

**A STUDY OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ROYAL CANADIAN
MOUNTED POLICE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

By

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INTRODUCTION

When Ken Baskin suggested that internal communication is to organizations as the nervous system is to the human body (1998), he set the stage for further inquiry into this relationship. The topic continues to be one of interest for many researchers and authors. A significant part of existing literature on the subject supports the necessity of effective internal communication in organizations (Jablin and Putnam, 2001; Church, 1996; Towers and Perrin, 1998; Tsai, 2001; Orsini, 2000; Covey, 1992). Authors exploring the complexities of internal communication attempt to define it by analyzing communication systems or by describing its components, participants, and content but a simplified summary would be to define internal communication as all communication that occurs within an organization.

The RCMP is not exempt from the need for effective internal communication and therefore this paper explores the state of internal communication in the B.C. RCMP by posing the following questions:

1. What factors currently impede or enhance effective internal communication?
2. Is the lack of effective internal communication affecting the organization? If so, how?
3. What strategies to improve internal communication have been tried in the B.C. RCMP and to what degree were they successful?
4. What new strategies could be implemented?

A brief background of the B.C. RCMP is provided and some potential problems are discussed. This is followed by an exploration of existing literature and a description of the methodology used to research internal communication issues. Based on this process, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in chapter four.

CHAPTER ONE – STUDY BACKGROUND

THE ORGANIZATION

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is a national police organization that provides policing services to provinces and municipalities by way of contracts. As with most police forces, the RCMP operates under a paramilitary structure with various ranks consisting of constables, non-commissioned officers, and commissioned officers. This structure is supported by civilian members, public service employees, and municipal employees. Approximately 5,000 RCMP officers (25% of the entire national force) are involved in policing British Columbia and most of its municipalities, making it by far the province or territory with the largest contingent of RCMP officers. In British Columbia, the RCMP faces the usual organizational and financial challenges brought on by communities shopping for the best (sometimes spelled 'cheapest') police force. Other challenges to effective internal communication, such as training and the ever changing demographics of crime have never been more prevalent than today.

Effective internal communication has been a constant challenge for the RCMP as indicated by its continuing efforts to embrace systems that identify effective communication as a key component. Training in Stephen Covey's (1992) leadership philosophies, the establishment of an Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) program that promotes informal resolution of disputes through open communication, and the Balanced Score Card initiative, which includes effective internal communication as an integral part of implementing strategies are examples of this quest. The RCMP has also attempted to create Employee Focus Groups to promote the exchange of information and to facilitate internal communication. Constables' Committees at the detachment level are evidence of this. Although this has created pockets of effective internal communication at a local level, the Regional Communications Survey (Sopow, 2002) and the

Coquitlam Detachment Internal Communication Survey that form part of the empirical basis of this paper indicate that these efforts have had little effect on the larger organization. These findings are detailed in chapter four.

Much is written about the importance of effective internal or organizational communication and its necessary presence in any system or process. This paper will link the research with several factors that become prominent when analyzing internal communication in the RCMP. Some empirical evidence suggests that size of the organization and distance between units or detachments may be an issue although research has yielded mixed results (McPhee and Poole, 2001). Research by Crank (1998), Reuss-Ianni (1983), Niederhoffer (1969) and Schein (1992) shows that hierarchical structures and police culture are inextricably linked to the nature and quality of internal communication while Mackeracher (1996), Jablin and Putnam (2001), Tsai (2001) and Bland (1998) describe the necessity of organizational communication training at all levels. Furthermore, although the term leadership encompasses a large variety of issues, many writers and researchers agree that successful leadership involves effective interaction and communication with others in an organization.

Ineffective communication will inevitably result in a breakdown of systems and an eventual decline in organizational productivity and employee satisfaction (Oshry, 1996). Efforts to improve the effectiveness and strengths of an organization's internal communication must therefore address the previously mentioned issues associated with size and distance, hierarchical structure (rank), police culture, training, and leadership. Each of these issues present unique challenges. However, since they are inextricably related, some of the best ways to deal with them may be rooted in creating awareness and understanding since attempting to change the size, hierarchical structures, and police culture may be unrealistic. A closer analysis of these five issues is required to better understand their relationship to internal communication.

Size and distance

The size of the organization and the distance between units affect internal communication. However, McPhee and Poole (2001), who reviewed recent studies on the effect of these factors on communication, noted that previous studies had apparently not been able to determine whether the effect was a positive or negative one. While some researchers found that greater size resulted in broader decision participation as well as more breadth in the number of alternatives explored (Connor, Smith et al. as cited by McPhee and Poole, 2001), others discovered that leaders and managers in larger companies concentrated their internal communication on immediate subordinates in relation to functions such as monitoring and exchanging routine information (Smeltzer and Fann as cited by McPhee and Poole, 2001). With approximately 20,000 regular members in Canada of which 5,000 work in B.C., successful operations and investigations require effective interaction. When important information fails to reach some parts of the RCMP, there can be serious consequences. Because of the size of the organization, communication can sometimes remain confined to sections or groups. This, in turn, can result in considerable duplication and diversity in procedures or an outright lack of valuable programs in some regions. Nanaimo Detachment, for example, had developed a Continuous Learning Program that satisfied some specific training needs. This would likely have suited other detachments but remained undiscovered for years because of a lack of awareness in the region about the existence of that particular local initiative. Senge (1999) comments on the importance of this type of interdepartmental communication regardless of the size of an organization. "Information that teams and individuals have generated cannot be fully understood in isolation from the rest of the system" (p. 439).

An Internal Communications Survey conducted for the RCMP (Sopow, 2002) identified that "information from supervisors and others close to personnel was deemed the most useful" and "that the more importance personnel placed on a topic being communicated, the less happy they were with how well that

information was being communicated” (p. 1). This suggests that internal communication outside of a local unit is judged to be less useful and that the transmission of important information is less efficient. It also suggests the existence of a need to improve the quality of internal communication and to promote a wider exchange of information. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) describe ‘Communities of Practice’ as one way of promoting the flow of information across platforms. They found that groups of people who shared the same concern or problem benefited by meeting informally to deepen their knowledge and expertise. They suggest that organizations create an environment in which these meetings can prosper as opposed to formalizing such a structure (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002).

Hierarchical structure

McPhee and Poole (2001) found that hierarchical structures can distort the free flow of information. Several studies concerned with the effects of level (rank) on communicative influence (the impact or effect of a communication) found that higher ranks used assertiveness to influence a communication (Brass and Burkhardt as cited by McPhee and Poole, 2001). Another study on the effect of rank on the perception of a problem found that “rank affected the likelihood that one will view a problem as political, with higher ranks seeing things as less political” (p. 508). Baskin (1998) states that internal communication suffers when information becomes power in the hands of management. In a dissenting opinion about the effect of rank, Klein (1996) maintains that “line authority is an effective communications channel” (p. 3). He does conclude, however, that this only follows when “each successively lower level is fully informed and is made a communications partner” (p. 3). Since the RCMP is a paramilitary organization that uses a hierarchical reporting structure, this research is particularly relevant when discussing the effect of rank on internal communication. Despite efforts to dispel the negative effects of this structure, internal communication in the RCMP continues to be a challenge partly because of an ‘us versus them’ mentality associated to police organizations (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Niederhoffer, 1969;

O'Connor, n.d.). The existence of this rank consciousness and its relation to internal communication is supported by findings of a Communications Survey (Sopow, 2002) which suggested that senior executives (officers at the rank of Deputy Commissioner to Inspector), senior managers (non commissioned officers at the rank of Staff Sergeant and Sergeant) in administrative functions, middle managers (at the rank of Sergeant and Corporal) of operational units, and junior ranks (constable) at the investigative level all communicated more or less effectively within their respective groups. However, communication and the sharing and exchange of information becomes less and less prominent across rank structures.

Opinions differ on how to maximize communication efficiency in a hierarchical structure. Several studies cited by McPhee and Poole (2001) favour decentralization as a means to improve internal communication but conclude that the overriding factor is still the quality of communication between leaders and employees.

Police culture

This is a complex and lengthy issue and is explored in more depth through the literature review in chapter two. Its origins are rooted in basic group dynamics as well as in police and military history. Research indicates that one of the areas it continues to affect is internal communication. Reuss-Ianni (1983) suggests that two competing cultures usually exist within a police force and that it is this 'us and them' aspect that creates feelings of distrust and alienation, which in turn impedes internal communication. Other research on police and organizational culture (Niederhoffer, 1969; O'Connor, n.d.; Schein, 1992) identifies fear of discipline, a misplaced use of power, and the transference of misconceived assumptions to new members as additional aspects of police subculture, which impede effective internal communication within a police force.

