



Cape Peninsula  
University of Technology

**THE EFFECTS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON EMPLOYEE  
PRODUCTIVITY AND PERCEPTION IN THE AUTOMOTIVE SERVICES  
INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Leslé Bianca Ince-Garcia, declare that the contents of this dissertation represent my own unaided work, and that the dissertation has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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**Signed**

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**Date**

## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services (aftermarket) industry in South Africa. The aim is also to provide recommendations to improve the internal communication in the industry. According to Grunig (2011), organisations are realising that employees are their most important competitive advantage, and effective communication helps unleash the talents and energies of their employees.

The literature review, which provides the theoretical perspectives upon which this study is based, comprises literature from a South African and international perspective. The literature outlined includes the Systems Approach, Excellence Theory, internal communication, productivity, perception, the automotive industry and the role of the communications practitioner.

A qualitative research method is used to seek answers to questions and to understand an aspect of the working environment. This method is also used to understand the experiences and attitudes of the participants. To collect the required data, in-depth interviews were conducted with eight employees at various levels in an automotive services organisation. The interview questions were asked under three headings, namely: Internal Communication; Productivity and the Role of the Communications Practitioner. The responses of the participants and the research findings are then compared to the literature review.

The major findings indicate that internal communication definitely impacts on the productivity and perception of the employees in the organisation. While certain aspects of internal communication in the automotive services organisation are effective, there is still room for improvement. This improvement should not be a once-off task. Management in the organisation is encouraged to conduct regular and on-going research to remain current and also to ensure that communication remains effective. Various types of research may be conducted at all levels in the organisation, internally and externally, which should consider the various aspects and elements of the organisation.

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## DEDICATION

This mini-dissertation is dedicated to every person who started; partially completed; and completed a task of this nature, despite the adverse obstacles you had to face.

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## **GLOSSARY**

<b>Internal Communication</b>	<b>Communication within an organisation may be referred to as employee or organisational communication</b>
<b>Employee Productivity</b>	<b>The assessment of the efficiency of employees within an organisation</b>
<b>Employee Perception</b>	<b>A process by which employees organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their work environment</b>
<b>Automotive Services</b>	<b>Also referred to as ‘aftermarket’ services and activities such as remanufacturing, distribution, retailing, and installation of all vehicle parts, chemicals, tools, equipment and accessories for light and heavy vehicles after the original sale</b>



# CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background and Rationale

During July 2006, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2006), conducted an electronic survey using a stratified sample of 2,000 employees from across Great Britain. This nationwide survey of employee attitudes and engagement found that nearly half of the employees felt they are not well informed about what is going on in their organisation. Durkin (2007:32) is of the opinion that if internal communication is not consistent, employees become concerned about the organisation's future and start thinking about leaving. According to Perry (2007), communication failure in any one area of an organisation can have implications for the others. Internal communication influences the level of trust in management by employees and in employees by management.

Perry (2007) suggests that communication infiltrates every relationship between employees, between employees and management, between departments and between the organisation and its many and varied stakeholders. The 2007/2008 Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study™ by Towers Watson (2008), reports on data collected from 6.2 million employees in 264 companies around the world. This research, undertaken over a period of six years, confirms that effective employee (internal) communication also directly impacts on an organisation's financial performance and that this extends worldwide.

In a post on Chatroom (Bizcommunity.com 2008), under the heading: 'Effectively manage internal communications throughout the African continent' (2012), Hylton Bannon, head of Toyota Tsusho Africa's Automotive Division, highlights the need to become aware of the importance of effective communication on a personal and organisational level. The gaps in the internal communication in the division/organisation have to be identified, which also serves as motivation to better understand the role that a vision, mission and slogan can play in a corporate identity. Once this is achieved, an internal communications programme can be developed to communicate one message to all employees.

This study is on the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in an automotive services (aftermarket) organisation in South Africa. The organisation is an enterprise feedback and customer relationship management company. It specialises in inbound and outbound contact centres, with a focus on the

automotive industry. Other services include database solutions, enterprise feedback management, lead tracking, complaints management and quality measurement services. The organisation does not have a public relations/communications department or a communications practitioner position.

The structure, hierarchy and levels of communication from organisation to organisation and from department to department will differ. In the enterprise feedback and customer relationship management organisation used in this study, the Commercial Director heads up the organisation and is assisted by a Client Services Manager and a Call Centre Manager. The Client Services Manager manages the team of Key Account Managers, which includes Senior and Junior Key Account Managers. The Call Centre Manager, heads up the Call Centre, which includes Supervisors and Agents. The Quality Manager manages the Quality department, which includes the Quality Assessors and Project Co-ordinators (Conexus 2013). The staff complements of various automotive services departments and organisations will differ and are dependent on the organisation, the solutions and services offered, as well as the types of areas and departments in the organisation.

The researcher is of the opinion that internal or employee communication may be positively or negatively affected by the structure of the department and/or organisation. There may be various types of internal communication disseminated to employees in an organisation and/or department. This communication may include job-related information, company announcements, the vision and values, new business acquired, promotions, procedures and processes, information about a department's products and services, as well as Human Resources updates. Various traditional tools of communication, such as e-mail, Intranet, meetings and presentations may be utilised to disseminate this information.

According to the researcher, some of the information may or may not apply or be of interest to all the employees in the organisation. On the other hand, some of the communication tools utilised may be effective while others may be ineffective. Internal communication within an automotive services organisation may be negatively perceived if irrelevant information is disseminated to the employees and if the incorrect tools of communication are utilised. Suggestions may be made by the employees about the types of internal information required, as well as the utilisation of new and different tools to disseminate internal communication. It is, therefore, important to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in an automotive services organisation in South Africa.

## 1.2 Research Problem and Question

While a significant amount of research has been done on organisational communication, there is not much research on communication in the automotive services industry specifically. This study aims to provide insight on how employees in the automotive services industry in South Africa perceive internal communication and how the internal communication impacts on productivity.

The reason for this research is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception. It is to determine whether or not employees within an automotive services organisation in South Africa perceive internal communication to be effective. It is also to determine what types of internal communication the employees would like to receive and whether or not all the communication sent (to all employees) is relevant to all and/or the majority of employees. Finally, the reason for this research is to determine which types of communication tools are the most effective for sending and receiving internal communication.

**The research question is:** What are the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa?

## 1.3 Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to make a contribution to the automotive industry in South Africa and particularly to automotive services organisations. This study aims to gauge the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry. According to Muller (2009:75), there is a missing link between the perceptions of employees about how they can make a difference in their jobs and the information communicated to them.

Feedback on the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception, the types of internal communication preferred, the relevance of the communication, as well as the effectiveness of the tools/channels of communication will be received. The study results may yield ideas of new or different types of internal information and communication required. There may also be suggestions to utilise new or different tools (including social media) to disseminate internal communication.

The results of the research will be used to provide recommendations to improve future internal communication within the organisation. This feedback will be submitted to management to incorporate into their planning and will, therefore, benefit all

employees at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. The study will also ultimately impact on and benefit the entire organisation in South Africa, and perhaps globally.

#### **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in order to provide recommendations to improve internal communication in the department. The objectives of this study are:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception;
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services organisation;
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation;
- To determine the role of a communications practitioner in the department/organisation.

#### **1.5 Research Design and Methods**

Depending on the organisation, an automotive services department may include various areas and staff complements. For the purposes of this study, the researcher has identified an automotive services organisation in Bryanston, Gauteng. Employees in this organisation were selected as the target group. The inclusion criteria of the employees surveyed were as follows:

- Employees whose positions are specifically in automotive services.
- Employees permanently employed in an automotive services organisation.
- Employees who have been in the employ of the organisation for at least six months.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), qualitative research is associated with an interpretive worldview. It is interested in exploring meaning and communication relationships and how social reality is constructed from the point of view of the people being studied. Therefore, for this research, a qualitative study in the interpretive paradigm was followed, using face-to-face interviews. In-depth interviews were used to collect the data. Dimensions, such as effective communication, internal communication and the role of the communications practitioner, which are identified in internal communication literature, served as a basis for the interview questions.

