

# Communication System in an Organization: A Case Study at Banglamung Drinking Water Co., Ltd.

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**Abstract:** *This study was focus on exploring the effectiveness of communication approach between the employees and employers at Banglamung Drinking Water Co. Ltd. Furthermore, this study also discovered the consequence on result of miscommunication, obstacle, and solution of the communication between the employees and employers at BDW. The samples of this study were 80 employees of BDW, consisted of 80 samples who were participants of survey and seven interviewees. Both survey and interviewing were applied for exploring effective of communication on employee's performance. The finding indicated that the communication approach at BDW was mostly done in face to face communication, which sometime they applied instant message application to assist communication activities. According to Pearson correlation coefficient test, it found upward to downward communication is the strongest positive correlated with performance, followed by quality of media and communication utility, downward to upward communication, subordinate communication and cooperate communication. The major findings explained consequence of miscommunication was reduction of work productivity, errors, and stressful employees. The problem is mostly come from downward site that employees quite ignore news or policies from upwards which is return to waste in production or activities. So it should improve communication in BDW start from downward to upward level by pushing employee to do more participate in the meeting or activities.*

**Keywords:** communication, effectiveness, employer, employee, organization, obstacle

## Introduction

Banglamung Drinking Water Co. Ltd. is the company that produce bottle and turned into package of water. This company was founded in 1995. Currently, the organizational structure of BDW, contained seven departments which are human resource, sales, delivery, purchasing, accounting & financial, manufacture and technician department.

There are over 80 employees hence this requires a good communication skill in order to get work done efficiently. To ensure the upward and downward communication, the weekly manager meeting is held to report the work done and discuss the issue from each department. Each manager will take care of the basic problem according to the policy that has been discussed during manager meeting. If the issue is something new, the manager will bring the issue up in the weekly meeting to find the best solution out. If anyone has a new idea, he or she will bring it up for discussion as well. After the manager meeting, each manager will pass on the policies to their department members. The members will follow the policy that has been told by the managers. If there are any problems with the issue, the members will gather the issues and discuss them during the monthly department meeting. It is a requirement that each department to hold once a month meeting among the members of the department. Then, the managers will bring the issues to the manager meeting. At the end of the month, CEO will hold end of the month meeting with all the employees to show the progress of that particular month to the employees. This is the meeting that will share the good news, bad news and new rules of the company.

In term of manufacturing, the work process requires the movement of the products from one machine to the others hence BDW need quite a huge number of employees in order to complete the production line. Moreover, a good communication skill is required in order to maintain a good standard of the productions. It means communication skill is one of those factors that will lead to the effective in manufacturing and organizational management. When the problem occurs in any part of the process in production line, the managers need to give a clear and quick instruction of when and

where to stop the machines. If employees are unable to follow the instruction, it can lead into the unexpected loss, for instance, increase the waste from production line, production is below expectation and spend too much time for each work that has been assigned. In the end, both managers and subordinates are not satisfied and unhappy, which caused subordinates request the change in work position, or even in the worst case is leaving the company.

This study is based on the concept of improving effective communication skill in an organization by Holt (2015). He mentioned in his work that there are several facts that effective communication can bring to the workplace such as increase productivity decreases employee turnover and improve office atmosphere (Holt, 2015). This is because better communication can bring a better working relationship between supervisors, managers and employees. In this study, the researcher have focused on communication skill within BDW, which can help the management further understand the work process and the communication issue among BDW employees. More specifically, the objectives of the study were to evaluate the communication approach at BDW and its effectiveness. Also, the objectives of the study were to find and resolve the obstacles of the communication between the employees and employers.

