

Ethical Communication in IT Project From an Islamic Perspective

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Abstract—Interactive communication morals distinguish it from other methods of interaction morals by focused point for the association among information technology project team members. Official communications design is not focused in a minor portion of the information technology projects, and neither writing performance reports nor having a system of control over lessons learned frequent practices within organization. When the communication is not at the best relationship, interpersonal communication at all levels moves into another form of communicative interaction. The major objective of this paper is to identify the communicational obstacles and its impact on the information technology projects and suggest the best possible solution for these obstacles from the Islamic perspective. We assume that the knowledge that we pass through this paper would be beneficial for the future IT projects.

Keywords – Communication; ethics, Islamic perspective; information technology project.

I. INTRODUCTION

Interpersonal communication ethics focuses on strong bond and the relationship among the team members. There are several methods of communication, among these methods is, interpersonal communication among the team members, project manager and the stakeholders, where interpersonal relationship and information sharing is more focused. Interpersonal communication ethic majorly targets the ethical behavior, trust, mutual support and information sharing. Face to face communication is best choice for the whole team especially for the project manager where he could identify the real expectation and the requirements by the stakeholders, also project manager could explain the same to the project team easily. This paper aims to recognize the communication method in information technology development project and the major obstacles to communications. The significance of communication in any project is very huge. Cautious communication planning and confirming the desired expectations with all the project stakeholders is very crucial for the success of any project. [8]

According to the latest finding it is clear that not enough information was known about the styles, methods, success or failure of existing within typical project environments within the project team. [2] Project communications means to the specific behavior and techniques used to lead, motivate, report

back and delegate to all stakeholders working on the project. [17].

II. RELATED STUDIES

A. *Interpersonal communication*

The absence of efficiency in the communications that has been used may be the results of problem to communication that may result from the everyday life of the project. Positive project managers normally have good communications skills that include being able to listen and act on feedback, foster harmony among team members and effectively present the issue. [11] Each interpersonal relationship requires different responsibilities and unique levels of distance. To create an environment of trust, following five steps of activities that assure a common recognizing of ideas, involvement of team members, actions and results is very crucial: (1) requesting and accepting feedback; (2) sharing thoughts, emotions and feelings; (3) recognize and test inferences; (4) taking commitments that one can fulfill; and (5) admitting errors; [17] [9]

Interpersonal communication supports the relationship in order to tie responsibility between persons. According to Fox “Traditional approaches to interpersonal communication include the contextual, in which the nature of communication is defined by the number of communicators, and the

developmental assessed by the closeness of the relationship as it developments toward greater intimacy”. Classification of communication methods is divided into four large groups, which are verbal, emotional, environmental and interpersonal reactions. [19] [10]

- **Verbal:** people who speak too rapidly; the use of slang; not knowing how to listen, not paying attention, etc.
- **Environmental:** visual distractions, noise, etc.
- **Emotional Reactions:** anger, love, hate, fear and embarrassment.
- **Interpersonal:** inaccurate suppositions and different perceptions, language differences, differences in status, ethnic differences, etc. [16] [14]

B. Whistle-Blowing

Whistle-blowing is defined as being applicable to situations in which behavior is observed that is illegitimate, illegal, or immoral. Personalities with higher levels of ethics are more likely to assess a personal responsibility to report a project’s status. A stronger judgment that information should be communicated will be showed in a higher reviewed level of responsibility is taken for the reporting. Prior research on whistle-blowing suggests that the ethics of a state can affect whistle-blowing purpose. Higher levels of measured personal responsibility level will be associated with more willingness to report defects in the system or product. An individual will make two separate assessments of whether the bad news ought to be reported and the personal responsibility to report the bad news. [18]

Morality as a personal issue which was found to influence an individual’s three determination steps included in the basic whistle-blowing model: the valuation of whether the project status should be reported, the valuation of personal duty to report the status of the distresses or troubled software project, and the motivation to report the bad news about the project.

