

Supervisor/Subordinate Disconnect: An analysis of
URT organizational research regarding
employee information acquisition.

by

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Abstract

The current literature related to Uncertainty Reduction Theory provides accurate insight in understanding motivation to seek information for employees within organizations. In discovering how to create a more accurate and available communication medium, organizations will benefit considerably in a number of areas. Previous studies have provided a framework to better understand the theoretical concepts related to this problem, however, research needs to be expanded in order to further our knowledge of these growing concerns in a constantly changing global organization.

By analyzing existing literature, informational and research gaps are realized, along with four critical emergent themes: Channel Selection, Employee Evaluation Feedback, Employee Expectations, and Employee Reflective Decision Making. These are four areas in which employee uncertainty effects performance and organizational success. Discussion related to extended research and informational gaps helps provide direction for assistance in alleviating these critical concerns within an organizational context.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Employee uncertainty exists in many different contexts; however, uncertainty experienced when seeking information can affect organizational members in their decision making practices and organizational behaviors. Employees faced with difficult decisions that need attention promptly, can directly affect the success or failure of an organization. Specifically, difficult decisions for employees are decisions that must be made without proper guidance or consent from a supervisor. These contexts do not provide employees opportunity for feedback from supervisors or time to confer with peers from the organization to seek accurate parameters on which to base their decisions. Meetings or opportunities to confer with proper sources of information would decrease the uncertainty in decision making and provide employees with a much greater knowledge of acceptable organizational behaviors.

One example that displayed this scenario was witnessed in a call center, in a large organization in North East Texas. Given that this scenario can occur in many different contexts outside of a call center, this scenario is an accurate portrayal of the problem discussed in this research project. An employee in the call center received a call from a current customer. The computer software provided by the organization that the employee from the call center provided had malfunctioned. The customer was very concerned; due to the fact the software controlled a large amount of money from the client. The customer had called to clarify and alleviate the problem, while the call center employee was attempting to help them based on personal experience and training. One large

contributor to this problem is the employee had not yet encountered a problem of such magnitude. The customer in this scenario discussed the problem and potential solutions with this specific employee and was not satisfied with the level of service being provided; the customer wanted answers. Finally, after much discussion the customer explained to the employee that if the problem is such that assistance could not be provided, another provider will be sought.

Had the employee been able to make an impulse decision to assist in the correction of the problem, the customer would have remained a customer, but due to the indecision of the employee, the customer was lost. This type of decision should not be a problem for organizations. Employees should be provided with an opportunity to execute certain protocol, to provide solutions for clientele and success for the organization. After the phone call, the employee sought feedback from the supervisor and discovered the correct decision would have been to take the steps the employee felt were not applicable to a person in their position. This is not the fault of the employee, however, a lack of communication and informational shortcoming of the organization.

The manager and employee discussed what had happened and some solutions to the problem after the incident, but a critical client had been lost in the process. The critical element in this scenario was the correct communicative channels. The employee was also uncertain about how to properly obtain the information on how to make the decision. This problem can be alleviated by informing employees and making the proper personnel aware of what specific channels will offer the applicable information.

In this example, the employee was uncertain about the extent of authority in which to make decisions and where to seek information to complete job oriented tasks. Unfortunately, this example is not an uncommon occurrence. Organizations are faced with many similar situations that have lasting effects on their employees. There are many residual effects that these feelings of uncertainty can produce, especially after an employee endures a situation similar to this. Some of those effects are:

1. The employee is uncertain about seeking information in the future on the basis of future personal perception from peers and supervisors.
2. The employee is uncertain about the feedback received and the perceived meaning from the message.
3. The employee may be concerned that if information is sought, personal roles and tasks within the organization may be jeopardized.
4. The employee experiences feelings of potential loss in confidence in personal ability due to organizational loss.

These are just a few of many feelings that employees may experience after operating in such a context that promotes this type of uncertainty. The manners in which employees seek information and the uncertainty that affects these mediums, directly affect the success of the employee and organization, creating many considerable problems within the organizations.

Despite such differences as status, size, work requirements, organizational products, personal and organizational goals, organizations share common difficulties. Uncertainty that employees experience from organizationally related activities is one of these critical sources, problematic in organizations. But crucial to realizing the effects that uncertainty has within organizations, is to understand why it is experienced across

organizations. One of the cornerstone elements of uncertainty is that it transcends contexts, which makes it applicable in all settings. Therefore, because uncertainty transcends contexts, it is able to transcend all of the factors that make organizations different and be a detrimental contributing aspect of all organizations, despite all of the idiosyncratic differences.

A prevalent concept, which provides insight to some of the difficulties employees experience within organization is employee channel selection. Within this project, channel selection provides a framework to analyze contexts that employees, potentially, experience uncertainty. There are three concepts related to channel selection that appear as emergent themes, along with channel selection, relevant to this project. These three related concepts are: Evaluation Feedback, Expectations, and Reflective Thinking Decision Making. These four areas appear to affect many of the various organizationally related tasks that are critical for an employee to successfully complete to contribute within an organization.

This thesis will seek to review the literature on uncertainty reduction theory and identify areas for future research with a focus on the organizational communication context. In chapter two the review of relevant literature will provide related emergent themes about the various areas that should be examined in order to assist in organizational and employee effectiveness. Chapter three will outline the current contexts of research and the informational shortcomings, in relation to uncertainty reduction, within the framework of organizational communication. The fourth chapter

will discuss potential studies, in relation to chapter three, that will explore the current research shortcomings and provide a framework for future research.

Chapter II

Review of Relevant Literature

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

There has been much research conducted on employee uncertainty and the theory that supports the concept, Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT). Uncertainty reduction theory offers much insight when applied in the organizational context. Although there are many different contexts where this concept may be applicable, the focus of this project will evaluate how uncertainty in the information seeking process can improve decision making, thus creating a more effective organization. The information seeking, decision making process and understanding acceptable behaviors within the organization may be difficult for some employees within the organizational culture.

Initially, URT was studied within the context of interpersonal communication. The theory suggests that when strangers meet, information is sought to reduce the amount of relational uncertainty (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). When individuals are interacting, information is shared for the purpose of understanding or knowing more about the other. Informational gathering occurs, generally, with contextual self-disclosure. When strangers have their initial encounter, the strangers attempt to gain knowledge to be able to predict or understand future behaviors (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Interpersonal relationships are strengthened by self-disclosure and the sharing of knowledge for many reasons, depending on the nature of encounter.

We attempt to gain knowledge about how a person will act in the future or about their personal beliefs and values (Berger & Bradac, 1982). During interpersonal encounters, individuals are gathering information, whether directly or through peripheral channels, about others in order to make sense of behaviors. This behavior is done in order to decrease existing levels of uncertainty. Through self-disclosure, people are able to understand what others may value or hold true and potentially predict behaviors or communicative tendencies, in the future. Also, humans seek information about values and beliefs in order to evaluate how personal beliefs compare to others.