## Literature Reviews

### *Organizational communication*

Communication is due with transmitting the message one way or the other. More importantly, it has to be vertical and horizontal communication. Kreps (1990) defined organizational communication as the process whereby members gather relevant information about their organization and the changes occurring within it. Organization communication is a form of both downward to upward and upward to downward communication in order to receive the same information throughout the whole organization. It is also an essential skill that require by many organizations. Many people often think that communication is regarding solely on speaking clearly and ensuring that the message is sent to the listeners. But that is the wrong idea. Rothwell and Sredl (1992) explained that communication has to do with the exchange of meaning, through symbols is the basic process underlying all management and learning functions. Communication theory has contributed to the study of human interaction and learning. In term of organizational communication, it learned on the process and how it is applied in organizational settings is influenced by communication within and between groups and individuals (Rothwell and Sredl, 1992). As noted by Heath (1994), an understanding of communication can help managers and their personnel coordinate efforts needed to achieve their company's mission. According to Heath (1994), the purposes of communication in an organization are two perspectives, which are focusing on make organizations effective and increase people's happiness in organizations.

Organization can keep manufacturing the products or providing the services, but it may not last long or get any further without a good effective communication skill. Robinson (2015) stated on effective communication consists of three major keys, i.e., listening, nonverbal communication, and meeting the stress. These keys need a good amount of practice in order to create a perfect effect communication. Listening is one of the most important parts of effective communication. Successful listening does not means just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but the listeners also need to understand how the speaker feels about what they're communicating (Robinson, 2015). Good listener should fully focus on the speaker and avoid seeming judgmental. Furthermore, listener should show their interest on the speaker to reduce a stress in communication (Holt, 2015). Lawrance (2015) stated that body language can make sure to relax oneself during the conversation. Besides, managing the stress wisely can help a person through the pressure (Robinson, 2015). It can help avoiding the unnecessary actions which later on the person will regret of doing them.

Furthermore, effective communications are explained as being productive and of high quality. As Heath (1994) mentioned on the purpose of pointing out the importance of communication is not to in any way show disregard for the basic functions of the organization, in other words, the company can keep manufacture goods, provide the service. Conrad (1990) stated that employees need to understand the relationship between effective communication and the successful operation of the organization. Further, all types of communication in the organizational context affect the relationships and even the productivity of an organization (Galvin & Cooper, 1996). Holt (2015) stated that

effective communication can bring a better working relationship between supervisors, managers and employees by increase productivity, decreases employee turnover and improve office atmosphere.

### ***Interpersonal and Organizational Barriers***

In order to achieve the effective communication skill, one has to consider the interpersonal and organizational barriers. Dawn (2000) has explained in his work that both barriers can be overcome with vision of the leader (supervisors, managers, CEO). In management terms, the word vision is used to describe an agreement among directors about the future of their organization. It requires access to all relevant information, such as the present state of the company and its values (Kakabadse, 2001). Vision also can provides leaders and their companies a sense of direction and purpose, enabling them to deal with resource (employees, materials, etc.) well, to develop and grow. For a vision to work, leader is needed to inspire other people. Leader must create a visioning culture that inspires people to work towards the same goals (Kakabadse, 2001). Vision can help company overcome interpersonal barriers which include perception and perceptual selection processes, semantics, channel selection and inconsistent verbal and nonverbal communication. The process of communicating vision can raise awareness of important organizational goals and can inform people about the appropriate means to attain the goals (Bass, 1990). In term of semantic, leaders are advised to be very expressive, to use vivid language to connote enthusiasm, positive energy, confidence and personal conviction (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). In this way, semantics is viewed as a tool available to a leader, instead of a problem to minimize. Furthermore, selecting a channel that does not fit the message can lead to a breakdown in communication. To date, research has shown that matching characteristics of the message to the channel can improve the effectiveness of communication.

Furthermore, task and organization structure requirements can provide barriers to effective communication. The tasks people perform will affect who talks to whom, the urgency and speed of messages, and what information people need to share. "As a direct consequence of hierarchy, we can find filtering (intentionally or unintentionally leaving out parts of a message) distortion (to serve individual goals), and refusal to communicate (either because of oversight or deliberately not sharing information)" (Dawn, 2000). To overwhelming the tendency to filter, distort, and refuse to communicate, leaders are advised to increase trust and encourage co-operation over competition by framing issues in terms of what the parties will gain from settling their differences. A focus on teamwork and gains should be reinforced by the measurement of results and the reward system (Kouzes and Posner, 1995).

