" (Rieger, 1995). An employee's productivity levels have a relationship with management. Employee and employer relationships should develop harmoniously in an effective operating organization.

In particular, the interaction between employees-worker-to-worker and supervisor-to-worker- influenced morale. And morale, in turn, affects productivity. Those people who do not participate or lack the motivation to see the final results would not communicate with his/her superiors or subordinates as well as others who pursue the team building exercises with an open mind. Productivity can be defined in many ways, yielding or furnishing results, benefits or profits; ratio of outputs to inputs; or as the ratio of output produced by an organization divided by resources consumed.

2.3.2.2 Organisational communication and company cost reduction.

An effective communication strategy can help the organisation through improved service delivery times, reduction in cycle times for service delivery process and responsiveness to customer complaints and ensuring that customer service representatives can spontaneously access accurate information while speaking with customers (Quirke, 1995). Communication can also be made effective by automating processes across departments to simplify interactions, eliminate redundancies, reduce errors and increase efficiencies. Communication ensures improved control over quality of service and risk areas that affect business performance.

He also mentioned that effective communication will help to reduce cost in an organisation by avoiding redoing the same job if communication was not done properly, re-print of statements by on-demand, reducing call resolution, time and lastly by reducing printing, distribution, and mailing costs in a significant manner. When organizations fail to get it right in their communication, the cost is high. Consider an error-ridden letter. It sets off a chain reaction that reverberates throughout the organization. According to Daft (1983) it has the power to frustrate and alienate customers; consume significant resources; breach compliance issues and create
unfunded liabilities; result in inefficient customer service; and jeopardize relationships. Unclear or inaccurate information on statements and invoices can prompt customers to call for clarification. What could be a simple single-call resolution ignites an extended exchange

Strebel (1996) argued that the company's post-call follow-up often includes letters that exacerbate the problem. That is because the primary method for those letters lacks quality control, resulting in confusing or inaccurate documents. Today's advanced correspondence management technology can help companies overcome challenges, reduce costs, and significantly improve business efficiency. A number of companies that have invested in customer correspondence software, such as websites, realize their return on investment (ROI) within a year. This ability to realize a return helps makes websites a good investment (Baker, 2002).

Companies can further eliminate communication inefficiencies and reduce costs through a unified communications strategy. A strategy that addresses these gaps is critical because fragmentation often is the culprit that enables these flaws to flourish. Companies must dissect their processes and product sets to find the bottlenecks and other weak points that sabotage their efforts to effectively communicate with their customers (Stevens, 1983, p. 62).

Too often marketing, operations, call centres, and IT departments are in disharmony, each focused on its own priorities. These groups require greater coordination to bolster each others’ efforts and fill the gaps created by fragmentation.

Stevens (1983) also pointed out that effective communication in an organisation helps to drive cost out of the business by automating processes across departments to simplify interactions, eliminate redundancies, reduce errors, and increase efficiencies. According to him it reduces costs by providing reliable, intuitive online self-service options.
Improve service delivery times and responsiveness to customer needs by ensuring that customer service representatives can instantaneously access accurate information while speaking with customers.

Ideally, an organization operates in a cost effective manner while still producing high quality goods and services. Obviously, maintaining productivity is the goal of all organizations; however, while there have been several theories on how to achieve productivity, these models often fail to emphasize the true makeup of a productive organization (Baker, 2002).

2.3.2.3 Organisational communication and company profitability

Collaborative communication benefits the organization’s profitability. As suggested by Dawsons (2004) shareholder returns for organizations with the most effective employee communications tend to be higher than those with less effective communication. He goes on to claim, delivering high service quality produces measurable benefits in profit, cost savings and increased market share. Organization should seek a competitive edge, and undoubtedly a collaborative leadership style that bridges the gap between now and future profitability.

According to Formani and Argenti (2005) a company’s profitability is intimately linked to the effectiveness and productivity of its workforce. The Paradigm for Profitability examines the human factors that influence a workforce and ultimately result in these goals. These factors include knowing, respect, listening, communication and relationships. These elements are built one upon the other to show that the order is as important as the elements themselves. When the human factor foundation is strong and stable, effectiveness and productivity naturally follow (Forman & Argenti, 2005) Therefore, the vision should include measures and procedures which make possible the organizational growth and adjustments required for adapting to an ever changing consumer culture. From the top of the organization to the bottom of the organization, everyone must know what the company's vision is. According to Elving (2005) this is achieved through a well orchestrated communication
system. Each member of the organization should be able to articulate the vision to anyone with whom they have contact as each connection is a potential customer.

As suggested by Turner (1987), in achieving the mission the basic message that each member communicates must be the same and it is also critical that employees not only believe the message, but own the vision. If the message is not sincere, credibility and performance will be lost.

2.3.2.4 Organisational communication and customer complaints

Representing customer needs offers potential for improving the satisfaction of customers to service offered by organizations. Effective communication allows significant opportunities for improving marketing effectiveness. These opportunities include strengthened brand loyalty, inflow of ideas for new products, improved image and trade relations. (Fornell 1981)

People need explanations and someone to whom they can express their frustration or satisfaction with. If a business is not set up to handle complaints and negative feedback, it may not stay in business very long (Postmes et al., 2000). Customer service is dependent on people who have outstanding communication skills. A good customer service department will be able to fix any problem and retain current customers by effectively listening and acting on their behalf.

2.3.2.5 Organisation communication and customer trust.

The two primary forms of communication are one-way communication and two-way communication. One way communication in business is when the business sends out a message to its customers or employees, but does not accept responses from the customers or employees (Gibb’s, 1961, p.44). One-way communication is important because it allows the business to share information with the customers who can benefit from the company’s products or services. He also mentioned that one of the most common forms of one-way communications in business is advertising, such as print advertisements in newspapers and magazines or billboards. Two-way communication occurs when customers can also respond to the company in business communication.
Social media marketing is a form of two-way communication which has gained popularity because it does not only allow businesses to communicate with its prospects and customers, but it also allows the prospects and customers to respond (Gibb’s (1961, p.44)

As indicated by Dalglish and Newton (2002), when the internal forces of a business are working toward communicating the same message to vendors, suppliers and customers, effective communication can also lead to a boost in sales for the business. Essentially, effective communication creates a win-win situation. The customers who can benefit from the company receive the messages they need to make them aware of the company and to make a purchase, which in turn boosts the sales of the company.

Good communication skills in business produce satisfied customers, motivated employees and effective leaders (Schaap 2006). Customers feel as if they are taken care of and their voice is heard. Customers that feel this way typically become loyal customers. Employees are motivated because they are kept informed and empowered to make confident decisions and think for themselves within the boundaries the company has established. Leadership can effectively train, correct and educate the staff to continue to improve. Good employee and customer relations can increase a company’s profitability

2.3.2.6 Organisational communication and company sales.

When communication lines are open between a business and its customers, it can directly affect the sales of the business (Ennis, 2005). When a business effectively communicates to prospects and customers how its products and services can benefit them, it converts prospects into customers. Effective communication ultimately boosts the bottom line of a business.

However, according to Clampitt and Downs (1993) perception plays a pivotal role in good communication. Communication may only be beneficial when the message the business is sending is the same as the one received by its customers. If customers misinterpret the message, it can have detrimental effects on a company’s sales.
2.3.2.6 Organisational Communication and service delivery

What companies say to customers, how they deliver the information, and how they respond to customers are fraught with opportunities and perils (Pearce (2001). He also mentioned that getting it right is paramount to delivering quality service that customers expect and deserve, and it wields tremendous influence over service delivery.

Given the way most companies are structured, there’s almost always room for improvement in the processes behind effective communications with customers. A common weak spot is organizational breakup, which masks opportunities to maximize the value derived from effective customer communications (Mazzarol, 2002).

Regardless of the channel or whether the contact is initiated by the customer or the financial institution, there are ways to drive, spend and cut costs as organizations create, manage, and deliver customer communications ((Mazzarol, 2002).

2.3.2.6 Organisational Communication and reduction in delivery times

Oguntimehin (2001) submitted that time based competition is an operational strategy focusing on compressing total throughput time in an organization. Compressing time has a cascading effect on quality and cost. As delivery times are reduced, productivity increases proportionally. Understanding the way an organization functions is key to the redesign for time-based competition. The structure dictates how labour is divided and how power is allocated. Postmes et al. (2001) pointed out that physical proximity normally follows structure, both of which have a direct impact on ease of information sharing and time.

Forman and Argenti (2005) asserts that every business has basic cycles that govern the way the delivery of goods is done. They may be documented in the form of procedures or routings. Examples of business cycles are offloading of vehicles, checking of goods on the floor, loading of goods into delivery vehicles and the actual delivery of goods in the market.
A customer order cycle begins with the placement of an order by a customer. It ends when the company is finally paid for goods or services rendered, but there are activities in between the two events that consume time. Some add value, such as packing, palletising and shrink wrapping, and some are non-value adding and delay time, such as breakdowns, police roadblocks, traffic congestion and receiving delays by customers. Poor physical logistics worsen the time delays; i.e. when distribution is physically separated from the main assembly plant, or engineering is separated from sales.

Once delivery routes are scheduled and mapped, the opportunities to compress time can be pursued. The goal in compressing time is not to devise the best way to perform a task, but rather to either eliminate the task altogether or perform it parallel with other tasks so that the overall system response time is reduced. This will help to reduce operating cost and at the same time improving service delivery.

2.3.3 Organizational communication and change

The constantly evolving nature of organizations, precipitated by technological advances, shifting service priorities and customer expectations, makes internal communication even more vital to the success of an organisation. Continual development and training is essential to equip staff with the skills to maintain and develop its services in response to such changes. Strebel (1996, p.86) asserts that while managers perceive change as an opportunity to strengthen the organisation, employees often view change as an unwelcome disruption. Despite the significant body or empirical evidence demonstrating the importance of communication in the implementation of change, Elving (2005, p. 129) reports that more than half of organisational change programs fail, reach a deadlock, or do not achieve their intended results.

Quirke (2008, p.149-153) identifies the following essential principles for communicating change:

- Communicate the context and the full picture
- Communicate the ‘why’ as well as the ‘what’
- Communicate probabilities and scenarios
- Make face-to-face the main communication channel
- Use involvement to get commitment

Paton and McCalman (2008, p. 50) also stress that particular attention should be paid to “ensuring the timely communication of change related messages and, ensuring that uncertainty is minimized and the negative impact of the ‘rumour mill’ nullified”.

In addition, the importance of two-way communication and employee involvement when implementing change is stressed throughout the literature (Dawson, 2004, p. 72) Elving’s (2005, p. 131) model of communication during organisational change proposes that the “first goal of organisational communication should be to inform the employees about their tasks and about the policy and other issues of the organisation. The second goal is communication with a means to create a community within the organisation.” This model also reinforces Maslow’s idea that a sense of belonging is essential to motivate employees to achieve organisational goals.