Research concerning interpersonal relationships and relational development has led to the conceptualization of URT, but through their development, relationships do not remain a constant, the relationships undergo changes. These changes in relationship occur in many different areas, but the amount of elasticity is dictated through an individual's communication style (Waldron, 1991). This affects the employee's organizational uncertainty, based on perceptions being altered because of the introduction of new contexts. In order to maintain a positive relationship, individuals must constantly communicate with others to decrease uncertainty so employees are able to develop an accurate perception when new behaviors are encountered. These changes that an individual may endure, potentially alter, other individual's perception of the nature of relationship or information that may have been gathered about an individual, thus creating lower or novel levels of uncertainty.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory was developed with seven original axioms, described by Berger and Calabrese (1975). These axioms are as follows:

- Axiom 1: Given the high level of uncertainty present at the onset of the entry phase, as the amount of verbal communication between stranger's increases, the level of uncertainty for each interactant in the relationship will decrease. As uncertainty is further reduced, the amount of verbal communication will increase. (p. 101-102).
- Axiom 2 As nonverbal affiliative expressiveness increases, uncertainty levels will decrease in an initial interaction situation. In addition, decreases in uncertainty level will cause increases in nonverbal affiliative expressiveness. (p. 103)
- Axiom 3: High levels of uncertainty cause increases in information seeking behavior. As uncertainty levels decline, information seeking behavior decreases. (p. 103)
- Axiom 4: High levels of uncertainty in a relationship cause decreases in the intimacy level of communication content. Low levels of uncertainty produce high levels of intimacy. (p. 103)
- Axiom 5: High levels of uncertainty produce high rates of reciprocity. Low levels of uncertainty produce low reciprocity rates. (p. 105)
- Axiom 6: Similarities between persons reduce uncertainty, while dissimilarities produce increases in uncertainty. (p.106)
- Axiom 7: Increases in uncertainty level produce decreases in liking; decreases in uncertainty level produce increases in liking (p. 107)

These seven axioms seem to describe interpersonal interaction as a very positive concept, when attempting to alleviate types of uncertainty. There does not seem to be explanation for new types of uncertainty based on experiencing new behaviors or the acquisition of new information. If an employee experiences a situation that presents new information or context, pertaining to the organization, this can potentially create different types of uncertainty about the situation.

Berger and colleagues believe there is a “social reality about relationships that can be known through the sharing, disclosing, and receiving of social information” (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). This theory also implies that people will seek certain levels of comfort in the exchange of messages and information. According to the context of URT, contextual variables will alter the ease and function of the uncertainty reduction process. There are benefits and drawbacks involved with the exchange of information, and based upon previous experiences, the informational seeking process is contingent upon previous engagements (Sunnafrank, 1986).

Crucial to understanding the nature of URT is the ability to view the concept in an ever-changing and evolving atmosphere, within the relationship. Relationships are not stagnant; based upon the dynamic and quantity of information shared or learned; humans are continually developing expectations and perspectives about how the interactions “should” take place. This research focuses on the organization as the culture and context for understanding URT. Organizations offer the same context due to their composition of employees and their ongoing relationships. There is complexity and constant change in organizations due to the ever-present quest for knowledge (Miller, Joseph & Apker, 2000).

Interpersonal relationships within organizations are burdened by the same difficulties of any other relational context. Information acquisition and sharing mandate that a channel of communication to be utilized. Despite the growing number of mediums for messages to be exchanged, the nature of interaction can produce the tendency to

willfully engage in communication, or may contribute to employee's hesitation to seek information based on past negative experiences. Negative experiences are not the only cause for shying away from engagement, a lack of knowledge about how the employee may be perceived when asking or seeking information creates uncertainty as well.

Reducing uncertainty, within an organizational context, has applicability in order to allow employees to feel more satisfied with their role in an organization. Shockley-Zalabak and Ellis (2000) found that the concepts of sense-making and job satisfaction were in direct correlation with each other. In order for employees to feel content with sharing information it is important that the employee feel comfortable with the source in which information is shared. Levels of uncertainty, in an organizational setting, are of great importance during interactions. The motivation for amount and levels of disclosure and information seeking are correlated with potential future interaction with individuals (Sunnafrank, 1986).

Uncertainty pertaining to the amount and nature of future engagement, dictates amounts of disclosure and how employees convey information to a supervisor (Sunnafrank, 1986). If an employee anticipates there will be future interactions or frequent work with a supervisor, there may be an attempt to develop a stronger personal relationship. The need for this type of relationship allows the employee to feel more comfortable about future engagements. Research indicates the critical nature of employees being well informed, along with cultivating feelings of job satisfaction and job success (Miller, 1996; Brown & Mitchell, 1993). It seems that employees who feel

frequency of engagement may substantially decrease or potentially limit the amount of disclosure because it is not crucial in relationship development. Both scenarios depict the nature of uncertainty that this study is focusing on. Based on the relationship between the supervisor and subordinate, the subordinate may experience difficulty in decision making simply out of need for making effective decisions to satisfy a supervisors expectations.

A critical aspect of this project is to consider information-seeking as a large element in employee uncertainty, in the supervisor-subordinate relationship. Douglas (1990), suggests uncertainty may be correlated with seeking information. Specifically, seeking information in this context alludes to how employees go about seeking information when communicating with their supervisors. If subordinates posses uncertainty about how to seek information, in order to make an organizationally related decision, the employee is presented with complications before even having to make a decision.

Uncertainty pertaining to decision making, specifically with supervisor-subordinate relationship, is greatly contingent upon the source encoding the information and how employees obtain information. One crucial element in this dyad is the concept of “source credibility”. When an employee is seeking information to make an ethically related decision, it is imperative that the decision be supported by their supervisor. Potential goals for seeking and carrying out appropriate decisions are focused on organizational and personal success. Lev (1975) states that, “decision-making now involves satisfying, rather than maximizing organizational objectives.” With the focus on

satisfying, rather than what is optimal for the organization, both supervisor and subordinate may add cohesive elements to the relationship, but not achieve success for the organization.

Studies have indicated that more participation in decision making leads to higher levels of satisfaction (Wheless, Wheless, & Howard, 1984). Participation in decision making involves more than a supervisor communicating expectations to a subordinate. It is important that a subordinate address the areas of uncertainty that exist and allowing the supervisor to realize and attempt to alleviate areas of uncertainty. There may be unexplored concerns for both supervisor and subordinate, in relation to decisional outcome, that affects the outcome of a decision.

These contexts of uncertainty deal directly with the seeking of information, more specifically, employees seeking information in order to perform job related tasks that posses levels of uncertainty. It is important to set parameters for understanding what concepts are correlated with uncertainty, in this particular context.

It appears that information-seeking and uncertainty are in correlation with each other, in relation to personal organizational effectiveness (Forward, 1999). Uncertainty and information-seeking seem to very closely relate and both affect an employee's ability to carry out their everyday organizational activities.

URT-Information Seeking

There are many factors that contribute to employee's willingness and effectiveness in seeking information. Uncertainty in information seeking provides

difficulty and apprehension for employees in the information seeking process. One large contributor is employee uncertainty. While employee uncertainty is a rather broad term, uncertainty manifests itself in many different ways. There has been much research on the different areas where uncertainty exists and the reasons it exists. The main focus in this project is to explore the related research and display the links between employee uncertainty and the effects that it has on employee information seeking techniques in order to make decisions within the organization. A few areas of importance to this examination are feedback, uncertainty in information seeking, and channel selection. These two areas appear prevalent in the existing research into information gathering.

