Organizational Communication: A Selected, Annotated Bibliography.


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Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)

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Annotated Bibliographies; *Communication Research; Organizational Climate; *Organizational Communication

Organizational Culture

Directing the reader to books and articles making significant contributions to theory and research in the field of organizational communication, this annotated bibliography contains 43 entries, including seminal works, exemplars, and state-of-the-art pieces primarily by authors within the field of communication. The entries are grouped into 9 categories: (1) general sources; (2) theoretical perspectives; (3) communication structure in organization (networks, superior-subordinate communication, feedback, distortion); (4) communication and organizational climate (including audits, productivity, and satisfaction); (5) power, influence, and organizational conflict; (6) organizational communication education; (7) organizational communication and information technologies; (8) information processing and decision-making; and (9) communication and organizational culture. (SR)
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION
A Selected, Annotated Bibliography Prepared by
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This bibliography directs the reader to books and articles making significant contributions to theory and research in the field of organizational communication. Included are seminal works, exemplars, and state-of-the-art pieces. While other disciplines have contributed substantially to the literature of organizational communication, these entries reflect primarily work by authors within the field of communication.

General Sources


This essay describes the state-of-the-art, outlines the evolution of diverse perspectives on symbolic action in organizations, and suggests criteria for evaluating traditional and nontraditional research.


This authoritative volume contains current treatments of issues central to organizational communication by leading theorists and researchers. It is an excellent source of incisive analysis and comprehensive literature reviews on topics such as communication climate, organizational culture, networks, information technologies, power and influence, conflict and negotiation, decision making, feedback, organizational assimilation, etc.


This essay provides an enlightening overview of organizational communication by tracing the evolution of traditional and nontraditional areas of research and by reviewing emergent approaches. It also touches on the practical side of organizational communication by including its impact on training and consulting.


Chapters focus on recasting traditions and on calling for future research on the history of organizational communication, networks, climates, bargaining, unobtrusive control and power.


Redding presents a cogent discussion of both the need for and the state of theory in the field. The prevalent ideologies which underly organizational communication theory are explicated and the advantages and disadvantages of the application of particular perspectives are explored.


This is an excellent overview of classic and contemporary perspectives of complex organizations that have had a significant impact on the study of organizational communication, including Fayol, Taylor, Weber, Mayo, Follett, Argyris, McGregor, Likert, Simon, and Barnard. Research on selected topics is also reviewed.

Theoretical Perspectives


Although complex, this work represents the earliest and one of the most comprehensive treatments of organizational theory from a communicative perspective. Barnard's theories of authority leadership and decision making are based upon communication as a key element.


The proper study of systems theory requires researchers to conduct systems research. This analysis provides a cogent overview of the systems perspective and examines one conceptualization of systems theory in depth.


Communication Structure in Organizations (networks, superior-subordinate communication, feedback, distortion)


Danowski, J. (1980). Group attitude uniformity and connectivity of organizational communicative networks for production, innovation and maintenance content. Human Communication Research, 6, 299-318. The author investigates the relationship between the connectivity of communication network groups and the uniformity of beliefs and attitudes of group members. Variations are explicated in terms of communication.


Jablin, F. M. (1979). Superior-subordinate communication: The state-of-the-art. Psychological Bulletin, 86, 1201-1222. This cogent literature review organizes and critiques empirical research in superior-subordinate communication. It examines the literature from eight areas such as openness, upward distortion, upward influence, semantic-information distance, and feedback.

Hoge, P. R., & Linsey, G. N. (1974). The study of communication structure in large organizations. Paper presented at the International Communication Association annual meeting. ERIC ED 095 4589. This report describes a set of procedures for analyzing communication networks in large organizations. It provides guidelines for conducting a large-scale network analysis by computer.


Communication and Organizational Climate (including audits, productivity, and satisfaction)


Falcone, R. L., & Kaplan, E. A. (1984). Organizational climate and culture. In R. N. Bostrom (Ed.), Communication Yearbook 8, (pp. 285-310) Beverly Hills, CA: Sage. The authors review the major perspectives from which organizational climate has been approached and climate research, including the ICA Communication Audit. They also examine the relationship of organizational culture and organizational climate.

This paper reviews modes of thought, dominant paradigms, perspectives on communication and organizations, and research approaches using organizational culture as a basis of comparison and a point of correlation.