When there is an absence of formal communication channels. It is difficult to get information from employee to manager, from manager to employee, from subunit to subunit, and from customer to supplier. In organizations we need channels to transmit information about performance, goals and goal achievement, procedures and practices, and to foster coordination and problem solving across the organizational boundaries. Interpersonal and organizational barrier is tough to overcome but with good vision from the leader as guideline for the followers (employees or members of each department), make it easier.

## **Methodology**

The research method applied in this study was the mix method research, which collecting and analyze both qualitative and quantitative at the same time (Creswell, 2009). The quantitative method was selected for identifying the effectiveness of the communication at BDW; which was the research question two. The qualitative method was used for finding out the obstacle that possibly affects the communication. The sample size of quantitative part was 80 employees who worked within the system and work process of BDW. For qualitative part, 7 interviewees who had been working at BDW for at least 3 years were selected from each department. Survey technique was applied for collecting data. The questionnaire distribution was done within October 2015.

The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect information from those respondents. For quantitative, the researcher developed evaluation of employee communication questionnaires to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication between employees and employers at BDW. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts. The first section showed the demographic factors of participants such as gender, age, working experience, and job positioning. Second section explained the perception of employee toward communication in the organization. It consisted of five

perspectives of organizational communication, which were subordinate communication, upward to downward communication, downward to upward communication, cooperate communication, and quality of media and communication utility. And the last section was measuring the employee performance. Likert 5-point scale questions were applied in section 2 and 3. For qualitative method, the instrument for the qualitative method was included semi-structure interview, observation, and document review. Both the qualitative and quantitative instrument was consulted with the three experts to measure the ambiguous and consistency of questionnaire. The content validity of instruments was tested by using IOC (Index of item – objective congruence). After validated by experts, in return of the positive and negative comments from the experts helped researcher to correct the questionnaire became more valid and consistent. For testing reliability, Cronbach's alpha test was conducted for testing consistency of question in each factor, including five communication factors and performance of employee (Table 1). The result showed all of variables had alpha coefficient are greater than threshold level or 0.70 (Zikmund, 2012). It indicated the questionnaire use in this study is reliable.

Table 1 Reliability of the questionnaire

n = 80	Cronbach's Alpha	N
Subordinate communication	.708	3
Upward to downward communication	.913	5
Downward to upward communication	.917	4
Cooperate communication	.771	4
Quality of media and communication utility	.885	4
Performance	.899	8

## Data analysis

For the quantitative data, the statistical analyses were conducted using the SPSS software (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 21. Descriptive analysis includes mean, frequency, and percentage selected for summarizing collected data. Furthermore, the researcher selected Pearson correlation coefficient test for identify the relationship between communication approaches and performance of employee of BDW.

### Quantitative Results

Table 2 Descriptive analysis of demographic factors

	n = 80	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	37	46.3
	Female	43	53.8
Age	21-30	46	57.4
	31-40	13	16.3
	41-50	17	21.3
	More than 50	4	5
Highest education	High school	63	78.8
	Diploma	17	21.2
Marital status	Single	41	51.2
	Married	39	48.8

n = 80		Frequency	Percent
Work experience in the current position	A year or below	17	21.3
	2 - 3 years	16	20
	4 - 5 years	22	27.4
	5 - 10 years	13	16.3
	More than 10 years	12	15
Salary	Below 15,000 Baht	63	78.8
	15,000 - 20,000 Baht	13	16.3
	Over 20,000 Baht	4	5
Position	Front line employee	40	50
	Driver	5	6.3
	Office	14	17.5
	Technician	8	10
	Supervisor	9	11.3
	Manager	4	5

The table shows the demographic data of the employees of BDW include 43 female and 37 male, both single (51.2%) and married (48.8%). Majority of employee aged between 21 – 30 years (57.4%) and have average age of 31.5 years. In term of education, they have highest education level at high school (78.8%). They have monthly salary below 15,000 Baht (78.8%). Half of participants are worked as front line employee (50%) and officer (17.5%). Most of them worked in current position for six years.