![Figure 2.3: Conceptual model of communication during organisational change](source: Elving (2005, p. 131))
2.3.4 Organisational communication and organisational strategy

Forman and Argenti (2005) rightly note that, “although an entire discipline is devoted to the study of organizational strategy, including strategy implementation, little attention has been given to the links between communication and strategy.” But Forman and Argenti (2005) also note that business communication researchers have become increasingly interested in the contribution of corporate communication to a company’s ability to create and disseminate its strategy in the last decade. However, very few authors have investigated the link between corporate communication and strategy, and – when they have – their focus has primarily been on how corporate communication affects the firm’s relationship with its various stakeholders. At least, numerous researchers have already emphasized the importance of communication for the process of strategy implementation (Alexander, 1985; Rapert & Wren, 1998; Peng and Litteljohn, 2001; Heide, Gronhaug & Johannessen, 2002; Rapert, Velliquette & Garretson, 2002; Forman & Argenti, 2005; Schaap, 2006). That research in this area is needed is emphasized by an older finding by Alexander from 1985: Based on interviews with 21 presidents and 25 governmental agency heads, Alexander (1985) points out that communication is mentioned more frequently than any other single item promoting successful strategy implementation. The content of such communications includes clearly explaining what new responsibilities, tasks, and duties need to be performed by the affected employees. It also includes the why behind changed job activities, and more fundamentally the reasons why the new strategic decision was made firstly.

Rapert and Wren (1998) find that organizations where employees have easy access to management through open and supportive communication climates tend to outperform those with more restrictive communication environments (cited in Rapert, Velliquette and Garretson, 2002).

Also the findings of Peng and Litteljohn (2001) show that effective communication is a key requirement for effective strategy implementation. Organizational communication plays an important role in training, knowledge dissemination and learning during the process of strategy implementation. In fact, communication is pervasive in every aspect
of strategy implementation, as it relates in a complex way to organizing processes, organizational context and implementation objectives which, in turn, have an effect on the process of implementation. Communication barriers are reported more frequently than any other type of barriers, such as organizational structure barriers, learning barriers, personnel management barriers, or cultural barriers. Heide, Gronhaug and Johannessen’s (2002), for example, indicate that there are various types of communication problems (without specifying what they are). These communication issues may be influenced to some extent by the organizational structure. According to Heide, Gronhaug and Johannessen, they constitute the key barrier to the implementation of planned strategic activities. Rapert, Velliquette and Garretson (2002) state that communication and shared understandings play an important role in the implementation process. In particular, when vertical communication is frequent, strategic consensus (shared understanding about strategic priorities) is enhanced and an organization’s performance improves. They explore vertical communication linkages as a means by which strategic consensus and performance can be enhanced.

The study by Schaap (2006), which was conducted in the casino industry within the state of Nevada, shows that over 38 percent of the senior-level leaders do not communicate the company’s direction and business strategy to all of their subordinates. This study also reinforces findings that frequent communication up and down in organization enhances strategic consensus through the fostering of shared attitudes and values.

The corporate communication function is the department or unit whose purpose is facilitate strategy implementation through communication (Forman & Argenti, 2005). This department can also serve as the antenna of an organization, receiving reactions from key constituencies to the strategy of the firm. Forman and Argenti (2005) find that the alignment between the corporate communication function and the strategic implementation process was particularly visible in those companies that were going through fundamental strategic change: “All of the firms studied were involved in significant efforts in internal communications and felt that IT was central to the success
of the function, particularly in terms of implementing strategy and building reputation” (Forman & Argenti, 2005).

2.3.5 Communication and Innovation

Organizational theory and technological change theory form the basis for organizational innovativeness (Dalglish & Newton, 2002). Businesses that are growing successfully are innovating, changing and evolving continuously through innovation processes that are essentially communication activities (Lievens, Moenaert & S’Jegers, 1999, p. 24). Their owners require the ability to think on their feet and communicate change in a meaningful way. Communication is not just about knowing what to say, but why certain points need to be addressed (Pearce 2001). Not spending enough time to communicate vision to staff members has not only a negative effect on their capacity for innovativeness but also business growth (Mazzarol, 2002) and hence success (Robbins et al., 1998; Klein, 1996). Innovative thinking in the workplace, together with a readiness for change and communicating this to staff members form the characteristics of a successfully growing business (Mazzarol, 2002).

Organizational communication is defined as both similar to and different from other types of communication (Shockley-Zalabak, 1999) and occurs within a multifaceted open system. It is influenced by both the external and internal environment (Goldhaber 1975). Communication is more than the daily interactions of individuals within organizations: ‘it is the very process through which organizations are created and in turn create and shape events’ (Shockley-Zalabak 1999, p. 28) and move beyond survival (Timm & Stead, 1996) to wealth creation and in some cases re-invention.

2.3.6 Organizational Communication and Organizational Identification

Frank & Brownell (1989:5-6) define organizational communication as “the communication transactions between individuals and/or groups at various levels and in different areas of specialization that are intended to design and redesign organizations, to implement designs and to coordinate day-to-day activities.” Communication is a multi-dimensional construct (Smidts et al., 2001). Hence, employees are not satisfied or
dissatisfied with communication in general, but can express varying degrees of satisfaction about definite aspects of communication (Smidts et al., 2001; Clampitt & Downs, 1993).

In the organizational communication literature, organizational identification is defined as a language-based process of sharing in the substance of an organization (Sass and Canary, 1991; Chreim, 2002). In this literature, identification is seen as the result of different factors, the most significant of which is communication by management (vertical communication), which is considered an important component in inducing member identification with the organization (DiSanza & Bullis, 1999). Furthermore, the concept of vertical communication is believed to have a greater impact on identification and commitment, because vertical communication should help define what the organization stands for (Postmes et al., 2001). By enhancing the distinctiveness, vertical communication would thereby make it easier for people to identify themselves with the organization as an entity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Postmes et al., 2001).

Communication helps create shared meaning because it provides social context cues (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991), and creates a shared interpretive context among organization members (e.g. Zack, 1993). Shared meaning provides organization members with a clear sense of the organization’s identity and thus may strengthen member identification. Pfeffer (1981) suggests that frequent communication by management leads to the development of a common set of shared meanings about the organization that provides members with a sense of belongingness and identity.

Whereas social categorization would require that employees receive adequate information about what is central and distinctive about their organizations, self-categorization (Turner, 1987) can be facilitated when employees are provided with useful information about their roles, duties, in organizations (Smidts et al., 2001), their performance and their career. Thus, being well-informed about organizational goals, objectives, activities and achievements will enable an organization's members to discover the salient characteristics that distinguish this organization from others (Dutton
et al., 1994) and thus enhance social-categorization (Smidts et al., 2001). In organizations that are perceived favorably by their members, organizational identification is more likely to occur (Dutton et al., 1994), since it enhances members’ feelings of self-worth. Similarly, Smidts et al. (2001) demonstrated that both communication content and climate affected organizational identification in a positive way. According to them, communication climate also plays a central role, mediating the impact of the content of communication on organizational identification (Smidts et al., 2001).

Accordingly, we propose that communication can strengthen member identification because it provides organization members with an opportunity to create and share their subjective perceptions of the organization’s defining features – its norms, values and culture. Knowledge of these facets of the organization creates a sense of shared meaning among employees.

2.3.7 Organizational Communication and Organizational Commitment

Organizational communication strengthens employees’ commitment by providing workers with a feeling of ownership in the shared meaning that has been created, because they feel that they have helped develop it (Wiesenfeld et al., 1999). Similarly research suggests that frequency with which individuals communicate with others in the organization enhances organizational commitment because frequent communication leads individuals to feel that they are active participants in the organization (Huff et al. 1989). Postmes et al. (2000) found that organizational communication and organizational commitment are related to each other positively. In particular, employees were strongly committed if they obtained adequate information to perform their task (task communication), and if this information was presented to them via formal bureaucratic channels rather than informally.

Similarly, research has suggested that vertical communication (communication with management) is a stronger predictor of organizational commitment, while horizontal communication (communication with colleagues) is related weakly to organizational
commitment (Postmes et al., 2000). Organizational communication may have its impact on organizational commitment primarily because it reduces uncertainty and thereby helps employees define and comprehend what their organization is about. Therefore, vertical communication may aid in the self-definition of an organization and thereby reinforce employees’ self-definition within it (Postmes et al., 2001).

With respect to information about personal roles in an organization, employees receiving useful and sufficient information about what is expected of them in their work (task communication) and regarding their contributions (performance communication) will increase their understanding of the norms and values of respected membership (Smidts et al., 2001). Also, receiving sufficient information about future opportunities and career advice (career communication) will encourage development, adaptation (Penley & Hawkins, 1985) and employee’s self-enhancement. Such information not only will provide basis for self-categorization, but also will enhance members’ sense of belonging to, involvement with and commitment to the organization (Lawler, 1989) and will increase their self-enhancement.

2.4 Barriers to communication and organisational effectiveness

Penley and Hawkins (1985) define barriers to communication as any obstacle in a workplace that prevent effective exchange of ideas or thoughts. According to Lawyer (1989) Such barriers include status differences, gender differences, cultural differences, prejudices, and the organizational environment. As highlighted by Steinman organisational effectiveness is a result of efficient communication within the organisation. However, these barriers reduce effectiveness since they distort the messages, Information such as goals and performance feedback are affected by these barriers.

2.4.1 Perceptual barriers

Perceptual barriers according to Postmes et al. (2000) occur when the receiver perceives the message in a differently from what the sender is intending to send. Huff et
al (1989) also expressed that these perceptual barriers are shaped by many aspects. Among the ones they identified is personnel relationships, balance of power and other prior experiences between the people communicating.

For instance pre-conceived perceptions can reduce effectiveness by polluting the communication environment. Meetings where new policies are discussed can become a game of hide and seek as employees can decide to oppose what management says even before they hear what they have to say. This occurs when the general perception among employees is that management wants to take advantage of them. Effectiveness is a product of many aspects one which is healthy communication of expectations between members of the organization. Perceptions can negatively affect this communication and in the process negatively affect effectiveness.

2.4.2 Emotional barriers

As opined by Huff et al (1989) emotional barriers are the major category of barriers that may make effective communication difficult. According to his argument these barriers are basically characterized by suspicion, mistrust and fear. Pfeffer (1981) on the other hand believes that while a little amount of fear and lack of trust might be necessary, excess of these things is not good and prevents one from doing a lot of things including difficulty in communicating effectively.

Usually emotional barriers manifest themselves in the form of reactions such as anger, hatred, violence; shyness and being highly protective among others. They negatively affect the communication environment. For instance some issues which are critical to company effectiveness may not be discussed in meetings due to fear of reprisal action from the concerned individual who might have a known temper problem.

2.4.3 Language barriers

Zack (1993) defines language barriers as those difficulties in sharing ideas that emanates from having different languages. In this case the people involved will have difficulty understanding each other because they speak different languages.
According to Smidst (2001) language barriers are easy to identify. He explained that when two people who do not understand a common language attend the same meeting not all of them would walk-out of that meeting having fully comprehended the contents of discussion. Those who partially understand a certain language might have an understanding totally divergent from what the speaker means.

2.4.4 Cultural barriers

Effective communication with people of different cultures is especially challenging (Sproull & Kiesler 1981). Smidst (2001) specified that cultures provide people with ways of thinking, of seeing, hearing, and interpreting the world. Thus the same words can mean different things to people from different cultures, even when they talk the "same" language. Chreim (2002) inn assertion said that when the languages are different, and translation has to be used to communicate, the potential for misunderstandings increases.

As in the situation where there are white Africans and black Africans, the vast cultural differences can affect organisational effectiveness. While in the white community it confrontation is viewed as a virtue of life (Morris 2000), in indigenous African societies confrontation as a lack of respect and an attack on one’s self esteem. An indigenous African manager might be afraid to confront his white coworkers as a way of respecting him, while the white man may at the same time view him as docile. These subtle effects of culture can be detrimental to effectiveness. Out of “respect” wrong actions cannot be stopped immediately and by the time a reaction is made, the damage on company effectiveness will already be done.