C. Ethical impact of the project

Project management process identifies the tasks and mission to be achieved, monitors development and quality frequently according to that plan and development a plan to achieve these tasks. Moreover, project management function is to make sure that the project is accomplished and delivered on the specific time, within budget, and with the required quality specifications. [18]

There are many of studies trying to analysis the reason of project success or failure and they found that there are criteria and signals that they can use it to measure the success or failure of projects. First, if the project meets user requirements. Second, if it is completed on time. Third, if it is within budget. Forth, if it is meets the quality requirements. But that is not all; if we look carefully we can see that the ethics issue is an important part that plays significance role in

project success or failure. So, let’s have a closer look and focus on “Project ethic”. [3] [16]

First of all, the project manager has to behave ethically, if not, it will ensure the project fail. To better recognizing we have to ask our self when we can say that the project manager behaves ethically. A project manager must accept responsibility of the actions that he made. This means: Admission of making mistakes: It is usually difficult to admit that you have done something bad. This is true for the project manager because the project is his responsibility. Hence, the project manager has to admission to all the stakeholders when he is wrong, learning from his mistakes, and putting actions into place that will help him to avoid making the same mistake in future. [1] [7]

It is unethical for a project manager to blame others for mistakes that were clearly the fault of the project manager. Although the project manager is the one that he responsible of ensuring the project completed, sometimes it can fail even the project manager afford his best efforts. In these cases the blame for failure has to be on the team as a whole instead of just one or two people.

Respect others: respect is a necessary moral must be available between superior and subordinate. The superior should not raise the voice or use non decent words of others.

Encouragement and promotion: Project manager should use method promotion and encouragement to be effective in spread the spirit of cooperation and competition between the teams. In addition, you should investigate the trust and avoid injustice in this method. [3]

D. Successful Communication

Following are the things that to be kept in mind to have a successful communication with in the project team.

1. Don’t assume everything is known: It is not wise to assume that we know each and everything in this world. The best option would be ask, guide and dedicate to the people that know the subject area.

2. Plan and prioritize: Don’t wait till things get bad to worst. It is always advisable to plane the communication and inject the right information at the right time to the right people. Access information or less information may lead to conflict and confusion.

3. Up to date: Out dated information may not be very important, rather providing the expired information or not relevant information may not be so effective. Always communicate the things in hand and things which are expected in the future.

4. Positive thinking: No one wants to hear bad news all the time, specially the client and the user who are already getting nervous about meeting deadlines and budgets. The communication plan will explain what needs to be done and how it will be done.

5. Different channels: Keep the different communication channels open, so that the stakeholders and the project team could easily access and feel comfortable to communicate. It is always advisable to use the different channels to communicate and make it flexible so that all the team players would adapt their own method of communication as they feel more convincing and comfortable. [3] [2] [16]

E. Reasons why project fails from a commutation view

There are hundreds of reasons that make the project fails such as poorly managed, undefined objectives and goals, lack of management commitment, lack of project plan, lack of user input, lack of organizational support, centralized proactive management initiatives to combat project risk, enterprise management of budget resources, poorly defined roles and responsibilities, team weaknesses, competing priorities, poor communication, business politics, overruns of schedule and cost, estimates for cost and schedule are erroneous, lack of prioritization and project portfolio management, ignoring project warning signs, bad decisions. [1] [12]

Poor communication is the reason most information technology projects fail, according to the research by the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA), nearly 28% of the more than 1,000 respondents to the survey said poor communication is the number one cause of project failure. [2]

When each team member works alone and tries to do their works and what they think it is fit the situation without caring or referring to the team or the project manager. Moreover, they don't know what the consequences of this behavior are or when the project manager hides the truth from the stockholder. [15] When the project has critical bugs but they hide due to the time available or budget or even the effort that they should to afford it to solve the problem. All these situations will surely cause the project failure. So, we can infer that there are different levels of communication each one of them is very important to project successes if it done under the scope of transparency:

- Communication among the stockholders themselves.
- Communication among the stockholders and the project manager.
- Communication among the project manager and the team.
- Communication among the team itself.

