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How to cite this thesis
The Influence of Communication 
within Organizations

A Minor Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of 
MAGISTER INGNERIAE 
In 
ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT 
at the 
FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT 
of the 
UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

by 
Ayrton dos Santos 
19 March, 2016

SUPERVISOR: Professor Jan Harm Pretorius
Abstract

Research has shown that communication is one of the key factors in organizational success and if not dealt with correctly will lead to poor organizational performance. This minor dissertation aims to investigate why modern day organizations still perform poorly in the area of communication. This will be demonstrated by researching the risk areas associated with communication as well as the factors within organizations that influence communication. This qualitative research study makes use of a case study, speed networking survey as well as a questionnaire. The findings of the research conducted identified four factors which influence communication namely, the communication software platform, organizational structure & strategy, communication competency of the employees and communication planning. Furthermore, the results found two main areas of risk associated with communication namely, the use of informal communication platforms (such as WhatsApp) and the communication of company information. The main conclusions drawn from this research were that organizations mainly perform poorly in the area of communication due to the lack of knowledge of the impact communication has on organizational performance. Modern day technologies such as email and instant messaging services have aided in the speed of communication but must not be solely relied on to solve all communication needs. This research calls for organizations to develop communication departments which work to identify the factors that influence their ability to communicate as well as the communication risk areas within the organization. Identifying and providing solutions to mitigate these factors should be their sole purpose.
Declaration

I Ayrton Augusto Correia dos Santos declare that the minor dissertation submitted for partial fulfilment of the Masters in Engineering Management Degree to the University of Johannesburg, apart from the help recognized, is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another university or institution of higher education for a degree.
Acknowledgements

This minor dissertation would not have been possible without the support of a number of individuals. Many thanks need to go to

Professor Jan Harm Pretorius for the supervision, guidance and support along the way.

The staff at the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Johannesburg, Dudu and Gina.

Thanks to my Fiancé and Family for their continued love and support.
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1. Introduction

Communication plays an integral role in allowing organizations to overcome the challenging modern day global competitive market. A modern organizations ability to efficiently communicate internally and externally is key. Communication is central to strengthening an employee’s confidence in the vision and mission of an organization, as well as improving the image of an organization to its external environment (Relationship with shareholders, society etc) [1]. Communication when effectively used can be seen as a strategic resource in maintaining and increasing an organization’s performance and is seen as a critical core competency to all organizations [1], [2].

Leaders within organizations need to facilitate effective communication internally (between their employees) as well as externally (between employees and the external business environment) [3]. If this is not done the leaders are likely to see low productivity levels and high levels of disorder amongst their workforce [3]. The paper titled “The Impact of Communication on Workers’ Performance...” links effective communication to employee performance and demonstrates that poor communication affects the performance of employees [3] [4].

A research paper by the PMI (Project Management Institute), titled “The high cost of low performance: The essential role of communications” illustrated that over 50% of project funds are at risk due to ineffective communication [2]. Also highlighted in the same report was the fact that only 48% of poor communicating organizations completed projects within budget, compared to 78% of organizations that communicated efficiently [2]. Further investigation showed that despite the above risks many organizations are currently not placing sufficient importance on communication [2]. This clearly illustrates that organizations as a whole will not be able to execute strategic initiatives unless they communicate effectively [2]. Thus communication carries with it inherent risks and if these risks are not addressed or controlled the organization may, as a result experience a continuous cycle of poor performance.

1.1 Problem Statement and Research Objectives

Further understanding the impact communication has on organizations and the potential risks associated with it, is paramount to organizational success in this area. The focus of this minor dissertation will be to further research communication and its influence within organizations. With a purpose of identifying reasons why modern day organizations, even with the rise of technology and access to information, still perform poorly in the area of communication.
The overall aim of this research is to understand the impact communication has within organizations. Based on the findings of this research paper, recommendations will be put forth on how organizations can avoid poor and ineffective communication. In light of the above, the following research objectives have been identified as critical in assisting to achieve the overall research aim:

1. Identifying risk areas associated with communication within organizations.
2. Investigate the factors within organizations that have an influence on communication.
3. Formulate recommendations on how to mitigate communication risk areas and influence factors.

### 1.2 Outline of Research Methods

The first and second objectives will be accomplished through the use of a case study on a business consulting and data analytics organization, BizWize Consulting (Pty) Ltd. The as is state of the communication and organizational structure of BizWize Consulting, will be obtained through detailed investigations and an employee speed dating survey. Results from these activities will aid in developing a new communication strategy and organizational structure for BizWize Consulting. Subsequently, a questionnaire was utilized to determine the impact of the new communication strategy and organizational structure.

Therefore, the research methods utilized are of a qualitative nature and include:

1. Case study on a business consulting and data analytics company BizWize Consulting
2. Questionnaires and surveys to solicit information from the employees within BizWize Consulting.

The research will be conducted and presented in the following steps:

a) As-Is analysis of the organizational structure and communication strategy of BizWize Consulting (Pty) Ltd.
b) Speed networking survey conducted at one of the organizations off site team building functions [5], [6].
c) Development of a new organizational structure and communication plan.
d) Questionnaire distributed to employees to determine impact of structure change and communication plan [7], [8].
1.3 Value of the Research

The significance of this minor dissertation is the fact that it will bring to the fore some of the reasons why organizations communicate ineffectively. In so doing aid in highlighting how organizations can avoid communication pitfalls, allowing for improvement in:

- Operations and business as usual.
- Project execution and delivery.
- Implementing strategic initiatives.
- Boosting employee moral and productivity.

This research will further contribute to the development of the understanding around communication and the influence it has on organizational performance.

1.4 Overview of Research Paper

The chapters presented in this research will form the sequential steps in the process of understanding, designing and implementing a new organizational structure and communication strategy within an organization. This being done in order to understand how communication affects organizations and why modern day organizations, even with the rise of technology and access to information, still perform poorly in the area of communication.

Chapter 2:

Chapter 2 provides a detailed literature review on the topics of organizations, communication and risk. Exploring the core elements and structures of organizations as well as organizational culture. Aspects of active listening and the fundamentals of communication are also introduced.

Chapter 3:

Chapter 3 introduces a detailed account of the research methodology introduced in section 1.2 above. Further detailed in chapter three is the reasons for selecting the various qualitative methods as well as the processes followed in collecting and analyzing the results.

Chapter 4:

Chapter 4 delivers a comprehensive description of the results of the research conducted as well as a detailed discussion of the findings.
Chapter 5:

Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and recommendations of the research conducted.

Chapter 6:

A full list of references used during this research study is provided in chapter 6.

1.5 Conclusion

Chapter 1 introduced the background to communication and the effect it has on organizational performance and project execution. Further detailing the research aims, objectives and methodology followed.

The chapter to follow will provide a theoretical background to the key areas within the minor dissertation, these include:

- Organizations.
- Communication.
- Risk.
2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Organizations

An organization can be described as a “Complex human system deliberately established to fill a defined purpose” [9]. The reasoning behind why organizations exist often comes down to simple fact that nobody can do everything themselves [10]. The need for collective effort in order to achieve a desired result is why organizations exist and thrive today [10]. This section will investigate organizations in detail exploring aspects such as

- Types of organizations.
- Organizational core elements.
- Organizational Culture.
- Organizational Structure

2.1.1 Organizations – Structures & Core Elements

According to Henry Mintzberg Organizations can be separated into three different dimensions [4], [11]:

- Core – Major role player in the determination of success or failure.
- Coordinating Mechanism – Main method the organization uses to coordinate its activities.
- Decentralization used – The percentage of subordinates allowed in the decision making process.

Core:

There are five main elements that make up the core of an organization these are [10], [4], [11]:

- Operating Core
  - These are the people in the organization that actually make the product or deliver the services. In some instances, the organization may be made up solely of an operating core. This is evident in smaller organizations striving to keep costs at a minimum and overheads low.
- Middle Line
  - This is the area of the organization where the middle managers operate. The need for middle managers arises when there are too many activities on the go for one
person to oversee. Therefore, middle managers bridge the gap between junior managers and senior managers.

- **Techno-structure**
  - This element contains the people who decide which is the best way to do all the jobs. This often involves selecting a form of technology and deciding/defining the work processes. This area is where the standardization of procedures is often born and continuous improvement is key.

- **Support Staff**
  - The people in this element help the Operating Core perform its job. These types of resources are normally seen as a major cost and kept to a minimum as they are not directly involved in the making of the product or delivering the service. Examples of such resources are cafeteria staff, HR and security to mention a few.

- **The Apex**
  - This is the top of the organization which decides on the direction the organization is going to take and the element that drives the organization forward. This may be one individual or may be group of board members.

Figure 2: Mintzberg Organizational Core Elements [10], [11], [4].
Coordinating Mechanism:

The coordinating mechanism is the main methods implemented to coordinate the activities across the organization, examples of these are [4], [11]:

- Direct Supervision  
  *One employee responsible for the work of other employees.*
- Standardization of work processes  
  *Work across entire organization is defined or automated.*
- Standardization of skills  
  *When the training and skills required by an employee to perform the job is specified.*
- Standardization of output  
  *When the output of the work performed is defined and unified. An example of this this would be the manufacturing of cars; each car needs to come out of the manufacturing process with the specifications.*
- Mutual adjustments  
  *Work is managed through informal communication.*

Decentralization used:

Decentralization refers to the extent to which subordinates participate in the decision making processes within the organization [4], [11]. Types of decentralization include [4], [11]:

- Vertical decentralization  
  *Power is distributed from the top of the organization down the hierarchy. With employees at the different hierarchical levels sharing authority.*
- Horizontal decentralization  
  *Where non line staff as well as administration staff share authority and make decisions.*
- Selective decentralization  
  *Authority is delegated to different business units within the organization.*

According to Henry Mintzberg, the three dimensions coupled with the strategy of the organizations will result in the organization taking one of five structure types [4], [11]. These are [4], [11]:
The below table details the three dimensions (core, coordinating mechanism & decentralization) of each of the organizational structures [4], [11].

Table 1: Henry Mintzberg’s Five Organizational Structure Components [4], [11].

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Structure</th>
<th>Coordinating mechanism</th>
<th>Core part of organization</th>
<th>Type of Decentralization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple Structure</td>
<td>Direct supervision</td>
<td>Strategic Apex</td>
<td>Vertical &amp; Horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Standardization of work</td>
<td>Techno-structure</td>
<td>Limited Horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Standardization of skills</td>
<td>Operating core</td>
<td>Vertical &amp; Horizontal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisionalised form</td>
<td>Standardization of outputs</td>
<td>Middle Line</td>
<td>Limited Vertical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adhocracy</td>
<td>Mutual adjustment</td>
<td>Support Staff</td>
<td>Selective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Apart from Henry Mintzberg’s theories, there are many different forms and variations when it comes to the structure of an organization [10]. According to Tony Greener fundamentally there are six different themes which organizations base their structure on and these are [10]:

- **Unitary**
  
  All Function heads report to the top which in the case of the Unitary theme is referred to as the centre.

  **Positives:**
  
  - Simple lines of communication
  - Encourages easy access to information and quick decision making.
Negatives:

- HOD (Head of Departments) become departmental chimneys. Whose sole purpose is to keep the boss happy. In that instance fragmentation within the organization will occur and silos will be developed.

- Centralized
  Central policy makers normally board members determine the way an organization will function. More control is exercised from the centre when compared to the Unity theme which gives HOD's less freedom in their roles.

Positives:

- Strong Control
- Standardization of Procedures
- Strong brand image
- Expertise at the centre of the organization

Negatives:

- Constrained local management
- Lack of management creativity
- Overstaffed and expensive central office

- Decentralized
  A good deal of responsibility is transferred from the centre to the regions. Thus separate business units have control over their own plans but have some aspects such as financial controls and in some cases strategic direction imposed on them from the centre.

Positives:

- Delegated authority – makes managers feel that they are running their own business.
- Closeness to customers
- Higher levels of creativity
- Lower central head count & lower overhead costs

Negatives:

- Little support from centre
- Different units may turn into competitors instead of working with one another
- Financial & human resources may not be used cost effectively

- Divisionalised
  Very similar to the Decentralized theme, however the Divisionalised structure ensures that all business units have their own resources. Thus all units will have their own finance, planning and HR support and in some cases a Sales and Marketing division.
  **Positives:**
  - Business Unit can function on its own.
  **Negatives:**
  - Centralized policy may still overrule smaller business units making their progress null and void.