Understanding and analyzing police culture may provide an insight into its effect on internal communication. Schein (1992, p. xii) states that "Cultural analysis illuminates sub cultural dynamics within organizations" and that "many problems that were once viewed simply as communication failures or lack of teamwork are now being more properly understood as a breakdown of intercultural communications". The existence of subcultures and their effect on internal communication is documented by Reuss-Ianni's (1983) research in "Two Cultures of Policing". She describes the potential conflict between management cops and street cops.

A review of literature on police culture and findings from research undertaken at a regional and local level presented in chapters two and four of this paper will enable the reader to better appreciate the link between internal communication and a variety of other cultural issues such as the technological influence, ethnical and hierarchical issues, and organizational learning (Schein, 1992). This again highlights the fact that all these complex issues are intertwined and that internal communication appears to be a common denominator.

Training

Recent history has shown that training in the RCMP is at the mercy of budgets and political priorities as indicated by the closure of the Depot Training Academy in 1997 and the simultaneous reduction in field training. Weick and Ashford (2001) suggest that there is an inherent link between communication and learning, which makes these issues particularly relevant to effective internal communication. Anderson (2000) describes the link between interpersonal communication skills and internal communication and the learning required to become proficient in them. He not only lists communication as an essential skill for leaders but also includes it in the process of developing individual leadership capacities. It is as important at the senior management level as at the junior constable rank.

Leadership

Leadership is intricately linked to organizational performance and it is, in turn, affected by the ability of leaders to effectively communicate with others in the organization (Yukl, 2002). From a systems point of view in analyzing the relationships between tops, middles, and bottoms in an organization, Oshry (1996) states that a leader (top) "has designated responsibility for the system or a piece of the system" (p. 58). In his "The Dance of the Blind Reflex" (p. 54) he describes how a communication process between tops, middles, and bottoms will ultimately decide the success or failure of these relationships and how it affects an organization. Based on his experience and work with many police, justice, and public safety organizations, Anderson (2000) suggests that every police officer is a leader. Once the link between leadership and internal communication has been established, a premise such as this accentuates the need for effective internal communication skills for leaders at all levels.

SUMMARY

The issues discussed here are a brief exploration of some of the organizational challenges that affect internal communication in the British Columbia RCMP. The size of the organization, the distance between units, hierarchical structures, police culture, training, and leadership are important factors to consider when developing an effective internal communication strategy. Since the RCMP is currently undergoing substantial organizational changes, this may be an opportune time to review the need for such a strategy. This will be explored in chapter two and additional research, findings and recommendations will be developed in chapters four and five.

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Documents

I have drawn on information from internal as well as external sources in an effort to identify internal communication issues that the RCMP is confronted with.

Internally, the RCMP has on numerous occasions attempted to address these issues. These efforts are discussed here. Externally, the examples provided by Abbotsford Police, Royal Roads University, the Correctional Service of Canada, and the Johnson and Johnson Co. will provide points of comparison with guidelines and procedures that exist.

Internal documents

- Internal Communications, Training and Issues Survey (Sopow, 2002).
 - This comprehensive survey identified gaps and shortcomings in internal communication and revealed some of the dynamics that affect it. It was distributed to six thousand (6,000) participants and four hundred ninety-two (492) responded.

- The RCMP Mission, Vision, Values Statement (RCMP, 2001)
 - The Vision Statement as it pertains to employees and internal communications makes a commitment to “ensure a healthy work environment that encourages team building, open communication and mutual respect” (p. 1) and the Values Statement declares that “We commit to open, honest and bilateral communication” (p. 2). This is a continuous challenge for the RCMP and is exacerbated by the ever-present political and financial pressures to maximize efficiencies and demonstrate fiscal restraint. This document creates an awareness of the importance of effective internal communication strategies and their potential effect on relationships.

- RCMP Organizational charts and rank structure
 - These documents describe the 'chain of command' and the desired flow of communications in the hierarchical structure. Both the Regional Communications Survey (Sopow, 2002) and the Coquitlam Detachment Internal Communications Survey revealed that the quality of internal communication deteriorated and the frequency declined beyond the level of an employee's immediate supervisor. This suggests a need for further research on the effectiveness of a hierarchical structure.

- The Commissioner's Directional Statement (Zaccardelli, 2003)
 - This annual document is an example of a communication from upper management to the employees of the RCMP. It describes the focus that the RCMP wishes to pursue and contains information on strategies and priorities. Although the Commissioner of the RCMP communicates this to all members via several methods, the Regional Internal Communications Survey (Sopow, 2002) revealed that only sixteen percent of respondents felt that broadcast's from the Commissioner were very useful. This shows a need to re-evaluate internal communication methods and sources.

- The RCMP Regulations (RCMP, 1988)
 - These regulations provide guidelines for acceptable internal communication as well as the consequences of any contraventions. With the advance of technology and the proliferation of e-mail, the content, quality and effectiveness of internal communication have become a concern as suggested by the findings in Chapter Four.

- The RCMP Training Manuals (RCMP, 2002)
 - These manuals contain training standards, course descriptions and candidate selection criteria as well as list of courses that will be

carried out during the year. They provide information on the type of training (such as leadership and communication) available to members in the form of in-service training courses. The Training Calendar, which is published annually, reveals that it is only in recent years that particular attention has been paid to effective communication training for employees and in particular for leaders.

- The Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) system
 - The RCMP adopted this system as a planning and reporting tool that links strategies with goals and objectives. In order for this to be effective, the system identifies internal communication as one of its key functions. It provides useful information about internal communication processes, their development and successes. The RCMP plans on training all employees in the use of this system.

- The 'Strategic Communication Plan' designed for the B.C. Policing Study.
 - This document provides information and guidelines on the efforts and intentions of the RCMP with regards to this specific project. It is an example of a communication plan created for onetime use but has little effect on general internal communication in the organization.

My review of internal documents revealed that there does not appear to be a general internal communications plan or policy. It would seem that the RCMP has relied on its hierarchical structure to manage internal communications but has not monitored its efficiency.

External Documents

Abbotsford Police Department

- Strategic Plan, 2002 – 2004
 - This plan, developed internally by the Abbotsford Police Department to provide direction for its organization, includes several strategies and goals to improve internal communication. A specific timeline is assigned and resources are identified to address the issues of communication between sections as well as communication between management and staff/volunteers.

- Organizational Improvement Team Project
 - An autonomous team made up of a variety of ranking members and civilian staff was formed to deal specifically with issues in the areas of problem solving, internal communication, change, and leadership development. It was designed to be an advisory body which was granted the ability to effect change wherever possible. Their ability to communicate directly with affected parties to arrive at solutions resulted in efficiencies that the hierarchical structure had prevented.

Royal Roads University

- Professional Services Contract – Course communication guidelines
 - This document provides guidelines for response times when interacting with learners and faculty. It is an example of a very specific communication structure designed with the client's satisfaction in mind. It is interesting to note how much value some organizations place on this type of communication.

Correctional Services of Canada

- Internal Communications Policy – Commissioner's Directives
 - These documents provide clear instructions about how to deal with information management and provide an example of how another

federal department deals with internal communication. Although there is no information on how these are enforced, at least they can be consistently referred to by the various departments.

Johnson and Johnson Co.

- Employee Relations Philosophy – Internal Communication
 - The company states that it places considerable value on employee relations. It wishes to create an environment of understanding and cooperation and commits to achieving this by open and direct communication between individuals and departments. It promotes the sharing of information to achieve common goals. This provides an example of desirable internal communication policies in the private sector.

It is interesting to note that each organization attempts to improve internal communication differently depending on their focus. It is evident, however, that each considers it important enough to give it significant attention.

Literature Review

Several authors (Jablin and Putnam, 2001; Anderson, 2000; Kouzes and Posner, 1997; Covey, 1992) write about the link between interpersonal communication skills and effective internal communication in an attempt to define internal communication. Redding (as cited by Tompkins and Wanca-Thibault, 2001) on the other hand, describes internal communication in terms of ten basic principles. They encompass a wide range of factors, which lead him to suggest that “anything is a potential message”, (p. xix) and that any communication that occurs in an organization is internal or organizational communication.