Feedback

One major reason for employee's seeking information is feedback. It is important for employees to understand how they are being perceived in relation to organizational effectiveness (Mokros & Aakhus, 2002). Research has discussed both, new hires and existing employees; however, the majority of these behaviors are quite similar. This project does not attempt to outline these two areas of employment; rather discuss them as one concept. Employees seek information in order to get an accurate perception of how they are performing within their organization, to reduce uncertainty pertaining to their organization (Morrison, 2002; Forward, 1999) and task orientation. Employees receiving feedback allows them to make sense of their behaviors and adjust accordingly for future contexts. If an employee is informed that personal performance is on an acceptable level, or higher, the employee will be more inclined to address supervisors or peers to gather information because perceptions about inquisitions are valid. The acquisition of

information, in order to provide personal and organizational success, is another large contributor to gathering feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Information on the basis of “Task-orientation”, or how to effectively carry-out one’s job, provides an employee with a sense of organizational effectiveness. Therefore, because an employee is concerned less with performing personal tasks to satisfaction, the employee is able to be more concerned with how much actually being accomplished. Information gathering for employees is one of the most important organizational activities because result that comes from the information (Berger & DiBattista, 1992).

While employees seek information indirectly through feedback (Jensen, 1970), feedback is also sought for “expected” feedback. Specifically, through everyday interaction and discussion within the organization, employees engage in feedback activities such as clarification, agreement, and questioning (Scheidel & Crowell, 1966). When employees do not receive feedback, assumptions about personal performance or roles within the organization are only left to be made by the employee. Even if the assumptions the employees make are about personal roles or acceptable behaviors are accurate, lack of feedback can lead to perceptions of apathy. If an employee does not receive feedback, the view about the supervisor may develop as apathetic. This could directly affect the employees’ performance, while also affecting personal and organizational goal attainment.

Another reason employees seek feedback is for organizational success. Despite being linked to personal feelings of assimilation and satisfaction, the success that

organizations experience is based upon the success of the employees of the organization (Wheless, Wheelless, & Howard, 1986). As mentioned in the introduction, employees are concerned with organizational success because of the personal feelings of security and contribution. Employees' productivity can be inhibited by waiting for information or contemplating correct choices, which is a product of receiving or not receiving feedback from an information source.

Personal satisfaction has a very important role in the information seeking process because of the potential motivation that it can provide an employee. Employees who receive benefits on the basis of success will be much more inclined to produce because of the rewards that are offered through that success. Outside of the monetary rewards, employees seek feedback for feelings of personal satisfaction and areas such as confidence and a sense of accomplishment. Confidence is a very important concept in the information seeking process because it affords the employee perceived latitude in asking questions of supervisors, pertaining to organizational effectiveness (Teboul, 1995). It is important for employees to feel as though seeking information will not affect outside perceptions of the employee and that questioning tasks and protocol are beneficial, rather than detrimental.

Organizational effectiveness and success also lends itself to be very important in employee information seeking and requesting feedback. This area differs from personal satisfaction in that employees need information to complete tasks requirements and be responsible to other employees. If an employee's job is contingent on another employee

completing their tasks, organizational effectiveness and productivity is important on a much personal level (Boyd & Jensen, 1972). Ultimately, the organization is reliant on each employee making correct decisions and being productive in everyday activities. This creates the importance of sharing information related to task requirements and accurate protocol.

Lawson (2004) discusses the importance of feedback in a much more pragmatic sense. Feedback allows employees to feel more involved. An example of this is if members of an organization are asked to provide feedback to supervisors about future plans or about ways conduct organizational activity, employees seem to be much more inclined to seek feedback for organizational success (Lawson, 2004). By soliciting feedback in an upward mode of communication, employees feel much more comfortable seeking information on the basis of productivity and task information, in a more downward mode of communication. This process opens the lines of communication, specifically feedback, making employees more inclined to seek feedback for informational purposes.

Information Acquisition

Information acquisition for employees affects their performance within the organization. It is important to understand why employees may or may not seek information. This is one of the most prevalent and motivating factors for an employee to gather information. Douglas (1990), suggests that uncertainty may correlate with seeking

information. Specifically, seeking information in this context alludes to how employees go about seeking information when communicating with their supervisors and coworkers.

How informed an employee is, partially depends on how the employee participates in communicative activities. Generally, employees who engage themselves relatively less are not as informed. The amount an employee contributes can be affected by the amount of information that is currently possessed and thus the employees may engage less frequently. Employees feel they do not have as much to share with other organizational members (Bonito, 2004). Unwillingness to engage negatively affects the organization and employee pertaining to affiliation, comfort with peers, and ultimately, information seeking strategies.

Beyond relational uncertainty, uncertainty in information seeking is crucial in the area of goal achievement. Two important concepts related to this subject are goal clarity and goal ambiguity (Berger & DiBattista, 1992). Goal clarity allows the employee to be more focused on the task and achieving, rather than spending time contemplating correct actions and protocol. If an employee is able to act on information and complete tasks, both the employee and organization are benefited. Time spent on clarifying messages and expectations about goals prohibits the employee from completing tasks and may even cause the employee to question their ability. This is the essence of goal ambiguity. However, goal ambiguity is a very volatile concept. It can display both negative and positive effects. Goal ambiguity can, obviously, be negative because of the “lag” time that it creates, as discussed previously. Positively, ambiguity can affect goals for

employees because of the very nature of goals. Goals are set for employee in order for the employee to gauge their process and productivity. So, if a goal appears to be ambiguous for an employee, the employee may achieve results greater than originally anticipated because of the perception of the goal. If the organization attempts to receive certain results from an employee and the employee understands the goals in a different manner, more or greater than expected, the level of production will be in relation to previously perceived levels of expectation.

Employees who experience uncertainty, related to peer-perception, feel as though they might be viewed as incompetent or not suited for the job for which they are employed. In order for employees to feel comfortable within the organization, members must feel as though their role is important.

Channel Selection

In organizations, choosing a medium for communicating affects more than just the communication. The political nature (social implications) of organizations makes the communication and information seeking strategies crucial. The utility of formal and informal channels for communication affect the type and context of the information being sought and received. An important aspect to consider is what management styles are most conducive to implementing people-based solutions. While scientific management styles view human capital as pieces that are interchangeable, this management style is not conducive to understanding some of the complications of channel selection. The management style that best identifies with clarifying and accessing most effective

mediums for communication is the style of human resources. By accepting some of the challenges that employees encounter within their respective organizations, supervisors and management can produce much clearer channels for employees.

