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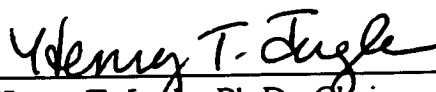
PREVIEW

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
FOR EMPLOYEE ADOPTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES:
A CASE STUDY OF A BORDER MAQUILADORA BUSINESS

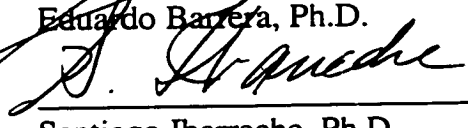
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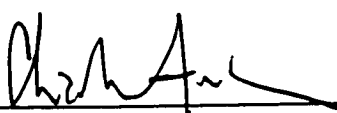
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©

Josefina Parga Enriquez

A mi familia:

**José, Margarita, Laura, Guadalupe, Olga, Pepe, y Fátima;
y para alguien muy especial en mi vida: Peter.**

**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES
FOR EMPLOYEE ADOPTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES POLICIES:
A CASE STUDY OF A BORDER MAQUILADORA BUSINESS**

By

JOSEFINA PARGA ENRIQUEZ, B.I.E.

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ABSTRACT

This graduate level research project explores the role of public relations strategies that can best work in a multicultural workforce setting characteristic of the “maquiladora industry” in Mexico. A workforce case study was undertaken of the Automotive Lighting ALNA Juárez plant to understand the ways in which workers could be committed to quality control standards and approaches. In addition, the study queried noted experts and practitioners involved in issues and concerns of multiculturalism in the workplace. A qualitative research approach was used, which consisted of: (1) the application of a survey instrument to employees in the ALNA workforce manufacturing plant setting; and (2), the interviewing of noted experts in the field of multiculturalism. A compilation of these data, and interpretation of the major research findings, subsequently was undertaken to reach conclusions about improving communication in multicultural work settings, where misperception of communication often occurs.

A sample of sixty-nine ($n=69$) “maquiladora industry” employees and ten ($n=10$) experts in multiculturalism participated in the research. The study contrasted employee points of view on the use of public relations and interpersonal communication strategies to get workers to adopt human resources policies in a multicultural environment. Key variables included: years of working experience and level of responsibility in workplace, gender and nationality.

Linkages between the theory and understanding of human behavior in organizational settings, characterized by a multicultural workforce, were used to ascertain

which types of public relations strategies work best to instill positive and productive compliance with organizational workplace requirements.

Also explored in this study were the enduring challenges to organizations characterized by a multicultural workforce.

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**PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES FOR EMPLOYEE ADOPTION OF HUMAN RESOURCES
POLICIES: A CASE STUDY OF A BORDER MAQUILADORA BUSINESS**

Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The need for standards of quality in work-place settings and organizations has existed since the beginning of the society itself. With the passage of time, an array of strategies for the administration of quality has evolved, as a response to the continuous change in all socio-cultural and politic aspects of organizational life (Jurán, 1989). How an individual behaves or copes with the demands and problems of everyday life in a given situation, however, has been found to be usually the result of the environment, or challenges arising from physical limitations and interpersonal challenges encountered in such organizational environments. This includes the public relations and interpersonal communication strategies implemented to persuade employees to understand and become vested in the organization's mission, which is the subject of study of this project.

Research Emphasis

Located along the Mexican-North American border, in the city of Juárez México, are many of the automotive industry maquiladora plants, which have to meet, and in some cases, exceed the day-to-day challenges of customer requirements for services and quality. One such newly formed company is Automotive Lighting North American Division (ALNA) Juárez plant, which is a joint venture between one of the top ten private

companies in the world (Bosch GMBH of Germany) and one of the top one hundred public companies in the world (Magneti Marelli of Italy). As reliable parent companies, both believe in the future of their 50/50 percent joint venture and consider that to compete, excellent companies must develop their own strong corporate identity, based on a motivated workforce that focuses on action, and shared principles that promote good quality practices. The company wants to constantly innovate and provide high quality solutions, with quality as the market driver.