This review will include information and findings in four domains. **Internal communication** is the subject of many papers and books. Most literature agrees that it is an essential process in successful organizations. I have

provided examples of some models and definitions to illustrate this. **Police culture** is a very prominent phenomenon in the police world. To support this, I have selected research that describes its power and influence and its effect on internal communication. **Training** and human resource development is at the root of effective internal communication. I describe some of the issues facing organizations and how they are managing them. **Leadership** is among the most studied topics in history as is evidenced by the amount of literature available. It continues to attract the attention of many researchers. I will describe some of the styles as well as some current methodologies and how they are affected by internal communication.

Internal Communication

So why should organizations care about effective internal communication?

Much of the literature that deals with internal communication focuses on attempting to answer this question. Included in these discussions are research findings on the consequences for an organization of being successful or not at these communications. Some authors describe components of effective internal communication and list participants while others write about its content.

Based on her extensive experience in public relations, Howard (1998) contends, "Employees are our best ambassadors and our loudest critics depending on how fast they get relevant information and the context in which it is received" (p.15). This suggests that employees should be high on the list of stakeholders and that they be treated accordingly when considering communication strategies.

As mentioned, Redding looked at the internal communication of organizations in terms of ten basic principles or postulates (as cited by Tompkins and Wanca-Thibault, 2001, p. xviii). In summary, they are:

1. Meaning as interpreted by receivers instead of transmitters – the failure to interpret messages correctly.
2. Anything is a potential message.
3. Importance of input/listening – the value of good listening skills.
4. Message received (versus the one sent or intended) is what a receiver will act upon.
5. Feedback (receptiveness vs. responsiveness) – the extent to which managers are open to subordinate feedback.
6. Cost factor or efficiency of internal communications – more communication is not necessarily better.
7. Redundancy balanced by economic need for efficiency – too much evokes boredom, too little makes some messages incomprehensible.
8. Communication overload – an individual's limits of message processing.
9. Serial transmission effect – the distortion or change of meaning as messages are passed from individual to individual in a hierarchy.
10. Climate for communication more important than skills and techniques.

Tompkins et al suggest that “communication constitutes organization” as opposed to “the idea that organizations are entities where communication is situated” (Tompkins, Wanca-Thibault, 2001, p. xxi). Along a similar line of thinking, Heath advances the idea “that information has no inherent meaning and that it is given meaning through interpretive processes” (as cited by Sutcliffe, 2001, p. 204).

Tsai (2001) suggests that “Inside an organization, learning involves the transfer of knowledge among different organizational units” (p. 996). This again indicates the significance of effective internal communication and defines it by including learning as a key function. How effective this communication is will dictate the organization's internal learning capacity. (Tsai, 2001)

Orsini (2000) claims "that effective internal communications are fundamental to good governance and good business" (p.29) and regards them as a very important soft control (qualitative) when attempting to understand what is going on in an organization. To complement this belief he recommends a participative approach to improving internal communications. He also concludes that the dynamics of internal communication are constantly changing which underlines the importance of an organization's permanent commitment to managing it.

As an example of a systems approach to facilitate internal communication, Church (1996) uses a model to deal with the mechanics of it and to provide a structure for the communication process. He assigns content, processes, and roles to three sides of a triangle to depict the three primary dimensions and thus highlights the importance of their interaction and interdependence.

Mitchell (2000) links internal communication with knowledge management and learning since all three are concerned with employee development and corporate health. This coincides with Tsai's (2001) view that learning involves the transfer of knowledge in an organization. Using several case studies, Mitchell (2000) concludes that "Strategic use of knowledge and communication can be the key to gaining competitive edge in a world where the best ideas and practices are needed at the front line all the time" (p.36). She suggests that a relationship between knowledge and internal communication can raise organizational functions to a more strategic level so that they can influence major decisions and processes.

Covey (1992) focuses on individual communication skills and how they affect an organization. He lists personalities, attitudes and behaviours as significant factors that affect internal communication. Like Tsai (2001) and Mitchell (2000), he also links it with learning and goes on to suggest that its relationship with leadership is equally important.

In a decidedly different approach, Baskin (1998) compares an organization's internal communication mechanism to that of the human body. He prescribes that two design principles of the central nervous system; continuous feedback to improve performance, and measurement to show progress, should be applied to help our organizations work better. He contends that the main impediment to this is the belief that "for bureaucrats, information is power" (p. 107) which results in a one-way flow of information. In what he calls the 'corporate nervous system' he suggests

People in these organizations can operate autonomously because they can learn what they must react to in their market ecologies, from their corporate nervous systems, and how to react, from their corporate DNA. Then they can further learn from their corporate nervous systems how effective their efforts have been. Finally, they can communicate what they learn to others throughout their organizations (p. 108)

He continues his analysis by recommending that organizations "develop a keen sensitivity to how the organization is working. By opening a variety of channels to communicate with employees, organizations can more quickly learn when systems are beginning to break down" (p. 114). Along with other strategies, this kind of corporate nervous system allows a more universal access to information making it difficult for those attempting to control that information, in an effort to deny events they don't want to face. His conclusion is that effective communication is one aspect of corporate life that makes this kind of truthfulness possible.

With the increasing prominence of women in police forces, it is necessary to consider whether gender has any effect on internal communication. Literature on communication competence (Jablin and Sias, 2001, p. 851) "indicates that others' perceptions of an individual's communication competence can be influenced by his or her gender". They explain the conundrum organizations face in the following excerpt.

Organizations tend to be portrayed as rational, unemotional arenas where individuals are expected to behave in a rational, unemotional manner. Women, in general, however, are expected by society to be emotional

beings. As a consequence, women are often faced with a double bind with respect to being perceived as competent communicators. Communicating without emotion violates society's expectations of competent female behaviour. Communicating with emotion, however, violates society's expectations of competent organizational behaviour (p. 851).

Along these lines, research by Mize (as cited by Jablin and Sias, 2001) indicates that unemotional communication by women is considered aggressive while communication perceived as "feminine" is too soft. The suggestion is that this "can lead to perceptions that women are unable to succeed in management positions" (p. 851).

While these studies suggest that gender can affect the perception of communication competence, a survey conducted at Coquitlam Detachment revealed that gender was not a significant factor in the analysis of internal communication issues. A more detailed presentation of the survey results is documented in chapter four.

At this point, the review of internal communication literature indicates that effective internal communication is paramount for a healthy corporate identity by linking it to organizational functions, learning, and knowledge transfer. The review also suggests that the absence of a defined system for dealing with internal communication will result in significant inefficiencies. Lack of precise information for employees will undermine factors such as "feelings of belonging, value, autonomy, and confidence" (Mucchielli as cited by Ogrizek and Guillery, 1999, p. 64) and generate feelings of frustration, distrust, demotivation, and resentment (Ogrizek and Guillery, 1999). This clearly indicates the importance of effective internal communication in an organization and its significance to the RCMP if it wishes to realize its vision of "ensuring a healthy work environment that encourages team building, open communication and mutual respect" (RCMP, 2001, p.1).

Police Culture

Police culture is not a new phenomenon. Reviewing historical events and structures helps to define it but how does police culture affect internal communication?

As a result of several wars and conflicts, there existed a strong military presence in most countries and since the duties of policing required similar skills, rank and military structure became a natural fit for police departments. Webster's New World Dictionary (1988) defines culture as "the ideas, customs, skills, arts, etc. of a people or group, that are transferred, communicated or passed along to succeeding generations" (p. 337) and policing as "to control, protect, or keep orderly" (p. 1045). These two definitions provide the link between internal communication and police culture.

Historically the desire for a structure-oriented society made this control appropriate and effective (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Niederhoffer, 1969). The constant use of this perceived power over individuals became a way of being. In the early days of policing, the strong influence of Machiavelli (1469-1527 CE) is evident. In his book The Prince he advocates power and control as the main principles for keeping peace. It is out of these historical concepts and beliefs that police culture has emerged.

An article written by Sgt. Paul Hansen (n.d.) of the Irondequoit Police Department, Rochester, New York, suggests that police forces initially attracted officers with a lower education level and provided little training. During the autocratic leadership style of the day, these officers expected to be ordered what to do. The structure was based on the assumption that the supervisor or leader was the authority on any particular subject and thus told others how to do it. Initiative was not encouraged. This created the 'us' and 'them' structure within the ranks and allowed internal communication to deteriorate (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Research material in the North Carolina Wesleyan College Justice Course

(O'Connor, n.d.) suggests this point of view also applied to the police relationship with the public. It examines how sociological, psychological and anthropological concepts sustain and perpetuate police culture and discusses how solidarity and the uniqueness of police duties limited their interaction with the general public. This resulted in the beginnings of a culture that chose to associate only with their own. The circle became effectively closed when training occurred within this culture, thus propagating any false assumptions in a never-ending loop. An article by S. J. Harrison (1998) on Police Organizational Culture agrees, suggesting that police culture is perpetuated by the way new members are selected and trained.