2.4.5 Physical barriers

Physical barriers according to Mazzarol (2002) any disturbance or interference that reduces the clarity and effectiveness of communication is called noise. Sass and Canary (1991) adds on that it may be physical or psychological, written or visual. Noise distracts the persons communicating and acts as barrier to communication.
As suggested by Elving (2005) such kind of barriers can be literally physical. For instance the physical distance between people can be a distraction to communication. If the company has a head office which is separate from the operational facilities. There will be lack of face to face communication. Face to face communication is vital in communication. Some change programs require regular face to face communication if they are to be successful. Some barriers can be as simple as working behind a closed door most of the time. This alienist one from the rest of the workers as the closed door keeps away customers

2.5 Conceptual framework of the study

A conceptual framework is a research tool intended to assist a researcher to develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny and to communicate this effectively. When clearly articulated, a conceptual framework has potential usefulness as a tool to assist a researcher to make meaning of subsequent findings. It forms part of the agenda for negotiation to be scrutinized and tested, reviewed and reformed as a result of investigation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

A conceptual framework can be defined a set of broad ideas and principles taken from relevant fields of inquiry and used to structure a subsequent presentation (Rechel & Ramey, 1987).

This is clearly articulated in figure 2.4 on the next page. The topic was “An assessment of the relevance of organisational communication on organisational effectiveness: The case of Unifreight (Pvt) Ltd (2005 – 2011)”
2005 – 2011

Relevance of organisational communication on transport firms. A case of Unifreight Transport firm

Behaviour and strategic responses for improvement of effectiveness in transport firms operating in slow growing economy.

Existing management theories on effective communication in transport firms in a slow growing economy:
- Organisational effectiveness
- Communication channels
- Elements of firm effectiveness
- Strategic priorities
- Barriers to communication

Survey empirical evidence on how transport firms behave in a slow growing economy:
- Organisational effectiveness
- Communication channels
- Elements of firm effectiveness
- Strategic priorities
- Barriers to communication

Determine if the behaviour and strategic responses of transport firms to the slow growing economy can be explained by existing management theories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Figure 2.4 Conceptual framework
2.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher has discussed a number of issues and aspects of communication. These include the flow of information, communication channels, impact of technology on communication and the impact of communication within an organisation. The reviewed literature has shown some challenges in measuring organisational communication since it is not a static variable. However, a combination of measurement techniques is considered for this study. The following chapter presents the research methodology used for this study.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION
The research methodology is an outline of the procedure on how the research was carried out. This includes processes and activities such as sampling methods, sources of data and data collection methods. It also outlines the ethics that governed the conduct of the researcher. The discussions on this chapter provide the research design and methodologies employed for the collection, analysis and presentation of data. The chapter also explains the process involved in coming up with the data collection instruments used as well as describing the study population and sampling techniques used. This chapter provides the methodology that was used to answer the research questions is described. Creswell (2003) states that research design should be addressed describing the following:

(a) The research theoretical perspective.
(b) The research strategies.
(c) The research methodology for data collection and analysis.

The methods, tools and techniques that were used for collecting, recording, analyzing and interpreting data were looked at under this section. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied in this research. These techniques were used from planning, collecting up to the final interpretation of data collected.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The concept of research design has been defined in a number of ways: a blue print that enables the investigator to come up with solutions to the problems and guides the researcher in the various stages of the research (Hakim, 1987); a set of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem (Mouton, 1996); provides the glue that holds the research project together (Trochim, 2006).
The literature review permits the building of a preliminary framework, the research questions and the choice of research methodology. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003), research is described as something that people embark on in a bid to find out things in a systematic manner, thereby increasing their knowledge. Ghauri and Gronharg (2003) gave the importance of a systematic way in which the research should be undertaken, in that research should be based on logical relationships, not just beliefs. They also pointed out that numerous purposes are possible for research including describing, explaining, understanding, criticizing and analyzing. Saunders et al (2003) give the following research characteristics:

(a) Data are collected systematically

(b) Data are interpreted systematically.

(c) There is a clear purpose

Easterby – Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002) in Saunders et al (2003) argue that the following three things make business and management research a distinctive focus:

(a) The way in which researchers draw on knowledge developed by other disciplines.

(b) The fact that managers tend to be powerful and busy people means they are unlikely to allow research access unless they see personal and commercial advantages.

(c) The requirement for research to have some practical consequences.

Saunders et al (2003) comment that research should complete a virtuous circle of theory and practice through which research on managerial practice informs practically derived theory. This becomes a managerial practice blue print, thereby increasing the stock of relevant and practical managerial knowledge. Saunders et al (2003) further comment that the purpose and context of research project can differ considerably within the boundaries of knowledge advancement, addressing business issues and solving
managerial problems. They suggested the continuum for research projects according to their purpose and context.

The main function of a research design is to enable the researcher to anticipate what the appropriate research decisions should be so as to maximize the validity of the research. A design is used to structure the research, to show how all the major parts of the research project, the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programmes and methods of assignment, work together to try to address the central research questions.

3.2.1 THE RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

A research philosophy is the way researchers think about development of knowledge. According to Saunders et al (2003), philosophy affects the way researchers do research. They state that there are three different mutually exclusive views of knowledge development which are positivism, realism and interpretivism.

**Positivism** approach is likened to the view of natural scientist (Saunders et al 2007). The researcher assumes the role of an objective analyst, making detached interpretations about those data that have been collected in an apparent free manner. The emphasis is on highly structured methodology facilitating replication and on quantifiable observations that can be statistically analyzed. The assumption is that the researcher is independent of and is neither affected nor affects the subject of the research.

**Interpretivism**, seeks to understand the subjective view of those under study in order to be able to make sense of and understand their motives, actions and intentions in a way that is meaningful to the research participants. This persuasive argument acknowledges the fact that business situations are complex and unique and hence it is necessary to explore the subjective meanings motivating people’s behaviour in order to understand those (Saunders et al 2007).

**Realism** is based on the belief that a reality exists that is independent of human thoughts and beliefs. In business this can be seen as indicating that there are some
social forces and processes that affect people without being aware of their existence on interpretations and behaviours (Saunders et al (2007).

Selecting an overall research philosophy is a choice between two primary alternatives: between a positivist and a phenomenological philosophy. A number of authors (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991; Hussey, 1997; Saunders et al., 2000), cited in Kevin and Tobin, (2006), have highlighted the main elements of choice involving research philosophy.

In carrying out this research an open approach was adopted which accepts that there is no philosophy that is superior, the philosophies are situational. The research assumed a mixture of positivism and interpretivism as with most management and business researches. This was done recognizing the following parameters identified by Hussey and Hussey (1997:54) cited in Kevin and Tobin (2006) for this mostly phenomenological paradigm:

- It tends to produce both quantitative and qualitative data: this would fit well with the case study approach.
- Data is rich and subjective: the qualitative data would be rich by nature, and the gathering process would be subjective due to the level of involvement of the researcher.
- The Location is natural: the setting for this research was in public organization (rather than a laboratory setting)
- Validity is high: this would be seen as a result of the empirical data gathering exercise.

3.2.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A general plan of how the research question is answered is important for any research. The strategy contains clear objectives, specifies data sources and the constraints faced. The strategy is the overall approach adopted and forms the base for the research tactics which gives the finer details of data collection and analysis. The research
methods that can be employed are experiment, survey, case study, grounded theory, and ethnography, action research, cross sectional and longitudinal studies.

3.2.2.1 Experiment.

An experiment is used to test existing theories or new hypothesis in order to support them or disprove them. It can be carried out using the scientific method to answer a question or investigate a problem. First an observation is made. Then a question is asked, or a problem arises. Next, a hypothesis is formed. Then an experiment is used to test the hypothesis. The results are analyzed, a conclusion is drawn, sometimes a theory is formed and results are communicated through research papers. A good experiment usually tests a hypothesis. However, an experiment may also test a question or test previous results (Freedman, 1954)

According to Best and Kahn (1989), an experimental research describes what happens when variables are carefully controlled or manipulated, the focus being on variable relationships. Fraenkel and Warren (1990) assert that survey research obtains data to determine the characteristics of a group. The same questions are asked to a number of respondents. The problems are however structuring the questions and getting sufficient responses for analysis. A case study, according to Best and Kahn (1989), is a way of organizing social data for the purpose of viewing reality. The case study probes deeply into and analyses interactions between the factors that explain present status or that influence change or growth.

3.2.2.2 Survey.

Survey research is one of the most important areas of measurement in applied social research. The broad area of survey research encompasses any measurement procedures that involve asking questions of respondents. According to Saunders et al (2007), a survey can be anything from a short paper and pencil feedback form to an intensive one-on-one in-depth interview. Surveys can be roughly divided into two broad areas: questionnaires and interviews.
3.2.2.3 Case Study.
Yin (1984) defines the case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. Critics of the case study method believe that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings. Others feel that the intense exposure to study of the case biases the findings. Some dismiss case study research as useful only as an exploratory tool. Yet researchers continue to use the case study research method with success in carefully planned and crafted studies of real life situations, issues and problems (Stake, 1995).

3.2.2.4 Grounded Theory.
Grounded Theory is most accurately described as a research method in which the theory is developed from the data, rather than the other way round (Glaser and Strauss, 2007). That makes this an inductive approach, meaning that it moves from the specific to the more general. The method is essentially based on three elements: concepts, categories and propositions, or what was originally called “hypotheses”. However, concepts are key elements of analysis since the theory is developed from the conceptualization of data, rather than the actual data (Straus and Corbin, 1996).

Grounded Theory, according to Saunders et al (2003) is the research through theory building through a combination of induction and deduction. Initially data is gathered without theoretical framework and used to develop theory. The developed theory is used to develop predictions that are tested further to confirm or deny the predictions. According to Best and Kahn (1989), ethnographic studies sometimes known as cultural anthropology is a method of field study observation consisting of participant observation, conversation and the use of informants to study cultural characteristics of primitive. Lewin (1946) in Saunders et al (2003) states that action research is founded on three themes; firstly focus and emphasis of the research is on management of
change; secondly the researcher is part of the organization within which research and change are occurring and thirdly the research has implications beyond the immediate project.

3.2.2.5 Ethnography.
Ethnography is the process of studying different aspects of different cultures in a very intimate setting to best find out what makes these people tick. The idea of ethnographic method comes from basic understanding that the world is divided into societies, cultures and micro cultures; this makes studying ethnography committed to inquiring about patterns of interaction and collaboration inside of these cultures along with neighboring ones (Sterk, 1995).

3.2.2.6 Action Research.
Action research is simply a form of self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out (Carr and Kemmis, 1986). The approach is only action research when it is collaborative, though it is important to realize that action research of the group is achieved through the critically examined action of individual group members (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988).

3.2.2.7 Cross Sectional Research.
Cross-sectional research is research which makes observations at only one period in time. Examples include conducting a survey or opinion poll. It is analogous to taking one still picture of the population or group being investigated. In cross-sectional research, data are collected from the research participants at a single point in time or during a single, relative brief period. The data are typically collected from multiple groups or types of people (Schindler, 2008).
3.2.2.8 Longitudinal Research.

Longitudinal research is a correlation research that involves repeated observations of the same items over long periods of time. It is a type of observational study. It is often used in psychology to study developmental trends across the life span, and in sociology to study life events throughout lifetimes or generations. It makes observing changes more accurate and it is applied in various other fields (Halford, 1998).