Despite the ever-growing number of channels for communication in organizations, employees seem to choose mediums for seeking information that seem to be easiest. Informal channels, generally, are utilized based on their low-risk nature. However, results from a study conducted by Jolke and Duham (2000) indicate that informal communication approaches did not necessarily result in higher levels of perceived job performance and satisfaction. Formal channels seem to be a little higher-risk for employees, but yield much more effective results. Specifically, seeking information from a supervisor offers the best outcome related to informational effectiveness, but also offers a much more apprehensive context. Waldron (1991) explored the results of using informal interaction techniques helped establish a relationship that offered higher levels of compliance and comprehension of expectations, which may offer greater motivation for an employee to seek information from a source in the future. Specifically, if an employee seeks information from supervisors and has a positive experience, the inclination to seek information from that source again is much greater. Hess (1993) discusses the fact that the interpretation of communication is drastically affected by past experiences, thus affecting a person's interpersonal and organizational expectations.

Outside of all contributors to employee information seeking, there appears to be one concept that affects most areas associated with the concept. Properly choosing the correct source for acquiring the information needed is a crucial component of the process. There is much research that discusses such concepts as “social cost” for employees when seeking information (Teboul, 1995).

It is important to understand what sources are perceived by employees to be the convenient and most successful sources to obtain information. These two concepts may appear to be related, but are not actually synonymous. What appears to employees as the most convenient source may not actually be the most successful source (Douglas, 1990). Employees seek information from sources based on many different factors. One of those factors is social cost, what the employee could be sacrificing with a negative experience, when seeking information.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory and Information-Seeking, pertaining to organizations, displays areas of importance because of the utility for employees. By examining these two concepts, it can be determined where some of the shortcomings of communication may exist and how these shortcomings can be alleviated.

Previously, this project has outlined literature that is pertinent to the following chapter. The next chapter will discuss the literature that suggests what potential future needs for research exist. In using current research related to uncertainty reduction and information seeking, the following chapter will display the informational links that organizations would benefit from exploring through research.

Chapter III

Future Research Needs

The previous analysis of literature indicates there are information gaps relating to the process that employees experience when making decisions. By understanding why these gaps exist and gap development, education to organizational employees can help provide a more comfortable and productive atmosphere. Channel selection, employee evaluation feedback, employee expectations, and employee reflective decision making are the areas where future research should focus.

Channel Selection

There is need for additional research on identifying a single channel for information seeking. Employees need a constant and consistent medium of communication with the people who evaluate their decision making and reaction process. Implementing management into the process would allow a connection to the organization and all of the necessary concepts that help provide a constant and consistent medium of communication (Helm & Remington, 2005). Problems or inefficient decisions could potentially be overlooked. If an issue develops in which feedback would benefit an employee, but no feedback is offered, the employee is left to react while being less-prepared. This seems to be the most frequent and likely obstacle because without correction, common sense leads the employee to believe that no correction was necessary, the initial reaction was the correct response. For instance, an employee is assisting a client about issues regarding finance and the client feels as though the organization has not satisfied part of an agreement between the client and organization.

At this point, the employee has an excellent opportunity to help restore credibility and business for the organization by alleviating the concerns of the client. More specifically, the concerns could be anything from refunding appropriations to human resource allocations. The needs and requests of the client are outside of the employees' jurisdiction, but the client feels the issue needs to be resolved as quickly as possible. At this point, the employee feels as though there are two potential choices to make. The first is that the employee takes care of the clients' needs, although outside their jurisdiction. The second scenario holds that the employee explains the inability to alleviate the clients concerns at that time.

The implications for these two scenarios are not as important as the long term affects that the employee experiences throughout their career. By offering the employee a positive medium of communication to discuss all of the potential outcomes from their decision making process, through each scenario, will not only provide a sense of confidence about the organization supporting their effort, but provide education about how their actions can directly effect the success of the organization. Just as important to the employees experience is the ability for management to understand where sources for uncertainty originate and how to more effectively educate employees to alleviate many critical concerns that are produced by such experiences.

Lack of feedback or delayed feedback is also problematic. In such cases, the employee has no choice but to continue with their current decision making techniques. Employees will continue to make decisions in the same manner unless alternative

solutions are offered or introduction to new information prompts self-reflection or realization to value in an alternate behavior. One concept that correlates with uncertain contexts is “Risk Behavior”. Research has shown that once people realize they are in an “at-risk” situation, they are willing to alter their behavior (Slattery, J. & Ganster, D., 2002). Once employees realize current personal decision making processes and rationale places their career and organization in jeopardy, alternate behaviors become a viable option, rather than the current course of action.

This particular issue would benefit from research on how employees feel and perform with a provided and regular face-to-face or other communication channel meeting time with supervisors or peers who affect others by personal decisions. Utilizing a face to face communicative approach, employees feel more assimilated, while experience greater feelings of assimilation (Waldeck, Seibold, & Flanagin, 2004). It appears that employees would become more successful and work more efficiently with an improved understanding on how peers and supervisors are affected by their decisions. Employees also become more focused functionally, if educated on their decisions’ impact to the daily activities of those who are dependant on outcomes of personal decisions. Allowing employees to have insight about how personal organizational tasks affects the greater body of work being conducted by the organization, may provide assistance to future decision making, as well as decreasing the amount of time spent seeking information. An initial critical factor is to determine how employees should receive information. A direct correlation lies between the decreasing amount of time seeking

information and the amount of time the employee spends working towards completing tasks throughout the day.

Scholars could also address industry specific preferences for channels of communication. This would extend upon research that previously studied informal versus formal means of gathering information. For example, Craig's et. al. (2006) research on arena public relations personnel found that 2-way radios were the preferred means of communication during a crisis. Similarly, scholars could address preferred means of communication for specific individuals and specific functions.

More specifically, employees need to recognize how to realize the ideal medium and how to properly address and access that source. If an employee understands who to approach and how to approach the source on any given basis, there will be more inclination to seek information to assist in the decision making process. Lack of employee confidence and mistrust of source or source reaction moves subordinates to be more likely to avoid the communication with the source. Employees will make choices on communication media based on the benefits that the source offers them (Minsky & Marin, 1999). This scenario will add to decreasing amounts of information seeking by employees. With decreased engagements of communication and employees less willing to engage sources for seeking information, the less likely the subordinates are to make an "educated decision", strictly on the premise that the information source has been removed as a medium of communication.

While it is difficult to display links between frequency of engagement and quality of communication, one thing is certain, if an employee is communicating as frequently as needed to be successful in their organization, their channels of communication are being made available to other sources. More specifically, simple face-to-face communication can offer such a channel for the employee. Research suggests that face-to-face interpersonal communication is essential in creating a positive managerial atmosphere in performance interviews (Kikoski, 1999). This particular scenario is limited to the subordinate and it can also manifest itself in organizational management. The approach is one that is conducive to sharing information, and creating educated, informed decision making.

The previous issues contribute to the concept of informal channel clarity. The informal channels of communication can be beneficial for information seeking. According to research, accuracy percentages have shown to be relatively high, as well as employees contributing and depending on the “organizational grapevine” with substantial regularity (Crampton, Hodge, & Mishra, 1998). But just as beneficial, the informal channels can be a detriment for employees seeking information. Such issues as accuracy, frequency, motive, availability, and expectancy are all variables within the informal communication channels. If just one of these issues presents itself inaccurately, decision making will suffer.