As a supplier of headlamps to the automotive industry, ALNA Juárez plant wants to anticipate, understand, and satisfy customer needs, creating values by creating solutions. The company strives hard to implement principles that will make a difference with the competitors and serve as a root of their value creation.

The convergence of these two companies has provided challenges and opportunities because of the workforce from two companies that have been formed. Currently, ALNA Juárez plant employs close to 640 employees, with 407 in direct, 95 in indirect and 138 in administrative positions, respectively. Among them, 70% are male and 30% are female with an average age of 23 years and of 30 years, respectively, in direct-indirect employment status and administrative personnel. Seniority varies across groups; however an average of 1.5 years of employment at ALNA Juárez plant is the norm. The direct-indirect personnel is 100% Mexican nationals, and the administrative personnel consists predominantly of Mexican nationals, with some significant percentages of American, German, and Italian personnel (5%, 2.5%, and 1%

respectively). The diverse workforce in this multicultural company means different things to the different people who form the company.

This research project explores the role of public relations strategies that can best work in a Mexican or multicultural workforce setting, such as ALNA Juárez plant, to get workers committed to quality control standards and approaches. The research was prompted by a willingness on the part of the author to contribute something new and different to the internal workings of such organizations and also to provide a new rationale for relating to a multicultural workforce. At the same time, this effort seeks to pinpoint the combination of personnel resources and communication strategies that can work best to persuade employees to understand and become vested in the organization's mission, in a manufacturing setting and in a predominant Mexican environment.

Research Approach

The project research was undertaken to fulfill the graduate requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Communications that the author is pursuing. A randomly stratified sample of employees at ALNA Juárez plant by nationality, gender, and level of responsibility in the organization, as well as years of experience were interviewed to ascertain their attitudes and perceptions. The focus of the inquiry was on public relations (PR) strategies that can facilitate the understanding and adoption of quality standards of work across individuals of diverse backgrounds, as well as procedures to promote more effective communication.

In addition, the author/researcher conducted focus group discussions with noted experts and practitioners involved in issues and concerns of multiculturalism in the

workplace. This effort was designed to determine which work-related approaches are most effective in communicating information to multicultural employees.

The research and its analysis, although not exhaustive, will be used to guide the implementation of a combination of human resources strategies in a multicultural workplace setting, and also to enhance the available knowledge base on the topic for those companies characterized by a multicultural workforce. Companies of this nature are perceived to be facing similar communication challenges when implementing quality control standards and approaches.

PREVIEW

Chapter 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Human Behavior in Organizations: A Review of the Research and Practice

In order to successfully cope with the implementation of any positive task in the company, as well as the personal freedom and satisfaction which will allow personnel to be more sensitive to others, we must not only understand the human interaction process, but the outcomes as well, as a basis for effectively working with interrelationships across personnel. Understanding and explaining the dynamics that come into play in these efforts in a manufacturing setting and in a predominant Mexican environment. is the principal area of inquiry for this study.

How an individual behaves or copes with the demands and problems of everyday life in a given situation is usually the result of the environment. This includes challenges stemming from physical limitations and interpersonal challenges the individual experiences (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975).

According to Goodstein and Lanyon (1975), the first of these, direct challenges from the environment in the workday setting, are defined by our biological nature, and include the skill level that an individual uses to cope with physical realities. "Human behavior is not simply an elaboration of biological patterns present in other species. Perhaps the most important advantage is the unique capacity for thought, language, and speech, which human beings can exhibit. Humans are first biological creatures; and their biological endowment as a species exerts a critical influence upon their behavior" (Goodstein and Lanyon, p. 8, 1975). The second challenge to human existence involves

people's responses to their own perceived physical limitations. These characteristics can be understood in large measure as individual differences in the biological endowment from one person to another (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975).

Finally, the third group of challenges includes those posed by the changing nature of the interactive environment. According to Goodstein and Lanyon (1975), although has not always been the case, the changing nature of our society has tended to emphasize relational factors as the most important component of the organizational adjustment process.

To develop an adequate understanding of psychological adjustment, it is necessary to adopt some more or less consistent viewpoint concerning basic human nature.

Assumptions about human nature could be grouped under three headings: (1) the moral view, (2) the phenomenological view, and (3) the social-learning or behavioral (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975).