Time horizons are important in research deciding whether a snapshot or diary of representative events should be considered hence the cross sectional or longitudinal approaches. Research can be classified according to the purpose of research. Exploratory researches are valuable to find out what is happening, descriptive studies portray accurate profiles of events or situations and explanatory studies establish relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2003).

In carrying out this research it was recognized that the strategies do not exist in isolation, they actually can be mixed and matched. Different methods were used for different purposes in the study. While this research is a case study, a survey was employed using questionnaires. A longitudinal approach was used to track events over the period under review.

3.2.2.9 Types of Research.

There are various types of research that a researcher can use. The types of research that can be employed are exploratory, descriptive and explanatory studies (Saunders et al., 2003).
3.2.2.7.1 Exploratory Research.

Exploratory research is a type of research conducted because a problem has not been clearly defined. It provides insights into and comprehension of an issue or situation. It helps to determine the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects. Given its fundamental nature, exploratory research often concludes that a perceived problem does not actually exist. It often relies on secondary research such as reviewing available literature or data, or qualitative approaches such as informal discussions with employees, management or competitors, and more formal approaches through in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies or pilot studies (Eisenhardt, 1989).

3.2.2.9.2 Explanatory Research.

Explanatory research is a method or style of research in which the principal objective is to know and understand the trait and mechanisms of the relationship and association between the independent and dependent variables. It builds on exploratory and descriptive research and goes on to identify the reasons for something that occurs. It looks for causes and reasons. It is normally used when we encounter an issue that is already known and have a description of it, and we might begin to wonder why things are the way they are. The desire to know “why”, to explain, is the purpose of explanatory research (Scapens, 1990).

3.2.2.9.3 Descriptive Research.

Descriptive Research is used to obtain information concerning the current status of the phenomenon to describe “what exists” with respect to variables or conditions in a situation. The method involved range from the survey which describes the status quo,
the correlation study which investigates the relationship between variables, to developmental studies which seek to determine changes over time (Scapens, 1990).

3.2.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Table 3.1 below shows Unifreight’s population and its composition by position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorry mates</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Security, Loaders &amp; General hands)</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>646</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unifreight is made up of Head Office and Depots scattered around three regions (The Eastern, Western and Central region). At these offices, the total number of employees – 646, as shown in Table 3.1 above, makes up the study population as they face challenges in strategy implementation. For a research of this nature, it is impossible to collect and analyze all the data available owing to time and resource constraints. It was therefore, necessary to adopt sampling.
3.2.3.1 Sampling Design

Sampling techniques provide a range of methods that enable one to reduce the amount of data needed to collect by considering only data from a subgroup instead of all possible cases or elements. Saunders et al (2003) argue that at times only sample data is required to generalize about all the cases from which a sample has been selected. They contend that a census survey may not necessarily provide more useful results than a well-planned sample survey.

3.2.3.1.1 Sample Size

A sample size of 138 employees was randomly selected from Unifreight. This cuts across all categories of employees and departments within the company. The researcher ensured that there is representation in each category of employees. However there was a bias towards management since the issue was strategic in nature. Table 3.2 clearly summarizes the sample.

Table 3.2: Study Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Number of Staff</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretaries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorry mates</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others( Security, Loaders &amp; General hands )</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>138</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In research, data can be collected from every possible case or group member. There is however, difficulty in collecting all data available due to time, cost and access restrictions. It is therefore, necessary at times to collect data from a representative sample of possible respondents.

3.2.3.1.2 Sampling Procedure

There are several options for both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques (Saunders et al., 2003). The probabilistic sampling was used and it was assumed that each case that was selected from the population or whole was known and equal for all cases. The selected techniques were chosen from the available techniques that are summarized figure 3.2 below:

Figure 3.1: Sampling Techniques:-Source: Saunders et al (2003: 153)
The probability sampling that was used in this research is according to Saunders et al (2003) and has the following stages:

- Identification of suitable frame based on the researcher’s questions and objectives
- Make a decision on sample size.
- Choosing the most appropriate sampling technique.
- Checking that the sample is representative of the population.

The method involved choosing the sample subjects randomly from the population. No formula was used to select the respondents to allow every member equal chance to be selected. The research is for strategy implementation and it was felt that since the company has more junior staff members than those in managerial posts, there was a likelihood of getting more responses from the lower levels. Stratified random sampling was used for involving grouping the population into groups of Managers, supervisors, Secretaries, Clerks, Drivers, Lorry mates and others.

The reason for taking a stratified sample was to have a more efficient sample than could have been taken on the basis of simple random sampling. Random sampling error is reduced because the group adopted is internally homogeneous but comparatively different. More technically, a smaller standard error may be the result of stratified sample because the groups are adequately represented when strata are combined. Another reason for taking a stratified sample was the assurance that the sample will accurately reflect the population on the basis of criterion or criteria used for stratification.
3.2.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data to be collected can be in two forms, that is primary data and secondary data.

Secondary data on the other hand is data that is readily available, like data from directories, statistics, published or unpublished work based on research. In general secondary data exists in published sources (Leedy, 1992).

Primary data is data which is created for the first time and there is no previous available source (Groenewald, 2004). It is facts and information collected specifically for the purpose of the investigation at hand or information that the researchers gather first hand. It is gathered directly from elements of the population or selected sample.

3.2.5 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Wegner (1999) lists three methods of gathering data:

Direct observation.

Interview methods

Experimentation.

Additional research instruments that can be used by a researcher are focus group discussions and questionnaires.

3.2.5.1 Observation.

Observation can be participatory or non participatory. It is when data is collected by directly observing the respondents in action. The advantage of the method is the unawareness of respondents hence they act in their natural way reducing bias. This method is however passive in collecting data and was found not suitable for this research where data could not be observed. The only form of observation that was used for this research was the researcher’s own experience with the organization, which reinforced data that was collected through questionnaires.
3.2.5.2 Experimentation

According to Wegner (1999), experimentation is used to collect primary data through manipulation of variable under controlled conditions. While this method produces more objective and valid data, it was found not suitable for the subject of management study particularly on strategic implementation and challenges to effective implementation of strategic plans.

3.2.5.3 Interview Methods.

These methods enable data to be collected through direct questioning to get responses for primary data. A questionnaire is the instrument used to structure data collection process.

Personal Interviews involve a process where questionnaires are completed through face-to-face contact with the respondents. The advantages of interviews according to Saunders et al (2003) are:

- High response rate.
- Questioning allows for further probing of reasons and clarifications.
- Data collection is immediate and accurate.
- Ability to observe non-verbal responses.

The Disadvantages are:

- The process is time consuming.
- There is need for trained interviewers hence more expensive.
- Few interviews get conducted due to time constraints.
- The interviewer may introduce some influence.

Due to the disadvantage of trained interviewer requirement, this method was not used though some passive form of it were applied through initiating discussions in the subject matter to get more information of the research questions.

3.2.5.4 Questionnaire.

A questionnaire is a series of questions asked to individuals to obtain statistically useful information about a given topic. When properly constructed and responsibly
administered, questionnaires become a vital instrument by which statement can be made about a specific sample of people or entire populations. Questionnaires are frequently used in quantitative researches. They are a valuable method of collecting a wide range of information from a large number of individuals, often referred to as respondents (Earl, 1989).

Questionnaires were used as the main primary data collection tool. Additional information was obtained through semi-structured and unstructured interviews, which were used to follow up and clarify answers provided in the questionnaires. Hoinville et al (1977) consider it most important to provide assurances about confidentiality. Certain parts of the questionnaire, particularly concerning organizational competencies, could be construed as sensitive both from the point of view of the individual and the organization they represented. A statement that no individual would be identified in any publication without express consent was included in the questionnaire itself.

**Questionnaire Composition and Design.**

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was clearly laid out and questions designed in order to attract a high response rate as well as ensuring reliability and validity of data collected. The questionnaire was designed to accurately capture the attitudes and beliefs of the respondents. It was crafted in a way that ensures that all data essential to meeting the objectives of the research were captured. The questions were presented in a logical and coherent way that makes reading and filling easy. The questionnaire was restricted to an optimal size that attracts a high response.

**Nature of Questions and Responses.**

The items in the research questions individually and collectively provide the data required for the successful achievement of the research objectives. Each of the forty nine questions in the questionnaire was intended to solicit information of a particular type relating to the research topic.
The respondents were asked to indicate with a cross (X) or a tick (√) on the most appropriate answer. The responses were designed in line with the Likert Scale. The Likert Scale consists of a number of evaluative statements concerning an attitude about their satisfaction and the respondents indicated the extent to which they agree or disagree to a variety of statements. The Likert scale ranged from strongly disagree, Disagree, Not Sure, Agree and strongly agree. Other responses required responses of Yes, Not Sure, and No.

**Pre-testing of the Questionnaire.**

Before administering the questionnaire, it was pilot tested to ensure that ambiguous questions were eliminated. Saunders et al (2003) posits that the purpose of conducting a pilot test is to refine the questionnaire so that respondents do not have difficulties in answering questions. They note that pilot testing enables the researcher to assess the validity and reliability of questions. All questions have to be interpreted in the same way. The pilot questionnaire was given personally to six colleagues and they were asked to complete the questionnaires, note how long it took and provide comments on wording and layout. The pilot survey enabled the researcher to detect concerns about the wording of questions and their sequencing. Some of the questions were ambiguous. In view of this the questions were refined in order to eliminate confusing questions. The sequencing of questions was also modified to ensure smooth flow of questions.

**Self Administered and Postal Questionnaires Surveys**

The respondents were given at least two weeks before the administered questionnaires were collected or returned. A quick response was highly desirable and it was also felt that if too much time was given for completion, the questionnaires may be put on one side and forgotten. On the other hand, if the return dates were missed due to holidays for example, the questionnaires might not be returned at all. In view of these considerations it was decided to follow the advice of Bell (1993) and specify a date two weeks from posting on e-mail. A reminder was sent out after the due date extending the
deadline. Respondents were thereby encouraged to respond quickly, but late returns could be accepted to maximize the overall response rate.

Questionnaires were sent through e-mails and through hard copies, taking count of every e-mail and hard copy administered. The method was used due to its advantages which Saunders et al (2003) list as follows:

- A large sample can be reached.
- More cost effective.
- The possibility of interviewer bias is eliminated.
- The respondents have time to consider their responses.
- Due to the anonymity of responses, the respondents are likely to be honest

The Disadvantages are:

- Response rate can be very low.
- The respondents cannot get clarity on questions easily.
- The possibility of probing further and getting clarity are limited.
- The process takes longer to conclude.
- There is no control over who actually answers the questionnaires.
- The possibility of check back for validity is very minimal.

The questionnaire was administered through e-mail and follow ups made through same means, in person and by phone. The names of selected respondents were kept secret in order to avoid contamination of responses through liaison. Saunders et al (2003) contends that contamination of respondents’ answers reduces data reliability. The purpose of the study was explained in the covering letter. Dillman, Eltridge and Little (2002) argue that the message contained in both the covering letter and the first page of the questionnaire affects the response rate. Confidentiality promises were made and the use of the survey results clearly defined.
Mehta and Sivadas (1995) highlight advantages of internet survey over surface mail survey including speed of delivery and negligible marginal costs. Posting e-mail is less resource intensive than printing, packing, addressing and stamping “snail mail”. Once the address is stored, it is equally easy to post reminders and the e-mail system itself provides an audit trail with dates of posting and receipt. Incorrectly addressed e-mail is notified almost instantly. Respondents were found to reply more quickly by e-mail than by post. Kiesler and Sproull (1986) found that e-mail responses were more candid, leading to longer answers to open ended questions.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to compliment questionnaires by capturing additional information. Saunders et al (2003) concur with this approach by arguing that it is usually better to link questionnaires with other data collection methods. The interviews provided an opportunity to clear possible ambiguities by further explaining answers provided. In order to ensure maximum cooperation and minimize disruptions, interviews were held in interviewees’ offices during working hours.