Again, positive industry specific or organizational specific channel factors can be beneficial. For decision making purposes, researching this concept more thoroughly will

help teach supervisors and subordinates how to communicate more efficiently. Related research should help to illustrate where the breakdowns occur within the dynamic. In large part, there is a responsibility that has developed on either the supervisor or subordinate to address the information gaps, when the gaps occur. However, this dynamic must be able to recognize and address these potential scenarios before the contexts develop.

Employee Evaluation Feedback

Employees should not have to evaluate personal performances. Research has discussed that self-reporting can be extremely problematic, specifically listed as a limitation for some research (Demerouti, Verbeke, & Bakker, 2005). When employees evaluate their own performance, there is a direct conflict of interest. However, if no feedback is provided, employees are left to ponder their decisions on their own. This context leads directly to a results-oriented evaluation. Employees are not always equipped with the proper cognitive tools, by which, to evaluate their own performances. While some employees might have a sufficient self-reflecting process, it remains that subordinates do not have enough insight to make drastic behavioral and cognitive changes in their own performances, in most cases.

Results do not necessarily determine the quality of decisions. While most situations that provide organizational success appear to have quality decision making processes behind them, this does not take into account such matters ethical implications and employee morale. It would be difficult to cultivate a successful atmosphere, for both

employee and organization, if employees are working against the organization in order to exist. For example, if employees make decisions that benefit the organization, but directly conflict with their personal codes of ethics an issue of employee vs. organization benefit emerges.

Consider an employee who is working with a portion of their clients' billing structure, such as account hours. While the client is unable to accurately monitor the amount of time spent on their account, the organization is able to bill for any amount of hours relative to the amount of work completed. The supervisor or organization has instructed the subordinate to round the fractional portion of the hour(s) billed up, rather than accurately tracking the precise total. At this point, the employee believes that this does a great disservice to the client, but refuses to question the practice adopted by the organization for fear that the employees' job could be put in jeopardy. Peripheral apprehension potentially could develop based on the employee questioning the practice of the organization. Such issues as uncertainty in future interaction, unwillingness to engage in organizational social events, and peer relational development may potentially be hampered by such an experience.

Therefore, scholars should examine URT in terms of performance appraisal. More specifically, for example, is written or oral a more effective method to reduce uncertainty about job performance? Should scholars study a combination of the two? For instance, written communication probably offers a much more efficient ability to reflect on performance appraisals. Having documentation for organizations to evaluate can

provide them with tools to educate employees in the future, as well as understanding the strengths and weaknesses of employees. The most important concept that understanding strengths and weaknesses provides is that organizations would be able to utilize this type of content to place employees in contexts in which the employee will thrive and be successful. The only potential downside to evaluating employees and scenarios by utilizing the written information is that it would be documented. In other words, employees may be less likely to share if their opinions are being documented for everyone, including management, to review. Sharing is being referred to in amounts of information, as opposed to sharing at all; employees would probably share on the basis of job requirement. The subordinate may be apprehensive that sharing a true opinion may put their job security in jeopardy, thus leaving the organization with a less than accurate depiction of the context being evaluated.

In reference to oral appraisal, employees might be more inclined to share their experiences and opinions on the basis of not being formally recorded. However, with oral appraisals, future utility becomes much more difficult. The best scenario would probably be to combine the two and offer both in different forums in order to receive the positive aspects of each appraisal style. The negative factors could be eliminated by using both styles and still receive the amount and type of information that was originally sought.

Employee Expectations

Explanation and expectations of employee goals need to be clear, for both supervisor and subordinate. The expectation of further interaction and the ability to seek and receive information are critical to uncertainty reduction theory (Dainton, & Aylor, 2001; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985). These have a direct impact on employee performance and the ability to meet goal expectations. Varying degrees of understanding, on the part of both people in the dynamic, can contribute to the issues associated with decision making. If both parts of the dynamic have a clear understanding of personal and organizational goals, there will be a more clear understanding of how “their part” fits in the organization. In order to be able to use deductive thinking and implement that into the employee decision making process, employees must be able to deduce. By allowing employees to more accurately view their objectives and roles in carrying out daily activities for the organization, and how those tasks correlate to other activities (Collins-Jarvis, 1997) and projects, these should aid in the quality of deductive thinking.

When hiring or educating employees, organizations should take additional time to elaborate on how different tasks affect the main objectives for the organization. Various activities such as financial obligations, customer service, and management of the resources related to organizational tasks directly effect the realization of goals. While organizational goals easily observed, goals are only achieved through employees meeting their own job-specific goals. In order for employees to make educated decisions to meet these goals, it is crucial that the employee not simply complete tasks for personal goal

success. Rather, if employees have an understanding of how personal goals affect peer and managerial goals within the organization, organizational goals will not have to suffer on the account of an employee specific goal.

For example, if the organization provides a monthly quota for an employee and the employee is presented with the opportunity to meet the quota with the completion of one task, the employee is apt to complete that task without hesitation. However, if the employee completes the task, which dictates that the same employee provide a financial task that sacrifices other areas of organizational goals, then other employees goals are challenged. Along with other employee goals being challenged, the organizational integrity and long-term goals could be compromised as well.

If the organization had educated the employee on the role of the quota put in place for employees and what long term implications potentially may be, then the employee might have understood that sacrificing financial guidelines could compromise the organizations' success. Also, an activity such as educating employee on how their role affects the entire organization, can help build a sense of assimilation and camaraderie.

Due to the dynamic of the supervisor and subordinate relationship, there is an inherent sense of power, from both sides. Power, then, becomes another area of study with regard to goal setting and expectations. When employees are assimilated into an organization, it creates a context to reference others for a standard of appropriate behaviors. One source that provides credibility for information is an employees' supervisor, based on the role inherently being a pivotal source of information (Ashford,

1993). Because of this, there appears to be less questioning of authority and more introspection, from the subordinate's perspective, about how to improve production.

This scenario has many implications, one of which is reduced confidence (second-guessing) and also, assuming that one person in the dynamic is always correct. This type of situation discourages consistently open channels of communication, which is crucial to alleviating difficulty with the employee decision making process.

Employee reflective decision making

Employee's willingness to participate in reflective decision making is a very important factor in creating a more constructive decision making environment. A reflective decision making process allows employees to discuss and review their decision with the relevant personnel, which could be either supervisors or peers (Wheless, Wheless, & Howard, 1986), potentially both. Reflective decision making allows the employees to take a more active role in understanding how all of their actions affect the inner-workings around organizational activities.

One theory that encompasses the reflective decision making process is the vigilant interaction theory. This theory explains that decision making quality is in direct relation to the manner in which the group moves through the stages of the process. The three stages are: analysis of the problematic situation, establishment of goals and objectives, and evaluation of positive and negative qualities of choices (Hirokawa & Rost, 1992, p. 270). While vigilant interaction theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for what employees experience when attempting to evaluate the decision making process, it

becomes more relevant from an intrapersonal perspective, in relation to this project. If an employee is able to reflect on their decision making process with their supervisor, it will provide them with the tools to continue to access future decisions without having to engage a group or supervisor. This displays a self-reliance and educated decision making process that will allow organizations to flourish and have employees that feel confident about their abilities and roles within the organization (Pomerantz, 1988) . The converse is that some employees who be more than willing to engage themselves in a process to improve their decisions and organizational effectiveness, some may simply view this as “being exposed”(allowing others to see their faults). The comfort level or risk factors as related to efforts to reduce uncertainty should, therefore, garner the attention of researchers.