- Matrix
  Matrix is version of an organization in which staff from different functional areas work together to complete a project. For instance, a finance manager can work with a salesman to land new clients.
  **Positives:**
  - Ability to change and adapt to changing demands from the client or industry.
  - Skills and experience within the team grow as each member is exposed to a lot more.
  **Negatives:**
  - Reporting conflicts can become confusing.
  - Organization can appear to be disjointed and in a state of instability.

- Process Structure
  Focus in this type of structure is how to go about the work, the process of the work. Normally these types of structures are horizontal and often there is no vertical structure. This is dependent on whether the team is keeping the clients and stakeholders happy.
  **Positives:**
  - Enhance cross functional working.
Enhance cooperation

Negatives:

- Workflow may be regarded as more important than the end product
- Quality in some cases suffers
- Responsibility is diffused

2.1.2 Organizational Culture

Referred to as one of the less tangible aspects of an organization, organizational culture is often spoken of as one of the most important aspects within an organization [10]. The culture within an organization can be defined as “...set of generally unconscious assumptions about reality shared by members of the organization and expressed in their shared beliefs, values and behavior.” [9]. The elements that make up culture can be broken up into two groups [12]:

- Visible components such as customs, food, art etc.
- Non Visible elements, often referred to as deep culture, such as values, beliefs and systems.

Research has shown that organizational culture can be used to provide a source of continuous competitive edge [13], [14], [15]. There have been numerous research studies performed to illustrate the relationship between organizational culture and organizational performance [13], [14]. These studies demonstrate three main points, these are [13], [14], [15]:

- Organizational culture has a positive influence on organizational performance by guiding and motivating employees and shaping employees’ behavior toward specific goals.
- Organizational culture is seen as a valuable inimitable resource allowing organizations to sustain a competitive advantage which has positive impact on performance.
- Organizational culture allows for an organization to be agile and to have the ability constantly adapt to the new demands of the market, this in turn has positive impact on performance.

In order to classify organizational culture the competing values framework was developed [13]. The competing values framework has four quadrants separated by horizontal and vertical axis [13]. The vertical axis illustrates the extent to which an organization stresses control or flexibility.
and the horizontal axis demonstrates the extent to which the organization focuses on internal or external views [13]. Refer to figure 3 which illustrates the four quadrants as well as the strategic emphasis and philosophy of each.

The power of organizational culture can be seen in the case of the organization Pacific Bell [9]. In 1983 Pacific Bell divested from AT&T and embarked on a leadership development program one of the largest planned change efforts seen at that time [9]. The change effort involved managers at all levels of the organization and eventually all 67000 employees [9].

Two years after the planned change effort started, the program was abandoned [9]. The reason cited for the failure of the program was, the culture of Pacific Bell was not prepared for the leadership development program [9]. The change program enforced creativity, innovative thinking and a systems approach that did not fit in with the culture of a telephone company at
the time [9]. This example shows how difficult it is for organizational culture to change once it has been entrenched [9].

In order for organizational change to be successful there needs to be a substantial effort to include employees affected by planned change in the change efforts. If this is not done the organization will experience resistance from those employees involved [9].

Margaret Heffernan in her book “Beyond Measure – Big Impact of small changes” describes organizational culture as “the secret sauce of organizational life: the thing that makes the difference but for which no one has the recipe” [16].

Research shows that around 70% of programs aimed at culture change fail, this leads management to believe that culture is abstract and difficult to manage [16], [17], [18]. However culture is a non linear system and thus can be impacted by all the small changes. Therefore the simple act of asking more questions, listening and sharing important information impacts the culture in a tremendous way [16].

The theory that great organizational cultures are made up of change on small initiatives from all employees is evident in the aviation industry transformation in 1972 [16]. After a fatal crash that killed 118 people, no one leadership change could address the scale of the problem at hand. During the investigation that followed it was seen that the failure of the employees to ask questions and raise concerns was a major contributing factor [16]. Therefore the small barriers between employees, functional areas and leadership threatened to bring down the entire industry [16].

This is when a “just culture” was introduced in order to draw from every employee the best ideas, observations, concerns and concepts [16]. A just culture aims to do the following:

- Make it easy and expected to raise concerns.
- Raised risks and sound alarms.
- Create an environment of openness and not secrecy.
- See mistakes as learning opportunities not shame and blame sessions.

This just culture then transformed the aviation industry into the safest mode of travel we have today [16].

2.1.3 High Performance Organization
Financial and operational performance are driven by the organizational and people capabilities within an organization [19]. In modern day organizations there is a lack of tools that enable the executives to drive organizational and people capabilities [19]. In order to bridge this Gap The Boston Consulting Group has done research into High Performance Organizations and has compiled a list of 14 organizational and people characteristics that can be grouped into five broad dimensions that lead to sustained performance [19]:

- **Leadership:** An aligned leadership team is effective deep within the organization.
- **Design:** A lean structure reflects the organizations strategic focus and has a defined roles and responsibilities.
- **People:** The organization translates business strategy into powerful people strategy and is therefore able to attract and retain the most capable individuals.
- **Change Management:** The organization has the proactive ability to adapt to varying changes in the market. The ability to sustain large scale change is a very important characteristic.
- **Culture & Engagement:** Culture of the organization is aligned with the strategic goals and employees are willing to go the extra mile in pursuit of the goals of the organization.

### 2.2 Communication

As quoted by Stuart R. Levine in his book *The Six Fundamentals of Success*, “Communication helps bring the best thinking into the right conversation at the right time.” [20]. Communication in its simplest form can be defined as the process through which information in the form of data, messages, ideas or feelings are transferred from one person to another [1].

Communication is seen as an important life skill and one that needs to be enhanced at every opportunity [21]. Good communicators often find it easy to develop empathy and trust with others [21]. Communication is a two-way process that can often be complex as in most cases several iterations are needed before an understanding is reached. Communication can take place in many different ways but most communication is a combination of the following [21]:

- Words
- Pictures
- Graphics
- Voice
- Facial Expressions
• Body Language

A skill that all good communicators have is the ability to actively listen whilst they are interacting with others [21]. Active listening avoids misunderstandings, confusion and misinterpretations and also ensures that the parties involved are always looking at the “big picture” whilst they communicate [21]. Active listening can be defined as the conscious decision made to listen and understand messages of the speaker [22]. When the technique is used effectively active listening can [22]:

- Demonstrate undivided attention.
- Encourage the other party to continue speaking.
- Reassure the other party regarding self-disclosure.

This section will introduce communication and its role within organizations as well as the projects organizations run. The risks associated with communication and the way in which communication affects the culture of an organization will also be investigated.
2.2.1 Communication within Organizations

It has been noted in research done by M. F. Hall that communication within organizations can mainly be broken down into two occasions. These are when [23]:

- Decisions have to be made, this results in the search for information which in turn provokes reports, discussions and so on.
- Modify the behavior of the organization. This could be in communicating a decision in order to initiate tasks or by the communicating of strategies in order to change attitudes.

M. F. Hall further broke communication within organizations down into symbols and stated “Might it not be better then, to say that all messages are expressed in symbols, and that some of these symbols are verbal ones?” [23]. This allows for a deeper understanding into the way verbal and non-verbal symbols affect communication. Take for example the size of the chief executives’ desk or the number of secretaries he/she has, all of these factors communicate information in a non-verbal way [23]. This insight brings into question the affect organizational roles have on communication, what organizational roles symbolize to others and whether this is true for all personnel in the organization.

For example, the “Shop Stewart” role (in the case of a production organization) might have positive implications for the shop floor workers and negative implications for management. The existence of these types of implications will often affect the way in which messages are received between the two parties involved in the communication. A further question can be asked as to the extent to which this kind of symbolization affects the recipient’s observation and assessment of what is communicated as well as how the message is communicated by the sender [23].

Figure 6 illustrates a typical production organization and demonstrates an example of how communication flows between the different organizational levels [23]. The organization shown in figure 6 can be described as the “official” decision making organization [23]. One of the functions of the “official” decision making organization which holds true for many different types of organizations is as an instrument for distributing information and decisions horizontally as well as vertically throughout the organization, making the resulting action legitimate [23].

This brings to light the affects that the logic of different employees at different levels play on the message as it flows vertically down the organization further away from the sources of power [23]. As illustrated in figure 6 illegitimate questions/premises arise about the intent of the decision to
cut costs. These types of instances may prove to be costly to the effectiveness of the communication [23].

Figure 6 also illustrates one of the weaknesses typical of this type of production based organization but also something that is evident in all organizations [23]. It shows that the premise information from the Personnel Manager is seen as less important than the premise information from the Production Manager [23]. This is due to the fact that often in organizations some departments are valued higher than others [23]. Therefore when making key decisions the information communicated by one department is seen as more important than communication from another [23]. Allowing this to be common knowledge amongst the organization will affect the way in which departments are communicated with as well as how those departments communicate [23].
1. Labour costs must be reduced.
2. They are high due to our high labour turnover.
3. Labour turnover is high because of piecework.
4. We must abolish piecework.
5. We must reduce our selling prices.

**REDUCE SELLING PRICES!!!!**

1. We must reduce selling prices.
2. To reduce selling prices we need to reduce labour costs.
3. We must reduce labour costs.

**REDUCE LABOUR COSTS!!**

1. Labour costs must be reduced.
2. They are high due to our piece work system and our layouts.
3. We must therefore alter our piecework system and our layouts.

**ALTER PIECEWORK SYSTEMS & LAYOUTS!!**

1. We want a stable level of earnings
2. This piecework makes it impossible to get stable earnings.
3. We must manipulate the piecework system

1. We must manipulate the piecework system
2. The manipulation gives us control over the level and stability of our earnings.
3. We must resist any alteration which threatens this control.

Figure 7: Communication within a Production Organization [23].
In the article titled “The Mood of a Firm” Li Way Lee explores the affects that the mood of an organization could have on the way in which that organization communicates [24]. The article makes two points about the mood of an organization and its effects on communication which are of interest and they are [24]:

- Change in mood effects the whole organization.
- Organization which is frustrated by poor communication will have a bad mood. Bad moods amplify behavioral responses.

Figure 8 illustrates the relationship between organizational culture, organizational strategy and communication [25].

Thus illustrating the interconnection communication has within the organization. Improving techniques and communication systems will result in improved levels of organizational effectiveness [25].

In the modern organization efficient communication is key to strengthening employee’s confidence in the strategic vision of that organization [1]. An efficient communication climate will allow the organization to strengthen from within and in turn, the relationship the organization has with society will be successful and the image of the organization will be a positive one [1].

A communication climate within an organization is a complex and ambiguous concept which in most cases is difficult to assess [26]. In traditional organizations a high importance has been placed on communication and management have assumed that a positive communication culture will lead to the following [26]:
Increased:

- Productivity
- Profitability
- Job satisfaction

Reduced:

- Absenteeism
- Grievances
- Staff turnover

It has been noted however that even though there is a high importance placed on communication there are no sufficient instruments that are able to measure the managerial culture in the broadest sense and critical communication culture factors [26]. In the modern day organization it has become increasingly crucial to collect & analyze data which shows the relationship between perceptions of communication culture and the actual communication behaviors [26].

The root cause of most communication problems within organizations is the difference between the intended meaning of a message and the way in which the other members perceive the message [1]. Thus in order to increase communication performance managers in organizations have had to develop the ability to receive information from their sub-ordinate employees and transmit swift and solid feed-back [1].

It is essential in the modern day working environment that the employees understands the impact they will have on the organization as well as their fellow employees [1]. It is crucial for the employees to know their role in applying the strategies of the organization and to understand the way in they as an individual fit within the organizational culture. These key factors when communicated effectively allow for staff retention and attraction of new employees [1].

It has been seen through a research study done in Romania that the following are among the most popular ways in which organizations improve their communication [1]:

- Open Meetings
- Inter-department meetings
- Internal newsletters
- Intranet
The advancement of technology has allowed for information to be distributed in ways that go beyond the printed word in forms such as video and audio [27]. Further advances in the teleconferencing and email allow people to interact even when they are separated by physical space and frantic schedules [27].

An article titled “Enabling, Advising, Supporting, Executing: A Theoretical Framework for Internal Communication Consulting Within Organizations” written by A. Zerfass and N. Franke stated that during the Stockholm Accords¹ public relation professionals proposed a vision for communicative organizations [28]. Networked societies are forcing organizations to move away from traditional methods of handling communication where access and interaction where limited to dedicated units such as marketing, public relations and customer services. This coupled with today’s complexity, speed and changes brought about the vision of the communicative organization [28].