Table 3 Descriptive analysis of the effectiveness of communication approach at BDW

	Mean	S.D	Level
Subordinate communication	3.91	0.55	Agree
Upward to downward communication	3.83	0.73	Agree
Downward to upward communication	4.05	0.76	Agree
Cooperate communication	3.88	0.52	Agree
Quality of media and communication utility	3.79	0.69	Agree
Performance	4.11	0.56	Agree

From the average mean score, it describes the BDW employee has high work performance ( $\bar{x} = 4.11$ ). According to the different communication approaches, it found all of average means are high, as it explained respondents agreed with the statements. Furthermore, the average score shows downward to upward communication has highest score ( $\bar{x} = 4.05$ ), followed by subordinate communication ( $\bar{x} = 3.91$ ), cooperate communication ( $\bar{x} = 3.88$ ), upward to downward communication ( $\bar{x} = 3.83$ ), and quality of media and communication utility ( $\bar{x} = 3.79$ ), respectively.

Table 4 Pearson correlation coefficient analysis

	Correlation coefficient	p-value	Interpretation
Subordinate communication	.753**	.000	High
Upward to downward communication	.774**	.000	High
Downward to upward communication	.755**	.000	High
Cooperate communication	.661**	.000	High
Quality of media and communication utility	.757**	.000	High

In term of inferential analysis, the researcher applied Pearson correlation coefficient statistic to explain the relationship between five communication approaches and work performance of BDW's employee. The strength of relationship can be explained by using interpretation from Hinkle et al. (1988). It found all of five factors have positive high relationship with work performance at significant level of 0.05 ( $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ ). From the coefficient value (r-value), it has found that upward to downward communication is the strongest correlated with performance ( $r = 0.774$ ), followed by quality of media and communication utility ( $r\text{-value} = 0.757$ ), downward to upward communication ( $r\text{-value} = 0.755$ ), subordinate communication ( $r\text{-value} = 0.753$ ), and cooperate communication ( $r\text{-value} = 0.661$ ), respectively. These findings are consistent with Holt (2015) that mentioned the association between communication and productivity. The effectiveness of communication in organization can improve the work atmosphere, relief employee stress, and it returned into better productivity. This study finds supervisor is the most effective on subordinate's performance. From the interviewing, the effectiveness of communication also enhance by using technology like peer to peer communication, for example, LINE application, e-mails, or even social networking platform like Facebook.

#### *Qualitative Results*

In case of qualitative, interviewing were conducted to seven participants who were employee of BDW. Four questions were ask about the communication approach between employees and employers at BDW, as well as the effectiveness of communication in their organization, the consequence of the miscommunication and the obstacles during participations.