It appears beneficial for organizations to receive a much higher percentage of employee participation in activities to improve decision making. As a result, employees should benefit from the shared experiences of other employees. First, the employee should be given information that helps them to realize the potential for improved decision making. Thus, researchers should study how to motivate employees to engage in reducing uncertainty to improve decision making. For example, research could explore how employees are motivated to participate. When employees learn that everyone else is involved in an activity, the employee is not the only person with potential faults. Finally, employees may also use the previous example as motivation to develop a forum to discuss personal success narratives. Being organizationally obligated to share success stories removes any hesitation from employees to expand on their personal talents or feel

braggadocios. This concept also promotes an open communication channel that employees can utilize to learn from each others' successes and failures. This will assist in decreasing the amount of repeated mistakes and help duplicate the amount of successes experienced.

Closely related to the issue discussed previously, organizations can develop a sense of "belongingness" or organizational assimilation (Waldeck, Seibold, & Flanagan, 2004) through sharing organizationally related decisions. Employees may eventually begin to welcome the opportunity and be more willing to engage themselves within the organization. If employees feel invited to share in decisions that allow for unique input and make the decision in the most appropriate and effective matter, then the employee will most likely experience an increase in confidence because of their success. A genuine feeling of aptitude towards the employees organizational functionality will develop based on continuing education and information gathering.

The long term effects of fostering an environment that helps promote assimilation for employees could potentially lead employees to feeling a "willingness" to engage in the evaluative decision making process, as an opportunity to display their knowledge for the profession (Pomerantz, 1988). This translates to employees being able to "show-off" their natural abilities, thus displaying that their abilities are an asset to the organization. These types of feelings can affect a multitude of different areas, most interestingly, the area of attrition. Employees should generally be able to expand on their careers in organizations with the feeling that knowledge is readily available and the organization is

benefited by the employees contributions. This directly relates to decreases in overhead costs for organizations, more specifically, recruiting, human resource and long-term training costs.

Scholars should re-address socialization research (Darling & Dewey, 1990). For example, teaching assistants benefit if there is socialization between them at an early stage (Darling & Staton, 1989). This should be re-addressed in terms of organizational socialization. The uncertainty experienced by people with association to organizations may be presented in many different contexts (Slattery & Ganster, 2002). The main concept that seems applicable to this discussion is the aspect of uncertainty regarding ability to succeed and the skills it takes to achieve success. All of which create a sense of uncertainty in an organizational context. Although some socialization research has explored teaching assistants, this should not exclude the importance of studying the same principles within a more traditionally “business” oriented organization.

Employees, like graduate teaching assistants, enter an organization with uncertainty regarding their performance expectations and a possible lack of insight into how to reduce that uncertainty. The role of peer socialization plays a critical role, in both contexts, in reducing uncertainty. Colleagues become sources of formal information, informal information, and misinformation. Colleagues also significantly influence the level of comfort new members feel in information seeking strategies and channels. Research on uncertainty related to employee socialization can provide valuable answers to the greater questions of uncertainty in superior-subordinate communication.

This chapter has identified questions and shortcomings in need of answers regarding uncertainty in superior-subordinate communication. The following chapter will not answer the questions, nor will it strengthen those shortcomings. However, it will identify the means for doing so.

Chapter IV

Suggestions for Future Research

Current research explores many elements regarding uncertainty reduction and the affect it has on the supervisor subordinate relationship. However, there appears to be critical shortcomings in this body of work. These shortcomings could provide crucial insight into improving organizational effectiveness, while improving upon the relationships within organizations. Such areas as training, consulting, assimilation, and organizational success may be positively affected by extending the knowledge into the shortcomings of the research surrounding these concepts.

Based on the review of the related literature and outlining of information and research gaps, this chapter will propose studies to help provide insight into the shortcomings of the research. This chapter will suggest future research to further develop our understanding of the affects uncertainty and uncertainty reduction, and information seeking have for supervisors and subordinates' relationships.

Channel Selection

As employees identify a single source channel for information acquisition, their related uncertainty will decrease.

For employees, communication channel selection can significantly influence their role within an organization. Understanding where to go and how to obtain information is critical for employee and organizational success.

Identifying a single point of contact for obtaining information is a concept that has not been thoroughly evaluated. The acquisition of information, regarding

organizational activities, is crucial for employee confidence and organizational success and by providing employees with a concrete direction or source for obtaining information can improve these occupational concerns. While some organizations offer “open door” policies, this can still produce employee uncertainty, related to the communicative issues prompting the information seeking process.

Studies that seek to understand the contributing factors and contexts where employees experience uncertainty, in an organizational atmosphere, can directly affect an employee’s performance. By providing insight about the problems associated with employee uncertainty when choosing a channel of communication there will a more fluid method by which employees can obtain and utilize information. Thus, employees will spend more time on organizational activities and less time on things not related to personal and organizational success.

An initial study could attempt to identify where the channel uncertainty originally occurs. By developing a questionnaire to administer to employees that seeks to identify communication channel(s) that employees feel most comfortable addressing, organizations will be able to make such channels more accessible to employees.

The questionnaire should use questioning that applies concepts that exist in organizations, in which, employees need to access information from peers and supervisors for the benefit of the organization. The survey should include blanket examples for employees to apply their own industry-specific experience, thus the need to

keep the questionnaire general in nature. One of the critical components of this survey should seek to identify the channels that employees feel most comfortable addressing.

While it is important to identify preferred channels, employee performance and satisfaction might also be increased by identifying least preferred channels. Factors that contribute to employees experiencing uncertainty or feeling uncomfortable should be the other major component of the survey. By identifying the reasons employees utilize certain channels of communication, research could provide organizations with information and first hand experience as to why employees choose to seek information or why employees experience organizational uncertainty, related to channel selection. A pilot study could be administered with the survey in Appendix A.

A few examples of general scenarios that employees seek to obtain information and experience uncertainty related to channel selection will further explain the relevancy of the questionnaire.

Once the surveys have been conducted, collected, and reviewed, focus groups should be conducted in order to help provide more specific descriptions of how employees experience uncertainty about channel selection. While survey responses should provide emergent themes about most to least preferred channel selection, a more qualitative research approach will provide subjects an opportunity to further explain why such contexts are preferred over other available mediums of communication.

Such information could also provide organizational specific information. From a consulting and training perspective, this information will provide parameters to be used in each specific organization that chooses to conduct focus groups or interviews. The information can also be used to educate supervisors about how to more effectively manage employees. By making supervisors aware of employee concerns in this area, organizational leadership can provide numerous benefits to employees and the respective organization.

Employee Evaluation and Feedback

Employees will become more certain about decisions and behaviors when provided with correctional or supportive responses about performance related concerns.