Drucker states that one of the realities of business is that the knowledge needed to properly understand a business exists outside of it (as cited by Chris Braiden, n.d.). Braiden maintains that this applies to policing as well. This seems to indicate that the bubble of police culture is, by its isolating nature, inhibiting learning and growth and perpetuating ineffective internal communication processes (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

Early studies by Niederhoffer (1969) suggest that the spectre of police culture affects applicants in the very early stages of the selection process. In their path from 'applicant' to 'rookie' they consciously (and sub-consciously) start to conform to the image of a police officer. Even though this 'tough cop' image perpetuated by language rituals and peer pressure is waning, the new ideology of a 'social scientist police officer' is meeting with considerable resistance (Niederhoffer, 1969). He also describes how, as a result of police culture, cynicism quickly sets in and he tabulates extensive data from a study that shows high levels of it at relatively early stages in an officer's career. For example, the study showed that forty percent of patrolmen shared the view that "the lower ranks tend to believe that special assignments depend on whom you know and not on merit" (Niederhoffer, 1969, p. 77) contrary to the views of top officials in the department. By definition, cynicism implies a basic mistrust and this has

become a barrier to effective internal communication in organizational hierarchies (Solomon and Flores, 2001).

Crank (1998) describes police culture in terms of common themes such as rank, danger, unpredictability, and solidarity, which are influenced by police officers' interactions with other groups such as citizens, the courts and the media. These themes unite police officers and organizations but simultaneously give rise to the cynicisms described by Niederhoffer (1969). Crank (1998) believes this is because police culture is a state of mind; that police decisions are guided by moral considerations as opposed to principles of scientific management. He uses the example of a ride-along where participants talk to an officer and observe him in his work environment. They believe that this behavioural research provides them with an insight into police culture when this is actually a sanitized version of how cops go about their work. Crank suggests "to naively believe that a ride-along provides an open window into police culture is to utterly fail to understand a great deal of what police culture is about – providing ways in which cops can protect themselves from outside influences" (p. 3).

This not only highlights the impact of police culture on internal communication, but also reveals that the inverse may be true; that the quality and substance of internal communication has considerable effect on police culture.

Schein (1992) talks about the dimensions of organizational culture and provides the following formal definition:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems (p. 12).

This definition is polarized considerably when related to police organizations. The shared assumptions and cultural predisposition (perceive, think, feel) are very specific due to the nature of police work and its internal environment. This is

further compounded by teaching new members a process that is perceived to be correct (Schein, 1992).

Eisenberg and Riley (2001) examined the role of communication in organizational culture. Their review of the various aspects of culture such as symbolism and performance, text, critique, identity, and cognition identified research that was rooted in a communicative process. This research equated communicating with organizing and identified "communication's constitutive role in creating organizational culture" (p. 293).

Reuss-Ianni (1983) suggests that "the organization of policing is best described and understood in terms of the interactions of two distinct cultures: a street cop culture and a management cop culture" (p.1). Her research determined that this is one of the main reasons for the breakdown of effective internal communication. This still exists today and is complicated somewhat by the generational gap between the Baby Boomers and the Generation Xers (Augustine, 2001) since street cops tend to be Xers while Baby Boomers have progressed to management. Her advice to Xers is to communicate, listen to yourself, practice patience, and network.

It is clear that existing literature on police culture identifies it as a major consideration when analyzing internal communication in a police organization. The long history of hierarchical police structures and the solidarity among police officers makes this analysis a difficult undertaking.

Training

The term training implies that there is someone (a trainer) sharing information with others (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1998) who are then learning. Although learning frequently occurs through individual effort as well, maximum effect is usually achieved through a process of interaction with others (Mackeracher, 1996). It is important to note that most literature suggests that

learning is a direct result of training, whether it is received from someone or whether it is self-generated.

But what part does training play in effective internal communication?

Anderson (2000) describes interpersonal communication skills as “the vehicles by which all interactions between people are made clear” (p. 99). He discusses essential communication skills such as observing, listening, and responding with understanding that leaders must learn in order to communicate effectively within an organization and thus makes the link to internal communication. He not only describes communication as an essential skill for leaders but also includes it in the process of developing oneself.

Exploring the idea of self-organization, Stevenson (2002) suggests that communication and the resulting information sharing is a requirement for a healthy process of self-organization and that “this communicative bonding creates an environment that both connects people and supports their personal growth and development” (p. 12). This coincides with Anderson’s (2000) idea that training in communication is as important for non-leaders as it is for leaders.

Internal communication is often discussed under the heading of leadership (Yukl, 2002; Kouzes and Posner, 1997; Covey, 1992) as noted later in this Chapter and thus most training in communication currently occurs as a sub topic of this higher profile issue.

Mackeracher (1996) describes learning as a dialectical process with an interactive dimension and that “our ability to communicate is an important feature of our ability to learn” (p. 7). She goes on to describe that part of this process involves learning to learn.

Using a systems approach to analyse internal communication, Tsai (2001)

discusses the benefit of networking to facilitate organizational learning and inter-unit knowledge transfer. She is one of several authors (Schulz, 2001; Mitchell, 2000; Mackeracher, 1996; Baskin, 1998; Senge, 1999) who link internal communication and learning with information and knowledge transfer. Senge (1999) goes on to describe the prevalent difficulty in corporate training and learning processes. "Even when executive and line leaders are sympathetic, it often seems like they do not know where to begin to enable useful knowledge to travel better across boundaries of individual working groups, divisions, departments, and functions" (p. 417). He lists symptoms such as isolation, competitiveness, and distrust as other roadblocks to information "diffusion" (p. 418). He makes a clear definition between information and knowledge. "Information is data with relevance to the receiver's situation" whereas knowledge is "the capacity for effective action" (p. 421) but links them together by stating that "knowledge only diffuses when there are learning processes whereby human beings develop new capacities for effective action. Information technology, while critical for enabling the spread of information, cannot capture and store knowledge. Only people can do that" (p. 421). This highlights the role that effective internal communication plays in the learning process.

Schulz (2001) explores how organizational learning affects outflows of knowledge. He states "for knowledge exchange to take place, knowledge worth sharing needs to exist" (p. 2) and then presents research that connects knowledge production and exchange. He describes how three learning processes; collecting new knowledge, codifying knowledge, and combining old knowledge, facilitate knowledge transfer thus permitting a faster, more comprehensive discovery of the relevance of knowledge to learning.

Bland (1998) takes a decidedly different approach to communication competency. He argues "that communication is a generic skill and that the best training unlocks the natural communicator rather than teaching performance skills" (p. 1). He suggests that communication training has artificially been

separated into a variety of skills when the core techniques are actually generic. Specifically, he states that internal communication has suffered because of the emphasis on elaborate methods as opposed to substance. He contends that communication deteriorates with the number of technological toys that managers are given.

Jablin and Sias (2001, p. 824) note that "To date few studies have explicitly explored communication competence at the group and organizational levels of analysis". Research by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) suggest a clear need for communication across such platforms. They discovered that informal meetings or 'Communities of Practice' were valuable in fostering learning processes that cut across these platforms. This concept that communication and learning occurs informally appears to agree with Bland (1998) and Stevenson (2002) that, given a void, self-organization starts to take over out of necessity.

This review presents several different approaches to acquiring effective internal communication skills but all agree that some form of training in it must occur on an ongoing basis as an integral part of personal and organizational development.

Leadership

This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of leadership styles or issues. I will concentrate on the relationship between internal communication and leadership.

Historically, research surrounding leadership and communication centred on leader-constituent behaviour (Fairhurst, 2001). He discusses the effect of communication on the leader-member exchange (LMX) model that describes the role-making processes between a leader and a subordinate. This focus on the interaction between leaders and individuals evolved in recent years to a more reconceptualized view of leadership as an emergent property of group interaction (Fisher as cited by Fairhurst, 2001) and leads Jablin and Putnam (2001) to the

conclusion that effective Internal communication is now one of the key concepts of leadership.

Along a different line of thinking, Stevenson (2002) suggests that leadership can be self-organizing and lists communication and information sharing as necessary features of this process.