These communicative organizations would require timely information, knowledge and understanding of economic, social, environmental and legal developments, as well as stakeholder expectations [28]. This would aid in the ability for the organization to quickly identify and act on opportunities and risks that can affect the organizations direction, action as well as communication [28]. These communication activities will take place at every point within the organization [28].

The article further stated that empirical evidence shows that a more complete understanding of communication functions within the organizations is needed [28]. The need for an increased competency in communication is due to the fact that in the modern day working environment many employees are at the “frontlines” of the organization and deal directly with customers [28]. Thus all employees need to be able to communicate in accordance with the organizations corporate communication goals and in addition be able to give and take feedback and share information in a positive way [28].

Thus a communicative organization includes the following three elements [28]:

- Awareness of the communicator role of every employee. Every employee is a messenger and brand ambassador for the organization.
- All outbound communication has a consistent set of core principles and visions
- All inbound communication activities have a holistic view as well as integration and interpretation of information from neighboring areas.

¹ Stockholm Accords, a collaborative effort of more than 1000 leaders of the global public relations profession from 42 countries [28].
An organization needs to ensure that every employee has a set of core communication competencies in order to realize the benefits of this concept. These competencies are:

- Active communication competencies.
- Perceptual & Interpretative competencies.
- Cooperative competencies (provide skills to combine active communication and perceptual competencies).

The need for a more communicative organization has required communication experts to widen their focus to include not only leading communication processes but also developing the organizations communication skills as a whole [28].

### 2.2.2 Project Communication

Project communication is defined as the exchange of project specific information with the emphasis on creating understanding between the sender and the receiver [29]. When performed effectively communication can bridges the gap between all the different stakeholders involved in the project even when the stakeholders are from different cultural and organizational backgrounds and at different levels of expertise [30]. Management of all forms of communication in the project is defined as project communications management [29]. Project communication
management incorporates all the processes that are required to ensure the correct planning, collection, creation, distribution, storage, retrieval, management, control, monitoring and the ultimate disposition of project information [31]. Project communication management follows three stages namely [31]:

- Planning
- Managing
- Controlling

Communications in a project environment can often come in many different forms. A few are listed below [29]:

- Internal (within the project) and external (customers, vendors etc)
- Formal (reports, memos etc) and informal (emails, telephonic discussions etc)
- Vertical (up and down organizational levels) or Horizontal (with colleagues)

![Project Communications Management Overview](image)

**Figure 10: Project Communications Management Overview [2].**

All project information is delivered using some form of communication, therefore the correct management and implementation of communication is key to the success of the project [32]. All aspects of the project related to communication need to be investigated before the project
commences [31]. From this investigation communication procedures need to developed and distributed to all the relevant stakeholders [31].

A report by the Project Management Institute (PMI) shows that there are great risks involved in the failure of communication within projects, which in turn could result in major time, cost & performance losses [2].

Figure 10 was extracted from the report by the Project Management Institute and their research shows that over 50% of the projects funds are at risk due to poor communication.

The three main project objectives are also greatly affected by ineffective communication by up to 25% (Refer to figure 11).

There are currently projects being managed where the project manager & the construction team are in different countries [30]. This illustrates that with the correct communication any project difficulties can be overcome [30]. Modern day communication has been aided with the advancement of technology making cross continent projects possible [30].
2.3 Risk

Merriam Webster’s definition of risk is “the possibility that something bad or unpleasant (such as an injury or a loss) will happen” or “someone or something that may cause something bad or unpleasant to happen” [33].

Risk, with regards to a project environment may be defined as an uncertain event or condition that if occurs will have either a positive or negative impact on one or more of the project objectives [31]. Risks can be categorized into two sectors; these are:

- Known
  Known risks have been recognized and evaluated and can be planned for whereas known risks that cannot be managed should be assigned a contingency reserve [31].

- Unknown.
  Unknown risks cannot be planned for and will be dealt with when and as they occur.

Due to the fact that risk has a high level of uncertainty, it is crucial that all levels of the organization practice risk management [31]. Communication and handling of risk should be an open and honest process throughout the organization [31].

![Figure 13: Plan Risk Management: Inputs & Outputs Flow Diagram [31].](image)

One methodology utilized to deal with risk, which has been introduced by the Project Management Institute, is called Plan Risk Management. Plan risk management is a process that
defines how to perform risk management activities for a project (Refer to 13 above). The benefit of utilizing planned risk management is that it guarantees that the level, type and visibility of the risk management taken is proportional to the risk itself [31]. However, in order for the plan risk management process to be successful, it is essential that the plan is communicated to all relevant stakeholders in order to obtain their agreement and participation [31].

A more detailed approach to risk management can be seen in figure 14 below, this illustrates risk management as a continuous cycle as apposed to a singular process as seen in Figure 13 [34].

![Figure 14: Risk Management Process](image)

Different forms risk analysis have been developed in order to assist businesses to determine the probability of the risk event occurring an the severity of the event when it occurs [35]. Please refer to Figure 15 below which shows a variety of different risk analysis methods and how they apply to the different stages in the risk assessment process [34].
### Applicability of Method for Components of the Risk Assessment Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Hazard/risk identification</th>
<th>Risk analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job hazard analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structured interviews</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delphi</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklists</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary hazard analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard and operability studies</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard analysis and critical control points</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toxicity assessment</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What-if analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business impact analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Root-cause analysis</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure mode effects analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fault tree analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event tree analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and consequence analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause and effect analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Layers of protection analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision tree</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human reliability analysis</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bow tie analysis</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability centered maintenance</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sneak circuit analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Markov analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monte Carlo simulation</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bayesian statistics and Bayes nets</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>FN curves</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk indices</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequence/probability matrix</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost/benefit analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-criteria decision analysis</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>SA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design safety review</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk assessment matrix</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management oversight and review technique</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>SA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Color codes: green/SA = strongly applicable; yellow/A = applicable; grey/NA = not applicable.*
2.4 Conclusion

Detailed literature relating to the main topics associated with this minor dissertation (organizations, communication and risk) were presented in this chapter. The author presented concepts relating to organizational structure and core elements. Presenting both Greener and Mintzberg theories on the concepts. Organizational culture as well as the elements of high performing organizations where also introduced. Furthermore, different aspects relating to communication where investigated, these included communication within organizations, active listening as well as project communication. Finally, the fundamentals of risk were introduced and risk management procedures were discussed.

Chapter 3 to follow will provide a detailed overview of the different aspects of the research methodology used in this research paper.
3 Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The leadership team at BizWize Consulting (Pty) Ltd realized that in order for the organization to be successful during its growth phase, there was a need to develop and implement a new organizational structure and communication plan. The new organizational structure and communication plan needed to align with the overall vision, strategy and culture of the organization.

The chapter to follow will detail the research methodology used to:

- Investigate the research questions at hand.
- Accomplish the research objectives set out in Chapter 1:
  1. Identifying risk areas associated with communication within organizations.
  2. Investigate the factors within organizations that have an influence on communication.
  3. Formulate recommendations on how to mitigate communication risk areas and influence factors.

3.4 Case Study

A case study was selected as one of the methods of research for this dissertation due to the following factors:

- Case studies allow for the investigation of organizational communication within its environment [36].
- Case studies allow for detailed investigation into communication [37].
- Case studies allow for data to be collected from various methods such as surveys/questionnaires, document review and observations [37].

The case study process followed the steps below, namely (these steps will be described in detail in the sections to follow):

- As-Is analysis of the organizational structure and communication strategy of BizWize Consulting.
- Speed networking survey conducted at one of the organizations off site team building functions [5], [6].
- Development of a new organizational structure and communication plan.
- Questionnaire distributed to employees to determine impact of structure change and communication plan [7], [8].
Each of the steps followed in the above-mentioned case study were designed to align with the research objectives. Therefore, the overall implementation of the steps and outcome of the process enabled:

1. The providing results that assist in investigating the risk areas associated with communication which addressed research objective 1 -
2. Identification of factors within organizations that have an influence on communication which addressed research objective 2 -
3. The highlighting of possible causes for poor communication within organizations which addressed research objective 3 –

The case study method followed above draws similarities with the research method of action research. The action research method consists of the following steps 1) develop a plan, 2) act, 3) observe and 4) reflect and allows individuals or groups to work toward improving their own practice [38]. The similarities are evident due to fact that the case study above has been designed to assist the leaders and employees of BizWize consulting in improving their organizational communication. Moreover, the steps followed in the case study closely resemble the 4 steps of action research.

3.4.1 Introduction to BizWize Consulting (Pty) Ltd
BizWize Consulting is a business consulting and data analytics organization which strives to deliver breakthrough performance by assisting its clients to push the boundaries of performance. Over a two-year period, BizWize Consulting grew from 2 to 19 employees.

Figure 17: The BizWize Consulting Evolution.
BizWize has equipped itself with team members that hold the following skills (these tie in with the services offered):

- Lean Six Sigma Black Belt
- Lean / Kaizen / Rapid Improvement Event Methodologies
- Senior Data Analytics
- Industrial Process Engineering
- Financial Management
- Managerial Accounting
- Database Administration
- Data Modelling
- Programming / coding that enables efficient data management processes (VBNet, Java, etc.)

BizWize Consulting have experience in the following fields:

- Financial
- Manufacturing
- Aerospace

3.4.2 As-Is state of Organizational Structure & Communication

In order to determine the as–is state of the organizational structure and communication strategy, the following steps were followed:

a) Interview and Investigation Process

Detailed investigation (interview) sessions with leadership of BizWize consulting. Focusing on the following themes:

I. Current organizational structure
II. Current communication strategy (incl communication platforms & software, newsletters etc)
III. Difficulties and failures currently being experienced due to poor communication (incl customer & employee complaints, project failures etc).

Investigation (interview) sessions were selected as a research method due to the fact that interviews allow for more focused discussions [39]. Furthermore, allowing the leadership
at BizWize time to reflect and share information in a one-on-one environment, information that they would not ordinarily share in a group setting [39].

b) Speed networking survey

Speed networking is a method founded in the speed dating phenomenon. The latter is a technique that encompasses a rotating format of seven minute dates\(^2\) within a structured setting. The underlying tone of speed dating is of a romantic nature and it is aimed at allowing single adults to find compatible partners [5]. From this the development of speed networking was introduced in 2005, as a third iteration of the speed dating format [5]. The term speed networking was presented due to its more neutral label which intended to separate the concept from its romantic origins. Organizations and academia are now looking to speed networking as a research method due to its efficiency and ability to build interpersonal skills [5].

Therefore, when used in the context of BizWize the speed networking provided greater insight into the current state of communications at the organization. With an emphasis on understanding communication at the organization from an employee point of view. The methodology is further explained in section 3.1.3 below.

3.4.3 Speed networking surveys

In order to provide further insight into the as-is state of the communication within BizWize Consulting speed networking surveys were used to engage directly with the employees. The leadership of BizWize wanted to ensure that questioning the employees on this important topic was also used as an opportunity to build teamwork and comradery within the organization. Given the above, a speed networking exercise was selected as the research method for the following reasons [6], [5]:

- Allow employees to discuss and collaborate with one another, in this way employees could end up changing their view or becoming more confident about their own opinion. This is not obtainable using the traditional questionnaire method, as often questionnaires are answered anonymously and by each employee separately.

---

\(^2\) A date can be defined as an appointment or social engagement between two persons [51]. This definition is applicable throughout the minor dissertation.
• Speed networking allow employees to develop interpersonally with a variety of “Soft Skills”.
• Speed networking provides a systemic way to develop social networks, thus allowing the organization to build team dynamics whilst the survey is being conducted.

3.4.3.1 Positive attributes and Limitations to speed networking surveys

In addition to the above further positive attributes to using speed networking as a research method are [6], [5]:

• Speed networking process allows for efficient collection of data. The survey is run and results are collected on the same day.
• Allows employees to share information and cultivates creativity. This will allow for more dynamic survey responses.
• Speed networking is a more innovative method of survey collection.
• Allows for each employee to be part of the collective problem raising and problem solving process.
• Allows each employee to understand what other employees pain points are when it came to communication.

On the other hand, due to the way in which speed networking surveys are conducted limitations are evident. One such limitation is that it is difficult to control and to ensure the involvement of both employees [39]. A second limitation is related to the fact that the survey and collections of results are conducted in the same setting and time frame, this places pressure on the need for all employees to be present (if some employees are not present the sample group is affected) [39].

The next section will describe the process followed in designing the speed networking survey.

3.4.3.2 Design of speed dating survey [40], [5]:

Research Aims
The speed networking survey research is aimed at determining the as-is state of communication within BizWize consulting.