Being able to isolate what exactly the term “evaluation” means to supervisors and subordinates, separately, could help explain disconnect for both parts of the dyad. An evaluation serves many different purposes, but in that lays the critical element of uncertainty. If supervisors assign a different value to evaluations than subordinates do, the employee could have a difficult time understanding how exactly the evaluation affects them. By studying the meaning supervisors and their employees assign to evaluations, a more distinctive and beneficial evaluation could be established.

Some potential reasons that evaluations may take place within an organization are:

1. Determining salary and/or promotion
2. Increasing the organizational efficiency

3. Assisting the employee
4. Helping the superior improve the organization
5. Relevancy of employees organizational role
6. Determining group dynamic satisfaction

All of these concepts are critical elements, inherent to the reasons why members of organizations are employed. However, all of these concepts also contain certain elements of potential uncertainty, if not communicated in a proper manner. While this list is not exhaustive, these concepts do encompass many of the issues that seem critical to research in the area of reducing uncertainty for the benefit of organizational success and employee satisfaction.

For instance, supervisors might view evaluation and feedback to be more performance correction related. There is a need to help subordinates be able to make the distinction about evaluations being suggestive or corrective. Suggestive meaning that there might be actions or task to be carried out as possibility, rather than a direct course of action. Corrective means that there needs to be a change in current methodology of completing tasks or behaviors.

A potential problem is created by the uncertain nature of evaluations. Evaluations can cause the subordinate to question meaning of engagements with supervisors. Also, the uncertainty may potentially cause supervisors to be rather assumptious about what the employee perceives from engagements. Studies that explore possible differences between what superiors consider to be “evaluation and feedback” and what subordinates consider to be “evaluation and feedback” could help reduce uncertainty for engagements

between supervisors and subordinates and improve the efficiency in organizational communication.

Another concept research could examine is how members of organizations view the purpose of evaluation and feedback. The utility of evaluations depends heavily on the accuracy of the information. Research can study the affects that uncertainty has on the accuracy of information received for evaluations. If an employee is uncertain as to why organizations or supervisors are evaluating employees the information may be altered. Organizations and employees would benefit from understanding more effective ways of communicating to employees about how and why evaluations are taking place.

Related to evaluations, one major concept to consider with in this research is does uncertainty develop regarding the purpose of evaluation and feedback. Specifically, superiors and subordinates could be asked to rank order the following purposes for evaluation and feedback.

Finally, when evaluations are taking place, research related to preferred styles of communication in seeking feedback could also benefit organizations. By analyzing how supervisors prefer to administer feedback, both negative and positive, and comparing those results to the results from how employees prefer to have feedback relayed to them would help organizations understand the most effective ways of communicating with employees.

One compelling concept that current research suggests is that supervisors should not use “ranks” when offering subordinates feedback. But rather, ranking items when offering feedback may be more detrimental to an employee than what it can actually offer (Miller & Thorton, 2006). The same research that suggests that accuracy may be more attainable through ranking, however, may do more damage than positive for an employee.

The concept that research indicates employees may be more positively benefited by strategic communicative methods, as opposed to information accuracy. Organizations would seem to be benefited by expanding upon Miller & Thorton’s (2006) research that alludes to employees being better served by the manner that the feedback is offered, rather than having the most accurate information conveyed. This research suggests that there is a critical need to explore preferred styles of communication when offering feedback. By reducing the uncertainty about receiving feedback, this may allow organizations to more effectively provide their employees with information regarding their performance and roles.

Employee Expectations

Communication, as a product, will become more efficient when supervisors more accurately realize the values of their employees, therefore decreasing amounts of relational uncertainty for the employee.

The relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate has generally placed much of the onus on the supervisor being able to guide the employee. But there appears to be a rather crucial research gap about educating supervisors as to the needs of the

employee. While many incentives in organizations are financially based, however, this may be rather presumptuous to assume that employee values are all solely based around financial gain.

Research related to subordinates' understanding employee values could help strengthen employees becoming more assimilated into an organization. Appealing to employees needs could help establish a stronger and more honest relationship between supervisors and subordinates. Employees experiencing a stronger feeling of assimilation, related to their needs, could provide a greater understand of what employees truly value, from an organizational support standpoint.

By conducting a study that explores what supervisors believe to be factors that motivate employees, in comparison to what employees truly value, provides organizational leadership more accurate insight into how employees are truly motivated. A study that would benefit organizations seems to be a two-part research project. First, what type of needs do supervisors assume motivate their subordinates and do the assumptions violate employee expectations, provides understanding of what assumptions are made by supervisors about subordinates. Secondly, what do employees value in the workplace (that provides motivation) and what do superiors think subordinates value, will display contrast against what the supervisors believe to be most important motivating factors for employees.

An initial premise in the area evaluating employee expectations would be to understand the source that the subordinate is responsible for answering, the supervisor.

One area of interest in particular is the area of motivation. While subordinates are compensated for their work financially, there certainly must be other ways to motivate employees. By surveying about what supervisors believe are the greatest motivating factors for employees, research is provided with a basis for comparison. An important concept that research should seek to reveal is what activities can be implemented on a regular basis, be it daily, weekly or monthly, that help bridge the gap between what employees expect versus what they actually encounter.

Another area of interest would be to evaluate how effective supervisors are in communicating goals to employees. Specific to each organization or organizational type studied, the research should distinguish between long-term and short-term goals. The related studies would be experimental and include surveys conducted with both the supervisors and subordinates in an organization. Some of the information listed below applies specifically to either the supervisor or subordinate, while some of the information applies to both groups. The information sought from the sample should include, but not be limited to:

1. Degrees of clarification of long-term and short-term goals
2. What are critical values to consider related to employees
3. What factors contribute to rewarding employees
4. What factors contribute to reprimanding employees
5. How well do supervisors feel goal related messages were decoded
6. Satisfaction of understanding goal related messages
7. Organizational goal clarity related to job description

8. What are the greatest organizational motivating factors

Once the respondents have completed the survey, the information should be reviewed to establish correlations. This study should provide a framework that could be applied in a consulting, training, or educational context for organizations.

Employee Reflective Decision Making

Once employees are provided proper guidelines for assessing their own behaviors, employees will become more certain about their role in organizational tasks.

Educating employees about how to properly assess their decisions and behaviors within an organization contribute greatly to employee uncertainty, specifically in decision making. Hirokawa and Rost (1992) discussed three stages that groups can engage in to increase satisfaction related to decision making. The Vigilant Interaction theory proposes that by acknowledging all factors around making a decision allows proper analysis to feel more confident about a decision. The term employee “reflective” decision making uses many of the premises from Vigilant Interaction theory, however it refers to an intrapersonal evaluation, rather than relying on a group to help review factors surrounding decisions.

Review of related literature seems to explore uncertainty related to employees and organizations as well as decision making for employees. But a link between these two concepts seems to be critical to understanding the experience of employees within an organization as well as being relevant to the field of communication research. In understanding the link between uncertainty and decision making, organizations can help create a more self-reliant employee who is also equipped with peripheral abilities such as

independent thinking and an understanding of how their role fits into the organizational whole.

By giving employees the tools to assess their own decisions, organizations can help train employees who are more confident and utilize their time more efficiently, thus benefiting the organization. Not simply limited to confidence and proper time utility, organizations may also help equip employees with knowledge to aid in decisions that offer little to no time to seek information. By studying what factors contribute to employee satisfaction, in regard to independently made decisions, a framework for educating and training employees may exist and offer benefits for both employee and organizations.