Non-probability sampling was used. This, according to Willemse (1994:13), is a sampling technique in which the selection of sample items is not determined by chance, but rather by personal convenience. The data was collected in an automotive services organisation, where specific individuals/employees in the department were targeted (non-random sampling). A convenience sample, based on the inclusion criteria above, was used. Willemse (1994:13) suggests that the definition of

convenience sampling is samples made up of items selected on the basis of ready availability (convenience).

## **1.6 Description of Context**

### **1.6.1 Stakeholders**

In the past, shareholders were considered the only stakeholders of an organisation. This view has changed significantly over the years. According to Steyn and Puth (2000), there seems to be consensus now that an organisation's stakeholders are all the groups with an interest or stake in the organisation. This includes the organisation's internal stakeholders: its employees.

Freeman (2010) defines a stakeholder as any group or individual who is affected by or can affect the achievement of an organisation's objectives. According to Goodijk (2003) stakeholders are defined as individuals and entities or institutions that may influence or be affected by the functioning of an organisation. These include shareholders, employees, customers, pressure groups and civic institutions.

Freeman (2010:10) is of the opinion that employees are often customers, stockholders and members of special interest groups. The changing nature of the employee relationship must be understood for each business...for low productivity is a warning signal of decline that cannot be ignored. However, the issue is not as simple as only understanding the needs of employees in general.

Fulmer (2000), on the one hand, notes that every employee as a stakeholder needs to know every day precisely what the organisation's business is in order to be empowered to realise opportunities and correct mistakes at ground level. Goodijk (2003), on the other hand, is of the opinion that employees are one of an organisation's important stakeholder groups.

Organisations need to implement strategies to communicate and deal with various stakeholders, based on their needs and requirements. Steyn and Puth (2000) suggest that communication with stakeholders about stakeholders requires shared meaning and active listening, where all stakeholder comments, feedback, suggestions and the like are considered by the organisation. An organisation that considers its internal stakeholders and behaves ethically and responsibly towards them creates financial and social wealth, which reinforces stakeholder commitment. If this is based on mutual trust and co-operation, the relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders will be a lasting one.

### **1.6.2 The South African Automotive Industry**

The South Africa Automotive Industry Report of 2012 states that South Africa's automotive industry is a significant employer. Aggregate employment in the vehicle manufacturing industry in 2010 amounted to 28 128 employees, while employment in the component manufacturing industry was approximately 65 000 employees and employment in the tyre manufacturing industry approximately 6 600 employees. There are approximately 200 000 people employed in the trade area, namely vehicle sales, vehicle maintenance and servicing fields; while a further 250 000 people are employed by importers of vehicles, aftermarket suppliers and service providers. Due to the creation of opportunities in automotive and related areas; as well as direct links to a large number of support services and SMMEs, the automotive industry exhibits a high multiplier effect.

### **1.6.3 Aftermarket**

The Research and Markets group refers to aftermarket as the remanufacturing, distribution, retailing, and installation of all vehicle parts, chemicals, tools, equipment and accessories for light and heavy vehicles after the original sale. Products covered in this category include mechanical, electrical, electronic, exterior and structural products, as well as motor oil, fluids, additives and appearance chemicals.

Capgemini Consulting and the University of St. Gallen mention in the Aftermarket in the Automotive Industry Report (2010) that aftermarket operations have a very broad scope and contain all activities related to maintaining a vehicle, after its initial sale until the end of its lifecycle. The relevant activities are also referred to as aftermarket parts and services. The aftermarket encompasses all parts and services purchased for light and heavy-duty vehicles after the original sale, including replacement parts, accessories, lubricants, appearance products and service repairs. This definition also includes any additional innovative services that help to optimise the use of the vehicle.

Findings in the Automotive Aftermarket in South Africa Channel Analysis of 2015, by Research and Markets (2011), indicate that the automotive aftermarket in South Africa grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10.6% over the 2005 to 2009 period. This market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 4.8% over the 2009 to 2015 period.

## **1.7 Outline of Chapters**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background**

In this chapter the introduction and background to the research will be discussed.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter will examine the importance of employees as stakeholders. The Systems Approach; Participative System; and Excellence Theory will be highlighted, as well as internal communication and channels of communication. Employee productivity and employee perception will also be discussed. The South African automotive industry and aftermarket, as well as the role of the communication practitioner will also be mentioned.

### **Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design**

In this chapter, the research methodology and design will be outlined. The significance of the study, as well as the aim and objectives will also be discussed.

### **Chapter 4: Findings**

The findings and interpretation of the research results will be discussed in this chapter.

### **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this chapter, the research findings will be compared to the literature review and recommendations will be made to improve internal communication. It will also include the limitations of, as well as suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa and then to provide recommendations to improve the internal communication, should this be required. The literature review provides the theoretical perspectives upon which this study is based. It starts with a discussion on the importance of employees as key stakeholders. The Systems Approach, Participative (Group) System and the Excellence Theory are highlighted. Internal communication within an organisation and channels of communication are also discussed. Employee productivity and employee perception are briefly mentioned, as well as the automotive services industry in South Africa. In conclusion, the role and importance of the communications practitioner in internal communication will be mentioned.

### 2.2 The Systems Approach

Robbins (1990) is of the opinion that there is wide agreement among organisational theorists that a system's approach offers important insights into the workings of an organisation. According to Botha, Chaka, du Plessis, Kraus, Rawjee Porthen, Veerasamy and Wright (2007:60), the systems theory says that a business organisation or system is made up of interrelated functions or subsystems such as public relations, marketing, human resources and production. Each subsystem as well as the system as a whole, has boundaries which distinguish it from the rest of the environment.

Robbins (1990) defines a system as a set of interrelated and independent parts arranged in a manner that produces a unified whole. A similar view is shared by Littlejohn (1983:29) who defines a system as a set of objects or entities that interrelate with one another to form a whole. According to Angelopulo (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:42) the systems approach addresses any system, whether inorganic, organic, social or cognitive.

Hall and Fagan (1968) are of the opinion that a system comprises objects, attributes, relationships and environment, which are described as follows:

- **Objects:** the parts, elements or members, which maybe physical, abstract or both.
- **Attributes:** the qualities and properties of the system itself.
- **Relationships:** the mutual effects and constraints of each part of a system upon the others.



- **Environment:** the system exists in an environment, which may affect the system or be affected by it.

Systems comprise five qualities, which Angelopulo (in Lubbe & Puth, 1994:42) describes as:

- **Wholeness:** systems have properties which are different from those of their individual parts because of the relationship and interdependence which exist between the parts.
- **Hierarchy:** systems are all seen as subsystems of greater systems and, in turn, as systems which comprise subsystems.
- **Self-regulation:** self-regulation guides the operations of a system towards a goal state by 'steering' towards it.
- **Openness:** a system may be open or closed. Open systems have permeable boundaries, which permit the exchange of information, material or energy with their environments. Closed systems are separate from their environments.
- **Adaptability:** the dynamic nature of systems concentrate on emerging processes rather than static structures.

Robbins (1990) suggests that the systems approach is a useful framework for management to conceptualise organisations. This approach permits seeing the organisation as a whole with interdependent parts – a system composed of subsystems. According to Agang (2009:27), the systems approach encompasses the concepts of inputs, outputs, throughput and feedback. These concepts describe the way a system behaves. Applied to the public relations (and communication) function, information is received from the environment as input, the information is then processed from the environment as throughput and sent back to the environment as output. After processing the information (throughput) from the information gathered (input) and sending it out to solve the problem (output) the system then looks for feedback from the environment to determine the impact of the information it sent out.