---

3 Soft Skills are defined as the ability to deal with people and having a positive flexible attitude [50].
**Population Sample**

The population sample for the speed networking survey will be as follows:

Table 2: Population Sample Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-Owners (Leadership)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stream Leads (Middle Management)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical leads</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How the speed networking survey was conducted [5]:**

The purpose of the speed networking survey was to arrange an event where each employee got to have a “speed date” with another employee. This process continued until each employee had an opportunity to have a “speed date” with every other employee at the firm. The conversations that were held during the 2-minute speed dates were led by questions that were shown up on a big screen.

Out of the 18 questions, five were specifically related to the research aims of this paper. These questions were highlighted with a red dot. Employees were instructed to record their fellow employees' answers to all questions indicated with a red dot.

Once the speed networking had come to an end the employees were split into two teams. These teams then discussed the answers each individual employee had from their red dot questions. This provided the opportunity for employees to further discuss the questions and suggestions put forth by fellow employees.

The two groups where then tasked to display all the answers on a single sheet of paper. There was then an opportunity for one employee from each team to present the answers to the rest of the organization. The speed networking survey was performed during a team off-site.

The method utilized in this version of the speed networking exercise draws similarities to the Delphi method as well as the world café method.

Where the intention of the Delphi method as well as the speed networking survey is to request insight from experts (the employees) and to reveal areas where these experts are in agreement [39]. These areas of agreement between the experts can then be utilized to

---

4 Team off site – Event held off the clients premises where the entire organization meets to discuss strategy and business related topics. Team building exercises are often held at these events.
support decision making about matters such as goals, needs and outcomes within the organization [39]. Furthermore the iterative nature of discussing the results (up to three times during the speed networking survey) also links to the methods used in the Delphi technique [39].

Similar to speed networking technique the world café method aims to create an environment where participants can collaborate on solving problems and challenges [41]. The main difference being, that the conversations in the world café method are facilitated in groups whereas in the speed networking they are one on one.

**Speed networking survey design [40], [42]:**
The following questions were the red dot questions asked in the speed networking survey:

1. How would you add “spice” to the BizWize culture? And why?
2. What do you think success looks like for BizWize? And why?
3. What excites you about BizWize? And why?
4. If you could provide one improvement opportunity for internal communication within BizWize, what would it be? And why?
5. What is your key take away from the company offsite? And why?

The following discusses the justifications around the nature of the questions presented:\(^\text{5}\):

1. Allows the employees to give ideas on how they would change the organizational culture and highlight what is possibly lacking in the organizational culture.
2. Each employee will be able to share their idea of what success means for BizWize. Ensuring that these points are incorporated into the overall vision of the organization and communicating it as such to employees. This will allow the employees to feel that they are a part of the organization and are able to add value.
3. Identify the aspects that are currently working within the organizational culture.
4. Indicates key risk areas within internal communication and highlights employee’s grievances when it comes to internal communication.
5. Will demonstrate key learnings that employees gain from off-sites. It will also indicate gaps within communication as employees may only hear important information for the first time at the off-sites.

\(^{5}\) The numbers in the justification are directly linked to the questions asked.
3.4.4 Questionnaires
In order to assess, the impact of the change in organizational structure and communication strategy in BizWize Consulting, there was a need to engage directly with the employees. The engagement needed to be conducted whilst having the least impact on the day to day operations of BizWize consulting. Furthermore, in order to ensure open and candidate responses the engagement was required to be conducted in an anonymous fashion. Whilst also bearing in mind that the BizWize Consulting employees operated from two geographical sites. In light of the above factors, a questionnaire was selected for the following reasons [7], [8]:

- Allows for data to be collected from a large sample size in a large geographical area. In the case of this dissertation this will allow data to be collected from all of the employees no matter where they may be situated.
- Questionnaires when structured correctly reduce bias, which results in accurate & credible research.
- Questionnaires are less intrusive and allow subjects to answer in their own time.
- Questionnaires are able to be answered anonymously.
- Questionnaires when setup correctly are easy for subjects to use and easy to analyze once they have been collected.
- Allowed leadership to determine whether the communication strategy and new structure brought about positive changes throughout the organization.

This method of engagement was chosen as it assisted in determining whether the change in organizational structure and communication strategy had the desired affects. Furthermore, allowing for the investigation into the research objectives namely, possible communication risk areas, causes of poor communication and factors which affect communication.

3.4.4.1 Design of the questionnaire [40], [42].

Research Aims
The questionnaire is aimed at determining whether the communications strategy and organizational structure developed has been well received by the employees. The research will also assist in identifying factors within organizations that have an influence on communication and highlight main causes for poor communication within organizations.
Population Sample
The population sample for the questionnaire and speed dating survey will be as follows:

Table 3: Population Sample Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Position</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-Owners (Leadership)</td>
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<td>Technical leads</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How Questionnaire will be conducted
The questionnaire will be conducted using an online service called Survey Monkey [43]. This service allows you to setup your own personal questionnaire and then assists in distribution/collection of all the questionnaires. The process that is followed is illustrated in figure 18 below.

![Figure 18: Method of conducting questionnaire.](image)
**Questionnaire design [40], [42]:**

The following questions will be asked in the questionnaire sent out to the employees:

1. As BizWize moves into a new chapter, what would you say has improved around the communications within the company?

2. How would you rate BizWize communication performance?
   - Poor
   - Satisfactory
   - Good
   - Excellent

3. From which of the following sources do you currently receive most of your overall company information/information relevant to your day to day workings?
   - Grapevine
   - Email
   - Stream leads
   - Technical leads
   - Core (Strategy) (i.e Alwyn & Claudio)
   - WhatsApp Groups

4. Do you have any suggestions on how you would prefer to receive most of the company information/information relevant to your day to day workings?

5. Have you seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize?

6. Do you feel that you have the opportunity at the various communication forums to voice your opinion & do you feel as though your inputs are valued?
   - Yes
   - No

7. If you could change one thing about the way BizWize communicates internally (within organization) what would it be and why?

8. If you could change one thing about the way BizWize communicates externally (to clients & the community) what would it be and why?

9. What information do you believe is very important to receive communications about?
   - Companies strategies for the future
   - Products and services of the company
   - Overall financial picture of the company
   - Human resources processes.
   - Potential new customers and projects
• Issues and trends affecting business
• Company success stories
• Community involvement

10. Speaker A knows what Listener B has heard, AND knows that Listener B is taking the time to fully understand before responding. What is listener B practicing?

The reason why each of the specific question was asked:

• Questions 1 to 5 will indicate the current state of communications within the organization and which avenues are being used to receive communication. An example being if an employee states that most of the information they received is via the grapevine this will indicate that the traditional channels of communication are not working.
• Questions 6 and 7 will indicate if employees feel they are able to give feedback to the leadership team and if it is received and valued.
• Questions 8 and 9 will give direction/suggestion on where to improve the communication.
• Question 10 will allow employees to stipulate what information needs to be distributed.
• Question 11 will show whether employees have heard of active or effective listening techniques. This will highlight the need for internal communication training.

3.5 Conclusion
A thorough researched methodology was introduced in chapter 3, detailing how the various steps within the research paper would be carried out. Moreover, the chapter included the main reasons for the selection of the various research methods as well as the questions asked during the speed dating survey and questionnaire.

Chapter to follow will present the results obtained by following the research methodology detailed in chapter 3. The results will be further discussed in detail at the end of the chapter.
Figure 19: Minor Dissertation Progress (3).
4. Chapter 4: Research Results & Discussions

4.1 As-Is state of Organizational Structure & Communication

After the detailed investigation sessions with the leads of BizWize Consulting, the following was obtained.

4.1.1 As is organizational structure

The organizational structure depicted in figure 20 above is the as is structure of BizWize consulting. This structure is classified as a Unitary structure as detailed in Chapter 2 [10]. The employees that operate within the different functional areas to (ie Consulting, Rapid Solution etc) report to head of departments, in the case of BizWize consulting the person responsible. The responsible personnel (HOD) then report to the centre leadership team, in this case the accountable co owners [10]. It is important to note that the organization operates out of two
different locations. With one half of the company situated at one client and the other half at another client.

4.1.2 As is communication plan

The detailed investigation (interview) sessions with leadership of BizWize consulting revealed that BizWize consulting did not have a communication plan in place. BizWize Consulting however relied upon the following as their main sources of day to day communication:

- Email
- Phone calls
- WhatsApp

The teams from the different client sites would meet together only once every two/three months at a company offsite. All important company information was often delivered either face to face by the owners themselves (as they were positioned on each of the sites) or via email.

4.1.3 Difficulties & failures experienced

The following main difficulties and failures experienced by the company - under the as is structure and communication strategy – where identified during the detailed investigation (interview) sessions with leadership of BizWize consulting:

- Miscommunication between employees operating at the different client locations.
- Different functional areas within BizWize consulting were operating in silos, the skills of all the employees were not being harnessed across the different client locations.
- Lack of group/team work.
- Employees complained of not having a sense of where the company was headed.
- Employees complained of feeling as though they were operating alone and out of touch with the happenings within the company.
- Lack of interaction between all employees due to the fact that the entire company only meeting once every two months.
- Reliance on informal communication platforms such as WhatsApp. This often led to miscommunication and employees missing crucial working instructions.
- BizWize Consulting leadership found it difficult to instill one company culture and ethos. The teams at the different client locations began to developed their own culture. This lead to a feeling of division among the company.
Employees not having a platform to easily track, share and review work led to work documentations going out with errors. Generating customer complaints about quality of work.
### 4.2 Speed networking survey results

Due to the nature of how the speed networking was run (refer to section 3.1.3), the results are split into two groups.

Table 4: Speed networking survey answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How would you add “spice” to the BizWize culture? And why?              | • Brainstorming & innovation sharing sessions.  
• Friday connect sessions once a month. Includes the entire team.                                                                                                                                  | • Food Friday’s  
• Social event every month across both teams.  
• Drive to bridge the diverse cultural and skill sets.  
• Weekly feedback sessions, where project teams can discuss what is going wrong “taboo subjects”.

• Achieving the vision of the company.  
• Not compromising on values as the company grows.                                                                                                                                                | • Increasing the brands reputation. I.e there will be no need to sell.  
• Maintaining the “family feel” culture into the future.                                                                                                                                             |
• Exciting environment.  
• Diverse people.  
• Malleable, company is agile and can change.  
• Being part of the evolution of the business.                                                                                                                                                   | • Exciting and talented people = exciting times.  
• Business is open minded to new ideas.  
• Entrepreneurial feel and there is a lot of opportunities.                                                                                                                                          |
| If you could provide one improvement opportunity for internal communication within BizWize, what would it be? And why? | • Prioritization of topics during meetings.  
• Need for one forum platform for all communications. Includes video, voice and text.  
• Reduce the use of the application Whatsapp.                                                                                                                                                   | • Single communication platform.  
• 1 on 1 sessions with leaders of organization.  
• Company suggestion email inbox.  
• Each employee gets to spend half a day with |
What is your key take away from the company offsite? And why?

- Obtained the bigger picture and direction of company.
- Sense that the company is headed in the right direction.
- Starting to understand the why (Why BizWize does what it does) and what (What BizWize does) of the company and not just the how (how BizWize makes money).
- Greater understanding of the employees within company through speed dating exercise.
- Better feel for the vision and mission of the company.
- Greater understanding of what stage the company is currently in.

Analyzing the results of the speed networking survey there are a few commons themes that can be observed. Both groups of employees raised the need for one communication platform and less use of the informal communication platform (WhatsApp). With the company mainly being based on different client sites the employees are often working in pockets and seldom get to interact with one another. Therefore, there was a call for more interaction amongst the team.

Employees came away from the offsite with valuable insight into the future plans of the company as well as the vison, mission and strategy. This was evident in the responses to the last question of the speed networking survey. This may indicate that the vision and mission of the company was not clearly defined or re-communicated to the employees. Moreover, the employees stated are excited by the people in the organization and relate to the family culture that has been developed. There was a call for leadership to develop a sustainable structure in order to not lose the current culture or compromise the values of the business as it grows.
4.3 Organizational structure & Communication plan

Utilizing the results from the as is state analysis and speed networking survey and applying the research in chapter 2, the following organizational structure and communication plan was developed for BizWize Consulting.