3.2.6 DATA ANALYSIS

The study of a problem through the use of statistical data analysis usually involves four basic steps as listed here under:

(1) Defining the problem.
(2) Collecting the data.
(3) Analyzing the data.
(4) Reporting the results.

Data are easy to collect but what is really needed in complex problem solving is information. A database may be viewed as a domain that requires probes and tools to extract relevant information. As in measurement process itself, appropriate instruments of reasoning must be applied to the data interpretation task. Effective tools serve in two capacities:

(1) To summarize the data.
(2) To assist in interpretation.
The objectives of interpretive aids are to reveal the data at several levels of detail. As part of the process of analysis, data reduction includes summarizing and simplifying the data collected and or selectively focusing on some parts of the data. Methods of reducing data include the production of interview or observation summaries, coding and categorizing data, and writing memos. The analysis also aims to describe, construct measurement scales, generate empirical relationships, explain and predict. For it to be of use, analysis must satisfy the principles of logical inference (Saunders et al 2003).

Tables bar and pie charts were used to present data. Tables are the simplest forms of summarizing the data as specific values can easily be read. The bar and pie charts provide a visible clue and also provide an accurate presentation of data (Saunders et al., 2003). The tables and graphs provided a basis for data analysis in this research.

3.3 Research ethics, credibility, reliability and validity.

Before the interviews were conducted prior arrangements were made with the participants. For those who were responding by questionnaires, the researcher asked for permission from them and their superiors. This was done without the exercising of the researches legitimate authority within the organization. Information provided by participants was regarded as private and confidentiality was used for research purposes only and would never be used for any reasons that would compromise the source.

The researcher did an utmost best to be honest in data presentation, analysis and interpretation. This involved not fabricating, manipulating or deliberately misrepresenting data from the research. This honest enabled the researcher to be objective and diverge from judging based on preconceived conclusions. The researcher achieved this objectivity through having an effective research design and data interpretation methods and as such self-delusion which affects credibility and reliability of the research was avoided. In respect of colleagues and other participants the researcher actions were sincere, consistent and had no discrimination based on position at work or any other criteria.
The researcher also respected intellectual properties such as publications. Such copyrights were used with permission and whenever possible were cited, in a way that gives credit to the owner of that copyright. Another aspect which the researcher sought to achieve was that of being socially responsible. The findings of this research were classified open to Unifreight Ltd who if willing can use the findings to improve the performance of their business.

It was of paramount importance that the researcher adhered to these ethics of research. This ethics upheld the aims of the research. Such aims include truth which affects credibility, knowledge which solves the problem and avoidance of error which promotes reliability. In a large organization like Unifreight adherence to ethics promoted cooperation and coordination between different people from different departments within the company. All this allowed the research process to be worthwhile and well coordinated.

Validity is that quality of a data-gathering instrument or procedure that enables it to measure what it is supposed to measure (Best and Kahn, 2003:36).

3.4 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

There searcher encountered a number of budgetary, logistical and administrative challenges during the research. The entire project had to be carried out and completed within a period of six months and as such there was limited time to make preparations and carry out the research. The researcher is on full time employment at Unifreight in Harare; hence the research work could only be carried out during his spare time. This resulted in him getting limited access to certain information and individuals.

The research having been carried out with the respondents who are geographically and widely spaced throughout the country, there was limited financial and human resources at the researcher’s disposal hence the challenges of travel costs were encountered. This resulted in the research being confined to a limited scope of individuals. The
researcher also had to contend with non-responses and regular rescheduling of appointments by certain individuals.

However, despite the various challenges encountered in carrying out this research, the researcher sincerely believe that future researchers in the same area of scholarly interest will find the information presented in this research useful.

3.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has dealt with the methodology employed in conducting this research taking cognizance of the rationale for the study. The target population and sampling have also been discussed. Stratified sampling was used to select 138 respondents in the study. The chapter also covered the data collection instrument and data analysis methods used. The questionnaire construction, questionnaire items and administration areas have also been discussed. The next chapter presents the results of the collected data.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter shows the research findings and is accompanied by an objective discussion of the data. It focuses on specific findings that relate to the research problem as outlined in Chapter one (1) above. The major thrust of this chapter was to produce results from the research, analyze and discuss possible solutions to the problem stated in Chapter 1. The researcher also tested the research proposition against the objectives stated in Chapter 1 to check if they are in agreement to or negating the research proposition. Lastly it ends with a chapter summary and conclusion.

4.2 Response rate

The overall response rate as well as the response rate per employee strata is shown in the table below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.1: Response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Position</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorry mate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 138 questionnaires were distributed and 115 questionnaires were returned giving an 83% response rate. The category of employees indicated as “others” includes security personnel, loaders and general hand employees. Of the 115 questionnaires returned, management contributed 25% of these responses.

The above findings reveal that respondents were eager and interested in the research that was carried out. A high response rate of 83% is big enough to justify the generalization of the case study finding (Sigmund 2000).

**4.3 Period in position**

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of years they have been in service; the results and discussion are shown below.

![Figure 4.1 Period in position](image)

The results indicate that 68% of Unifreight employees have been in their current position for 10 or more years. Of the managerial respondents 89% are above 10 years of service. A 25% proportion of respondents have been in service for 4 to 10 years while
the remaining 7% have been in the company for 4 or less years. Of the 7%, 48% of them are at supervisory level.

The results above indicate that Unifreight has an aged management. There is a vast difference in number of years between management and those in supervisory levels. This wide chasm can create communication challenges. According to Dawsons (2004) experience related perceptions can act as a barrier to effective communication.

4.4 Age of respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their age categories. The results and discussion are shown below.

Figure 4.2 Age of respondents

The analysis above indicates that 52% of the respondents are over 50 years of age and 30% are within the 40 to 49 years range. Of all the respondents 12% are within the 30 to 39 years range, 6% are within the 18 to 29 years range.
Mwita (2010) indicated that management style can be a result of a manager’s personal background and age. Old managers seem to be authoritative and prefer one directional communication which in most cases is downward communication. His argument mirrors the prevailing situation at Unifreight where communication and age fits Mwita’s explanation.

4.5 Channels and methods of communication employed by Unifreight

This section identifies the channels of communication used in Unifreight. The findings and discussions are as shown below.

4.5.1 Communication methods used at Unifreight

The respondents were asked about the communication methods they use in their work stations.

![Communication methods chart]

**Figure 4.3 Communication methods**
The analysis above indicates that 41% of respondents use formal meetings as a means of communication while 59% indicated that they were not holding formal interviews. Of the total respondents 90% agreed that they are using informal meetings while the remaining 9% indicated that they do not hold informal meetings. Asked about the use of telephone, 53% agreed to use them while 47% expressed that they do not use telephones. A total of 37% alluded to using emails while 63% denied having access to emails. With regards to newsletters only 10% indicated that they are using them in their communication while the remaining 90% are not exposed to newsletters. A 15% proportion of the respondents agreed to using other means of communication and 85% highlighted that they have no other means besides the ones indicated.

As indicated in the results above not even a single communication channel seems to be fully exhausted.

**Formal meetings**

Of worry is the lack of prevalence of formal meetings. The analysis above points out that only a minority of 41% use formal meetings as a means of communication. Further observations by the researcher indicated that formal meetings are being held from middle management up to senior management while isolating supervisors. This kind of organizational ill was also highlighted by Johansson (2007) who indicated that a scenario like the one in Unifreight would facilitate ivory tower planning which is one of the major reasons why organizations fail to meet their targets.

**Informal meetings**

Only informal channels are almost being fully utilized with 89% of respondents alluding to using them. However according to Clampitt and Downs (1993) if not controlled informal communication can have overall detrimental effect to the organization. He goes on further to indicate that informal forms of communication can lead to cliques and form
unnecessary patronization structures which might hinder the effectiveness of work groups.

Telephones

A Majority of 53% use telephone as a means of communication. Telephones allow faster communication where distance is a barrier. This assertion is also alluded to by Tourish and Hargie (2004). However the same author went on to give the flip side of using telephones. He highlighted that with telephones it is not usually the availability which matters these days but rather the quality of conversation between the people involved. Telephones can accentuate the effect of physical barriers such as walls and distance that physically separate people.

E-mail

The above findings reveal that 37% of the respondents have access to e-mail communication. The researcher also made observations that this method of communication is only available to management and is used as a discriminatory factor in communication. This scenario is also supported by Carriere and Bourque (2008) who said that dissemination of information should be discriminatory in nature because not all information is for everyone.

Newsletters

Newsletters are rarely used in Unifreight paltry 10% indicated that they have been exposed to newsletters within the organization. The deduction from such a development is that management at Unifreight does not value the use of newsletters. One of the reasons why it is not favored is that it does not offer a two way avenue of communication and according to Clampitt and Downs (1993) not many employees have the time to go through them on the notice boards.
Only 15% of the respondents alluded to using other means of communication. Further investigations showed that Unifreight employs a two way radio system that is used by drivers and lorry mates when communicating with their supervisors.

**4.5.2. Frequency of use of communication channels**

The researcher also inquired about the frequency of use of certain communication channels.

![Figure 4.4 Communication Channels](image)

The Findings show that 68% of respondents often use downward communication while 8% rarely use downward channels. A proportion of 11% often pass their messages to their superiors while 66% rarely communicate upwards with their supervisors. Asked if
there is inter-department communication 21% indicated that they communicate often with other departments. Only 39% rarely communicate with other departments while the remaining 40% moderately communicate with other departments. Inquiries about communication between coworkers showed that 70% of respondents frequently communicate with their co-workers while 5% indicated that they rarely communicate with their co-workers.

Vertical Communication (downward & upward communication)

The result above portrays Unifreight management as an autocracy. As the results specify, 68% of respondents claim that downward communication is often used compared to the 11% who claim that upward communication is being used. There is not much upward communication as compared to downward communication. As portrayed by Downs and Adrian (2004) such a scenario usually creates an organization which does not fit with its environment since senior management may lack proper knowledge of what will be happening on the ground. They claim that there is often a discrepancy in organizations between management’s perception of what employees need to know and what the employees say they need and want to know.

Lateral communication (department to department and co-worker to coworker)

The seemingly unfair communication environment has increased unionism within Unifreight. This is shown by the high levels of communication between co-workers. This unionism has on the other hand flamed suspicion between management and employees. Observations by the researcher also indicated a bureaucratic management style is also being used at Unifreight. This has facilitated the low and unhealthy levels of communication between departments. This scenario as opined by Downs and Adrian (2007) creates an organization which is slow to react to changes in both its internal and external environment. Stevens (1983) also feels that the most effective means of solving problems within organizations is that which provides for a high degree of lateral cooperation among first line managers and their staffs as they jointly deal with the many problems of coordinating workflow.
4.6 Communication as a strategic priority.