In his research on leadership, Yukl (2002) suggests that the responsibility of effective internal communication lies not solely with leaders. In his description of what he calls a "courageous follower" (p. 130), he concludes "it is an important responsibility for followers to provide accurate, timely information needed by the leader to make good decisions" (p. 132). The importance of this is underlined by the fact that middle managers may be both leaders and followers. Most leaders in the middle of an organization are also followers who report to the next level of management. Yukl (2002) states that here lies the significance of a high quality LMX and thus the importance of effective internal communication. On one hand the leader must interact appropriately with a higher level of authority to support and implement decisions, and on the other he/she must encourage and empower followers.

In a different variation of the LMX theory, Oshry (1996) highlights the significance of effective internal communication by all levels of leaders in his description of "The Dance of the Blind Reflex" (p. 54). The dilemma of tops feeling burdened, middles feeling torn, and bottoms feeling oppressed is caused by this lack of information flow. "Tops are working with incomplete information middles are not connected with tops or bottoms bottoms feel isolated in the system; they don't have the big picture" (p. 54).

Covey (1992) talks about internal communication as one of six interdependent systems in a structure designed to assist leaders with their principles and vision. "In organizations, we relate with many people in interdependent ways, and

interaction requires some kind of structure and certain organization” (p. 185). He uses the human body’s nervous system as a metaphor of effective internal communication in organizations. Baskin (1998) uses the same metaphor to describe the importance of a leader’s involvement in this kind of internal communication system.

In a very basic analysis of the link between leadership and internal communications, Kouzes and Posner (1997) suggest that “leadership is a dialogue, not a monologue” (p.11). They elaborate by saying “leaders communicate their passion through vivid language and an expressive style” (p.11). This indicates that leaders must not only be adept at internal communications but also be aware of the effect their style has on the organization.

The best organizational leaders are able to bring out and make use of this human longing for meaning and fulfillment by communicating the meaning and significance of the organization’s work so that the individual understands his or her own important role in creating it (p. 132).

Kouzes and Posner (1997) believe that people in an organization possess a wealth of knowledge and experience, and that leaders can successfully foster an interactive relationship that promotes sharing and establishing common goals. They suggest that

Shared goals bind people together in collaborative pursuits. As individuals jointly work together and recognize that they need each other in order to be successful, they become convinced that everyone should contribute and that, by cooperating, they can accomplish the task successfully (p. 155).

Senge (1999) suggests that ownership of a project, a process, or a problem must be shared for the well being of the entire organization. He calls the lack of this sharing a “diffusion gap” (p. 424). His research and that of Yukl (2002) describe a close relationship between cooperation, collaboration, information sharing and the resulting development of shared goals when discussing qualities of effective leadership. Kouzes and Posner (1997) talk about the need for supporting

reciprocity. "In any effective long-term relationship, there must be a sense of mutuality" (p. 155). They go on to say that "People realize that they can achieve cooperative goals when day-to-day organizational norms encourage them to share information, listen to each other's ideas, exchange resources, and respond to each other's requests through positive interdependence" (p. 161). The Communications Survey (Sopow, 2002) showed that a significant number of RCMP employees believed that they had little input into actions affecting their lives and when they did provide input it was not taken seriously. This failure by leaders of the RCMP to recognize and acknowledge input from personnel results in goals that are not developed through any process of sharing. This suggests that effective internal communication, in particular continuing feedback and measurement, is an essential component of leadership and is the key to the health and prosperity of an organization (Baskin, 1998).

Not only do Kouzes and Posner (1997) and Yukl (2002) link effective internal communication to leadership and making sound decisions, they list the benefits of involving groups in this decision-making process under a new collaborative style of leadership. In their view this indicates that the quality and acceptance of a decision is directly dependent on the level of participation.

Ineffective communications can have far reaching effects in the organization. When internal communications are primarily top down, the perception at the lower levels is one of powerlessness (Oshry, 1996). Thus employees believe that the outcomes of projects are predetermined and consultation processes lack credibility. Oshry's (1996) "Dance of the Blind Reflex" documents this kind of scenario. (p. 54)

- Tops feel burdened by unmanageable complexity.
- Bottoms feel oppressed by insensitive higher-ups.
- Middles feel torn – they become weak, confused, and fractionated with no minds of their own.
- Customers feel righteously done-to (screwed) by an unresponsive system.
- None of the players see their part in creating any of the above.

Kouzes and Posner's (1997) solution to this is to focus on the gains rather than the losses. "In order to find integrative solutions, leaders frame differences and problems so that participants focus on what's to be gained rather than what's to be lost" (p. 160). This demonstrates how a leader's communication skills are vital to the establishment of a positive organizational climate.

Anderson (2000) deals more specifically with the topic of leaders in the police domain and suggests that every officer is a leader. He lists interpersonal communication as one of "Five skill sets of Transforming Leadership" (p. 4) and goes on to describe it as "the interpersonal foundation of leadership and management effectiveness" (p. 28). He also describes it as a critical skill necessary for successful conflict management. Even though interpersonal communication skills are valuable in all walks of life, they are essential for leaders to be able to effectively communicate internally.

If we manage ourselves and our lives well,we will be in a better position to be fully present, whole, and influential in our relationships with others. Even one serious deficit in a skill area in these foundational skills of self-management and communication can undermine our leadership credibility, diminish our influence with others, and result in our not being as effective as we could be (p. 97).

When discussing best practices of internal communication, Towers and Perrin (1998) list internal communications as the number one issue for communication leaders. They indicate "Leadership behaviour and CEO support have greater impact on communications effectiveness than formal communications vehicles such as newsletters and memos" (p. 10).

Jablin states that "the most important actor and the primary company representative is the immediate supervisor" (as cited by Klein, 1996, p. 3) and that this is the last level of leadership that provides a communications link to non-supervisory employees. This indicates the importance of effective internal communication by leaders at all levels of an organizational structure.

While this paper will not analyse the complexities of organizational change, it must be noted that change is communication-based and communication-driven. A leader's place in this process is vital and effective communication skills will determine the success of any changes (April, 1999).

It is evident that from this review that effective internal communication is one of the key components of effective leadership. Opinions differ somewhat whether this communication should focus on dyadic relationships or group interaction, however, it is generally accepted that it is a critical part of a larger interactional system involving leaders and constituents (Yukl, 2002).

SUMMARY

In general, this review describes internal communication as an essential process that involves the exchange of knowledge and information and that organizations and individuals need to master it to be effective. Although the literature review has been separated into four domains consisting of internal communication, police culture, training, and leadership, it becomes evident that they are inextricably linked. Discussing one inevitably leads to the others and effective internal communication is one of the common themes that emerge.

As it relates to the RCMP and to the questions this paper seeks to answer, the review suggests that the organization faces several challenges in its drive to improve internal communication. The size of the organization, its culture, the hierarchical structure, training processes, and its leadership are all areas of concern that are affected by the lack of effective internal communication and prevent the organization from being as effective as it could be. Internal documents state that the RCMP encourages open communication to ensure a healthy work environment and reveal that the Commissioner attempts to emulate this through his communiqués although there is no process to assess the effectiveness of the statement and or the Commissioner's actions. Other

documents suggest that the hierarchical structure provides an appropriate avenue for internal communication, however, Klein (1996) believes that this only follows when “each successively lower level is fully informed and is made a communications partner” (p. 3). Some of the processes such as the Balanced Scorecard (Kaplan and Norton, 1996) system indicate that the RCMP is making efforts to address internal communication issues. Externally, other organizations provide examples of internal communication strategies and policies that the RCMP could benefit from.

Ultimately, this review provides a look at what is out there with respect to internal communication. It gives the reader an idea of the importance of effective internal communication by documenting examples of what works and what doesn't. The following chapters describe additional research carried out within the RCMP along with findings and recommendations.

CHAPTER THREE – CONDUCT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to identify factors and strategies that complement or hinder effective internal communication in the B.C. RCMP. In order to achieve this, existing literature was reviewed in the previous chapter. Specific information about the current state of internal communication in the B.C. RCMP was obtained from an existing Regional Internal Communications Survey (Sopow, 2002). This was supplemented by data from a smaller one carried out at Coquitlam Detachment. A more detailed description of this research process is presented here.