4.3.1 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure illustrated in figure 22 below is the new organizational structure developed for BizWize consulting. Each of the business streams within BizWize Consulting (consulting, rapid solutions, culture & branding & strategic finance) is displayed as a sphere. Within each sphere are the areas of responsibilities of each of the streams. All of the streams are connected to the core of the company which is the leadership. The three circles connected to the outside of the organization are future/potential business opportunities being explored. These future/potential business opportunities may in future combine with one of the streams or may form a complete different stream on their own.

The Core, Consulting and Rapid Solutions streams are seen as the operating core of the organization. These streams work directly with clients and perform the work that generates revenue [10], [4], [11]. The Strategic Finance and Culture & Brand streams are seen as the support
staff, that provide support to the operating core [10], [4], [11]. However due to the size of BizWize consulting the employees operating in the support streams often need to simultaneously work on projects performed by the core streams. This suites the matrix structure of operation [10].

The new organizational structure was developed as a combination of matrix and unitary organizational structures [10]. These structures where selected due to the following reasons:

- Observed during the as is analysis and speed networking survey was the fact that BizWize Consulting needed to utilize the skills across the entire organization. Using the skills of all employees together in order to complete client projects. Applying the matrix structure allows employees from the different business streams to work in combination with one another [10]. Thus projects can be completed using resources from each of the business streams.
- New structure allows for better management of risks and stops the tendency for employees to work in silo’s [44].
- In order to cater for the instable nature of the matrix structure, each of the business streams will be headed up by a stream lead. These stream leads then report directly into the core leadership of the organization, allowing for clear reporting lines to be developed [10].
- Illustrating the organization in a flat structure as seen in Figure 22 below removes the tendency for employees to think of hierarchy. This will assist in keeping the “family feel” culture referred to in the speed networking results.
Figure 22: To be Organizational Structure of BizWize Consulting (Pty) Ltd.
4.3.2 Organizational communication strategy

Consulting the research done in chapter 2 and the results from the as is state analysis and speed networking survey, a communication strategy was developed and implemented. The strategy needed to compliment the new organizational structure, ensure open communication and assist in developing a “just culture” [16].

The communication strategy will be structure and presented in the following way:

- **Perspective** – Adding perspective to the communication strategy by demonstrating using research performed the impact of communication on an organization.
- **What we believe** – Giving the communication strategy a main belief and goal, creating effective communication within the organization and making sure it is a habit.
- **Selection of a software platform** – In order to improve group communication as well as work collaboration across the different sites.
- **Global communication** – How communication will flow from the core (leadership) to the stream leads and then to the employees as well as back into the core (leadership) from the employees.
- **Stream specific** – How each stream will communicate as well as which software platforms are used to support the communication.
- **Cross Stream Communication** – How communication across functional streams will be facilitated. Ensuring that each employee interacts with one another.
- **Setting up of monthly newsletter**
- **Support functions** – Surveys and Off site functions to ensure the communication strategy is being effective.
- **Moving forward** – Ideas and suggestions of further communication enhancements.

The section to follow will provide further detail to the above mentioned points.

4.3.2.1 Perspective

The first point of the communication strategy was introduced in order to illustrate the impact that communication can have within organizations. By adding statistical values to a soft topic such as communication the leadership and employees are able to understand how it may affect their business. The Project Management Institute developed a report titled the PMI Pulse of Profession in depth report “High Cost of Low Performance – The essential role of communications” [2].
The report found that 50% of project funds are at risk due to poor communication. Furthermore, the report established that highly effective communicators are five times more likely to be high performers than minimally-effective communicators [2].

4.3.2.2 What we believe

The vision of the communication strategy is to create a “just culture” within the organization [16]. Making effective communication a habit not only for the organization as a whole but for each individual employee. Thus in order for the organization to habitually communicate effectively each employee has to be an effective communicator. Figure 24 below shows the high level structure of how the communication strategy aims to achieve the vision [28].
The recommendations of the employees in the speed networking survey results indicated that BizWize needed to implement one communication platform (Refer to section 4.2). To ensure consistent communication and enabling each employee to be a communicator BizWize selected a software platform which has the ability to cover all bases.

The selection was between a Google Business or Microsoft 365 platform. Figure 25 details the functional and cost analysis done in order to decide which platform would be used.

* Microsoft Enterprise 365 E3 [45].

** Google Business [46]
Recommendations & Comments [45], [46]:

- Microsoft Enterprise 365 E3 is the recommended choice of software.
- Encompasses all the functionality needed to successfully communicate throughout BizWize Consulting.
- Microsoft Lync provides a platform for teams to communicate/hold meetings no matter the geographical location. Most corporate organizations allow access to Lync whereas Skype is often blocked.
- Microsoft One Cloud has the ability to replace the current google drive. Document sharing & collaboration will be enhanced with Microsoft added feature of version control.
- Migration of emails to Microsoft will have no impact on the current structure of employees emails (no loss of data/emails).
- In order to operate effectively and to benefit from all the functionality (previous slide) only the uppermost versions of both Google & Microsoft should to be considered (Microsoft Enterprise E3 & Google Business Unlimited).
- The cost of both Microsoft Enterprise E3 & Google Business Unlimited is the same, however the Microsoft software has greater functionality making it the more “value for money” choice.
4.3.2.4 Global Communication

Aim:

- Promote clear/regular communication throughout the organization and prevent any instances of incorrect context/hearsay/miscommunication.
- Allow communication to flow from the core to the supporting functions and then back to the core.
- Communicate relevant information within the different spheres of the organization.
- Ensure all employees have a voice and have the ability to be heard.
Prerequisites:

- Meetings to occur at each level weekly. No matter where geographically the employees are situated.
- Meetings notes need to be recorded and tracked on the software support platform (Trello).
- Recurring business and strategic related agenda items coupled with other pre-approved agenda items are to be the focus. This is to steer as much as possible away from daily operation & production actions as these are covered in other collaborations.

Support platform:

A web based software platform will be used in support of the global communication strategy. This platform is called Trello and will be used to:

- Set agenda for stream lead meetings with the leadership of organization.
- Record and track all minutes, decisions and actions to be taken by the stream leads and leadership.
- Form the basis of the discussion to be had by stream leads with employees.
Figure 27: Example of Trello (web based platform).
4.3.2.5 Stream specific communication

Stream specific communication is broken into three components:

- Weekly meetings (this includes the feedback from the stream leads as well as high level project meetings.)
- Daily meetings (Focused on delivery of activities and highlighting any challenges/obstacles the team members are facing. Stream leads are required to move any obstacles)
- Offline meetings (Adhoc meeting when and where needed, may be project orientated or business specific)

All of these sessions are supported by Trello (web based project management application, refer to section 4.3.2.4).

4.3.2.6 Cross stream communication

In order to promote interaction between the different streams within BizWize Consulting, cross stream communication initiatives have been implemented. The two initiatives are:

“Biz Tech Talks”:

The “Biz Tech Talks” promotes cross stream communication, allowing each employee in BizWize the opportunity to understand exactly what each stream in BizWize does day to day. Moreover, enhancing employees understanding of the services BizWize offers as a whole. Increasing the communication between streams will open up avenues for the different streams within BizWize Consulting to work together. Therefore improving the organizational performance and business strategy implementation [48], [1].

Once a month employees present what they have been working on to the entire organization [49]. A schedule created will allow employees time to prepare. All presentations will be stored in One Cloud\(^6\) for any employee to access either during the “talks” or at a later stage. These sessions can be “dial in” sessions which will be pre-scheduled /pre-prepared in advance to ensure attendance as well as effective facilitation and participation.

---

\(^6\) Online cloud storage service offered by Microsoft. Allows multiple people access to same files [43].
“Bridging the Gap”

The “Bridging the Gap” sessions encourage interaction between employees on a more informal and personal level. Employees that better understand each other communicate well with one another, this will promote a positive communication culture within BizWize [26]. A positive communication culture will ultimately lead to increased productivity [26]. Allowing employees to meet with one another the leadership reinforces the “family feel” culture referred to in the speed networking survey (refer to section 4.2).

One a month each employee will have a “Bridging the Gap” session (over coffee) with another BizWize employee. A roster will be set up to facilitate the process and ensure each employee has an opportunity to meet one another. The sessions are intended to be informal and aimed at bridging the gap of employees working at different sites. Thus allowing employees to get to know one another on a more personal level.

4.3.2.7 Newsletter

In order to increase the frequency of communication between leadership and the employees of BizWize a newsletter will be sent out on a monthly basis. The newsletter aims to communicate the following:

- Announcements
- New Starters
- Message from the leaders (Alwyn & Claudio)
- Client acquisitions
- Achievements & Milestones
- Employee Profiles (Monthly)
- Communication & Active listening pieces promoting lifelong learning

The strategy and vision of BizWize will be tied into each newsletter through the various aspects above. In this way ensuring that the employees confidence in the vision and strategy of BizWize is increased. Increasing employees confidence in the vision and strategy of BizWize will assist in producing a positive communication climate and in turn increased productivity and job satisfaction [1], [26].
"BIZ" Update

Great Achievements

"Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great" - John D Rockefeller

Congratulations to both the Consulting and Technical Team:
Final sign-off on the deployment of the Reconciliation Solution in Botswana for Card, Cheque, ACH and Loan Repayment Accounts.
A special word of mention to Ayrton, Fabio and Ann who have had to navigate extremely tight deadlines to ensure a successful implementation.

Congratulations to the Rapid Solutions and Technical Team:
BizWize is heading into its 3rd Contract year with Investec Pvt Bank.

Great Opportunities

"The biggest risk is not taking any risk...In a world that's changing really quickly, the only strategy that guarantees to fail is not taking risks" - Mark Zuckerberg

SBV (cash processing business) is on a transformation journey, as they look to rollout new technology and capability sets. BizWize have been requested to tender (via a POC) to build an automated reconciliation solution. The POC is to address their Teller Cash Balancing and Settlement (with other Banks) reconciliation processes.

New Team Member

"Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself" - George Bernard Shaw

Itani Ratephata

How is BizWize Doing?

As BizWize embarks on its journey with you to "Greatness", it is just as critical that this journey is also one of "Learning, Listening and reflection" as a business!

"You must expect great things of yourself before you can do them" - Michael Jordan

Figure 28: Example of BizWize newsletter.
4.3.2.8 Support Functions

The support functions have been implemented to ensure the communication strategy is being effective. The function implemented are:

Surveys:

Frequently surveying the employees will give leadership of BizWize a sense of what is and what is not working well. Therefore, bridging the gap between perceptions of communication culture and the actual communication behaviors [26].

- Employees will be surveyed 3 times a year
- The surveys will be themed, this will be aligned with what needs to be investigated and what insights are required (employee satisfaction, communication etc.)
- Results of the surveys to be packaged and shared with employees.

Off Sites and Stream Events:

To further build the team work ethic and ensure that company information is frequently communicated to employees a schedule of offsite and team events was developed. Please refer to schedule below:

- Entire team social every six weeks.
- Budgets for once a month small fun stream specific or cross stream events.
- Strategy review offsite (3 times a year, ½ day).

4.3.2.9 Moving forward

Upskill employees with communication techniques:

In order to achieve the vision of the communication strategy where each employee is seen as a communicator, there is a need for employees to be proficient in different communication techniques [28]. Therefore, BizWize will send employees on short courses aimed at upskilling them with different communication techniques (active listening). Moreover, a facilitator will be brought in to sit in on various team meetings and engagements to provide team members feedback and further training recommendations.
The Contrarian Hour:

Idea:

One hour bi-weekly meeting where project teams share ideas, air grievances, ask questions and say outright if they think things should be done differently. There is an importance in these sessions to create an atmosphere where employees can express how they feel but no one employee feels like they are being attacked and/or criticised. No topic should be seen as taboo and an open communication policy should be instilled [49].

Facilitation:

Topics and questions are to be collected in advance in a mailbox to leadership. This will help leadership take the time to prepare answers to the questions. All action items coming out of the session are then logged and tracked to completion, this ensure the employees understand that BizWize not only solicits information but does something to change it. This being a attribute of a good organization. Ensuring to also use the end of the sessions to have a celebratory time, where wins are praised [49].

Mentor/Mentee:

Idea:

Implement a system of bottom up and top down mentoring. Each employee in the organization has the ability to be a mentor and be mentored by another person in the organization. Leveraging off of the “Rookie Smarts” concept, where someone new may have a fresh perspective and offer some valuable advice and ideas [50].
4.4 Questionnaire Results

The results obtained from the questionnaire are presented below:

Out of the 18 people only 15 were selected to answer, the people that were excluded were:

- Ayrton dos Santos (Questionnaire developer)
- Alwyn Labuschange (Company Co-Owner)
- Claudio dalla Venezia (Company Co-Owner)

**Participation:**

The questionnaire had a participation of 93.3%, with only one of the employees not participating.