This objective sought to identify whether management at Unifreight thought that communication is of strategic value within the organization.

4.6.1. Communication and performance

The respondents were asked to relate quality of communication to the level of performance in Unifreight.

![Chart showing responses to communication statements](chart.png)

**Figure 4.5 Communication as a strategic priority**

As asked about whether communication would improve employee comprehension of management expectations 88% strongly agreed while 12% somewhat agreed. Respondents were also asked if communication would help in reducing resistance in times of change and 86% claim it would reduce resistance. Only 5% disagreed to the statement. A proportion of 97% of respondents agreed that communication between co-workers result in good team spirit which in turn increases group productivity while 3% somewhat agreed. Findings indicate that 96% of respondents agree to the fact that
good communication improves employee morale and 4% somewhat agrees. The researcher also asked whether vertical communication is key to controlling daily performance 81% responded by strongly agreeing to the statement while 14% totally disagreed.

**Communication would improve employee comprehension of management expectations**

The majority of respondents (88%) agreed that improvement in communication would mean that employees comprehend targets better. This is also in agreement with the ABC model by Mwita (2000) model which stipulates that communication should be effective if employees are to fully understand what management requires from them. Ayer (2003) also supports this argument by identifying part of the antecedents as communications of goals.

**Communication helps in reducing resistance during the change process**

A proportion of 86% agreed to the fact that communication is key to reducing resistance to change. According to Loop and Schneckenberg (2009) in his explanation of the Kurt Lewin model of change management, communication is part of the de-freezing as well as the freezing era. This shows that if management at Unifreight is to communicate, their programs change would be easy to implement.

**Communication between co-worker results in good team spirit**

A substantial proportion of 97% agreed to the fact that effective communication within a work-group improves group performance. This is so because communication facilitates the smooth flow of work between team members. Downs and Adrian (2004) are in agreement with this assertion as they also argued that communication and a common goal are the two aspects that glues a group together.

**Good communication improves employee morale and reduces turnover**

Findings also revealed that the majority of respondents are of the opinion that good communication would improve employee morale and reduces labour turnover. Usually
communication comes in the form of employee involvement in decision making. According to Okane et al (2004) involving employees is a way of gaining their support and it increases their ownership of decisions made. In such a scenario the employee will feel important and will be more motivated to put more effort.

**Regular vertical communication is key to controlling daily performance**

While results show that 81% of those who responded appreciate that effective communication improves effectiveness, it is paradoxical why communication is poor within Unifreight. The answer to this paradox lies in Edmunds and Morris (2000) argument that good communication does not come natural but is a result of deliberate and careful construction by both management and employees. Management at Unifreight has not put in place structures that would guarantee good communication. The fusion of a bureaucratic and an autocratic management style that is being used is out of sync with effective communication.

**4.6.2 Communication of targets**

Employees were asked whether their performance targets have been communicated to them and the results are as shown and discussed below.

![Figure 4.6 communication of performance targets](image)

Figure 4.6 communication of performance targets
As expressed in the pie chart above, 88% of employees highlighted that they did not have their performance targets communicated while the remaining 12% claim that management communicated performance targets to them.

The results above indicate a suicidal development as far as organizational effectiveness is concerned. One of the key elements in performance management is effective communication of targets. As postulated in the ABC model of performance management by Mwita 2000 all antecedent activities are related to communication of goals and targets. It therefore means that by not communicating goals management are breaking the link where it is supposed to start.

4.6.3 Communication and company performance indicators

The researcher asked the respondents to indicate what they feel will be the effect of improving communication on certain performance key indicators in Unifreight.

Figure 4.7 Company performance indicators
An aggregated 71% is of the opinion that improved communication would help Unifreight attain its targets with regards to each key performance indicator outlined in figure 4-5. Those who were impartial comprised 15% of the total respondents while 14% claimed that it would not improve anything.

As indicated above most of respondents indicated that an improvement in communication would also help Unifreight attain its objectives. Further probing identified that most employees are not aware of their targets. These employees do not know if the effort they are putting is enough because they are not aware of the targets. However the 14% who were of the opinion that it would not improve performance had a different view to the Unifreight problem. They highlighted that there were other things like lack of planning which were hampering progress. According to the balanced scorecard approach (Kaplan & Norton 2004), communication would come just to cement the other elements with the mission. Communication will not cover up for lack of proper planning.

### 4.6.4 Communication atmosphere

The respondents were asked about the relevance of certain statements with relation to the communication atmosphere in Unifreight.

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents for different statements related to communication.](Image)

Co-workers have efficiently communicated with each other
- Agree: 68%
- Neutral: 20%
- Disagree: 12%

Departments have effectively communicated with each other
- Agree: 10%
- Neutral: 30%
- Disagree: 60%

Employees efficiently articulate concerns to management
- Agree: 11%
- Neutral: 87%
- Disagree: 2%

Management clearly articulates expectations to everyone
- Agree: 28%
- Neutral: 96%
- Disagree: 2%
Figure 4.8 Communication atmosphere

As indicated in figure 4-6 above 96% of respondents disagree that management have been able to clearly articulate their expectations to everyone within the organization and 2% agreed to the statement. A total of 87% disagree that employees have been able to clearly articulate their concerns to management while 2% agree. Asked if the different departments have been able to effectively communicate with each other, 60% disagreed while 10% agreed and 30% were neutral. The respondents were also asked if they have been able to effectively communicate with each other within their departments and 68% agreed while 12% disagree and 20% were neutral.

Management has been able to clearly articulate their expectations to everyone within the organization.

The findings above indicate that the communication atmosphere between management and employees has not been at its best. Managers have failed to communicate their expectations to employees and this results in the under performance of the organization. According to Forman and Argenti (2005), most organizations fail to carry their vision beyond their mission statement. Unifreight managers have failed to communicate the organizational objectives in terms of departmental and individual targets.

Employees have been able to clearly articulate efficiently their concerns to management.

Just like the situation described above the vertical communication has not been effective. There is mistrust between management and their subordinates. As a result communication between the two has been compromised by attitudes and emotions. According to Rapert and Wren (1998) attitudes and emotions are very serious barriers to communication; they argue that organizations where employees have easy access to
management through open and supportive communication climates tend to outperform those with more restrictive communication environments.

**Different departments have been able to effectively communicate between each other.**

As the results suggest, different departments have failed (60%) to effectively communicate between each other. This phenomenon can best be explained by Bavelas (1950) who highlighted territorialism as a barrier to communication between departments. This according to Leavitt (1951) is also a result of a bureaucratic management style.

**Co-workers have been able to efficiently communicate with each other.**

The most prevalent type of communication in Unifreight is between co workers. Co workers have a sense of commonality between themselves. However the effectiveness of this group cohesion is diluted by the fact that their concerns are not heard by their superiors and the superiors on the other hand are not giving direction and coercing the groups towards a common goal by communicating their exceptions to them. As discussed earlier, management must free-up the communication environment and allow employees to express themselves while on their part they also should communicate their expectations. Rapert and Wren (1998) argue that organizations where employees have easy access to management through open and supportive communication
4.7 Communication and key performance indicators in Unifreight.

One of the key objectives of this research was to find out the importance of communication to effectiveness

4.7.1 Importance of communication

The respondents were asked about the importance they place on communication in relation to various aspects such as team work and decision making.

![Figure 4.9 Importance of communication](chart)

The respondents were asked if communication within a work group would facilitate effective team work and in their response 95% highlighted that it is very important while 5% indicated that it is important. A proportion of 87% indicated that communication is effective in improving teamwork between departments while 3% said it is not importance. Findings also indicate that 89% of respondents are of the opinion that communication would improve management decision making while 5% indicated that it is rather not important. The researcher also identified that 92% of respondents are of
the opinion that communication is important in employee involvement and decision ownership

**Team work within a workgroup**

A substantial proportion of 95% approved to the fact that effectual communication within a work-group advance team work within a workgroup. This is so because communication makes possible the smooth flow of work among team members. Quirke (2008) is in accord with this assertion as he also argued that communication and a familiar purpose are the two aspects that join a group together.

**Team work between departments**

As indicated by the 87% who highlighted that communication is important in facilitating team work between departments. Although the general opinion is encouraging actual things on the ground are discouraging since communication between departments has not effective. As explained earlier this is a result of territorialism between departments.

**Management decision making**

A total of 89% indicated that communication is important in improving management decision making. Managers make decision based on the information they have on their disposal. Some of the information comes from either their co-managers, or from their subordinates. If communication is poor then they will have insufficient information or they will base their decision on wrong and inaccurate information. As indicated by Dawsons (2004) a manager’s decision making system must include input from other employees. This according to him results in a more informed and relevant decision.

**Employee involvement and decision ownership**

Results also revealed that the greater parts of respondents are of the view that good communication would improve employee morale and lessen labour turnover. Usually communication comes in the form of employee involvement in decision making.
According to Elving (2005) involving employees is a means of gaining their support and it will augment their ownership of decisions made. In such a scenario the employee will feel significant and will be more motivated to put more effort. He explains that such a situation reinforces Maslow’s idea that a sense of belonging is essential to motivate employees to achieve organizational goals.

4.7.2 Communication channels and effectiveness

The researcher inquired about the respondents’ opinion on which communication channels would improve effectiveness.

![Pie chart showing communication channel preferences]

**Figure 4.10 Importance of communication channels**

Results indicate that 70% of employees are of the opinion that improving upward vertical communication would be more important in improving communication while 17% think improving downward vertical communication is more important at the moment. The
remaining 13% are of the opinion that it is rather important to improve lateral communication at the moment.

Asked about what channel would advance company performance if improved most, managers indicated upward communication. The sample was consisting of majority middle managers. This indicates that even the middle managers are not happy with the direction of communication between them and senior managers. It also supports the fact that communication seems to be one directional. This is contrary to the general characteristics of an effective organization. According to Paton and McCalman (2008) an effective organization should have two way communications.

4.7.3 Communication modes and organisational performance

The respondents were tasked to indicate whether an improvement in the communication modes shown in figure 4.11 below would improve performance. Their responses are summarized and discussed below.
Figure 4.11 Communication modes

Of all the respondents, 60% strongly agreed to having formal group meetings while 4% disagreed to holding formal meetings. An aggregated 70% agreed to cleave to informal meetings while 8% indicated that they do not hold informal meetings while the remaining 22% were neutral. When asked about telephone conversations an aggregated 62% agreed that telephones are important in improving organizational performance and an aggregated 18% disagreed. A proportion of 23% are of the opinion that emails are important in improving performance whilst 17% have a contradicting view. With regards to importance of newsletters and notices, 3% agree that it is important while 67% disagree and the remaining 30% are neutral.

**Formal group meetings**

The highest percentage of respondents had a strong conviction that formal meetings are very important in improving organizational effectiveness. This assertion is supported...
by Michelson and Mouly (2002) who indicated that formal communication channels leads to order and predictability which are key ingredients to an effective organization.

**Informal individual meetings**

A considerable 30% of respondents agree that informal individual meetings would improve effectiveness. However this contradicts Conroy and Schindler (1986) argument that informal communication can complicate things and will let things spiral into an uncontrolled situation. Only 6% of respondents agree to this assertion as they have shown a strong conviction that informal meetings would not improve communication. Michaelson and Mouly (2002) have a different view, they argue that a lively grapevine reflects a healthy organization, one in which people talk about their jobs and their organization out of their interest and personal need.