The relevance of the Systems Approach for this study is because an automotive services organisation can be viewed as an organisation made up of interdependent parts. Employees in their respective departments can be seen as systems and sub-systems in the organisation. The various organisations and specifically the automotive services organisations function as systems and sub-systems in the automotive industry. Finally, the automotive services industry in South Africa can be seen as a system and sub-system of South Africa, which has an impact not only on South Africa but also globally. The effects of manufacturing, sales, services and other automotive functions in the automotive services industry in South Africa are experienced in countries such as Germany, Korea, China, which trade with South Africa. Similarly, to a greater or lesser extent, the automotive services industries in those countries also impact on the automotive services industry in South Africa.

### 2.3 Participative System (Group System)

Through the years, Dr Rensis Likert conducted extensive research and examined various types of organisations and leadership styles. Through his research, Likert (1961) identified four main systems, viz. the Exploitive (Authoritative System), the Benevolent (Authoritative System), the Consultative System and the Participative (Group System). These four systems were measured against the following organisational variables:

- Leadership processes used
- Character of motivational forces
- **Character of communication process**
- Character of interaction-influence process
- Character of decision-making process
- Character of goal-setting or ordering
- Character of control processes

The findings for the third organisational variable; **Character of communication process** for the Participative (Group) system, are relevant to this study.

**Table 2.1: Organisational and Performance Characteristics of Different Management Systems Based on a Comparative Analysis**

<b>System of Organisation</b>				
<b>Organisational Variable: <i>Character of communication process</i></b>	<b>System 1 Exploitive Authoritative</b>	<b>System 2 Benevolent Authoritative</b>	<b>System 3 Consultative</b>	<b>System 4 Participative Group</b>
<b>a) Amount of interaction and communication aimed at achieving organisation's objectives</b>	Very little	Little	Quite a bit	Much with both individuals and groups
<b>b) Direction of information flow</b>	Downward	Mostly downward	Down and up	Down, up and with peers
<b>c) Extent to which downward communications are accepted by subordinates</b>	Viewed with great suspicion	May or may not be viewed with great suspicion	Often accepted but at times viewed with suspicion; may or may not be openly questioned	Generally accepted but if not, openly and candidly questioned
<b>d) Accuracy of upward communication via line</b>	Tends to be inaccurate	Information that manager wants to hear flows; other information is restricted and filtered	Information that manager wants to hear flows; other information may be limited or cautiously given	Accurate
<b>e) Psychological closeness of superiors to subordinates</b>	Has no knowledge or understanding of problems of subordinates	Has some knowledge or understanding of problems of subordinates	Knows and understands problems of subordinates quite well	Knows and understands problems of subordinates very well

Source: Adapted from Likert (1967:16)

The Participative (Group) System is ideal for an organisation which is profit oriented and concerned with its human assets. Likert is of the opinion that all organisations should adopt this system. While the changes involved (to achieve this management style) are complicated and long-winded, they are necessary to achieve maximum rewards for the organisation. In order to achieve good labour relations and high productivity, organisations have to make optimum use of their human assets. An organisation with highly effective work groups linked together in an overlapping pattern by other similarly effective groups is the type of organisation which will make the greatest use of its human assets.

The key attributes of an organisation's structure and culture are its belief systems regarding its core values and foundations, as well as its communication patterns. In terms of organisational structure, modern organisations are complex entities with some functions centralised and others decentralised. According to Berger (2008), the culture for communication needs to be conducive to open, transparent, authentic two-way communication and conversations.

In this study, the internal communication of an automotive services organisation in South Africa is compared to the organisational and performance characteristics of the Participative (Group) System. This determines how effective internal communication is in the organisation in terms of employee productivity and perception.

## **2.4 Excellence Theory**

According to Grunig (1991), in the 'Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management *Executive Summary/Initial Data Report*,' the excellence theory is a general theory of public relations. This theory is the result of a 15-year study of best practices in communication management, funded by the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Research Foundation. In 1985, the IABC Research Foundation awarded a grant to a six-member research team headed by James E. Grunig, Ph.D., of the University of Maryland.

The purpose of the research was to address the questions: *How, why, and to what extent does communication contribute to the achievement of organisational objectives?* In addition to this, they added what they called the excellence question, which is: *How must public relations be practiced and the communication function organised for it to contribute most to organisational effectiveness?* The team began the research project with an extensive literature review of theories from public relations, management, sociology, psychology, marketing, communication,

anthropology, philosophy and feminist studies. The theories were the foundation of a new theory of the characteristics that public relations departments must have in order to make organisations more effective and to explain how and why communication makes organisations more effective.

In the introduction to Excellence Theory in Public Relations, Grunig (1995) notes that theory was tested through heads of public relations, CEOs, and employees in 327 organisations (corporations, non-profit organisations, government agencies and associations) in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Amongst others, one of the outcomes of the Excellence study showed that a symmetrical system of internal communication increased employees' satisfaction with their jobs and with the organisation. However, internal communication generally was not practiced unless organisations had a participative rather than an authoritative culture; and a decentralised, less stratified (organic) structure rather than a centralised, stratified (mechanical) structure.

According to Grunig and Grunig (*in Gillis, 2006:11*), two-way symmetrical communication is based on research and uses communication to enhance public participation and manage conflict with strategic publics and, as a result, produces better long-term relationships with those publics. Communication is used to negotiate with the publics, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organisation and its publics. The following four dimensions underlie the two-way symmetrical communication model and also serve as characteristics of excellent communication:

- The purpose of communication is symmetrical.
- The direction of communication is two way.
- Communication activities can be mediated and be interpersonal.
- Communication follows rules of accountability that makes it ethical.

Grunig and Grunig (*in Berger: 2008*) state that there are facilitating or impeding factors in the creation of a culture for communication in Excellence Theory. These factors include a participatory culture which empowers employees, a two-way communication system, a decentralised, less formal structure and programmes that treat all groups equitably.

Grunig (2011:2) is of the opinion that organisations are realising that employees are their most important competitive advantage, and effective communication helps unleash the talents and energies of their employees. Internal or employee communication, which was once considered a 'soft skill', is now seen as having 'hard business impact' in customer service, product quality, innovation and other areas.

The commitment and loyalty of the internal stakeholders of an organisation will assist the organisation in striving towards its vision.

The relevance of the Excellence Theory in this study is to determine the culture of internal communication in an automotive services organisation in South Africa. This include whether or not the internal communication is participatory, empowers employees and encourages a two-way communication system. Also, to determine if the organisational structure is decentralised and less formal and if the dissemination of internal communication considers employees at all levels in the organisation.

## **2.5 Internal Communication**

Internal communication may be referred to as employee or organisational communication. According to Mazzei (2010), internal communication is generally defined as the communication flow among people within the boundaries of an organisation. Shockley-Zalabak (1995) suggests that communication is a combination of people, messages, meaning, practices and purpose; while Jones (*in Berger: 2008:s.a*), is of the opinion that organisational capabilities are developed and enacted through "...intensely social and communicative processes".

In his research, Perry (2007) found that internal communication does indeed affect the culture of an organisation, its climate and the engagement of its employees. Good internal communication not only increases the morale of the employees, but also enhances employee engagement, has an impact on the performance of employees, as well as on the reputation of the organisation. Thus, internal communication is at the heart of an organisation as it has an impact on the level of employee engagement and is critical to organisational success.

D'Aprix (1996), as well as Harris and Nelson (*in Berger, 2008:s.a*) suggest that communication is the foundation of modern organisations and is one of the most dominant and important activities in organisations. According to Grunig (2011:1), employee communication includes three dimensions: firstly, the formal communications in organisations, such as newsletters and internal blogs, which are created by communication professionals; secondly, the communication that occurs within, among and across employees and teams; and thirdly, the non-verbal communications and behaviours of the individuals who send the messages.