**Question 1:**

*As BizWize moves into a new chapter, what would you say has improved around the communications within the company?*

There was an overall positive sentiment with positive answers from 12/14 employees, with two of the answers having a more negative connotation.

The following were the most common themes that came through:

**Positive comments:**

- Increased transparency
- Less WhatsApp and more formal meetings
- More Structure
- Daily Meetings (Huddle) help us understand what each person is doing
- Increased clarification
- New structure allows for better communication
- Newsletter & Stream Lead Sessions Regular and Consistent
- Newsletter

**Negative comments:**

- Not applicable (indicating nothing had improved)
- Communication is not good. To many meetings setup and no-one joins. Need more structure around agendas for meetings. Timely communication of cancellation of meeting. Must be one platform where all meetings are held.
Question 2

How would you rate BizWize communication performance?

i. Poor
ii. Satisfactory
iii. Good
iv. Excellent

The table below details how employees rated the communication

Table 5: Organization communication rated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Options</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>35.71</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 3

From which of the following sources do you currently receive most of your overall company information/information relevant to your day to day workings?

- Grapevine
- Email
- Stream leads
- Technical leads
- Core (Strategy) (i.e Alwyn & Claudio)
- WhatsApp Groups

Refer to graph below which illustrates the different avenues which employees use to receive their day to day information.

Graph 1: How employees receive their information
**Question 4**

*Do you have any suggestions on how you would prefer to receive most of the company information/information relevant to your day to day workings?*

The following were the suggestions from employees on how they would like to receive their day to day information:

Table 6: Employees selected mediums to receive company information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Given</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned</th>
<th>Percentage of employees mentioned (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings (online &amp; offline)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From stream support</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trello</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lync</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whatsapp</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone calls (urgent matters)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily newsletter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 5**

*Have you seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize?*

Table 7: Improvement in flow of information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Given</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned</th>
<th>Percentage of employees mentioned (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>78.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11/14 employees indicated that they have seen an improvement in the information received from the streams within BizWize. A small number of employees offered further insight and suggestions such as:

- Need to ensure information travels back to leadership of the company.
- Ensure employees use the project management packages we have selected such as Trello. This will curb the need for meetings.

**Question 6**

*Do you feel that you have the opportunity at the various communication forums to voice your opinion & do you feel as though your inputs are valued?*

- Yes
- No

Refer to graph below

**Graph 2: Results of question 6**
• 9/14 employees state that they have the opportunity to voice their opinion and that their input is valued.

• 4/14 employees state that they have the opportunity to voice opinion but their input is not valued.

• 1/14 employees state that he/she does not have opportunity to voice their opinion.

**Question 7:**

*If you could change one thing about the way BizWize communicates internally (within organization) what would it be and why?*

**Table 8: Internal communication improvement suggestions.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Given</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned</th>
<th>Percentage of employees mentioned (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Define WhatsApp as a medium</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A (employee did not put any suggestion forward)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of respect shown between employees on communication platforms such as WhatsApp &amp; Email.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One consolidated platform for communication.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased meeting preparedness (agenda’s etc)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be more punctual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 8:

*If you could change one thing about the way BizWize communicates externally (to clients & the community) what would it be and why?*

Table 9: External communication improvement suggestions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Given</th>
<th>Number of times mentioned</th>
<th>Percentage of employees mentioned (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard Email Formats</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A (employee did not put any suggestion forward)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review outgoing communication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom to communicate without a need to go through leadership</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase frequency of face to face meetings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the use of formal and informal methods to keep clients up to date.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase frequency of communications going to clients.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question 9:**

What information do you believe is very important to receive communications about?

- Companies strategies for the future
- Products and services of the company
- Overall financial picture of the company
- Human resources processes.
- Potential new customers and projects
- Issues and trends affecting business
- Company success stories
- Community involvement

Please refer to the below graph.

**Graph 3: Answers to question 9**
**Question 10:**

*Speaker A knows what Listener B has heard, AND knows that Listener B is taking the time to fully understand before responding. What is listener B practicing?*

50% of employees answered with the correct answer, ACTIVE LISTENING. Demonstrating that approximately 50% of the organization have not been introduced to or are not familiar with active listening.
4.5  Discussion of Results

The research results will be discussed by highlighting how the research results aided in accomplishing the research objectives namely, the factors that affect communication and the risk areas associated with communication.

4.5.1  Factors that affect communication:

1. Selection of one software platform for all communication:

In the speed networking survey both sets of team members stated that in order to improve internal communication there was a need for one communication platform (refer to Table 4). Before the implementation of the Microsoft E3 enterprise software system (refer to section 4.3.2.3) the employees at BizWize consulting where utilizing different systems. This led to a decrease in the ability to communicate and productivity as some systems supported online calling, messaging, meeting and documents sharing services and some did not.

Implementing one software platform across the entire organization (Microsoft Enterprise E3 [45]), allowed all employees across the different client locations to:

- Hold online meetings
- Share and collaborate on documentation
- Connect through instant messaging

The change to one communication platform increased the team’s capability to communication and therefore increased productivity. This illustrating that the software platform has an influence on the ability for organizations to communicate.

2. Ensuring your strategy & structure align to your communication strategy:

An organizational structure that allows communication to flow unrestricted key to the success of the organization [25]. During the as is analysis it was found that the unitary structure of BizWize Consulting resulted in the company functional areas operating in silos and restricted team work as well as communication across the functional areas (Refer to section 4.1.3). BizWize Consulting needed to utilize the skills of employees across the entire organization in order to complete projects. The changes made to the organizational structure accommodated this need and facilitated communication across the functional areas (called streams in the new structure). A positive impact was made
and is evident from the responses to the following questions in the questionnaire distributed after the change was implemented:

- Question 1 having 12/14 positive comments. Examples are
  - “Increased transparency”,
  - “New structure has resulted in improved communication”
- Question 5 showing that 78.5% of employees have seen an improvement in information and content received from the different streams.

The results of the questionnaire show that the change in the organizational structure, resulted in an improvement in communication across the different streams. Thus illustrating that organizational structure is one of the factors that can affect the way in which an organization communicates. This in turn having an effect on the organizational effectiveness [25].

3. **Employee competency in communication:**

Results from Question 10 of the questionnaire show that only 50% of staff have either heard of or understand the concept of active listening. Exposing the fact that there is a potential lack of knowledge and understanding around active listening and the benefits thereof.

As presented in the article titled “Enabling, Advising, Supporting, executing: A Theoretical Framework for Internal Communication Consulting Within Organizations” written by A. Zerfass and N. Franke, one of the key communication competency areas of any employee is active communication [28]. The fact that only 50% of the employees are familiar with active illustrates that there is a lack of communication competency knowledge amongst the employees in BizWize Consulting. A lack of communication competency will have an impact on the communication level within the organization [28]. Furthermore, effecting the success of the communication strategy in section 4.3.2.2 which requires each employee to be proficient in communication competencies.

4. **Communication Planning:**

The as is analysis performed with the BizWize Consulting leadership showed that there was no formal communication planning in place. This contributing to the difficulties experienced in the organization (refer to section 4.1.3). Difficulties such as:

- Miscommunication between employees operating in the different sites.
• Lack of group/team work across the different sites

The impact of the implemented communication strategy (refer to section 4.3.2) was evident in the results of questionnaire, specifically in the following questions:

• Question 1 – Overall positive sentiment with positive answers from 12/14 employees, when asked what has improved around communications. Answers included:
  o Increased transparency.
  o Daily Meetings (Huddle) help us understand what each person is doing.
  o Increased clarification.
  o Newsletter & Stream Lead Sessions Regular and Consistent.

• Question 5 – 78.5 % of employees have seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize.

A white paper performed by the Project Management Institute titled “Communication: The Message is Clear” shows, that high performing organizations are twice as likely to utilize formal project communication plans when compared to low performing organizations [51]. The results of the research mirror this sentiment and also illustrate the positive impact that communication planning had on the organization.

Showing that communication planning is a factor that affects the level of communication within organizations.

4.5.2 Risks areas associated with communication:

1. Use of Informal Communication Platforms:

With the rise of technology and mobile phone communication, platforms such as WhatsApp have allowed people to communicate easily and quickly. Instinctively businesses have begun to use such platforms, in order to communicate day to day workings and instructions. BizWize is one such organization.

However, with the use of such informal platforms comes risks and concerns. With reference to the speed networking survey and questionnaire results, employees raised the following points:
• 50% of employees in the speed dating survey called for their to be reduction in the use of WhatsApp (Refer to Table 4: Speed networking survey answers.)
• 28.57% of employees in the questionnaire raised that there needed to be clarity around the use of WhatsApp (Table 8: Internal communication improvement suggestions.)
• 14.28% of employees felt that there was a lack of respect shown on platforms such as WhatsApp (Table 8: Internal communication improvement suggestions.)
• An employee commented that often there is often confusion as both social talk and actual business deliverables are being discussed on the WhatsApp platform.

Taking these results of both the questionnaire and speed networking survey into account, there are a few risks that can be identified when utilizing informal communication platforms:

  o Informal communication platforms (WhatsApp) are used for both social and business related communication. Employees find it hard to differentiate between the two as seen in the research results. This may lead to crucial information being missed and deliverables not being met. There may also be the risk that confidential business information could be shared with someone outside the organization.
  o Typed short messages, like those typically used in informal communication, can leave space for ambiguity and self interpretation. Thus messages are often misinterpreted and some employees may feel as though they are not shown sufficient respect. This was evident in the research results and may result in disgruntled employees and a breakdown in teamwork.
  o Studies have shown that informal communication platforms such as WhatsApp negatively affect performance as concentration is often broken due to incoming messages [52], [53].

2. Communication of crucial company information:

As introduced by M.F Hall in the research on the way key decisions are made and how they communicated through an organization. It was seen that the original reason for a decision being made, if not communicated correctly and throughout the organization left room for interpretation and may result in adverse affects on the organization (refer to figure 6) [23].
Employees from both groups during the speed networking survey stated that their main take away from the offsite event was:

- Starting to understand the why (Why BizWize does what it does) and what (What BizWize does) of the company and not just the how (how BizWize makes money).
- Greater understanding of what stage the company is currently in.
- Better feel for the vision and mission of the company.
- Sense that the company is headed in the right direction.
- Obtained the bigger picture and direction of company.

The fact that these events happen twice to three times a year, show that often employees went for months at a time not receiving crucial company information. This illustrating that there was a risk that crucial company information was not being communicated effectively and timely.

The introduction of the communication strategy was a positive step in mitigating this risk as seen in the results from these questions from the questionnaire:

- Question 1 – Overall positive sentiment with positive answers from 12/14 employees, when asked what has improved around communications. Answers included:
  - Increased transparency.
  - Daily Meetings (Huddle) help us understand what each person is doing.
  - Increased clarification.
  - Newsletter & Stream Lead Sessions Regular and Consistent.

- Question 5 – 78.5 % of employees have seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize.

The risk for organizations is the fact that if crucial company information is not communicated consistently, employees have room for interpretation and this may result in unfavorable effects [23].

4.6 Conclusion

The results of the case study steps (as is analysis, speed networking survey, development of a new communication strategy and structure as well as questionnaire) introduce in chapter 3 have been thoroughly detailed in this chapter. The results discussion section
4.5 demonstrated links between the results obtained and the research objectives. The chapter to follow will provide a conclusion to the minor dissertation.

Figure 29: Minor Dissertation Progress (4).
5. Chapter 5: Conclusion

Effective communication is one of the keystones to organizational success and has become more prevalent in a modern day environment. With the rise of technology and the speed at which employees are able to access information, organizations need to focus on how they communicate externally as well as internally.

This minor dissertation has explored the topic of why organizations still perform poorly even with the rise of technology and access to information. This was achieved through a qualitative research approach, using a case study, speed networking survey and questionnaire as the main research methods. The research methodology was designed to explore two different objectives in order to assist in exploring the research question, these being:

- Risk areas associated with communication.
- Factors that influence communication.

5.1 Objective 1: Factors that influence communication

The results of the research performed highlighted four main factors that influence communication within organizations, namely:

1. Software platform for all communication.
2. Organizational strategy & structure.
3. Employee competency in communication.