**Telephone communication**

Surprisingly only 10% of all respondents strongly agree to the fact that advancing telephone communication would in turn improve communication. However observations by the researcher indicated that majority of employees do not have land lines and company provided cell phones. Only a few have this facility and are the ones who feel that it can improve communication. Majority of respondents many who do not work from the office are rarely using this facility and this explains why they lack an appreciation of this facility.

**Emails**

A considerable number of respondents indicated that improving the use of email would help Unifreight achieve its objectives. Hargie and Tourish (2009) supports this assertion, they highlighted that communication technologies have also contributed to the reshaping of organizations as traditional hierarchical and departmental barriers are easily traversed by electronic media. However this is contrary to O’kane et al (2004) idea, who said the use of emails can eliminate the need for face to face communication.
Some aspects of communication cannot be passed through the email. For instance it is easy to measure enthusiasm physically than over the mail.

4.7.4 Types of meetings
The respondents were also asked questions concerning the type of meetings they hold. The responses and discussion are shown below

![Types of Meetings](image)

**Figure 4.12 Types of Meetings**

When asked about the types of the meetings they hold 28% agreed to holding morning briefings, 30% agreed to holding depot council meetings, 30% to national works council meetings while 12% agreed to holding strategic retreats

**Morning briefings**

A minority of total respondents indicated that morning briefings are done daily. The researcher identified that middle managers in operations are the only ones who do morning briefings. The rest of the staff does not enjoy such a communication platform. However if meetings are done on a daily basis, they may lose their essence. In some
cases these meeting happen because they are part of the manager’s daily routine. According to Strebel (1996) communication is not effective if it is done to fulfill schedules and routines.

**Depot works council & National works council meeting**

As indicated in the results above, depot works council meetings are being held on a regular basis. They are scheduled to be done once a month. However, indications are that they are done out of a mandatory situation since it is a requirement in the labour law. The meetings themselves will be time restricted and not much benefit has been drawn from them. The same also extends to national works council meetings which are held quarterly. Again nothing much has come out of these meetings as they are widely spaced apart and usually have a narrow agenda. They focus on matters affecting employees nationwide and therefore might turn a blind eye on issues isolated to certain service centers.

**Strategic retreats**

The results above indicate that strategic retreats are rare if not a non-existent phenomenon in Unifreight. No one amongst the respondents indicated that strategic retreats are being held. This may also point to another shortcoming other than communication. It might be that the mangers are failing to plan and have nothing to communicate in terms of the organization’s mission and objectives.

**4.7.5 Communication and key performance indicators in Unifreight.**

One of the major objectives of this research was to establish how organisational communication influences productivity, volume of business, service delivery and profitability in Unifreight. The findings and discussion are shown below.

**Communication and Effectiveness**
The respondents were asked to relate quality of communication to the level of effectiveness with regards to the above aspects in Unifreight.

**Figure 4.13 Impact of Communication on Effectiveness**

The respondents were asked to give their personal opinions on the effect of communication on effectiveness and 80% of the respondents acknowledged that increased productivity is very important to attain effectiveness while 15% highlighted that it was important and 5% indicated that it is not important. An aggregate proportion of 88% indicated that it is very important to improve delivery times and service delivery in order to attain effectiveness while an aggregate of 8% and 5% highlighted that it is important and not important respectively. Asked if improvement in communication of costs and customer complaints related aspects would help to attain effectiveness in Unifreight, an average of 89% acknowledged that it is very important while an average of 9% said it is important and 5% indicated that it is not important. The researcher also identified that 83% of the respondents highlighted that it is very important to improve...
communication if business volumes are to increase whilst 17% agreed that it is important. Findings also indicated that 90% of the respondents categorically indicated profitability as being positively correlated to communication while on the other hand 1% was of the view that it is not important and 9% agreed that it is important.

**Increased productivity**

A substantial proportion of 80% indicated that regular communication between management and employees concerning organisational goals, technological changes and customer needs lead to increased productivity which is very important in order to attain effectiveness. Rieger (1995) explained that an employee's productivity levels have a relationship with management. Employee and employer relationships should develop harmoniously in an effective operating organization. In particular he highlighted that the interaction between employees-worker-to-worker and supervisor-to-worker-influenced morale. Morale, in turn, affects productivity.

This is supported also by Papa (1990) who highlighted that communication behaviour influences employee performance. He indicated that in order to successfully implement new technology, management and employees must constantly interact in order to understand directions, discuss problem areas, and new ways to work as efficiently as possible with new equipment.

**Improved delivery times**

Results also indicate that 87% of the respondents have an understanding that organisational communication is very essential to ensure improved delivery times. The research findings indicated that Unifreight takes note of special instructions given by customers upon making bookings for collection. These instructions allow traffic controllers to dispatch consignments as per customer specifications. Fornell (1981) indicated that organisations that seek a competitive edge in customer satisfaction open opportunities for strengthened brand loyalty, inflow of ideas for new products, improved image and good trade relations.
Improved service delivery

A total of 88% of the respondents indicated that communication is very important in improving service delivery that leads to organisational effectiveness. This is so because what companies say to customers, how they deliver the information and how responsive the company is to customer needs and complaints is vital in delivering quality service. This is supported by Jeremy Whyte (2009) who highlights that increasing customer satisfaction with service experiences is a function of employee satisfaction itself. Therefore, to optimize customer satisfaction with service experiences, companies must also invest in communication workshop retreats that attract, acquire and retain satisfied loyal employees that possess the ability to deliver exceptional service to the customer throughout the customer lifecycle.

Reduction in customer complaints

Results also revealed that 85% of the respondents agree to the assertion that effective organisational communication yield reduced customer complaints. Research findings pointed out that Unifreight received a lot of complaints from customers concerning late deliveries, poor communication on both failed collections and deliveries and late notifications on new services. This has had detrimental effects such as customers pulling out from Unifreight to rival transporters. This was so due to poor lateral communication between departments. This organisational ill was addressed by Downs and Adrian (2004) who clearly articulated that organisations that make routine processes across departments to distribute information increases internal user acceptance and adoption of the customer feedback received. This according to them increases the ability to action and further internalise the importance of harnessing the voice of the customer. Constant interactions between departments allows swift flow of information and gives room for management to refine resource allocation and invest in the key areas impacting customer satisfaction, perceptions and behaviour. Gronroos (2000) asserted that an organisation’s customer service is dependent on people who have outstanding communication skills. He further explained that in order to drive continual customer service improvements, companies need to focus on four areas
regarding the customer feedback process which are capturing customer feedback, storing customer feedback, analyzing customer feedback and acting on customer feedback.

**Increase customer trust**

A substantial proportion of 72% of the respondents asserted to the fact that effective communication within an organisation facilitated an increase in customer trust. Further findings by the researcher revealed that a lot of Unifreight’s customers had lost trust and goodwill in the company due to poor service delivery. However according to Clampitt and Downs (1993) poor communication skills in business produces dissatisfied customers, de-motivated employees and ineffective leaders in the market. However customers feel as if they are taken care of and their voice is heard and customers that feel this way typically become loyal customers. Johansson (2007) highlighted that vertical communication that allows businesses to communicate with its prospects and customers gives room to customers to effectively articulate their concerns and expectations while on the other hand allows the organisation to share information with the customers on the company’s products and services. This ensures unprompted access to accurate information.

**Reduction in costs**

A total of 92% of the respondents acknowledged that communication by organisations of the moves to reduce costs is very important in achieving effectiveness. The researcher noted that customer claims is one of the major costs Unifreight is facing. It was noted that these claims have come about as a result of poor loading, pilferage, cross loading of customer consignments and damages sustained in transit. However communication of such grey areas across board in Unifreight may help ensure improved control over quality of service, handling of customer consignments and risk areas that affect business performance. This assertion is supported by Loop and Schneckenberg (2009) who indicated that an effective communication strategy can help the organisation
through improved service delivery times, reduction in cycle times for service delivery process and responsiveness to customer complaints.

**Increased volumes of business**

Findings also revealed that 83% of the respondents had a perception that effective communication has a positive effect on business volumes. Further research indicated that performance reports on revenue and tonnage are not being issued out to each department on a daily basis in order for them to assess their daily performance. This compromises the effectiveness of morning brief meetings as they are supposed to be based on such reports. Okane et al (2004) is in agreement with this assertion as he argues that when a business effectively integrates customer feedback and makes effort to communicate with prospects and customers on how its products and services can benefit them, it converts prospects into customers and ultimately boosts the bottom line of a business.

**Increased profitability**

A proportion of 90% of the respondents asserted that effective communication is very important to company effectiveness in terms of profitability. This is supported by Dawsons (2004) who claims that shareholder returns for organizations with the most effective employee communications tend to be higher than those with less effective communication. He asserts that a company’s profitability is intimately linked to the effectiveness and productivity of its workforce undoubtedly in delivering high service quality, producing measurable benefits in profit, cost savings and increased market share.

### 4.8 Challenges hindering effective organizational communication in Unifreight.

One of the objectives was to find the barriers that have been hindering communication in Unifreight. The findings and discussion are shown below.
4.8.1 Barriers to communication

Respondents were asked to indicate whether the factors ii the chart below affected their communication.

![Chart showing barriers to communication]

**Figure 4.14 Barriers to communication**

The results indicate 71% are of the opinion that there is no language barrier in Unifreight while 7% acknowledged the existence of these barriers. These results also show that 53% of respondents think that lack of supporting ICT has created a communication barrier while 17% are of the opinion have a contradicting view. The findings indicate 86% of respondent are of the opinion that management is unwilling to listen to employee concerns while 2% have a contradicting opinion. Asked whether employees are unwilling to communicate 78% indicated that they are unwilling to communicate with their managers and 15% are willing to communicate while 7% are not sure. A proportion of 62% indicated that a tall organizational structure is hindering communication while 35% are of the opinion that it is not a barrier.

**Language**
Most of the respondents as indicated above have no problems with the language used in Unifreight. Across the branch network, English and Shona and in the south eastern regions Ndebele are the commonly used languages. Although Oguntimehin (2001) highlighted that language can be a barrier to communication the same cannot describe the situation in Unifreight. It means there are other aspects of the organization which hinder communication.

**Lack of supporting ICT**

The results show that most of the respondents are of the opinion that ICT that would facilitate communication is lacking. Observations showed that most of the employees do not have basic communication infrastructures such as landlines and computers. Of those with computers only a handful has access to internet and email. According Oguntimehin (2001) to ICT has the impact of improving communication by offering a fast and cheaper way of communication.

**Attitudinal barriers**

As expressed in the results above managers seem to be unwilling to listen to what their subordinates. Majority of respondents indicate that their superiors are not willing to listen to them. This is shown by the lack of opportunities to talk to them as well as the non-implementation of their initiatives. According to Gibbs 1961 theory of defensive and supportive climates claims that closed climates do not promote spontaneity, equality and empathy between workers. Another problem that has hindered communication in Unifreight is the mistrust that employees have on their managers. This has resulted in a situation where employees are unwilling to listen to managers. According to communication message should be analyzed in terms of the communication environment as it influences the encoding and decoding of the message.

**Tall organizational structure**

Most respondents have indicated that the tall organization structure that Unifreight has been detrimental to effective communication. Senior management seems to operate
remotely away from the ground floor with several management buffer layers between
them. These layers dilute and in some cases alter the original message. The message
might be lost in translation somewhere along the management chain. This situation was
described by Euster (1981) who highlighted that poor communication can be a result of
an unnecessarily tall organization. He argues that traditional management structures
emphasize hierarchy and limits the flow of information.