Research Methods:

I have used a combination of a quantitative and qualitative approach to conduct the research. This has allowed me to analyze and compare data from different types of sources. Proponents of both methods argue that their processes are separately accurate and sufficient, however, Palys (1997) highlights the necessity of using both. I have chosen to construct an integrated approach that combines the scientific obligation of a quantitative analysis with the humanistic aspect of a qualitative one. Hard numbers from the existing survey (Sopow, 2002) and the Coquitlam Detachment one regarding the volume of communications and perceived successes or failures of internal communication processes have provided background while qualitative details have provided a more in depth insight of issues as well as the humanistic side of the picture. Qualitative information from interviews has made it more personal and relevant by directly engaging individuals and this coincides with Palys's (1997) recommendation.

Any effort to understand human behaviour must take into account that humans are cognitive beings who actively perceive and make sense of the world around them, have the capacity to abstract from their experience, ascribe meaning to their behaviour and the world around them, and are affected by those meanings (p. 16).

My primary rationale for being attracted to this approach is that it combines analytical data with information obtained from interactive research. I agree with

the more naturalist view of Kirby and McKenna (1989) that either the quantitative or qualitative method in isolation would lack credibility and depth. By including information from interviews (the grass roots voice from the front lines), the finished product is more likely to be recognized and accepted by a greater variety of people. Weber suggests that being involved and understanding the issues is important to people (as cited by Palys, 1997).

Study Conduct:

The research consisted of information from an existing survey, a self-administered one, four interviews, and a comparison of the qualitative and quantitative data with existing internal and external literature reviewed in chapter two.

Data Collection:

Surveys:

I have conducted an evaluative inquiry to gather information from two surveys. I used quantitative data from an existing "E" Division Internal Communication Survey (Sopow, 2002) along with that of a self-administered one at Coquitlam Detachment. Questions for the Coquitlam survey and interview topics were designed by a focus group of four made up of several ranks and civilian staff. The survey was distributed at Coquitlam Detachment, which consists of one hundred and sixty-seven (167) police officers made up of all ranks and supervisory levels, seventy (70) civilian employees, and approximately twenty (20) volunteers. Only two hundred and ten (210) actually received the survey due to absences and transfers. In order to increase the return rate, participants were promised a free pizza coupon if they completed the survey. Ninety-two out of two hundred and ten responded (43.8%). Of this sample sixty-seven (67) were police officers and twenty-five (25) were municipal employees.

Focus group discussions and individual interviews:

The focus group previously mentioned met three times to discuss internal communication issues and design the survey questions. Two RCMP officers, one municipal employee and one public servant were selected for one-on-one interviews. Information from the group discussions as well as the interviews provided qualitative data to supplement the quantitative data from the surveys.

Comparisons:

The quantitative data from the surveys and qualitative information from the discussion group and interviews was compared with existing internal communication policies and procedures as well as desired practices from external sources with the intent of seeking solutions or alternative processes for effective internal communication in the B.C. RCMP.

Data Analysis:

Data from the Pacific Region Survey (Sopow, 2002) had already been analyzed. This information was sorted into the topics of internal communication, police culture, training and development, and leadership and consequently divided into identified issues and proposed solutions/improvements. Data from the Coquitlam Detachment Survey was initially sorted into categories of age, gender, employment category, and years of service and then classified into the topics of internal communication, police culture, training and development, and leadership before identifying issues and solutions.

Through an interactive process, the qualitative data from the interviews was discussed with the consultative group. In order to obtain a common denominator with the results of the quantitative data analysis, information was also sorted into the four domain topics (internal communication, police culture, training and development, leadership) and then separated into issues and solutions. These results were then compared with and contrasted to the findings of the quantitative data analysis as well as information from external and internal documents

reviewed in chapter two. At that point, emerging trends and patterns were identified and reported on.

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

FINDINGS

Responses to questions about internal communications in the regional survey (Sopow, 2002) were remarkably similar to those in the Coquitlam Detachment survey. The research at Coquitlam Detachment also revealed that age, gender, employment category, and length of employment were not significant factors in the analysis of information received from that location. Specific percentages for each question can be found in Appendix "A". I have categorized the results into the four domains itemized in the literature review and then summarized them in the form of conclusions and recommendations in relation to the questions this paper seeks to answer.

Internal Communication

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that effective internal communication was vital in their daily duties (Q.1, 96%). More specifically, they felt that verbal communication was the most important, most comfortable and most effective means of communicating when compared to e-mail and voice-mail (Q. 2,3,4). At Coquitlam Detachment, many respondents indicated that technology had indeed improved internal communication (Q. 10, 73%). However, information from the interviews suggested that it may have been at the expense of verbal interaction and revealed that respondents had an affinity for a more human connection. Even though information from regional and detachment levels indicated that verbal communication was the most desirable method of communication with peers and immediate supervisors, it also revealed that it became considerably less frequent and effective with individuals beyond an immediate supervisor in the hierarchical structure (Q. 5).

There was some concern over the quantity of e-mail messages (Q. 6b, 51%) and the time spent dealing with them (Q.9c, 56% - 30 minutes or more). The level of

concern about the volume voice-mail (Q. 6a, 19%) and written communication (Q. 6c, 12%) was considerably less.

The regional survey found that there was a particular problem in the general quality of internal communication and that this issue was even more significant when related to topics that employees deemed very important such as officer safety (Sopow, 2002).

Although most participants felt they promoted effective internal communication (Q. 15, 78%) and took advantage of opportunities to provide feedback (Q. 17, 54%), opinions on whether there were enough opportunities to do this were mixed (Q. 16). Many respondents also believed that they had little input in the decision-making processes (Q. 18, 72%).

Information from the interviews suggested that the RCMP could benefit from an overall internal communication policy. A review of internal documents determined that, although individual communication strategies for specific projects were developed, it appeared that they were ignored and filed upon the completion of the project.

Another concern that came out of the interviews was that employees didn't know whom to consult for guidance on internal communication issues. Several participants suggested the need for a 'gate keeper' of internal communications.

Some of the literature supports the use of a hierarchical structure to facilitate internal communication but warns that this is not unconditional. Klein (1996) states, "line authority is an effective communications channel" (p. 3) concluding, however, that this only follows when "each successively lower level is fully informed and is made a communications partner" (p. 3). Some of the interview participants agreed that an internal communication structure was necessary in the RCMP but the study did not provide sufficient information to indicate whether

its hierarchical structure fulfilled that need. The survey did suggest that higher rank had little effect on internal communication (Q. 8).

Respondents also showed some concern over the accessibility of information about their careers (Q. 11c, 44%).

Police Culture

Information from the interviews suggested that Reuss-Ianni's (1983) 'us and them' culture still exists in the RCMP and her contention is that this significantly affects internal communication. The interviews also suggested that this cultural phenomenon might be caused by questionable personality traits and lack of communication skills.

In a variation of this cultural conflict, several interview participants talked about the existence of tension between municipal employees and police officers. There again, they suggested that certain personality traits and a lack of communication skills were the cause as opposed to police personnel versus civilian employees.

The interviews indicated that, although participants' understanding of police culture varied, they were generally aware of it at some level and that it affected their interactions in the workplace whether it was with management or with a different employment category.

Training and Development

Most employees felt that training in internal communication was vital to the successful completion of their duties (Q. 13, 95%). The majority also felt that they had not had enough training in some form of internal communication in recent years (Q. 12, 74%).

A high percentage stated that this kind of training should occur annually or at least every two years (Q. 14, 74%).

Information from the interviews suggested that although this training was valuable for everyone, it was particularly necessary for managers and leaders. Some participants felt that there was a limit to how much training could improve internal communication and that personality traits played a significant factor in the outcome of this equation. The interviews also revealed that some individuals failed to practice effective communication skills even though appropriate training had been given. This seems to give the personality issue additional credence.

Leadership

The emerging theme from the four interviews was that one of the responsibilities of a leader is to ensure the existence of effective internal communication and that to achieve this a leader must model it. Material from the interviews also revealed that employees looked to their leaders for role models, which accentuates the effect a leader can have on an organization. Interview participants acknowledged that they must accept some responsibility for internal communication as well but the predominant opinion was that it would be next to impossible to have effective internal communication without the participation of the leader.

The issue of personality traits also came up when discussing leadership and effective internal communication. Information from the interviews supported the idea that a congenial personality facilitated effective internal communication and consequently how much more effective some leaders in the organization were than others. Participants suggested that this was the reason why the current Commanding Officer's style of leadership and communication was so much more effective and popular than that of leaders who were perceived to be unapproachable.

CONCLUSIONS

It is reasonably safe to conclude that effective internal communication is important to employees in the B.C. RCMP. In general, the study suggests that a lack of effective internal communication may be a source of conflicts and interferes with the efficiency of organizational processes.