In the case of this research all four of the factors above had a negative impact on communication within BizWize Consulting. Consequently, ensuring that the organizational structure and strategy is designed in a way that allows communication to flow is key. Using BizWize Consulting as an example, the company needed to harness all of their employee skills in order to complete client projects. Therefore, the initial unitary structure of their organization forced employees to work only in their functional areas. Thus restricting the flow of communication across the organization. Once the new structure was implemented, a hybrid structure (mix between matrix & unitary structure) BizWize started to observe favorable results.

Looking at the factors identified in the research results, it could be argued that factors 1, 2 and 3 could be mitigated if communication planning (factor 4) is performed adequately. The as-is
analysis performed with the leadership of BizWize revealed that no planning for communication was in place. Once the new communication strategy was developed and implemented (refer to section 4.3.2) favorable results were seen with regards to the factors 1 and 2. It became evident from the case study that there is an overall lack of knowledge about the impact communication has on organizational performance. Showing that not enough emphasis is placed on this important function within organizations.

5.2 Objective 2: Risk areas associated with communication

The results of the research identified two risk areas associated with communication, these were:

- The use of informal communication platforms.
- Communication of company information.

What became quite evident in the research results was the debate around the use of informal communication platforms (WhatsApp). In the initial engagement with employees (speed networking survey) both groups requested that there be a decrease in the usage of WhatsApp. However, in the questionnaire (second engagement with employees) 28.57% of employees stated that they would like to receive day to day information on WhatsApp (Refer to Section 4.4). Furthermore, in the same questionnaire 28.57% of employees stated they would like to see a reduction in WhatsApp and that the terms of use needed to be defined.

This demonstrated a clear split amongst employees, in terms of those who wanted to utilize the platform and those who would prefer not to. Taking this into account and the fact that research has shown that informal communication platforms (WhatsApp) have a negative effect on productivity, demonstrates that organizations need to perform thorough investigations before introducing new technology platforms.

These findings show that employees need to be communicated and engaged with in order to obtain an understanding of what is affecting their ability to be productive. Obtaining a common ground amongst employees is also of importance as you do not want to favor one group over another. The fact that informal communication platforms have been shown to affect productivity and in the case of this research the support for informal communication is divided within BizWize, clearly illustrates this as a risk area that needs to be investigated.
5.3 Recommendations

Organizations underestimate the power of communication and the impact it has on the work force. By delivering timely and consistent communication leadership within organizations it will ensure that:

- Employees are up to date with important decisions being made in the organization.
- There is less room for interpretation and rumor spreading.
- Consistent and positive messages are being delivered to boost employee morale and embed the vision and mission of the company.

Organizations perform poorly in the area of communication due to not properly identifying and understanding the factors that affect (positively & negatively) the way they communicate. A lack of communication planning and risk management allow potential problems to go unnoticed until it is too late. Thus in order to improve communication standards, organizations need to implement a communication department whose sole responsibility is to:

- Identify the factors that influence the ability of the organization to communicate
- Identify the communication risk areas
- Ensure a high communication competency amongst employees
- Provide solutions to mitigate risks and negative influence factors

The results of the research also highlighted the need for further research into the affect informal communication platforms (WhatsApp, instant messenger application) have on organizational performance.

This study was limited by the size of the organization researched. A similar study performed on a larger organization will allow for further validation of the results obtained in this research study. A further limitation to the study is the results obtained could not directly measure the performance of the organization as a whole.
Introduction: Research Aim and Objectives Value of Research

Literature Review: Organizations Communication Risk

Research Methodology

Research Results & Discussion

Conclusion and Recommendations

Figure 30: Minor Dissertation Progress (5)
References


Appendix A – Research Article
THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

A. dos Santos

1 Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of Johannesburg, Corner Kingsway and University Road, Auckland Park, 2006, South Africa. E-Mail: ayrton@dossantos.co.za

Abstract: Research demonstrates that communication is a key factor in organizational success and if not addressed correctly, will lead to poor organizational performance. This qualitative research paper aims to investigate why modern day organizations perform poorly in the area of communication. Through exploring the risk areas associated with communication as well as the factors within organizations that influence communication. The main finding of this study was that organizations perform poorly in the communication field due to not fully comprehending the impact of communication on organizational performance. Although modern day technologies such as email and instant messaging services have aided in the speed of communication, it was also found that these are not solutions in solving all communication needs. This research calls for organizations to develop communication departments which work, to identify the factors that influence their ability to communicate as well as the communication risk areas within the organization. Identifying and providing solutions to mitigate these factors should be their sole purpose.

Keywords: Organization, communication, risk, influence factors.

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication plays an integral role in allowing organizations to overcome the challenges of the modern day, global competitive market. Of which, the ability of leaders within these organizations, to efficiently communicate both internally (between their employees) and externally (between employees and the external business environment) is key [3]. If this is not done the leaders are likely to see low productivity levels and high levels of disorder amongst their workforce [1]. The paper titled “The Impact of Communication on Workers’ Performance...” links effective communication to employee performance and demonstrates that poor communication affects the performance of employees [1] [2].

Communication is also central to strengthening an employee’s confidence in the vision and mission of an organization, while also improving the image of an organization to its external environment (relationship with shareholders, society etc.) [3]. In addition, when used effectively communication can function as a strategic resource in maintaining and increasing an organization’s performance and is perceived as a critical core competency to all organizations [3], [4].

A research paper by the PMI (Project Management Institute), titled “The high cost of low performance: The essential role of communications” illustrated that over 50% of project funds are at risk due to ineffective communication [4]. Further investigation showed that despite the above risk many organizations are currently not placing sufficient importance on communication [4]. This clearly illustrates that organizations as a whole will not be able to execute strategic initiatives – such as the effective use of the project budget - unless they communicate effectively [4]. Greater understanding of the impact that communication has on organizations and the potential associated risks, is paramount to organizational success in this area.

The focus of this paper will be to further research communication and its influence within organizations. With a purpose of identifying reasons why modern day organizations, even with the rise of technology and access to information, still perform poorly in the area of communication.

A. Problem Statement & Research Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to understand the impact communication has within organizations. Based on the findings of this research paper, recommendations will be put forth on how organizations can avoid poor and ineffective communication. In light of the above, the following research objectives have been identified as critical toward the attainment of the overall research aim:

1. Identifying risk areas associated with communication within organizations.
2. Investigate the factors within organizations that have an influence on communication.
3. Formulate recommendations on how to mitigate communication risk areas and influence factors.

The first and second objectives were accomplished through the use of a case study on a business consulting and
data analytics organization. BizWize Consulting (Pty) Ltd. The as-is state of the communication and organizational structure of BizWize Consulting, was obtained through detailed investigations and an employee speed dating survey. Results from these activities aided the development of a new communication strategy and organizational structure for BizWize Consulting. Subsequently, a questionnaire was utilized to determine the impact of the new communication strategy and organizational structure.

The significance of this research is the fact that it underlined some of the reasons why organizations communicate ineffectively. In so doing it highlighted how organizations can avoid communication pitfalls. Furthermore, this research contributed to the development of better understanding communication and the influence it has on organizational performance.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Case Study

A case study was selected as the method of research for this study for the following reasons:

- Case studies allow for the investigation of organizational communication within its environment [5].
- Case studies allow for data to be collected from various methods such as surveys/questionnaires, document review and observations [6].

The data collection process that enabled part one of the case study was established through the use of an as-is analysis which was completed through the following steps:

(i) Interview and investigation process with the leadership of BizWize Consulting in order to determine the as-is state of the communications strategy and organizational structure. An interview process was selected to enable the leadership to have more focused discussions and time to reflect and share information [7].

(ii) Speed networking survey conducted at one of the organizations off site team building functions [8], [9]. In order to determine the as-is state of communication from an employee perspective. Speed networking was selected due to its efficiency and ability to build interpersonal skills [8]. Allowing employees to discuss and collaborate with one another leading to a collective problem raising and problem solving approach [9], [8]. The method utilized in the speed networking exercise draws similarities to the Delphi method. Where the intention of the Delphi method as well as the speed networking survey is to request insight from experts (the employees) and to reveal areas where these experts are in agreement [7].

Based on the information collected in (i) and (ii) above, a new organizational structure and communication strategy was developed and implemented by BizWize Consulting. In order to assess the impact of the changes implemented and to investigate the research objectives, part two of the case study utilized the following to collect further data:

(iii) Questionnaire distributed to employees. A questionnaire was selected due to the fact that it permits for data to be collected from a large geographical area. [10], [11]. This was suited to BizWize Consulting because employees operated from different client locations. In addition, questionnaires are less intrusive and granted employees the ability to answer in their own time [10], [11].

3. RESEARCH RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

Part 1 of Case Study

A. Interview and investigation process

After the detailed investigation sessions with the leadership of BizWize Consulting, the following was obtained.

Firstly, the as-is organizational structure was classified as a Unitary structure [12]. The employees that operate within the different functional departmental areas reported to the head of department. The responsible personnel (HOD) then reported to the center leadership team, in this case the accountable co owners [12]. For the purpose of effective communication implementation, it is important to note that the organization operated out of two different locations. One half of the company was situated at one client and the other half at another client.

Results of the as-is communication status of BizWize consulting revealed that there was no communication plan in place. BizWize Consulting however relied upon the following as their main sources of day to day communication:

- Email.
- Phone calls.
- WhatsApp (informal communication platform).

1 BizWize Consulting is a business consulting and data analytics organization. Over a two-year period, BizWize Consulting grew from 2 to 19 employees. BizWize has equipped itself with team members that possess skills such as lean six sigma and data analytics.
The teams from the different client sites would meet together only once every two-three months at a company offsite.

**Difficulties & failures experienced:** The results from the interview process with the BizWize leadership revealed the following:

i. Miscommunication between employees.
ii. Functional areas within BizWize consulting were operating in silos, therefore company resources were not being used efficiently. Lack of group/team work.
iii. Employees complained of not having a sense of where the company was headed.
iv. Employees complained of feeling as though they were operating alone and out of touch.
v. Reliance on informal communication platforms such as WhatsApp led to miscommunication and employees missing crucial working instructions.
vi. Employees not having a platform to easily track, share and review work. This led to work documentations going out with errors. These generated customer complaints about the quality of work.

**B. Speed networking survey results**
Due to the nature of how the speed networking was run (refer to section 2), the results are split into two groups.

**Table 1: Speed networking survey answers.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you add “spice” to the BizWize culture? And why?</td>
<td>Brainstorming and innovation sharing sessions. Friday connect sessions once a month.</td>
<td>Food Friday’s. Social event every month. Weekly feedback sessions, where project teams can discuss what is going wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think success looks like for BizWize? And why?</td>
<td>Developing a sustainable structure. Achieving the vision of the company. Not changing values as the company grows.</td>
<td>Increasing the brand’s reputation. ie there will be no need to sell. Maintaining the “family feel” culture into the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you could provide one improvement opportunity</td>
<td>Prioritization of topics during meetings.</td>
<td>Single communication platform. 1 on 1 sessions with leaders of organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2 BizWize Consulting has four streams which are consulting, rapid solutions, culture & branding and strategic finance.

**C. Organizational structure and Communication plan**
Utilizing the results from the as-is state analysis and speed networking survey and applying the literature research, the following organizational structure and communication plan was developed and implemented for BizWize Consulting.

**Organizational Structure:** Based on the results of the initial as-is analysis (part 4) of BizWize Consulting, a new organizational structure (as illustrated in figure 1) was developed. As demonstrated in figure 1, each of the business streams within BizWize Consulting is displayed as a sphere. Within each sphere are the areas of responsibilities of each of the streams. All of the streams are connected to the core of the company (leadership). The three circles connected to the outside of the organization are future potential business opportunities being explored. These business opportunities may in future combine with one of the existing streams or form an independent stream.

![Figure 1: To be Organizational Structure of BizWize Consulting](image-url)
The Core, Consulting and Rapid Solutions streams form the operating core of the organization. These streams work directly with clients and perform the work that generates revenue [12], [2], [13]. The Strategic Finance and Culture and Brand streams are viewed as the support staff structure, that provides support to the operating core [12], [2], [13]. However due to the size of BizWize consulting the employees operating in the support streams often need to work simultaneously on projects performed by the core streams. This suits the matrix structure of operation [12].

The new organizational structure was developed as a combination of matrix and unitary organizational structures [12]. These structures were selected due to the following reasons:

- Observed during the as is analysis and speed networking survey was the fact that BizWize Consulting needed to utilize the skills across the entire organization. Applying the matrix structure allows employees from the different business streams to work in combination with one another [12]. Thus projects can be completed using resources from each of the business streams.
- In order to cater for the instable nature of the matrix structure, each of the business streams will be headed up by a stream lead. These stream leads then report directly into the core leadership of the organization, allowing for clear reporting lines to be developed [12].
- Illustrating the organization in a flat structure as seen in Figure 1 removes the tendency for employees to think of hierarchy. This will assist in keeping the “family feel” culture referred to in the speed networking results.