Most of project manager when they establish the project plan they miss including the communication on this plan. But

they are wrong because it truth that you get lots of information via email messages but it is also kept in various separated files, which are not easily accessible for the team members. This situation causes lots of misrecognizing, misinterpretations and mistakes. We don't mean that e-mail is not affective and we need to find another method to communicate, we have to integrate e-mail communication with project management. This will help easily manage projects in one workspace, solve the email inbox chaos problem, and boost team collaboration and double team productivity. We think, if integrated tools would be adopted a fewer projects would have failed. [16] [13]

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Desk research

As desk research uses secondary data or information that has already been published and collected for a specific research it would save lots of time to do our research. We used the relevant data which has already been publish by well-known groups with regards to specific issue of project communication also project management in general. One of the biggest advantages of doing the desk research is that we were able to gather lot of information on this particular topic. Some of the many sources of quality data information on the Internet with this regard are follows:

- 1- CHAOS Summary 2009 Report, information technology failure statistics (by Neil A. Ernst)
- 2- WSR Consulting Group's "What we do as Software Project Failure Expert Witnesses"
- 3- Linda Rosencrance 2007, Survey: Poor Communication Causes Most It Project Failures

IV. ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE OF COMMUNICATION

In Islam, it is very much prohibited and discouraged for the Muslim to treat unjustly or cheat in business transactions whether the one dealing with is a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Following are some of the Hadiths narrated by many companions of the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) [6]:

- 1- Narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Umar:

A man mentioned to the Prophet that he had always been cheated in bargains. The Prophet said, "Whenever you do bargain, say, 'No cheating.'" (Bukhari :: Book 9 :: Volume 86 :: Hadith 94)

- 2- Sa, id b. Musayyib reported that Mu'awiya said

Should I narrate to you the evil make-up. Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) forbade cheating. It was during that time that a person came with a staff and there was a cloth on its head, whereupon Mu, awiya said: Behold, that is cheating. (Muslim :: Book 24 : Hadith 5309)

- 3- Abdullah ibn Abbas said,

"Equanimity, gentleness, and good behavior are one twenty-fifth of prophecy" (Malik :: Book 51 : Hadith 51.5.16)

O People who Believe! Do not unjustly devour the property of each other, except through trade by mutual agreement; and do not kill one another; indeed Allah is Most Merciful upon you. (An-Nisa 29) [19]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا

(An-Nisa 29) [19]

Noble Quran, it is very much clear that it is forbidden to cheat in any manner. Even it is a simple error that was discovered during the testing phase, we are supposed to inform to the client about its defect. Four major characteristics define Qur'anic leadership: godliness, ethics, humaneness and balance. It is based on the Islamic creed, it is ethical because it places ethics at the core of its system and never gives priority for the worldly gains over ethical values. Its major focus is conducting good deeds to gain Allah's acceptance.

V. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION MODEL FROM AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

According to the above research, we conclude that to have an effective communication link within the project participants, it is very much important to establish a good connection among stakeholders, manager and project team.

When the Islam came it covers everything in human life from birth, death and after death. Islam doesn't leave anything out of its purview and jurisdiction. So, we can refer to Quran and Sunnah to any topic that we wondering about. In this paper we will focus on communication in Islam and some method that Islam have given to us to avoid misrecognizing and to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and social in general. [5]

The First review could conclude from the actions of the Prophet and his statements are important to repeat the words several times. This happens in order to ensure the delivery of message to the recipient is clear. We know that the degree of recognizing varies from person to person. We note that the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) was used this technique in many of his important statements. For example: On the authority of Abu Hurairah (radiAllaahu anhu), that a man said to the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him): "Counsel me", so the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) said: Do not become angry. The man repeated [his request for counsel] several times, and he Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) said: Do not become angry. It was related by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim.

The second review could conclude from the actions and statement of the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) is clarifying wording of the speech. Prophet Mohammed

(May peace be up on him) was able to deliver his idea by using clear and strong words. On the authority Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) said: "God gave me six things did not give other prophets, given the conciseness of speech.....Etc."

It was related by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. So, we can see that the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) sums up a lot of words in one clear word. As mentioned in the Qur'an, Prophet Moses was aware of the significance of good communication when he asks the god send his brother Aaron (who was a better communicator) with Prophet Moses because he was not able to speak clearly. According to Qur'an, Surah Ash-Shu' araa, 26: 13, Prophet Moses said "My breast will be straightened and my speech may not go (smoothly): so send unto Aaron". [4]

The third thing is counseling. There are many stories regarding to counseling in Serah of Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him). Counseling is one of the assets of the rules of the Islamic government and the necessity of community justice and the delivery a good for Muslims and ward off harm from them. God ordered the Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) to consult his companions when he said: "And counseling them in it..." (Alaumran 159). Benefit of counseling people is to teach them diligence.