Power, Influence and Organizational Conflict


This extensive case study of a developing organization examines how participants' communication affected their organizing behavior. Female dominance and male response to that dominance emerge as an important element.


A means of coding negotiation interaction that is sensitive to formal, naturally occurring bargaining behavior and that can detect the strategic use of communication is described. The results of its application to simulated and naturalistic bargaining data are reported.


This comprehensive essay classifies, reviews, and critiques contemporary literature on the role of communication in the bargaining process. It also reviews research findings in four areas: communication opportunity, information exchange, message strategy and categories of interaction.

Organizational Communication Education


This paper outlines a general instructional system and paradigm which can be applied to any learning situation and discusses four instructional strategies specifically applicable to teaching organizational communication.


This paper describes a bargaining scenario particularly suitable for the introductory organizational communication course. It also includes criteria and options for a written assignment.


Guidelines are provided for using the case study technique, including case selection, structure, and strategies.


The authors describe the undergraduate organizational communication series developed at the University of Colorado and the competencies the series is designed to cultivate.

Organizational Communication and Information Technologies


This article explores the potential impact of technologies designed to facilitate and augment human-to-human communication on shaping organizational culture. It reviews existing research, describes linguistic ethnography and an interpretive framework, suggests research steps, and reports results of a pilot study.


The authors investigate the influence of job category on perceived benefits and level of adoption of the intelligent telephone system. The results of a study of a large Fortune 500 company are reported.


This study examines factors explaining the amount of task and social use of electronic mail in an organization.

Jablin, F. M. (1980). Organizational communication theory and research: An overview of communication climate and network research. In P. Himmo (Ed.), Communication Yearbook 4, (pp. 349-366) New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Bks. This article summarizes concepts and issues related to the psychological approach to climate research and the sociological approach to network research and suggests a model to integrate the two areas into a single paradigm.


Information Processing and Decision-making

Dunning, R. S., & Sincoff, M. Z. (1978). The upward progress of unusually good ideas in a four-tier hierarchy. Paper presented at the International Communication Association meeting, Chicago, IL. ERIC ED 157 119. This paper mathematically compares the progress of unusually good ideas in an organizational hierarchy to that of ordinary ideas. It also investigates the problems associated with the acceptance of good ideas.

Eisenberg, Eric (1984). Strategic ambiguity. Communication Monographs, 51, 227-242. This paper defines strategic ambiguity, its role in an organization, and argues that communicative clarity is non-normative and not a sensible standard for measuring individual or organizational effectiveness.


Poole, M. S. (1978). An information-task approach to organizational communication. Academy of Management Review, 30, 493-504. Viewing communication as an organizational task, Poole presents a conceptual framework for determining factors that create communication structures in organizations. A series of propositions relate information task characteristics to organizational task variables, communication structure, power and influence.

Stohl C. (1986). The role of memorable messages in the process of institutional socialization. Communication Quarterly, 34, 231-249. Based on an analysis of interviews conducted in a small company, this study examines the structure, form, and nature of the content and context of memorable messages exchanged within an organization. Implications for socialization research are discussed.

Communication and Organizational Culture

Harris, L., & Cronen, V. (1979). A rules-based model for analysis and evaluation of organizational culture. Communication Quarterly, 27, 12-28. This paper advances a model which analyzes organizations as cultures and evaluates them in terms of communicative competence. It presents a protocol for the analysis and study of organizations from an interactionist perspective based upon a case study, and derives implications for both theory and consultants.

Pacanowsky, M. E., & Trujillo-O'Donnell, N. (1983). Organizational communication as cultural performance. Communication Monographs, 50, 126-147. The authors argue that process can be introduced into the conceptualization of organizational culture by looking at organizational communication as cultural performance. They examine five cultural performances: ritual, "passion," sociality, politics, and enculturation, suggesting directions for future research.

Schall M. (1983). A communication-rules approach to organizational cultures. Administrative Science Quarterly, 28, 557-581. This study addresses the interface of culture, organization, and communication rules. An inductive, multifaceted method is set up to assess the feasibility of identifying group culture by discovering communication rules.

Smircich L. (1983). Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. Administrative Science Quarterly, 28, 338-59. This review traces the ways culture has been developed in organizational studies and identifies the interactions of culture theory and organizational theory in five areas: comparative management, corporate culture, organizational cognition, organizational symbolism, and unconscious processes and organizations.