Formal communication is grounded in the receivers' needs and concerns. Employees also communicate informally with others inside and outside the organisation through high-speed communications. Organisational leaders and communication specialists

must, therefore, continue to develop strategies to achieve the objectives in terms of communication within the organisation. Communication within traditional organisations occurs on multiple levels. Fielding (1993) suggests that interpersonal or face-to-face communication is the primary form of communication and occurs between individuals. According to Berger (2008), group-level communication occurs in teams, units or interest groups and is characterised by information sharing, issue discussion, task co-ordination, problem solving and the like. Organisational-level communication focuses on matters such as vision and mission, policies, new initiatives and organisational knowledge and performance. Internal communication is often cascaded downwards from managers at the top of the hierarchical levels to employees at the lower levels.

Fielding (1993) is of the opinion that organisational communication may also be described as vertical, horizontal or diagonal. Vertical communication can be downward or upward-flowing that is, moving from higher to lower levels in the organisational hierarchy or vice versa. Horizontal communication refers to communication among employees, who have no hierarchical relationship. Berger (2008) suggests that diagonal or omni-directional communication occurs amongst employees at different levels and in different functions.

Berger (2008) is also of the opinion that a network, which may be formal or informal, represents how communication flows in an organisation. Traditionally, in formal communication networks, messages travel through official pathways like newsletters, memos and policy documents, which reflect the organisation's hierarchy. In informal communication networks, messages move along unofficial paths like the grapevine, which has now become electronic, fast and multi-directional. Communication that passes along this network includes rumours, opinions, aspirations and expressions of emotions.

One of the most important purposes of employee or internal communication is to motivate employees to support the objectives of the organisation. A key role of communication is to ensure that employees feel part of the organisation and that they understand and buy into the vision, mission and goals of the organisation. This, according to O'Neil (2008:1), is achieved when the channels of communication are open, which enable the employees to become aligned to the goals of the organisation. Perry (2007) suggests that good internal communication not only requires considerable levels of skill, but also well-developed processes to maintain competent and effective communication. While Pettinger (2000) is of the opinion that

good internal communication is instrumental in driving the relationships and behaviour of the organisation's employees and is an important factor in organisational effectiveness.

According to Perry (2007), improving the quality of communication, providing adequate internal communication resources and using multiple channels of communication will greatly contribute to employee engagement and organisational effectiveness. In the Internal Communications Best Practice Guide by Lancashire Communications Network (2005:3), good internal communication involves frequent and effective two-way communication with all employees at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. O'Neil (2008:1) suggests that, organisations should also provide formal feedback opportunities in their employee communication practices and strategies.

Perry (2007) also notes that internal communication is complex and contains both soft and hard elements. Soft elements include planning and implementing communication strategies within the organisation's structure and hierarchical levels, as well as the skills of employees and managers to communicate with one another. The hard elements include communication channels such as publications, notice boards, electronic media and meetings. According to Luss and Nyce (2008:24), effective communication in organisations requires that the organisations competently employ a variety of communication practices. While individual practices are important in communication throughout an organisation, no one practice guarantees effective communication. Instead, a combination of various communication practices will not only yield the best results, but also an effective communication programme.

## **2.6 Channels of Communication**

Research by Haas (2006) indicates that employees desire more information from top management. An organisation's communication channel is the medium through which organisational messages/information are transmitted and received. Channels are categorised as print, electronic or interpersonal. Print channels include memos, brochures, newsletters, reports, and policy manuals.

As a result of emerging technologies, electronic channels for communication are also utilised and include e-mail, voice mail, intranets, video conferencing, instant messaging systems and so forth. Electronic channels of communication are efficient channels for information exchange, if utilised correctly. White, Vanc and Stafford (2010) are of the opinion that these channels have the ability to flatten the traditional,

hierarchical structure of internal communication. Through these forms of communication, employees at all levels of the organisation simultaneously obtain 'first-hand' information from the top.

According to Berger (2008), face-to-face channels include meetings, focus groups, social events and gatherings. White, Vanc and Stafford (2010) are of the opinion that meetings serve as opportunities to communicate face-to-face with managers. While employees find meetings to be time-consuming, they do value this form of communication as a channel for feedback. Research by these authors also indicates that employees at every level in the organisation still prefer face-to-face communication as a primary form of interaction in organisations.

Miller, Green and Putland (2005) suggest that relevant messages (communication) must be constructed and then transmitted through the diverse channels within an organisation. This is to stimulate conversations with the organisation's employees. In doing so, emerging technologies must also be taken into consideration. With regard to the traditional forms of organisational communication and culture, emerging technologies allow for the 'empowerment' of employees and thus, there is decentralisation of responsibility and authority. These new and emerging technologies are constantly developing or will be developed over the next few years. They will also continue to substantially alter communication not only in the social environment, but also in business.

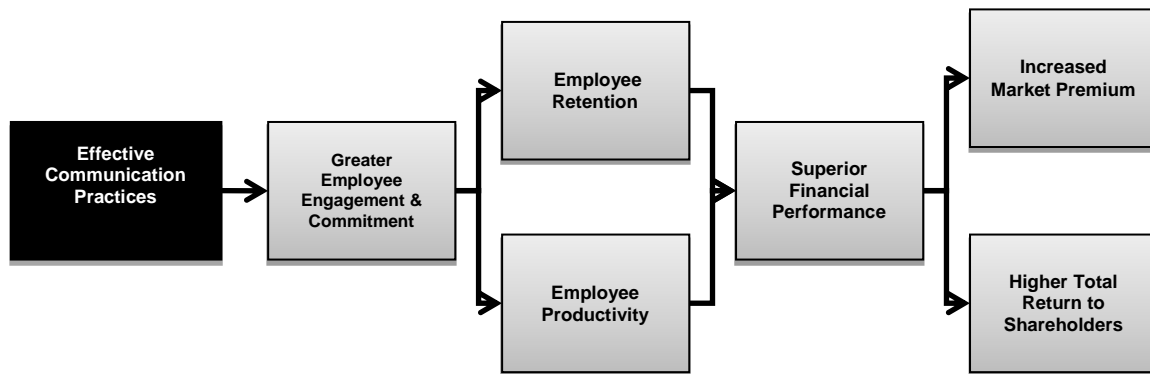
New and emerging technologies, which often offer high-speed and multi-directional communications, have made corporate culture, structure and organisational communication patterns more complex. However, according to Berger (2008), the core components live on in formal communications planning and implementation. Fulmer (2000) is of the opinion that an organisation's ability to adapt is at the core of the new communication style needed in today's workplace. The author argues that organisations will succeed or fail depending on how well they are able to constantly absorb data about their changing business environment and communicate that understanding to its employees and stakeholders.

## **2.7 Employee Productivity**

Malik (2013) is of the opinion that employees' job satisfaction can lead to better engagement in the organisation. More participation by the employees can be productive for the organisation and improving employee engagement can increase their productivity. According to Vogt (n.d.), in the 2003/2004 Watson Wyatt



Communication ROI Study™, companies with highly effective internal communication practices produce superior financial results and enjoy greater organisational stability.



