

AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION APPROACHES USED BY SMES IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT: *Literature highlights the importance of communication in the formulation and implementation of strategies. The level of communication has been seen to positively correlate with the overall performance of organisations. Unfortunately the level of communication in SMEs in Zimbabwe has not received much research neither have studies revelled the communication processes used by SMEs. This study sought to establish the communication approaches used by these SMEs and their contribution to the overall performance of these organisations. This was a qualitative study using the multiple case study approach involving eight organisations. In depth interviews and non-participant observations were used to collect data from owner/managers. The major findings were that SMEs used informal communication channels to share information with employees particularly the grapevine to gather organisational information. This tended to create organisational disharmony with each employee striving for favours from the owner. Employees were also given information on a need to know basis and this adversely affected overall organisation performance due to inadequate or delayed information.*

KEYTERMS: Strategy Implementation, Communication, Smes, Performance

INTRODUCTION

All organisations whether big or small require people to undertake various activities in them to prosper and grow. It is human elements that will identify an existing or an impending problem with the current direction or focus of the organisation which puts the human element at the front, centre and back of the strategy process, (Duke, 2013). Duke II (2013) states that the greatest challenge to confront the manager is arguably that of articulating a clear and suitable direction in which the organisation is headed. Surviving and thriving in the long term involves getting the right people focussed on the right things and engaged in collective effort (Holbeche & Matthews, 2012). The importance of effective communication in an organisation cannot be overemphasized in both strategy formulation and eventually implementation and monitoring organisational performance. Communication has been defined as a process through which people acting together create, sustain and manage meanings through the use of verbal and non-verbal signs and symbols within a particular context, (Conrad & Poole, 2012).

People in organisations act together and need to communicate regularly in order to achieve organisational goals. However, to effectively drive these, the manager requires the capacity to communicate complex ideas in simple ways; an ability to build and play in teams as well as trouble-shoot, (Duke II, 2013). This is easier said than done and most organisations encounter significant problems in trying to move forward which can be directly attribute to communication problems or barriers. Nelson et al (2007) calls for further research to