To facilitate our understanding of these processes, three discipline-based theoretical perspectives also will be considered: social-psychological, sociological and anthropological (Vaske and Grantham, 1990).

By adopting a set of assumptions regarding human beings and work places, these discipline-based theoretical perspectives can be advanced to examine a wide range of workplace interaction processes. By emphasizing certain points of view and de-emphasizing others, features of interaction become more apparent. Each perspective highlights attributes of a given social situation. Thus, the fundamental value of theoretical

perspectives lies in their use for generalizations and examining a wide range of social situations and behaviors.

The study of social psychology focuses on the nature and causes of human behavior in a social context. There are four major concerns within social psychology: (a) the influence of one individual on another person's attitudes and behaviors; (b) the impact of a group on its members' attitudes and behaviors; (c) the impact of a member on a group's activities and structure; and (d) the impact of one group on another group's activities and structure (Vaske and Grantham, 1990).

This latter concern, the impact of one person on another, is perhaps the most researched topic in social psychology. When one person changes the behavior of a second individual, the first is said to have a social influence. Beyond this overt impact on behavior, one person can also affect another's attitudes. Social psychologists define an attitude as an organized set of learned beliefs and feelings about a person, an object or a situation, which predisposes one to respond in some preferential manner. Because attitudes are learned, they can be changed.

Understanding the attitude change process, however, requires consideration of the organizational pressures to change, as well as the cultural influences, which affect individual and group cohesiveness, goals, and pressures toward conformity. The study of attitude change as a function within the context of organizational expectations draws attention to the context of the message communicated, the reliability of the source, the order of presentation, and perceived sanctions or incentives for changes (Vaske and Grantham, 1990).

In the *moral* view of psychological adjustment, moral absolutes provide the guidelines for evaluating the quality of one's adjustment. Sigmund Freud took a negative view of human nature, and although later psychoanalytic scholars modified this view to increase the importance of social and cultural factors in the adjustment process. Psychoanalytic scholars considered that "the highest level of adjustment is achieved when one has reached the stage of self-actualization, or fulfillment of one's innate potential" (Goodstein and Lanyon, p. 37, 1975).

On the other hand, *Phenomenologists* (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975) believe that individuals see the world through the selective filter of their own unique viewpoints, and that is, their own phenomenal fields. In order to predict an individual's behavior, it is thus necessary to have knowledge of that phenomenal field. Each person's phenomenal field is constantly being restructured according to changing needs. In this view, the fundamental force motivating all behavior is the need to preserve and enhance the phenomenal self.

Social-learning theorists (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975), approach the study of the human psychological adjustment as the study of problem-solving behavior. This view is similar in some respects to the contemporary view derived from the Freudian theory known as ego psychology, which also emphasizes one's competence in coping with the environment.

Cultures differ in the types of behaviors, including socialization, which are valued. However, one way of looking at the phenomenon of socialization is to view it as the process by which the biologically determined, unlearned patterns of behavior are

modified and changed into the learned patterns of behavior that are sanctioned or approved by the particular society.

Its goals include: learning to inhibit and control biological impulses; acquisition of culturally approved values of the society; and learning what behaviors are appropriate and what behaviors are inappropriate for one's position in society (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975).

Understanding the process of socialization requires an understanding of the basic principles of learning, which in turn lead to the development of an adequate understanding of human behavior.

Learning is "the process by which behavior is established through the influence of special experiences or stimulation, as a result of practice or training. Learning involves the arrangement of conditions, either intentionally or unintentionally, so that new or different responses are now made by the organism in place of some older responses or where no response at all was initially made" (Goodstein and Lanyon, p. 47, 1975).

There are three kinds of learning that are not mutually exclusive: (1) learning by association or classical conditioning; (2) learning by reinforcement; and/or (3) learning by modeling or observational learning.

Learning by Association or Classical Conditioning (Goodstein and Lanyon, 1975).

The association between a stimulus and a response, an association that did not exist prior to learning. This learned condition is not one, which emerges as a function of maturation, but rather, is one, which is created by special conditions. This is probably the simplest kind of learning because it involves responses, which are already part of the