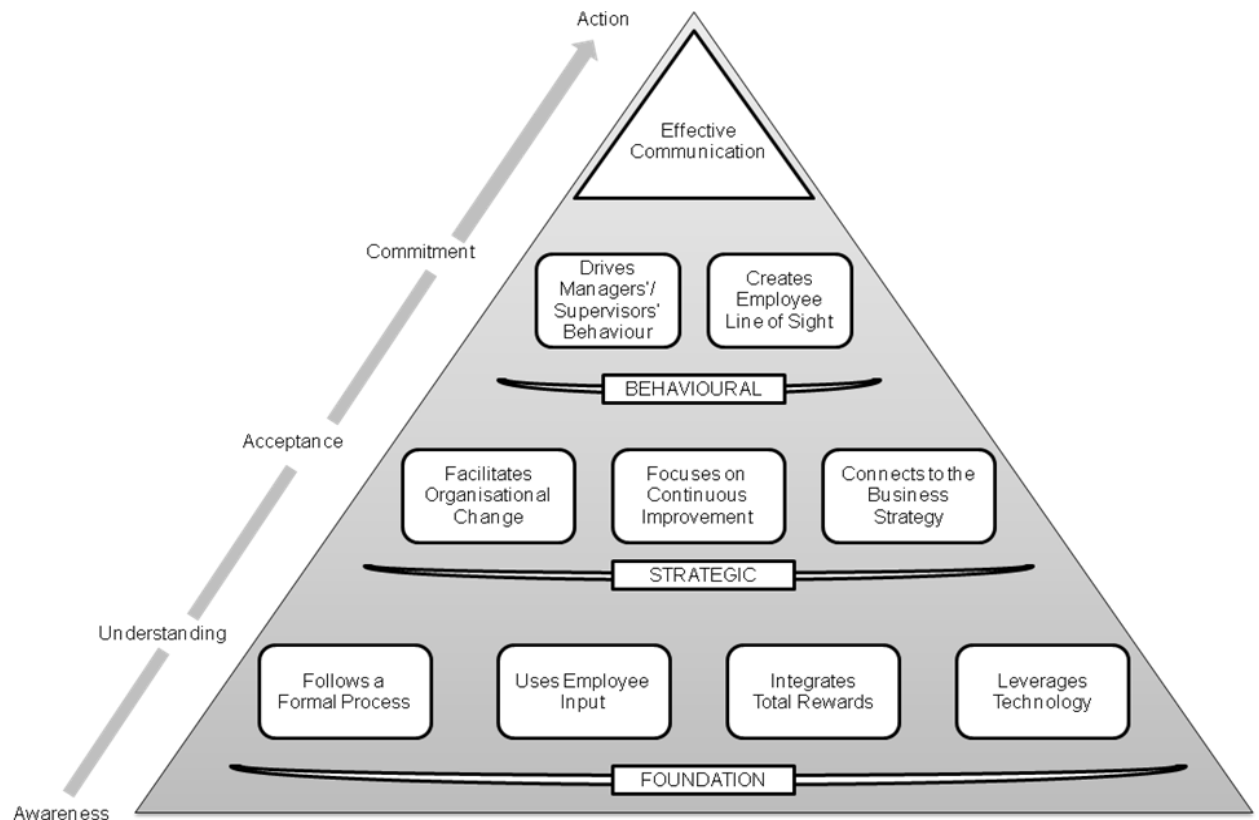
**Figure 2.1: Communication Effectiveness Drives Superior Financial Performance**

*Source: Adapted from Yates (2006:72)*

Watson Wyatt (2003) defines an effective communication organisation as one that excels in the following eight areas:

- Educating employees about organisational culture and values.
- Helping employees understand the business.
- Aligning employees' actions with customer needs.
- Providing employees with financial information and objectives.
- Providing employees with information on the value of their total rewards programmes.
- Explaining and promoting new programmes and policies.
- Integrating new employees into the organisation.
- Exhibiting strong leadership by management during organisational change.

Yates (2006:72) affirms that these eight areas are the communication components of organisational effectiveness. They are critical for providing employees with the information, perspectives and motivation they need to take the actions that will ultimately lead to desired business outcomes. Top-performing organisations engage in very specific communication practices that deliver quantifiable results. These practices comprise the Hierarchy of Effective Communication, which is discussed below.



**Figure 2.2: Hierarchy of Effective Communication**

*Source: Adapted from Yates (2006:74)*

- The **Foundation** tier: The starting point for effective communication is a solid foundation of four communication practices:
  1. A formal communication process
  2. Employee input
  3. Links between desired behaviour and employee compensation
  4. Effective use of technology
- The **Strategic** tier: Efforts at the strategic level align internal communication with business objectives and employ communication tools to:
  1. Facilitate organisational change;
  2. Focus on continuous improvement; and
  3. Connect employees to the business strategy.
- The **Behavioural** tier: Uses communication to increase employee commitment by focussing on the relationship between employees and their leaders with communication practices designed to:
  1. Drive changes in the behaviour of managers and supervisors that enable them to support senior management's vision through their actions; and
  2. Work through these key managers and supervisors to draw a clear line of sight between employees' jobs and business outcomes.

According to Yates (2006:73), the result of these nine practices combined is Effective Communication, which is at the pinnacle of the pyramid. Organisations that are able to reach this top tier are able to drive behavioural change in their employees. This change translates into action that produces positive business and financial results.

O'Berry (2010) is of the opinion that a small gesture, such as stopping by a co-worker's desk or giving an employee a call to see how they are doing, can have a big impact on self-esteem, office morale and overall productivity. There are a variety of ways to stay close to employees. Traditional forms of media (email and telephone), as well as social media platforms make it easier to communicate in a business environment. O'Berry (2010) provides the following communication suggestions:

- **Email** - The most efficient tool to communicate with several people at the same time, but not an effective tool for engagement and decision-making processes.
- **Social Media** - Newer communication services tools like Twitter® and Facebook® can assist to build relationships and camaraderie. Strong relationships outside of work can strengthen relationships and ultimately communication at work.
- **Text and Internet Chat** - For short and non-critical communication, it allows team members to maintain consistent communication.
- **Pick up the Phone** - People are often so inundated with technology and social networking that the message becomes lost, resulting in miscommunication. The telephone is versatile for both short, informative chats and long, complicated discussions.
- **In-person meeting** - Depending on geography, meeting face-to-face provides the best payoff for any organisation by increasing the bond between employees.

Likert's theory of Employee-Centered Management (1967) is based on effectively functioning groups linked together structurally throughout the organisation. The author's research called for an increase in participation by organisational members. His research also revealed that productivity was high in groups in which the supervisor (manager) and subordinate (employee) shared reasonably accurate perceptions of each other. He concluded from this finding that good communication and high performance go together. According to Likert (1961:44), communication is essential to the functioning of an organisation. It is viewed widely as one of the most important processes of management.

## 2.8 Employee Perception

Heidema (*in* Lubbe & Puth, 1994) notes that in organisations, the perception of the organisation as a system determines the well-being of that organisation. An organisation's internal and external publics respond favourably or unfavourably to the perception of it. The perception that organisational members have of their organisation largely determines the real nature of their organisation.

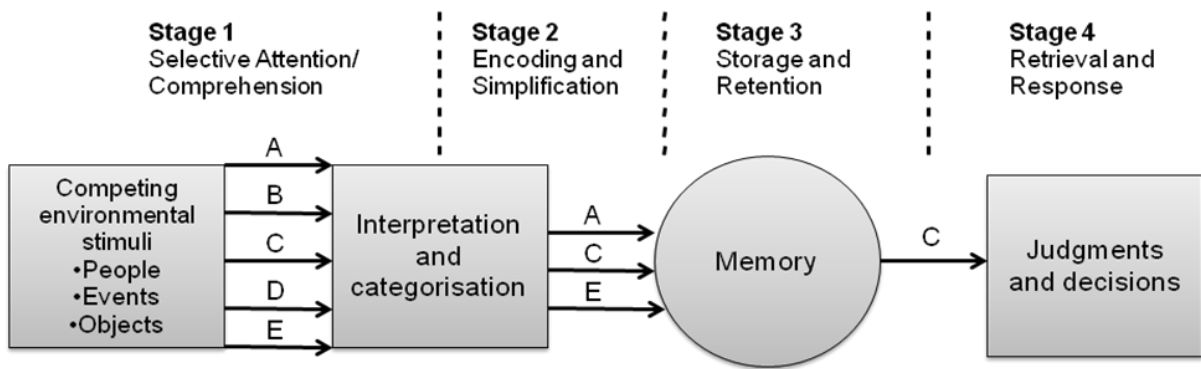
According to Besancon (2012), when employees are evaluating their roles in the workplace, their perceptions of these roles may lead to either an increase or decrease in productivity. Employees may develop positive or negative perceptions of their roles in the workplace, which may lead them to feel valuable and important or worthless and unimportant to the workplace.