The forth thing is always say the truth. Being a truthful person can always save you. The Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) said: "You must speak the truth for the truth leads to virtue and virtue leads to Paradise." (Al-Bukhari & Muslim).

The fifth is: do not be Gossiping, slander or backbiting because it harm to other people and parties, and may lead to many negative things (disputes, hatred, etc). The God said: "And do not spy, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?" (Al-Hujurat 49:12). The Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) said: "A slanderer will not enter Paradise" (Al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 6056). [6]

There are several things Islam guided us to strengthening social ties. We will mention some of them that regarding to this paper: Deployment of the greeting of Islam (peace be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings). God said (And if anyone greet you, you have to greet in return with what is better than it, or return), and smiling at people face. Meanwhile, Abu Dharr – (may Allah be pleased with him) - said: The Prophet Mohammed (May peace be up on him) said: "smiling at your brother is a charity, etc.." (Al-Bukhari) [5]

Islamic Effective Communication Model is a combination of theoretical factors like project managers' relationship with stakeholders and the team, professionalism of the project manager. Meanwhile, factors that were derived from the

Islamic findings like trust and experience of the project manager are included in this model. In this model stakeholders must keep a good relationship with the project manager, make the best of the experience and communication channels available to communicate with the project manager. Project success also depends on the motivation, teamwork and the level of trust of the project team and also the relationship between project manager and the project team is also highlighted in this model. [6]

One of the main things that Islam teaches is telling the truth and to have equality among the team members. It is noteworthy, that project's success very much depends on the amount of usage of Islamic effective communication module. By implementing this module for communication within the project bodies, it will ease the flow of communication and will give path to professional communication among the members.

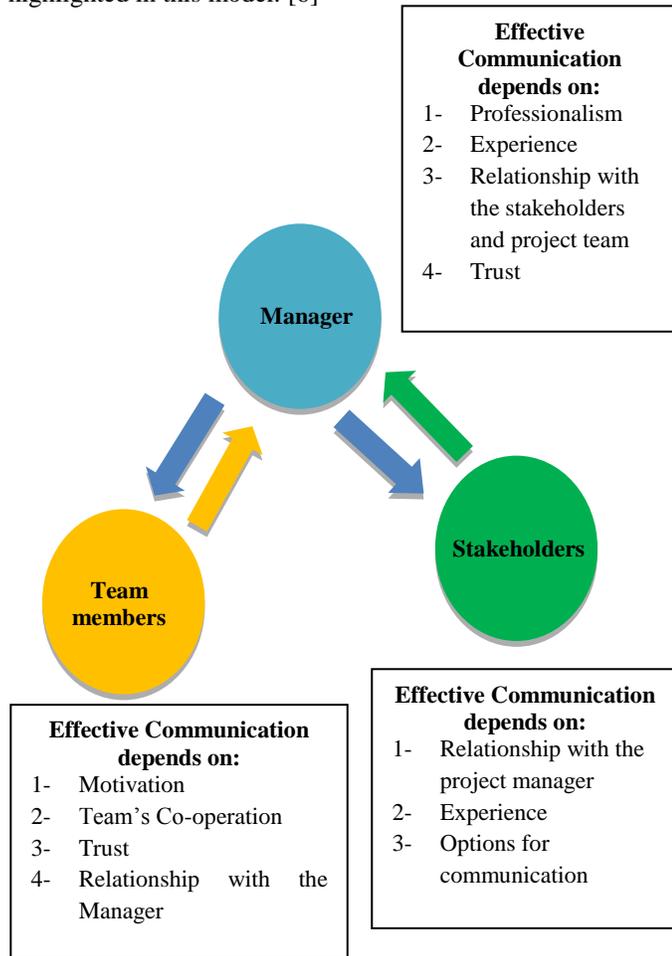


Figure 1. Islamic Effective Communication Model

VI. CONCLUSION

We would conclude this paper by expressing the importance of doing an in-depth research on this area. From our findings from the desk research, we noticed that many projects failed due to lack or miss-timed information from Stakeholders to project management and from project management to project team. One of the main focus which is very crucial, that is very much neglected in current IT project it the establishment of proper professional, formal and informal communication among the people involved within the project.

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