4.9 CONCLUSION
This chapter focused on the presentation and discussion of findings from the research.
It considered all the data that came from all the different sources. Majority of
respondents used the questionnaire while a handful provided their data through
interviews. The next chapter is going to focus on the conclusions and
recommendations.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
This chapter marks the culmination of the research study by drawing conclusions from
the study findings discussed in chapter 4 above and also validating the research
proposition which was tested in the same chapter above. It also contains a set of
recommendations that the case study organization needs to adopt in order to improve
on communication and business performance. Finally, it also makes suggestions to
other scholars for further studies in the area of effectiveness of communication on
business performance.
5.2 Conclusions

In recapitulation of the research objectives articulated in Chapter 1 which seek to find solutions to problems under investigation, the researcher makes the following conclusions which are arranged in the order of research objectives shown in Chapter 1.

5.2.1 Channels and methods of communication employed by Unifreight.

The researcher made the conclusion that Unifreight communication is mainly through the downward communication channel where managers pass on instructions to employees without paying much attention on the feedback. The researcher noted also that management’s perception has moved from participative management to being selective of what employees need to know. Dissemination of information in this case is mostly done through e-mails which are discriminatory to the recipients since the majority of the employees do not have access to e-mail. As a result there is mistrust between management and their subordinates and communication between the two has been compromised by these attitudes and emotions.

The researcher also noted that communication between departments is not effective due to territorialism. Departments control task-related activities within a defined and fixed jurisdiction without considering how much value other departments can add to the task. In spite of the mistrust and resentment between departments, co-workers have been able to efficiently communicate with each other. This mistrust is a result of the perceptual barriers which are very prevalent in Unifreight. Managers are selective in giving information to the employees and they do not trust them enough to listen to what they say. These perceptions have resulted in a predominantly downward communication situation which is rather not healthy for the organisation.

5.2.2 Organizational communication and effectiveness.

The researcher concluded that Unifreight is failing to be effective in terms of productivity, profitability, reducing customer complaints and regaining their trust and improving on service delivery. This is evidenced by the organisation’s failure to clearly open windows of communication to allow free flow of information mainly within the
organisation and to another extend with its customers. Both management and employees have failed to clearly articulate their expectations and concerns to each other in terms of departmental goals, revenue targets, job instructions and performance feedback. The research revealed that most employees are working without clear targets. No organization is known to be effective when it does not communicate targets and expectations. This was also the result of the physical barriers that exist between the operational staff and management staff. Unifreight’s Head office is located in a different suburb from its main operations hub. As such management and employees are far away from each other and this has worked negatively in relation to communication of targets and flow of feedback.

5.2.3 Communication as a strategic priority.

It was also concluded that communication is not part of the Unifreight’s strategic priorities. This is evidenced by management’s failure to communicate targets to their employees. Management has also failed to create a conducive environment for openness and trust to promote spontaneity, equality and empathy between workers. They have also failed to provide supporting ICT to increase information flow and exchange. They also have adopted an organizational structure that does not result in easy communication and empowerment of employees. The organisational structure has become a barrier to effective communication in Unifreight.

5.2.4 Challenges hindering effective organizational communication in Unifreight.

The researcher made conclusion that there are numerous barriers to effective organizational communication in Unifreight. One of these is perceptual barriers which are promulgated by the mistrust between management and employees. Management is seemingly unwilling to listen to employee concerns and employees are also unwilling to communicate. The recent retrenchment created contempt between management and employees. Employees have an impression that management want to exploit them for no benefits while management on the other hand have a perception that employees are rebellious and are always asking for too much. Another contributing barrier is the tall
organizational structure at Unifreight. Senior management appears to be operating remotely away from the ground floor. They have created buffer layers between them and the employees. These layers dilute and in some cases alter the flow of information. Lack of supporting ICT also contributed to poor communication. This is shown by lack of basic communication infrastructures such as landlines and computers and of those with computers only a handful has access to internet and emails.

5.3 Validation of Research Proposition

In the previous Chapter of data analysis, results and discussion which sought to test the research objectives against the research proposition confirmed that 4 out of 4 objectives corroborated the research proposition which stated that, the current organizational communication results in organizational ineffectiveness and poor performance. Therefore the research proposition has been proved correct.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the results of this study and the conclusions drawn in section 5.2 above, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

5.4.1 Channels and methods of communication employed by Unifreight.

In respect of the conclusion made in objective 1, where the researcher sought to identify the channels and methods of communication, Unifreight makes greater use of downward communication in form of e-mails and telephone conversations than any other channel of communication. A morsel of upward communication and lateral communication is also seen between coworkers only and not between departments. Unifreight should start fully utilizing upward vertical communication through offering participative management styles that seek to foster a climate of openness and trust to ensure free flow of information. Management should introduce an open door policy to allow them both to effectively articulate theirs expectations and concerns reciprocally.

Management should introduce formal meetings with the various work groups from the ground floor. These meetings will give the employees a platform to express their ideas
in a formal setup and take ownership of decisions made in their presence. Management should participate in these meetings as peers so that they create a friendly environment with the employees.

5.4.2 Organizational communication on effectiveness.

Following the conclusion made in objective 2, where the researcher sought to establish the impact of organizational communication on effectiveness, the researcher recommends that senior management should fully communicate goals and targets to both departments and individuals. These targets should be communicated prior to the implementation period. Communication should also go on further to explain the evaluation period and criteria.

It is also of paramount importance that Head office staff be accommodated at the operational hubs. This will remove distance as a physical barrier to communication. If they are closer to shop floor staff they will comprehend what they say in a much better way.

Management should also allow the smooth running of informal networks that cut across all levels of the organization. This disregards the organizational structure and status of individuals and allows free flow of information. They can use the grapevine as to measure the early effects of new policies and procedures by gauging employee’s reactions to them.

5.4.3 Communication as a strategic priority.

The researcher also made the recommendation that management should prioritize communication through communication of goals and setting up of objectives and targets. They should also spearhead the implementation of new trends in communication. They should acquire equipment such as computers and give employees access to facilities such as Skype and Google. The advent of social networks can also be hijacked to benefit Unifreight as it is if promoted well a platform they can use to discuss work related issues.
Senior management should also make an effort to create a flatter organizational which is conducive for easy communication between management and employees.

5.4.4 Challenges hindering effective organizational communication in Unifreight.
Management needs to reassure the general employees that they are on the same side. They can achieve this through genuinely listening to employees and giving them full details of issues affecting the employees. There should be tangible evidence that they have an open door policy which must end up in employee ideas being considered for adoption.

5.5 Recommendation for further study
The researcher also noted that there is also another area of the organization which needs further research. Some of the problems seem to be related to the field of performance management. A further study is recommended to ascertain how performance management is affecting Unifreight’s effectiveness.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Introduction letter

House No 120
Golden Hope Crescent
Good hope
Westgate
Harare
+263712221704

26 June 2012

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETION ON ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND COMPANY EFFECTIVENESS.

My name is Obert Mutonhori and I kindly request your assistance in the completion of my questionnaire. I am a University of Zimbabwe Graduate School of Management (U.Z. G.S.M) student and as part of the requirements of the institution for the completion of the Master of Business Administration program, I am carrying out a research entitled; an assessment of the impact of organizational communication on organizational effectiveness: the case of Unifreight (2005 – 2011). It is against this background that I kindly seek your opinions by completing the attached questionnaire.

Please feel free to say out your honest opinion and I assure you that all the information you provide will be treated in strict confidence. For any clarifications, please contact me on the details provided above.
Appendix 2 Questionnaire

**SECTION (A) - DEMOGRAPHICS**

1. What is your position in Unifreight?
   
   - a) Manager [ ]
   - b) Supervisor [ ]
   - c) Driver [ ]
   - d) Lorry mate [ ]
   - e) Clerk/Secretary/PA [ ]
   - f) Other (Specify) __________________

2. Period in that position 1-4 years 4-10 years 10+ years

   [ ]   [ ]   [ ]

3. Please tick your highest level of qualification?
   
   - a) Masters and PhD [ ]
   - b) Honors’ degree [ ]
   - c) Professional Diploma [ ]
   - d) Professional Certificate [ ]
   - e) ‘A’ Level [ ]
SECTION B: IDENTIFICATION OF COMMUNICATION METHODS

1. From the following, select the methods of communication used between you and your Superiors at Unifreight

   YES  NO

   a) Formal Meetings  [  ]  [  ]
   b) Informal Meetings  [  ]  [  ]
   c) Telephone  [  ]  [  ]
   d) Email  [  ]  [  ]
   e) Newsletters  [  ]  [  ]
   f) Other
      (Specify)________________________

2. How often is the following communication channels used in Unifreight? (tick in the appropriate box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Channel</th>
<th>Often used</th>
<th>Moderately used</th>
<th>Rarely used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downward i.e. Senior Management to employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward i.e. General employees to Senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral i.e. department to department</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral i.e. Co-worker to co-worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If one of the responses is rarely used give reasons?
SECTION C: RELEVANCE OF COMMUNICATION ON EFFECTIVENES

1: Which of the following statements concerning communication do you agree with? 
(\textit{Tick in the appropriate box})

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication between management and general employees allows the employees to know what is expected of them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication of change programs help reduce resistance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication between co-workers results in good team spirit which in turn increases group productivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall good communication improves employee morale and reduces labor turnover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular vertical communication is key to controlling daily performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2: Were your performance targets communicated to you?  \textbf{Yes}  \underline{No}

3: Do you think improvement in communication will help Unifreight attain its targets with regards to the following issues? (\textit{Tick in the appropriate box})

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Impartial</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4: The following statement describes the communication atmosphere at Unifreight. ?

(Tick in the appropriate box)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management has been able to clearly articulate their expectations to everyone within the organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees have been able to clearly articulate efficiently their concerns to management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different departments have been able to effectively communicate between each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-workers have been able to efficiently communicate with each other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How would you value the following aspects with regards to organizational effectiveness?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in productivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved delivery time of goods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved service delivery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Improved customer trust

### Reduction in customer complaints

### Improved volumes of business

### Cost Reduction

### Increase in business profitability

If one of these aspects is not important give reasons:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

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**SECTION D: TO DETERMINE THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION**

1: How would you value communication with regards to the following aspects in Unifreight? *(Tick in the appropriate box)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENT</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team work within a workgroup</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team work between departments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management decision making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee involvement &amp; decision ownership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If one of those aspects is not important give reasons?
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________
___________________________________________________

2: Which of the following communication channels would improve company performance the most if it was to be improved? (*Tick in the appropriate box*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Channel</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Downward communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3: The following modes of communication are very important in improving organizational performance. * (Tick in the appropriate box*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal group meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Individual meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone conversation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-mail</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newsletter and Notice boards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4: Are the following meetings held on a regular basis at Unifreight? *(Tick in the appropriate box)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morning Briefings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot works council meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Works council meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic retreats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SECTION E: HINDERANCES TO COMMUNICATION

1. Which of the following aspects do you think are hindering proper communication in Unifreight?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different languages spoken</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of supporting ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwillingness by management to listen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwillingness by general employees to communicate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall organizational structure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Other (Specify) .................................................................

..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................

2. What can be done at Unifreight to improve communication within the organization?

..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................
..................................................................................................................

END OF QUESTIONNAIRE
Thank you for your valuable time