*The communication approach between the employees and employers at BDW*

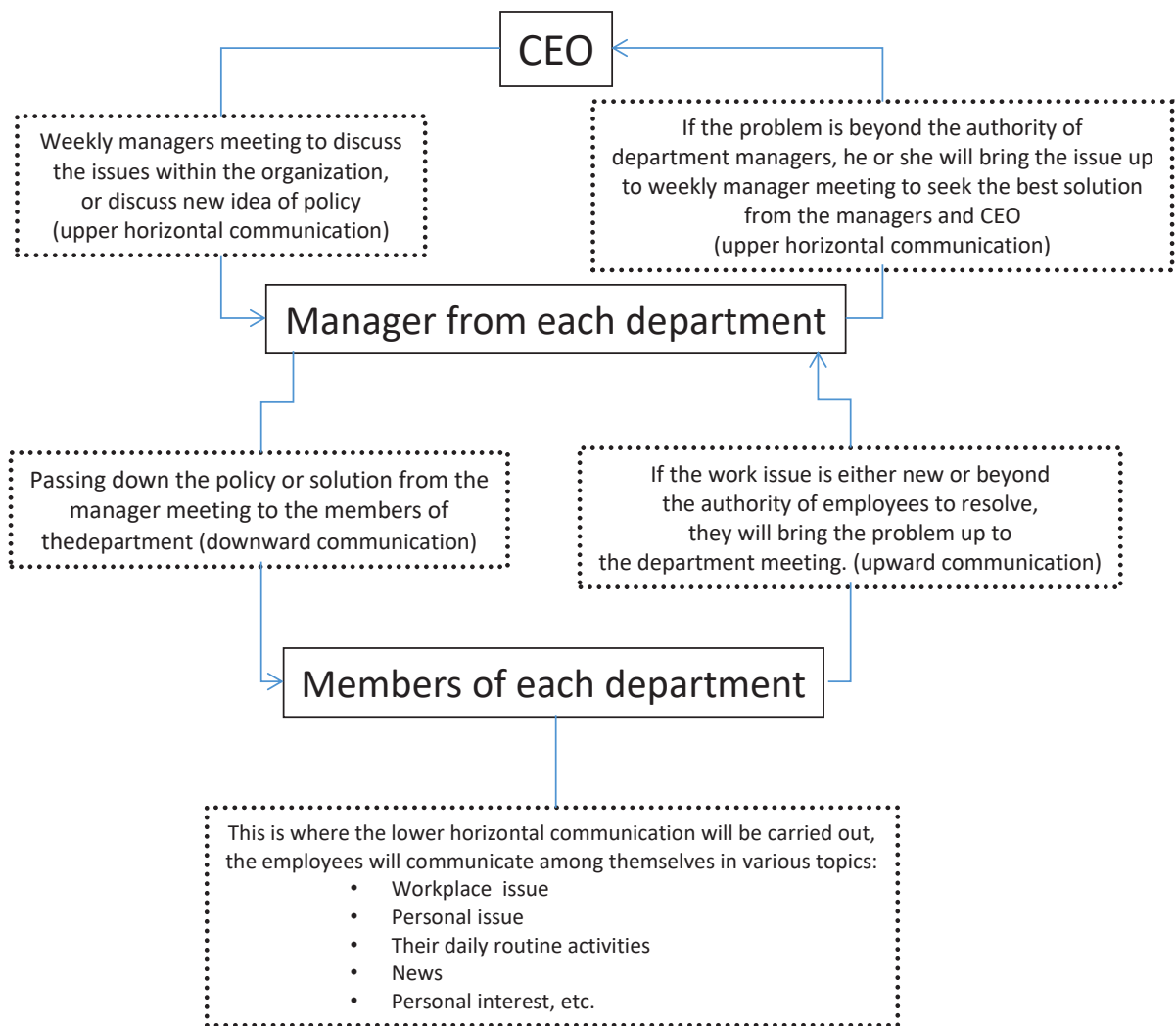


Figure 1: Communication approach at BDW

Since the company currently handle over 80 employees, the communication approach is very significant. Face to face communication is mostly done in this organization. Besides, instant message application such as LINE application is used for various purposes, such as texting message to their boss or sending information like photo. Inside BDW Company, the characteristic of organization communication can occur in many situations. Firstly, the subordinate communication is discussed in topic include workplace issues, news, personal issues, and any routine activities. However, when they cannot solve the problem, the communication from downward to upward is take care by department manager who take responsibility to discuss issues from their department, which mostly pass from their subordinate to them. The corporate communication occurs when they discuss those problems with other managers in the manager meeting which is done every week. Then upward to downward communication occurs by passing the results to their subordinates. In the end of month, CEO will share information or news to every employee.

*The effectiveness of the communication between the employees and employers of BDW*

In term of effectiveness of communication process in BDW, it can be considered that quickness of conversation, flexibility, and intimacy are strong points of communication in BDW Company. Managers allow their employee to use personal communication application such as LINE or social media like Facebook to report issues to them directly. The use of information technology for communication can enhance the effectiveness of communication. It can possibly trace the information on chat logs or sending many type of information like image or video. It means using these tools can reduce the noise occur in communication process. For term of intimacy, the gap between subordinator and their boss is reducing due to flexibility in communication through the use of personal communication application. Furthermore, they still leave the message to secretary or make an appoint to manager directly.

*The consequence as the result of miscommunication/ lack of communication at BDW*

However, it found all of communication approaches were linked to the performance of workers. It shows upward to downward communication is the most affected performance, followed by quality of media and utility, downward to upward communication, subordinate communication, and cooperate communication. It means the smoothness of communication can improve the workplace environment and productivity of work. In contrast, the miscommunication at the organization leads to many consequences to overall performance of company. It means this problem might affect the work productivity and also make employee feels stressful, which increase turnover rate of employee in an organization.