Initially, an expansive study should be conducted from Hirokawa and Rost (1992): Using the three stages proposed in that research to evaluate subordinates feelings once utilizing all three stages on a general organizational task. Group A (group that uses 3 stages proposed in Vigilant Interaction Theory) versus a control group (group B) that make decisions about the same events as group A, however, allowing the group to use any method of preference, no coaching as to how to reach a group decision. Once the groups have reached decisions, the study should perform exit interviews about how the group feels about the decision and decision making process.

Specifically, the exit interviews should seek to discover information such as: how satisfied the participants were with their group decision, how group interaction affected their decision, preference on group versus independent ability to make a decision,

feelings of responsibility related to the decision that was reached, how much did the decision making process affect the decision making outcome, and groups strengths and weaknesses. Each of these concepts should provide insight about what the individual participant values. Just as critical, by examining the values of each participant an understanding of why the participant does possess these values may aid in explaining different variables that produce uncertainty in the individuals' decision making process.

In relation to the previous study, an objective for a follow up study would be to discover how to motivate or persuade subordinates and supervisors to engage in proactive uncertainty reduction methods to create an organization of reflective, independent thinkers. Specifically, discussing techniques from both the supervisor to subordinate and subordinate to supervisor perspective in how to seek information to reduce uncertainty.

The study would seek to discover what factors contribute most to employee uncertainty around decision making, independently. For instance, by surveying employees about what topics information or affirmation is sought on, most frequently, as opposed to topics that employees feel most comfortable making decisions without consulting an outside source (someone other than themselves). This could help establish the contexts in which employees most frequently experience uncertainty about their decision making.

This study should also seek to understand what factors contribute to creating uncertainty with independent decision making. Insight as to information such as job

loss/demotion, being reprimanded, sentiment related to peer-inadequacy, and willingness to seek information may be indicators of uncertainty.

In understanding what factors contribute to uncertainty in decision making, supervisors can help provide subordinates with proper support to increase satisfaction and accuracy in their decision making. Supervisors actively providing support and continuing to promote successful subordinate decision making may, over time, allow the employee an active knowledge about how to properly make decisions, related to the organization. The subordinate having the ability to make decisions independently and successfully will benefit the organization in many different ways, depending on the structure of the organization.

Discussion

This study provides the theoretical underpinnings to realize the legitimacy of applying communication research in the business arena. Fundamentals specific to businesses vary according to the function and overall purpose of the organization, however, one consistent element that directly contributes overall success within organizations is communication. The ability to share information accurately and access that information is paramount to the basic functionality of modern organizations. More specifically, the element of uncertainty for employees, when choosing a communication channel, develops as a constant concern for members of organizations. The ability to understand how to effectively and efficiently acquire information, through the available medium, is at the conceptual core of channel selection.

The spark and continued growth of the global economy has initiated a critical concern for organizational efficiency. Information becoming readily available through a multitude of devices creates a growing immediacy to be able to access information that permits employees the access to information which enables organizational goals to be realized. This project displays concerns directly associated with the theoretical efficiency underpinnings. While organizations become more spread out, as a result of continued global growth, an ever-present concern to strengthen communication efficiency arises. This project displays the current lack of research that would assist in the development of training, educational, and assimilation tools to help create a much more communication conscious and task-efficient organization.

There is an economic demand for organizations to become more globalized, but this creates difficulties related to information acquisition. The means by which employees will be able to access information in the future will become more complicated, thus the importance to understand some of the potential deterrents employees might encounter, attempting to complete organizational tasks. Information acquisition will be one of the critical factors for organizations to solution for a horizontally growing global economy. Communication is the medium that will be able to connect a swiftly spreading economy and by further research related to employee difficulties acquiring information, businesses will be able to run more efficiently.

Prevalently, research has been associated with particular genres or topically related fields. No matter the genre, this study evaluates organizations on the basis of how

communication research can affect a critical concern in a business atmosphere. Being able to share knowledge for pragmatic solutions, utilizes research in the most beneficial manner. Future research should not only seek to find solutions to issues related to this study, but attempt to discover how applying concepts from alternate genres. By not isolating research to genre-based ideas, the collective field of research will profit from increased accuracy in findings, while drastically increasing the utility of proposed solutions.

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Appendix

Survey

Please read the following questions and select the most appropriate answer.

1. If your supervisor had to tell you bad news about your job performance, how would you prefer to receive this information?
 - A. face to face
 - B. in a memo
 - C. in a formal letter
 - D. via another person
 - E. by email

2. If your supervisor had to tell you good news about your job performance, how would you prefer to receive this information?
 - A. face to face
 - B. in a memo
 - C. in a formal letter
 - D. via another person
 - E. by email

3. If your supervisor had to tell you bad news about the organization, how would you prefer to receive this information?
 - A. face to face
 - B. in a memo
 - C. in a formal letter
 - D. via another person
 - E. by email

4. If your supervisor had to tell you bad news about the organization, how would you prefer to receive this information?
 - A. face to face
 - B. in a memo
 - C. in a formal letter
 - D. via another person
 - E. by email

5. The factor I value most when being rewarded for completing a job related task for being successful in that task is:
 - A. monetary reward
 - B. time or days off
 - C. private recognition
 - D. organizational recognition
 - E. other

6. The factor that I least value most when being rewarded for completing a job related task for being successful in that task is:
 - A. monetary reward
 - B. time or days off
 - C. private recognition
 - D. organizational recognition
 - E. other

7. When I am seeking assistance for a job related task, I feel most comfortable seeking information from which source?
 - A. one of my team members (peers)
 - B. my supervisor
 - C. someone from another team, within my organization
 - D. someone from an outside organization
 - E. I would rather find it by myself and not seek assistance

Please respond to each statement with the following scale: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=no opinion, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

When I communicate with my supervisor about issues related to salary, I feel comfortable.

1 2 3 4 5

When I communicate with my supervisor about issues related to job performance, I feel comfortable.

1 2 3 4 5

When I communicate with my supervisor about issues related to my fellow employees' job performance, I feel comfortable.

1 2 3 4 5

When I communicate with my supervisor about organizationally related goals, I completely understand their purpose.

1 2 3 4 5

When I communicate with my supervisor, they explain the difference between the goal being a long term goals versus short term goal.

1 2 3 4 5

When I am being rewarded, my supervisor understands what I value, as an employee, in relation to what I personally value.

1 2 3 4 5

When I am being rewarded by my supervisor, I feel like my supervisor considers what is really important to me, personally.

1 2 3 4 5

When I seek assistance with a job related task, I feel like my supervisor respects me as an employee.

1 2 3 4 5

When I am required to make a decision that will impact the success of my organization, the most important factor is:

_____ Expediency

_____ Jurisdiction

_____ Accuracy

_____ Future success

_____ Affect on my peers performance

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Agree (Permission is granted.)

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Date

Disagree (Permission is not granted.)

Kyle Mitchell Christensen

Student Signature

March 22, 2007

Date