Besancon (2012) goes on to explain that these varying perceptions are essential for managers to understand in order to keep production up and even increase productivity. Managers must not only understand employees' perceptions of their roles in the workplace, but also be able to recognise the significance of these perceptions in order to meaningfully interact with employees and encourage them, thereby increasing overall productivity.

Clutterbuck (2005) is of the opinion that maintaining the goodwill of key stakeholder groups, such as employees, customers, investors and suppliers depends to a significant extent on how the relationships between them and an organisation is perceived. The quality of communication between the organisation and each stakeholder group is possibly the most important factor in that perception.

Robbins and Judge (2008:51) define perception as a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their environment. People's behaviours are based on their perceptions of what their reality is, not on reality itself. "The world as it is perceived is the world that is behaviourally important." According to Kreitner and Kinicki (2010:185), perception is defined as a cognitive process that enables us to interpret and understand our surroundings. The authors are also of the opinion that perception involves a four-stage information-processing sequence.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2010:185) have developed an Information-Processing Model which illustrates a basic information-processing model of perception in four stages namely, *selective attention/comprehension; encoding and simplification; storage and retention; and retrieval and response*. The first three stages in this model (*selective attention/comprehension; encoding and simplification; and storage and retention*) describe how specific information and environmental stimuli are observed and stored in memory. The fourth and final stage (*retrieval and response*) involves turning mental representations into real-world judgements and decisions. The four stages are discussed in more detail below.



**Figure 2.3: Perception: An Information-Processing Model**  
 Source: Adapted from Kreitner & Kinicki (2010:185)

### Stage 1: Selective Attention/Comprehension

*Attention* is the process of becoming consciously aware of something or someone. Attention can be focussed on information either from the environment or from memory.

*Salient stimuli*: Something is salient when it stands out from its context. Research shows that people have a tendency to pay more attention to negative than positive information, which leads to a negative bias.

### Stage 2: Encoding and Simplification

Observed information is not stored in memory in its original form. Encoding is required; raw information is interpreted or translated into mental representations. To accomplish this, perceivers assign pieces of information to *cognitive categories*. Cognitive categories are mental depositories for storing information. People, events and objects are interpreted and evaluated by comparing their characteristics with information contained in schemata (or schema in singular form). A schema represents a person's mental picture or summary of a particular event or type of stimulus. A schema for an event (like going to dinner at a restaurant) is called a script. Cognitive category labels are needed to make schemata meaningful.

The encoding process is used to interpret and evaluate one's environment. This process can result in differing interpretations and evaluations of the same person or event. The varying interpretations of what is observed occur due to four key reasons: Firstly, people possess different information in the schemata used for interpretation. Secondly, people's moods and emotions influence their focus of attention and evaluations of others. Thirdly, people tend to apply recently used cognitive categories during encoding. Fourthly, individual differences influence encoding.

### **Stage 3: Storage and Retention**

This phase involves storage of information in long-term memory. Long-term memory encompasses:

- Separate units connected to one another.
- Separate but related categories – these connected categories contain different types of information and information passed among these categories.
- Three compartments containing categories of information about events, semantic materials and people.

The *event memory* compartment is composed of categories containing information about both specific and general events. These memories describe appropriate sequences of events in well-known situations. *Semantic memory* refers to general knowledge about the world. In so doing, it functions as a mental dictionary of concepts. Each concept contains a definition and associated traits, emotional states, physical characteristics and behaviours. Just as there are schemata for general events, concepts in the semantic memory are stored as schemata. The *person memory* compartment contains information about a single individual or groups of people.

### **Stage 4: Retrieval and Response**

People retrieve information from memory when they make judgements and decisions. These judgements and decisions are either based on the process of drawing on, interpreting and integrating categorical information stored in the long-term memory or on retrieving a summary judgement that was already made. Employees' perceptions of the organisation for which they work, as well as the organisation's communication practices, will differ. It is, therefore, important to understand the cognitive processes that lead to perceptions being formed and how different factors are affecting the perception process.

According to Besancon (2012), issues, managerial activities and organisational processes are all affected by employees' perceptions. These perceptions are developed from employees' observations and interpretations of managers. If managers are known and recognised to be positive and encouraging, this will influence employees in positive ways and vice versa. By understanding these perceptions and using them to their advantage, managers are able to alter employees' perceptions of their treatment, equality, value, potential and overall role in the workplace. This, in turn, will positively influence productive behaviour and result in increased productivity.

## **2.9 The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

Learch (2013) is of the opinion that there are certain factors that contribute to the success of internal communication in an organisation. These include an organisational structure that connects internal communicators with the rest of the organisation, horizontally, vertically and diagonally. There should also be a good understanding that strong internal communication will have a positive return for the organisation. The organisation should have effective tools and practices to listen to and communicate a message; and also have a strong commitment to keeping employees, at all levels, informed in a timely fashion.

According to Young and Post (1993), certain communication practices and characteristics can improve the ability of senior management to effect large-scale changes in organisations. These include, lived messages, which is the match between words and actions, commitment to two-way communication and an emphasis on face-to-face communication. Other characteristics include the willingness to share both bad news and good news, having a clear focus on employees as customers and audience, and a clear and compelling communication strategy that provides message context and content which helps align individual jobs with the organisation's objectives. They note that every manager is a communication manager and while these characteristics were identified over twenty years ago, they are still relevant to internal communication today and may be applied to general internal communication.

The role of a communications practitioner is to help organisations develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external stakeholders through excellent communication. Verwey (*in* Lubbe & Puth, 1994:67) is of the opinion that effective public relations is dependent on effective communication. The communications practitioner communicates on behalf of the organisation with the organisation's internal and external stakeholders about organisational issues. This is done through specific channels and media.

## **2.10 Conclusion**

Angelopulo (*in* Lubbe & Puth, 1994:48) notes that public relations or communication from the system perspective incorporates thorough and effective communication within the organisation and with the publics/stakeholders in its environment. The success of the organisation in altering its corporate culture is a model of effective communication. The systems approach entails proactive and reactive involvement with the organisation and its stakeholders. It is, therefore, imperative that the public

relations or communication effort includes the accumulation of information, as well as the distribution thereof.

Goodman (2006) suggests that public relations practitioners or communication specialists must become aware of the new era of transparency, which is creating an opportunity for building trust through strategic organisational communication initiatives. In this regard, communication can assist top management by identifying and engaging the internal stakeholders of an organisation on the social, financial, and environmental accomplishments and actions of the organisation. Therefore, organisational or internal communication must be built around the understanding of the organisation's environment.

This chapter comprised the literature review, which is the foundation upon which this study on *the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa* will be based. It started with a brief discussion on the importance of employees as key stakeholders. The Systems Approach, Participative (Group) System and the Excellence Theory were then mentioned as the theoretical perspectives. Aspects such as internal communication within an organisation, channels of communication, employee productivity and perception, as well as the automotive industry in South Africa were briefly highlighted. The role and importance of the communications practitioner in internal communication were also discussed. In the following chapter, the aims of the study will be mentioned, as well as the four elements of a research process. Details on sampling, data collection and data analysis will also be highlighted.



## **CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter the importance of employees as key stakeholders was discussed. The Systems Approach, Participative (Group) System and the Excellence Theory were briefly highlighted as the theoretical perspectives for this study. Internal communication within the organisation, as well as channels of communication were also mentioned. There was also a brief discussion on employee productivity and employee perception, as well as the role of the communications practitioner in internal communication. In this chapter, the aim of the study is highlighted and the four elements of a research process are discussed briefly. Details on sampling, data collection and data analysis are also mentioned.

### **3.2 Qualitative Research**

Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005) describe qualitative research as a type of scientific research which consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question. According to Patton and Cochran (2002), qualitative research is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis.

Moody (2002:1) is of the opinion that qualitative research methods collect qualitative data (data in the form of text, images, sounds) drawn from observations, interviews and documentary evidence and analyse it using qualitative data analysis methods. Furthermore, Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005) note that qualitative research systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance and that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study.