*The obstacles of the communication between the employees and employers at BDW*

According to the communication issues at BDW, most of problem appeared from downward to upward communication. From the quantitative analysis of the study, it shows upward to downward communication is strongest positive correlated with performance. Many employees quite ignore news or policies from upwards which is return to waste in production or activities done by them. Even front line manager shows the way of intimate communication, but most of front line employees choose to leave the problem behind rather than tells it to their boss. According to the interviewing result, it found the major communication obstacles at BDW comes from the employee. The problem of interpersonal communication is generally occurred between employee and their boss, especially in downside. Some staffs may not feel an appropriate to contact their supervisors, which causes they hide a problem and it returned into the waste in production. It can make the manager dissatisfies with worker's performance, which make more pressure on employee and it causes them quit the job. Furthermore, the most of the cases in this company generally rely on reporting to their boss. If the staffs or employees cannot contact their boss, the problem or issues will be on pending stage. Additionally, those staffs do not much pay attention and participate on reporting problem or discussion on meeting room, which returned no productivity occurs after meeting.

*The solution to resolve the communication obstacles at BDW*

To improve the overall performance of communication, it should start from downward to upward level. The best way is meeting in person by person. The suggestion for solving these issues is pushing employee to do more participate in the meeting or activities. The manager should directly ask feedback from employee directly to understand how they perceive well in communication. Furthermore, department manager should allow them to debate some ideas or discussion. Sometime, manager should reduce the use of third party source or application when communicate something important to employee. It helps them to understand specific direction and know which action can make them complete their job



without any problem. Furthermore, repeating the policy or summarize the meeting's result will help them understand more. To make important messages more repetitive can improve the organizational communication. From upward to downward communication, manager should be trained to handle communication problems, including conflicts or misunderstanding in communication process. Manager should always recognize that employee has different in cultural background. They should act straightforward and speak openly to employee for ensure their message has been received correctly.

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

The research gives significant finding to show the association between communication issue and productivity of employees at BDW. It shows positive upward to downward communication affected performance, as well as quality of media, downward to upward communication, subordinate communication, and cooperate communication. The key finding was supported by Grill (2009) stated on the significant of communication from upward to downward on performance of employee as well as environment in organization. Furthermore, it is consistent to Kouzes and Posner (1995) that explained appropriate advices from boss can improve the power of teamwork that lead to better performance. Besides, Seaman (1997) and Aviles (2012) stated on the effective of technology in term of improving of performance in organization. The advantages of implementing technology in communication can reduce noise in communication and provide the better understanding toward dialog of communication. The result shows main barrier of communication at BDW is mostly came from subordinates, which is mean two-way communication should be improve in employee side. The obstacle of communication caused trouble to the organization, for example, increases the waste in the production, as well as lack of efficiency in work output and creates an unhappy working situation. In return, the stressed employee will leave if the workplace have inappropriate environment. This finding shows the effectiveness communication makes fewer mistakes in the workplace. By giving clearer instruction and communication can reduce waste from making certain mistake in production. Improving the quality of communication will make both subordinators and leaders become more satisfy with their job. In order to improve the way to communicate in BDW Company, enforcing strategy is suggested. Pushing distracted employee to participate more in the meeting room can help them understand more. However, creating an environment where employees feel an appropriate to make discussion in the workplace, as well as make them would like to share opinion to their boss. In order to improve the quality of communication, it should allow employee selects their best choice of communication tool to make a contact with their boss. It can help to reduce a distance between subordinate and their leader. Furthermore, utilizing focus group is recommended to increase a level of employee's participation by allowing them to share a thing or subjects that they feel uncomfortable to say in general.

This research solved all of the objectives of the study, however it still have major limitations. The researcher considered time constraint and budget as major problem of the study. So the topic was limited only studying the relationship between some communication approaches in the organization and work performance. Furthermore, the sample size of 80 may affect the quality of output. It will make the result become less accurate. Since this research is a case study of BDW Company, so the result may not apply to other companies because the organization size and culture might be different. In order to make the result more reliable, the researcher have to do comparative research by select another company to compare the difference between two companies in term of effectiveness of communication approaches on employee's performance.

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