More specifically, although technology has improved internal communication, verbal interaction is still favoured. Questionable personality traits and a lack of communication skills are impeding progress towards effective internal communication and a limited availability of expertise on the matter has slowed development of consistent strategies in that area.

It appears that police culture is still relatively misunderstood by employees of the RCMP. The severity of its effect on internal communication seems to depend on individual personality traits. This becomes an important point when related to leaders and the effect they can have on the organization.

Training in internal communication is essential for everyone but particularly important for leaders and managers, considering their role in organizations. This training will improve employees' communication skills and result in more effective organizational relationships.

Existing literature and study findings indicate that employees see their leaders as role models. Thus, their actions significantly affect internal communication processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The B.C. RCMP is currently experiencing substantial changes. During this time it is critical that the flow of information is maximized through effective internal communication processes. All aspects of the organization are affected by internal communication, which is why it must be assigned a high priority and must be linked with change processes to ensure their success.

Recommendation #1:

The RCMP should designate a manager or unit to act as a resource for internal communication processes and strategies. The Communications and Analysis Section has begun to fulfill some of that need but a more expanded presence is recommended. These internal communication experts should act as consultants for major projects, advisors for routine internal communication in the hierarchical structure, and facilitators for effective communication in workplace conflict situations. They would make their expertise readily available to members and employees and monitor internal communication systems for effectiveness.

Recommendation #2:

The RCMP should develop a consistent overall internal communication strategy. This will facilitate implementing the vision of delivering seamless service to members and the public. Internal documents reveal that the RCMP is beginning to recognize the importance of effective internal communication. Initiatives such as the Balanced Scorecard are evidence of progress and learning.

Recommendation #3:

Training in internal communication should become an integral part of coaching, supervisor, and leadership training so that all levels of the organization can develop this skill. This training should include instruction in the proper use of internal communication systems such as e-mail and voice-mail as well as schooling in effective consultation processes.

Recommendation #4:

Findings showed that a questionable personality in a leader had the potential to harm any efforts to improve internal communication. Leader selection processes at all levels must take into account the effect of personality traits on internal communication. This could be achieved during an interview process where verbal interaction has the potential to explore communication skills and personality traits.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Organizational Implications:

Information presented in this paper suggests that internal communication issues need to be addressed by the RCMP. These issues would require someone in a position of authority to take ownership of them in order for the recommendations to have a reasonable chance of success.

A separate unit to oversee all aspects of internal communication or the expansion of the Communications and Analysis Section would result in a clear source of internal communication expertise. This section would also be instrumental in developing and implementing the strategy mentioned in recommendation #2. The status quo consists of occasional internal communication plans designed for special projects and limited access to expertise due to insufficient resources. The current restructuring of policing in the Lower Mainland provides a valuable opportunity to identify adequate resources for such a unit.

The development of a consistent overall internal communication strategy would facilitate the flow of information and knowledge and result in an increase in organizational efficiency and learning. Failure to address this issue will perpetuate the isolation of expertise and cause inconsistent responses to operational and administrative matters.

If the internal communication component of core courses such as Field Coaching, Supervisor, and Interactive Leadership is emphasized more, then people in the organization will begin to develop this skill and experience the benefit of information and knowledge exchange. A failure to focus on this aspect of training for everyone may cause additional organizational inefficiencies.

The study has revealed that questionable personality traits can significantly affect internal communication particularly as it pertained to leadership. Although this

issue could be addressed in part through training, a more comprehensive leadership selection process at all levels, which seeks to identify personality traits that are conducive to effective internal communication is more likely to create an interactive atmosphere among employees. Failure to recognize the importance of the relationship between personality traits and internal communication may result in poor employee relations and a consequent lack of cooperation.

The benefits of acting on the issues related to internal communications should not be ignored. The recommendations made in this paper are consistent with existing literature that describes favourable outcomes. The corporate will and the means to implement them may become the biggest challenge facing the organization.

Future Research:

This research process has produced some answers but, inevitably, it has also prompted more questions. This paper has focused on internal communication in the present B.C. RCMP. It has explored what effect police culture has on it; how important it is to receive training in it, and how it is related to effective leadership. These areas are in a constant state of flux, therefore, research could now focus on the nature of internal communication in the future and to what extent technological improvements will dictate its format and role in the organization. This would include further study on the effects of rank, size, and distance on internal communication because the nature and organizational structure of policing is changing as well. It has become obvious that past solutions are not necessarily the solutions of the future and that constant re-evaluation is necessary for the RCMP to remain competitive and to be able to deliver an acceptable level of service to the public.

CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

Project Lessons Learned:

This project has been a life-changing experience. The quest for information and learning about the subject matter has broadened my horizons in a manner that no other exercise could have accomplished. Researching this project has provided me with valuable insight into the organizational complexities in the RCMP and has allowed me to form a more educated opinion about internal communication.

During the process of working on the project, it became clear that making hasty assumptions and drawing conclusions with incomplete information was going to be a major pitfall. Premature decisions were invariably reassessed as new and sometimes contradictory information was received. It was fascinating to observe and be part of the evolution of the project as if it had a life of its own. The learning and mind-altering processes that this project created presented new opportunities in my career and personal life. What I had thought of as “the big picture” became small by comparison to the new one.

From a technical point of view, the process of developing and administering a survey was uniquely illuminating and frustrating. It underlined the importance of including people from the sample audience in the process to make it more accurate, relevant and accepted. It also became obvious that more time needed to be spent on designing the questions to prevent them from being ambiguous or misleading. Dealing with the bureaucracies of the RCMP stretched my patience but allowed me to experience a wide range of personalities and opinions. It was particularly surprising and gratifying to note the difference between quantitative and qualitative information and made me thankful that I had not excluded either.

I now look at internal communication in organizations and the sub topics of police culture, training, and leadership with a new appreciation. The project also

brought to mind the concept that the more you learn the less you know and made reflection about who you were before the project a bizarre experience.

Program Lessons Learned:

I believe that one chooses a product or a path by evaluating a set of presented criteria and then gets on with the desired purpose. In the case of the MALT - JPSL program, I believe the format was appropriate for the purpose of helping me to learn. There are always improvements to be considered but that is also the nature of learning.

More specifically, the program has prompted me to reassess the format and intensity of my critique and allowed me to be more constructive and tolerant.

I was surprised at the passion that people brought to the table and sometimes dismayed at the effect this had on the group and its learning processes. I am unsure whether this is a common characteristic of adult learning programs or whether this was precipitated by the personalities in the group. In any case, this has prompted me to reflect more on the relevance of such passion to learning. I also noted that the outcome of discussions or events (passionate or otherwise) was directly related to the actions of the staff in dealing with the situation. The extent to which the learning organization was indeed a victim or benefactor of its own abilities in dealing with such matters came as a surprise to me and was indeed a valuable learning experience which requires more exploring.

In conclusion, the MALT – JPSL program has reminded me that it doesn't matter what format one chooses for the purpose of higher learning, only that learning of any nature is valuable and that one only gets out of it what one puts into it.

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APPENDIX A

Coquitlam Detachment Internal Communications Survey

Raw data results

Rate of return: 43.8% (92/210)

1. In general, how important is internal communication in your daily duties and the effective operation of the detachment?

not important at all	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5	very important
percent:	0	1.1	2.2	13	83.7	

2. More specifically, with regards to internal communication at the detachment, how important is

- a. verbal communication?

not important at all	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5	very important
percent:	0	0	6.5	28.3	65.2	

- b. communication via voice-mail?

not important at all	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5	very important
percent:	4.3	13	39.1	27.2	16.3	

- c. communication via e-mail (electronic)?

not important at all	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5	very important
percent:	1.1	2.2	17.4	40.2	39.1	

3. Concerning internal communication at the detachment, how comfortable are you with

- a. verbal communication?

not comfortable at all	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5	very comfortable
percent:	0	4.3	6.5	34.8	53.3	

b. voice-mail?

not comfortable at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very comfortable
 percent: 1.1 8.7 29.3 28.3 30.4

c. e-mail?

not comfortable at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very comfortable
 percent: 2.2 1.1 8.7 39.1 47.8

4. Which of the following methods of internal communication do you find most effective?**a. verbal**

not effective at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very effective
 percent: 1.1 3.3 15.2 34.8 44.6

b. voice-mail

not effective at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very effective
 percent: 6.5 31.5 41.3 16.3 4.3

c. e-mail

not effective at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very effective
 percent: 2.2 6.5 16.3 38 35.9