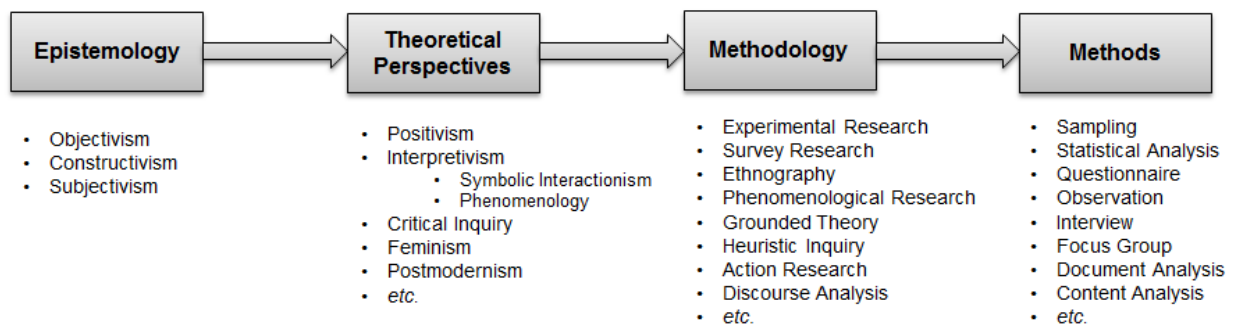
Patton and Cochran (2002) explain that qualitative methods generally aim to understand the experiences and attitudes of the participants. Qualitative methods aim to answer questions about the 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon rather than 'how many' or 'how much', which are answered by quantitative methods. According to Moody (2002:1), qualitative methods tend to be more appropriate in the early stages of research (exploratory research) and for theory building.

Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) are of the opinion that qualitative research allows for the inclusion of many different kinds of data collection and analysis techniques, as

well as the diversity of theoretical and epistemological frameworks. In addition, Daymon and Holloway (2011:99) mention that each public relations and marketing communications study is shaped by the researcher's understanding of the world and how communication should be studied. This ideological perspective or philosophical stance is usually associated with a particular research paradigm, which has fundamental assumptions about what communication is and how best to research it.

The researcher opted for a qualitative research method because it consists of an investigation that seeks answers to a question or questions. Though this type of research, the researcher is able to answer questions about the 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a particular phenomenon, in this case, to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in an automotive services organisation in South Africa. From the feedback received through qualitative research, the researcher is able to understand the experiences and attitudes of the participants in terms of internal communication within an automotive services organisation.

According to Crotty (1998:2), there are four elements in any research process. These elements are 1) epistemology, 2) theoretical perspective, 3) methodology and 4) methods. The four elements, in relation to this study, are discussed below.



**Figure 3.1: Four elements of a research process**  
 Source: Adapted from Crotty (1998:5)

### 3.2.1 Epistemology

Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima and Haider (2011) describe a paradigm as a worldview, a whole framework of beliefs, values and methods within which research takes place. The design of a research study begins with the selection of a topic and a paradigm. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:100), there are three aspects associated with a research paradigm. These are derived from the philosophy of

science and are ontology, **epistemology** and methodology. This study falls in the epistemology paradigm, which will be described further.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:100) epistemology asks, 'What is the relationship between the enquirer/researcher and the known?' Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) describe an epistemology as a philosophical belief system about who can be a 'knower'. An epistemology includes how the relationship between the researcher and research participant(s) is understood.

Crotty (1998:3) describes epistemology as the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology. A similar view is shared by Daymon and Holloway (2011:100) who note that epistemology is the philosophical study or theory of knowledge and determines what counts for valid knowledge. The key questions in the field of epistemology are 'What is knowledge, and how is it acquired?' or, put another way, 'How do I know the world?'

### **3.2.2 Theoretical Perspective: Interpretivism**

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) describe the methodology (theoretical perspective) as an account of social reality or a component of it that extends further than what has been empirically investigated. According to Crotty (1998:3), a theoretical perspective is defined as the philosophical stance which informs the methodology and consequently provides a context for the process and grounds its logic and criteria.

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) note that there are three major theoretical approaches in qualitative research: (1) post-positivist, (2) interpretive and (3) critical. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), qualitative research is associated with an interpretive worldview. An interpretive worldview is interested in exploring meaning and communication relationships and how social reality is constructed from the point of view of the people being studied.

According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) the theoretical perspective is always part of the research process. Therefore, for this research, a qualitative study in the interpretive paradigm is followed. Daymon and Holloway (2011) note that interpretive researchers are concerned primarily with reaching an understanding about how meaning is constructed and re-constructed through communication relationships, which they study in their 'natural' or 'local' setting.

### **3.2.3 Methodology: Phenomenological Research Approach**

Crotty (1998:3) describes methodology as the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), methodology is a theory of how knowledge building should take place. Methodology is the bridge that connects the researcher's philosophical framework and her/his method of practice.

The phenomenological research approach is used as the methodology for this study. Daymon and Holloway (2011:181) describe phenomenology as the study of phenomena, the examination of things according to the lived experiences (and consciousness) of individuals. According to Dash (2007), phenomenology is a theoretical viewpoint which believes that individual behaviour is determined by the experience gained from one's direct interaction with the phenomena. In addition, Bound (2011) is of the opinion that phenomenology begins with an experience or condition and through the narration of participants, of either a shared single incident or shared condition, investigates the effects and perceptions of that experience.

Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009) describe phenomenology as attempting to understand how participants make sense of their experiences. It does not assume that the experiences of participants refer to some verifiable reality, but recognises that it involves a process of interpretation by the researcher. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:181), phenomenological researchers are interested in how participants make sense of the world around them. They describe the 'essential structures' of experience and what these mean for participants.

### **3.2.4 Method: In-depth Interviews**

Crotty (1998:3) describes methods as the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to a research question or hypothesis. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), methods are the tools that researchers use to collect data. Methods and techniques allow researchers to gather data from individuals, groups and texts in any medium for the purposes of learning about social reality. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose in-depth interviews as the research method. Boyce and Neale (2006) define in-depth interviewing as a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation. Therefore, for this qualitative study, in-depth interviews will be conducted with eight employees in an automotive services organisation in South

Africa. This is to explore the effects of internal communication on the perception and productivity of the employees in the automotive services organisation.

According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005), in-depth interviewing is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. Patton and Cochran (2002) mention that the in-depth interviewing method is used on topics of which little is known and where it is important to gain an in-depth understanding. In terms of this study, not much literature is available on the effects of internal communication specifically in the automotive services industry in South Africa. Therefore, in-depth interviews will be the best data collection method to provide insight into the employees' perceptions of internal communication and to gain a better understanding of the research topic.

According to Patton and Cochran (2002), in-depth interviews are used to explore in detail the perceptions and accounts of the participants. Boyce and Neale (2006) explain that in-depth interviews are useful when a researcher wants to obtain detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or to explore new issues in depth. These types of interviews are often used to provide context to other data, offering a more complete picture of what happened and why.

Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005) explain that in-depth interviews are usually conducted face-to-face and involve one interviewer and one participant. According to Patton and Cochran (2002), in-depth (also referred to as qualitative or unstructured) interviews are less structured than semi-structured interviews and may cover one or two issues only. In-depth interviews may start with very open questions. This view is shared by Guest, Namey and Mitchell (2013) who note that a key feature in in-depth interviews is the use of open-ended questions, which are followed up with probes in response to the answers given by the participants.

### **3.3 Sampling**

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:209), sampling involves decisions about what data to collect and analyse, and where these can be accessed. In qualitative research, sampling techniques are purposeful; a form of strategic sampling based on judgements directly related to the purpose of the research. Patton and Cochran (2002), agree that samples in qualitative research are usually purposive. This means participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the project.