Organizational communication strategy: Consulting the research conducted and the results from the as is state analysis and speed networking survey, a communication strategy was developed and implemented. The strategy needed to compliment the new organizational structure, ensure open communication and assist in developing a “just culture” [14]. The communication strategy will be structured and presented in the following way:

i. **Perspective** – Adding perspective to the communication strategy by demonstrating using research the impact of communication on an organization's performance.

ii. **What we believe** – Giving the communication strategy a main belief and goal, creating effective communication within the organization and making sure it is a habit.

iii. **Selection of a software platform** – In order to improve group communication as well as work collaboration across the different sites.

iv. **Global communication** – How communication will flow from the core (leadership) to the stream leads and then to the employees as well as back into the core (leadership) from the employees.

v. **Stream specific** – How each stream will communicate as well as which software platforms are used to support the communication.

vi. **Cross Stream Communication** – How communication across functional streams will be facilitated. Ensuring that each employee interacts with one another.

vii. **Setting up of monthly newsletter**

viii. **Support functions** – Surveys and Off site functions to ensure the communication strategy is being effective.

ix. **Moving forward** – Ideas and suggestions of further communication enhancements.

D. Questionnaire Results

The results obtained from the questionnaire are presented below. Out of the 18 people only 15 where selected to answer, the people that were excluded were the questionnaire developer and the two owners of the company.

**Participation:** The questionnaire had a participation of 93.3%, with only one of the employees not participating.

**Question 1:** As BizWize moves into a new chapter, what would you say has improved around the communications within the company?

There was an overall positive sentiment with positive answers from 12/14 employees, with two of the answers having a more negative connotation.

**Question 2:** How would you rate the communication within BizWize?

50% of employees rated the organizational communication at BizWize as good, while 7.14% rated communication as excellent. With 7.14% rating the communication as poor.

**Question 3:** From which of the following sources do you currently receive most of your overall company information/information relevant to your day to day workings?

Over 50% of employees selected email (71.43%) and WhatsApp (57.14%) as their main sources of information. With the remainder of the sources, (Grapevine, stream leads, core & technical leads) being selected by under 25% of employees.

**Question 4:** Do you have any suggestions on how you would prefer to receive most of the company information/information relevant to your day to day workings?
64.28% of employees selected email as a method to receive their information. With 28.57% and 21.43% of employees stating that they would prefer WhatsApp and Trello respectively. The remainder of the methods suggested where selected under by under 15% of employees.

**Question 5:** Have you seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize?

78.57% of employees stated that they have seen an improvement

**Question 6:** Do you feel that you have the opportunity at the various communication forums to voice your opinion & do you feel as though your inputs are valued?

65% of employee’s state that they have the opportunity to voice their opinion and that their input is valued. 28% of employee’s state that they have the opportunity to voice opinion but their input is not valued. 7% of employee’s state that he/she does not have opportunity to voice their opinion.

**Question 7:** If you could change one thing about the way BizWize communicates internally (within organization) what would it be and why?

28.57% of employees stated that there needs to be defined rules on the use of WhatsApp. With 14.28% of employees declaring that there is a lack of respect shown amongst employees on WhatsApp & Email platforms. 35.71% of employees did not put a suggestion forward.

**Question 8:** If you could change one thing about the way BizWize communicates externally (to clients & the community) what would it be and why?

14.28% of employees felt that there needs to be increased frequency in communication to clients. 7.14% of employees raised the need for freedom to speak to clients without going through leadership. 50% of employees did not put any suggestion forward.

**Question 9:** What information do you believe is very important to receive communications about?

Over 45% of employees believed all information selections where important.

**Question 10:** Speaker A knows what Listener B has heard, AND knows that Listener B is taking the time to fully understand before responding. What is listener B practicing?

50% of employees answered with the correct answer, active listening. Demonstrating that approximately 50% of the organization have not been introduced to or are not familiar with active listening.

**E. Discussion of Results**

The research results aided in accomplishing the research objectives and thus highlighted the factors that affect communication and the risk areas associated with communication.

1) Factors that affect communication:

**Selection of one software platform for all communication:** In the speed networking survey both sets of team members stated that in order to improve internal communication there was a need for one communication platform (refer to table 1). Before the implementation of the Microsoft E3 enterprise software system (refer to section 3C) the employees at BizWize consulting were utilizing different systems. This led to a decrease in the ability to communicate and productivity as some systems supported online calling, messaging, meeting and documents sharing services and some did not.

The change to one communication platform (Microsoft Enterprise E3 [15]), increased the team’s capability to communicate (hold online meetings, share and collaborate on documentation, connect through instant messaging) and therefore increased productivity. This illustrating that the software platform has an influence on the ability for organizations to communicate.

**Ensuring your strategy and structure align to your communication strategy:** An organizational structure that allows communication to flow unrestricted is paramount to the success of the organization [16]. During the as-is analysis it was found that the unitary structure of BizWize Consulting resulted in the company functional areas operating in silos and restricted team work and communication across functional areas (refer to section 3A). BizWize Consulting needed to utilize the skills of employees across the entire organization to complete projects. The changes made to the organizational structure accommodated this need and facilitated communication across the functional areas (streams). A positive impact was made and is evident from the responses to the following questions in the questionnaire:

- Question 1 - 12/14 positive comments. Examples are
  - “Increased transparency”
  - “New structure has resulted in improved communication”

- Question 5 showing that 78.5% of employees have seen an improvement in information and content received from the different streams.

This illustrates that organizational structure is one of the factors that can affect the way in which an organization
communicates. Subsequently, having an affect on the organizational effectiveness [16].

**Employee competency in communication:** Results from Question 10 of the questionnaire showed that only 50% of staff have either heard of or understand the concept of active listening. Exposing the fact that there is a potential lack of knowledge and understanding around active listening and the benefits thereof.

As presented in the article titled “Enabling, Advising, Supporting, executing: A Theoretical Framework for Internal Communication Consulting Within Organizations” written by A. Zerfass and N. Franke, one of the key communication competency areas of any employee is active communication [17]. The fact that only 50% of the employees are familiar with active illustrates that there is a lack of communication competency knowledge amongst the employees in BizWize Consulting. A lack of communication competency will have an impact on the communication level within the organization [17]. Furthermore, effecting the success of the communication strategy which requires each employee to be proficient in communication competencies.

**Communication Planning:** The as-is analysis performed showed that there was no formal communication planning in place. This contributing to the difficulties experienced within BizWize Consulting (refer to section 3A). The impact of the implemented communication strategy was evident in the results of questionnaire, specifically in the following questions:

- **Question 1** – Overall positive sentiment with positive answers from 12/14 employees, when asked what has improved around communications. Answers included:
  - Increased transparency.
  - Daily Meetings (Huddle) help us understand what each person is doing.
  - Increased clarification.
  - Newsletter & Stream Lead Sessions Regular and Consistent.

- **Question 5** – 78.5% of employees have seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize.

A white paper performed by the Project Management Institute titled “Communication: The Message is Clear” shows that high performing organizations are twice as likely to utilize formal project communication plans when compared to low performing organizations [18]. The results of the research mirrors this sentiment and also illustrated the positive impact that communication planning had on the organization. Showing that communication planning is a factor that affects the level of communication within organizations.

2) **Risks areas associated with communication:**

- **Use of Informal Communication Platforms:** With the rise of technology and mobile phone communication, platforms such as WhatsApp have allowed people to communicate easily and quickly. Instinctively businesses have begun to use such platforms. With the use of such informal platforms comes risks and concerns. With reference to the speed networking survey and questionnaire results, employees raised the following concerns:

  - 50% of employees in the speed dating survey called for there to be reduction in the use of WhatsApp (Refer to table 1).
  - 28.57% of employees in the questionnaire raised that there needed to be clarity around the use of WhatsApp.
  - 14.28% of employees felt that there was a lack of respect shown on platforms such as WhatsApp.

Taking these results of both the questionnaire and speed networking survey into account, there are a few risks that can be identified when utilizing informal communication platforms:

- Informal communication platforms (WhatsApp) are used for both social and business related communication. Employees may find it hard to differentiate between the two. This may lead to crucial information being missed and deliverables not being met. There is also a risk that confidential business information could be shared with someone outside the organization.
- Typed short messages, like those typically used in informal communication, can leave space for ambiguity and self interpretation. Thus messages are often misinterpreted and some employees may feel as though they are not shown sufficient respect. This was evident in the research results and may result in disgruntled employees and a breakdown in teamwork.
- Studies have shown that informal communication platforms such as WhatsApp negatively affect performance as concentration is often broken due to constant incoming messages [19], [20].

**Communication of crucial company information:** As introduced by M.F Hall in the research on the way key decisions are made and how they are communicated through an organization [21]. It was observed that the original reason for a decision being made, if not communicated correctly and throughout the organization left room for interpretation and resulted in adverse affects on the organization [21].
Employees from both groups during the speed networking survey stated that their main take away from the offsite event, was to gain a greater understanding of the organization. The fact that these events happen twice to three times a year, show that often employees may have worked for months at a time not receiving crucial company information. This illustrating a risk that crucial company information was not being communicated effectively and timely.

The introduction of the communication strategy was a positive step in mitigating this risk as seen in the results from the questionnaire:

- Question 1 – Overall positive sentiment with positive answers from 12/14 employees, when asked what has improved around communications. Answers included:
  - Increased transparency & clarification.
  - Daily Meetings help us understand what each person is doing.
  - Newsletter & Stream Lead Sessions Regular and Consistent.
- Question 5 – 78.5 % of employees have seen an improvement in the information and content received from the different streams within BizWize.

The risk for organizations is the fact that if crucial company information is not communicated consistently, employees have room for interpretation and this may result in unfavorable effects on productivity [21].

5. CONCLUSION

Effective communication is one of the keystones to organizational success and has become more prevalent in a modern day environment. With the rise of technology and the speed at which employees are able to access information, organizations need to focus on how they communicate externally as well as internally.

The results of the research performed highlighted four main factors that influence communication within organizations, namely:

1. Software platform for all communication.
2. Organizational strategy & structure.
3. Employee competency in communication.

In the case of this research all four of the factors above had a negative impact on communication within BizWize Consulting. Consequently, ensuring that the organizational structure and strategy was designed in a way that allowed communication to flow was key. In the case of BizWize Consulting, the hybrid matrix-unitary structure enabled better communication and harnessed all employee’s skills which yielded promising results.

In addition, factors 1, 2 and 3 could have arguably been mitigated if communication planning (factor 4) was performed adequately. The as-is analysis performed with the leadership of BizWize revealed that no planning for communication was in place. Once the new communication strategy was developed and implemented (refer to section 3C) promising results were seen with regards to the factors 1 and 2. It became evident from the case study that there was an overall lack of knowledge about the impact that communication has on organizational performance. Which confirmed the inability of organizations to understand the importance of effective and ineffective communication.

Furthermore, the results of the research identified two risk areas associated with communication, these were:

- The use of informal communication platforms.
- Communication of company information.

What became quite evident in the research results was the debate around the use of informal communication platforms (WhatsApp). In the initial engagement with employees (speed networking survey) both groups requested that there be a decrease in the usage of WhatsApp. However, in the questionnaire 28.57% of employees stated that they would like to receive day to day information on WhatsApp. Moreover, in the same questionnaire 28.57% of employees stated they would like to see a reduction in WhatsApp and that the terms of use needed to be defined.

This demonstrated a clear split amongst employees, in terms of those who want to utilize the platform and those who would prefer not too. Taking this into account and the fact that research has shown that informal communication platforms (WhatsApp) have a negative effect on productivity, demonstrates that organizations need to perform thorough investigations before introducing new technology platforms.

Organizations perform poorly in the area of communication due to not properly identifying and understanding the factors that effect (positively and negatively) the way they communicate. A lack of communication planning and risk management allow potential problems to go unnoticed until it is too late. Thus in order to improve communication standards, organizations need to implement a communication department whose sole responsibility is to:

- Identify the factors and risks that influence the ability of the organization to communicate.
• Ensure a high communication competency amongst employees.
• Provide solutions to mitigate risks and negative influence factors.

The results of the research also emphasized the need for further research into the affect informal communication platforms (WhatsApp, instant messenger applications) have on organizational performance.

6. REFERENCES