5. During your working hours at the detachment, how often do you communicate with**a. Peers****i. verbal**

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 1.1 0 6.5 20.7 70.7

ii. voice-mail

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 43.5 23.9 22.8 6.5 3.3

iii. e-mail

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 4.3 16.3 22.8 28.3 28.3

b. Supervisors

i. verbal

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 2.2 8.7 17.4 19.6 52.2

ii. voice-mail

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 43.5 34.8 16.3 4.3 1.1

iii. e-mail

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 5.4 12 20.7 35.9 26.1

c. Management

i. verbal

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 35.9 22.8 19.6 8.7 12

ii. voice-mail

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 67.4 15.2 14.1 1.1 2.2

iii. e-mail

not very often 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very often
 percent: 21.7 19.6 19.6 20.7 18.5

6. How do you feel about the volume of

a. voice-mail

adequate 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 too much
percent: 28.3 17.4 33.7 10.9 8.7

b. e-mail

adequate 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 too much
percent: 14.4 15.2 18.5 23.9 27.2

c. written communication

adequate 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 too much
percent: 23.9 20.7 41.3 7.6 4.3

7. How skilled at internal communication are the following positions in this detachment?

a. You

not very skilled 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very skilled
percent: 0 3.3 23.9 50 22.8

b. Peers

not very skilled 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very skilled
percent: 0 2.2 41.3 45.7 10.9

c. Supervisors

not very skilled 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very skilled
percent: 4.3 1.1 32.6 47.8 14.1

d. Management

not very skilled 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very skilled
percent: 8.7 16.3 21.7 39.1 14.1

8. What effect does higher rank have on internal communication?

positive 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 negative
percent: 7.6 25 34.8 22.8 4.3

9. How much time per day do you spend on dealing with the following means of internal communication?

a. verbal

minutes	10.....	15.....	20.....	25.....	30.....	40.....	50.....	60 +
percent:	2.2	3.3	2.2	6.5	8.7	8.7	3.3	64.1

b. voice-mail

minutes	10.....	15.....	20.....	25.....	30.....	40.....	50.....	60 +
percent:	58.7	14.1	10.9	1.1	10.9	2.2	0	1.1

c. e-mail

minutes	10.....	15.....	20.....	25.....	30.....	40.....	50.....	60 +
percent:	9.8	10.9	14.1	8.7	28.3	5.4	4.3	18.5

d. written

minutes	10.....	15.....	20.....	25.....	30.....	40.....	50.....	60 +
percent:	19.6	8.7	13	6.5	17.4	8.7	4.3	20.7

10. Has technology improved internal communication at the detachment?

no improvement	1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5	considerable improvement
percent:	3.3	5.4	15.2	43.5	29.3	

11. How accessible is the following information at this detachment?

poor access 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 readily accessible

a. operational		1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
percent:	9.8	5.4	34.8	28.3	20.7	
b. administrative		1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
percent:	9.8	12	41.3	20.7	15.2	
c. career planning		1.....	2.....	3.....	4.....	5
percent:	26.1	17.4	33.7	10.9	9.8	

12. How much training in internal communication (ie. effective presentation, interpersonal skills, supervisory or coaching skills, working relationships, verbal and language skills, etc.) have you received in the last five years?

none 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 enough
percent: 33.7 19.6 20.7 10.9 14.1

13. How important is training in internal communication?

not important at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very important
percent: 1.1 3.3 19.6 30.4 45.7

14. How frequently do you feel training is required to become skilled/effective in internal communication?

	percent
once <input type="checkbox"/>	7.6
annually <input type="checkbox"/>	45.7
every 2 years <input type="checkbox"/>	28.3
every 3 years <input type="checkbox"/>	7.6
every 4 years <input type="checkbox"/>	2.2
every 5 years <input type="checkbox"/>	6.5

15. How much are you participating in promoting effective internal communication? (ie. good working relationships, professionalism, positive outlook)

not at all 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 very much
percent: 1.1 3.3 16.3 43.5 34.8

16. Are you given the opportunity to provide feedback?

never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 often
percent: 16.3 25 26.1 20.7 12

17. How often do you utilize an opportunity to provide feedback?

never 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 often
 percent: 5.4 5.4 32.6 33.7 20.7

18. How much input do you feel you have in the decision-making processes?

none 1.....2.....3.....4.....5 considerable
 percent: 23.9 26.1 21.7 16.3 10.9

19. Age:

	percent
<input type="checkbox"/> 19-25	4.3
<input type="checkbox"/> 26-35	38
<input type="checkbox"/> 36-45	33.7
<input type="checkbox"/> 46-55	20.7
<input type="checkbox"/> 56 +	2.2

20. Gender:

	percent (3.3 missing)
<input type="checkbox"/> Male	54.3
<input type="checkbox"/> Female	42.4

21. Employment category:

	percent
<input type="checkbox"/> RCMP regular member	72.8
<input type="checkbox"/> Municipal employee	27.2

22. How many years have you worked at Coquitlam Detachment?

<input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 years	percent: 51.1	<input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 years	percent 9.8
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years	22.8	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-25 years	2.2
<input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 years	14.1	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 years	

23. How many years have you worked for the RCMP? (all locations)

<input type="checkbox"/> 0-5 years	percent 29.3	<input type="checkbox"/> 21-25 years	percent 13
<input type="checkbox"/> 6-10 years	17.4	<input type="checkbox"/> 26-30 years	5.7
<input type="checkbox"/> 11-15 years	18.5	<input type="checkbox"/> 31-35 years	3.4
<input type="checkbox"/> 16-20 years	8.7		

24. If you have any suggestions on how to improve internal communication at the detachment, please feel free to add your comments here or if you prefer you can contact me via e-mail.

Comments that were submitted:

1. External experts in the field of communication should be brought in for training sessions.
2. Management needs to interact more frequently with employees, verbally and face-to-face. E-mails can be misinterpreted in a negative manner.
3. Too much e-mail makes it too time consuming. Keep e-mails brief and to the point.
4. Commissioner's broadcasts should not come to personal e-mail.
5. More verbal communication at watch briefings and section meetings allows for more discussion and input.
6. Regular management/employee meetings.
7. Hold 'detachment/staff meetings'. E-mails cannot replace real people talking to real people.
8. Presentation and communication training for supervisors.
9. More effort at communication between sections to prevent alienation.
10. Briefing board should have more information about what's happening at the detachment as opposed to the LMD.
11. Cell phones and pagers should be personal issue which would eliminate paperwork and the constant number changes.
12. More frequent communication training.
13. The use of e-mail has replaced verbal communication which is bad for morale. More human face-to-face interaction is required.
14. The flow of communication needs to have some quality control so that important information is not lost.
15. More computer courses are required so that members can become more skilled in internal communication.

16. Need guidelines or training in the proper use of e-mail and voice-mail (ie. response times) to facilitate the procurement of information and to prevent inappropriate content.
17. The indexes and content of the manuals should be improved.
18. Members need to be more involved in processes that affect them so that unrealistic expectations can be avoided (feedback).
19. Bi-annual staff meetings.
20. More effort is required to promote a harmonious working relationship between municipal employees and RCMP members. There should be more of a 'working together towards a common goal' attitude.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. Would you agree with the premise that internal communication is vital to the organization?
2. How effective are we at internal communication?
3. What is hindering internal communication?
4. What is helping?
5. Is our hierarchical structure (rank) interfering with internal communication?
 - a. Why
 - b. Is this a management/leadership issue
6. How do personalities affect internal communication?
7. How does police culture affect it?
8. The survey indicated that verbal communication is preferred, most comfortable and most effective but drops in frequency with supervisors and management. (Agrees with findings from the provincial survey)
 - a. Why
 - b. Is verbal communication still a viable solution to such internal communication problems
 - c. How would you change the above situation
9. At the detachment level, people thought that management was relatively unskilled in internal communication
 - a. Is the problem broader than this
 - b. How would you deal with this
10. What effect do you think technology has had on internal communication?
11. What information should be communicated?
 - a. How much
 - b. Administrative
 - c. Operational
12. How "warm and fuzzy" (consultative) should management be in relation to decision-making and communicating?

13. Can one be an effective leader and decision-maker and still be good at internal communication and information sharing?
14. Would more/different training help ineffective internal communication?
 - a. for management? ranks?
15. How would you address the issue of poor communication by a manager?
by any member?