According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005) in qualitative research, only a sample (that is, a subset) of a population is selected for any given study. The research objectives of the study, as well as the characteristics of the study population (such as size and diversity) determine which and how many people to select. For this study, the sampling procedure is non-probability sampling. This according to Willemse, (1994:13) is a sampling technique, in which the selection of sample items is not determined by chance, but rather by personal convenience.

### **3.3.1 Sample Size**

Patton and Cochran (2002) note that the sample sizes in qualitative research are typically small. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011:217), highly insightful studies have been based on very small samples (especially in phenomenological research) because these have allowed researchers to focus in great depth on a few phenomena. Smaller samples are valuable for the deep, rich data they provide. However, smaller samples should not be so small that saturation cannot be achieved.

Patton and Cochran (2002) advise that one way of identifying how many people/participants a researcher needs, is to keep interviewing until, in analysis, nothing new comes from the data. This point is called 'saturation'. According to Daymon and Holloway (2011: 217), saturation occurs when no new data emerges that may be important for the agenda of the study.

For this study a sample size of eight participants is used. This sample size enables the researcher to conduct thorough in-depth and face-to-face interviews to collect the data. It also enables the researcher to spend time analysing the data. The basis for the interview questions includes dimensions such as internal communication, productivity and the role of the communication practitioner, which are identified in internal/employee communication literature.

### **3.3.2 Participants**

For the purpose of this study, the people/employees who voluntarily participate in this study are referred to as 'participants'. With their consent, employees in an automotive services organisation were selected as participants in this study. *Please see Annexure B: Letter to Participants.* The inclusion criteria of the participants are as follows:

- Employees permanently employed in the automotive services organisation.
- Employees who have been in the employ of the organisation for at least six months.
- Employees at various levels in the organisation's hierarchy.
- Employees whose job requirements focus on the automotive services aspect.

Eight participants were interviewed representing the junior, mid- and senior levels in the organisation. There were two males and six female participants and their ages ranged from 24 to 37 years old. The participants were all permanently employed in the organisation, for periods ranging from nine months to eight years. While race was not an inclusion criterion, the participants represented the Black, White, Coloured and Indian population groups. The sample also included a foreigner.

The breakdown of the participants is as follows; at junior level, there was a 35 year old, female Test Drive Facilitator who had been employed in the organisation for four years and also a 24 year old, female Call Centre Agent, who had been employed in the organisation for a year and two months. The mid-level participants comprised of a 27 year old, female Project Co-ordinator, who had been employed in the organisation for nine months, a 37 year old, female Project Co-ordinator, who had been employed in the organisation for four years and a 26 year old, male Quality Assurer, who had been employed in the organisation for a year and nine months. The senior level participants were a 37 year old, male Key Account Manager, who had employed in the organisation for eight years, a 26 year old, female Client Services Manager, who had been employed in the organisation for six years and a 37 year old, female Quality Manager, who had been employed in the organisation for four years.

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa. It is, therefore, important that the employees (participants) have knowledge and experience of the organisation's internal communication, to provide feedback on how (if at all) this communication impacts on their productivity in, and their perception of the organisation.

### **3.4 Questionnaire**

In order to gauge the perception of internal communication in an automotive services department, the researcher chose face-to-face, in-depth interviews. According to Boyce and Neale (2006), in-depth interviews rely on many sources of information to provide as complete a picture as possible. Daymon and Holloway (2011:220) describe in-depth interviews as a major source of data in qualitative research and a way of exploring informant perspectives and perceptions. They are of the opinion that qualitative interviewing differs from quantitative interviewing in that it is relatively non-directive and less structured. While the aim of the research guides the qualitative interview process, in-depth interviewing involves participants and interviewers in a

form of social interaction through which they collaborate to produce meaningful, situated accounts of experiences of the participants.

Therefore, this form of data collection is selected because in-depth interviewing is a useful method to learn what impact internal communication has on employees' productivity in and perception of an organisation in the automotive industry. In-depth interviews are an effective qualitative method to get the employee to talk about her/his personal feelings, opinions and experiences in terms of communication in the organisation. This type of interview also offers the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into how the employee interprets and orders the 'world', specifically in terms of the organisation in which she/he is employed.

The researcher is able to accomplish the above by being attentive to the explanations provided by the participants for what they believe and have experienced. In-depth interviewing also allows the researcher to probe participants about the connections and relationships they see between particular events, phenomena, and beliefs. In-depth interviews also offer an appropriate setting for addressing sensitive topics that participants might be reluctant to discuss in a group setting.

In order to ensure that the questionnaire for this study is without bias/influence to the outcomes, it was devised from scratch to determine the effects of internal communication on the productivity and perception of employees in the automotive services industry in South Africa. The in-depth questionnaire comprises two sections. Section 1 comprises questions relating to the profiles of the participants. This includes their genders, ages, positions in the organisation and how long they have been employed in the organisation. Since this research was undertaken on a voluntary basis and the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were guaranteed, the participants were not required to divulge information such as their names, nationalities, religious stances, sexual orientations and so forth.

Section 2 of the questionnaire comprises open-ended questions and is divided into three parts. The first part covers nine questions under internal communication. The purpose of these questions is primarily to gauge what the participants understand by internal/organisational communication and more importantly, *effective* internal communication and the benefits thereof. From their responses, insights into whether communication is effective in their departments and/or the organisation as a whole will be provided. It is necessary to determine where the participants think internal communication fits into the organisation. It is also important to obtain their views on



whether the people responsible for internal communication in their departments or the organisation are proactive or reactive. The participants are able to comment on whether or not they have a platform to provide feedback on internal communication received. They also have an opportunity to make suggestions to improve internal communication currently being received. The questions in this section pertain mainly to the following objectives of this study:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception.
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services department/organisation.
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation.

The second part of the questionnaire covers twenty-eight questions on productivity. The main purpose of the questions in this section is to determine if and how internal communication has an effect on productivity/work in the automotive services organisation. In their responses, the participants are able to advise whether they consider themselves to be effective communicators. From their points of view, they are also able to mention whether or not their line managers/supervisors understand their communication needs and if their colleagues have the same communication requirements as they do. It is important to obtain their views on how communication with and from their line managers/supervisors and colleagues take place, how and how often this occurs, as well as the type of information they prefer to receive and not to receive.

In their responses, the participants are able to provide feedback on communication received from other line managers/supervisors and colleagues from other departments. Their views on the reporting structures in their departments will be noted and also whether they consider themselves part of the management team. The participants will have the opportunity to highlight their core job functions, the communication functions they perform in their current roles and also mention what prevents them from carrying out their jobs effectively. They are also able to give their opinions on whether communication helps them in their work and also their perceptions of exposure to internal communication in other departments/organisations. The questions in this section are relevant to the following study objectives:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception.
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services department/organisation.
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation.

The third and final part covers nine questions on the role of the communications practitioner. In this section, participants are able to share their views on whether the right people are responsible for communication in their departments/the organisation and whether they are suitably qualified in the area of communication. It is also important to note their understanding of a communications practitioner; the job of a communications practitioner and the characteristics of a good communicator. Participants are able to mention if, in their opinion, they require a dedicated communications practitioner in their department/the organisation and whether it is necessary to have a qualification in communication to be a communications practitioner. They will also have the opportunity to add anything else they wish to the information provided in the previous responses. In this section of the questionnaire, the questions relate to the following objectives:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception.
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services department/organisation.
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation.
- To determine the role of a communications practitioner in the department/organisation.

Below is an example of the questionnaire.

<p><b>Interview Questionnaire</b></p> <p><b>Research topic: <i>The effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa</i></b></p> <p><b>Section 1: Biographical data</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender</li> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Position</li> <li>• How long have you been employed in the organisation?</li> </ul> <p><b>Section 2: Questions</b></p> <p><b>Internal communication</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you understand by internal/organisational communication?</li> <li>2. In your opinion, what is effective internal/organisational communication?</li> <li>3. What are the benefits of effective internal communication?</li> <li>4. Based on your understanding of internal/organisational communication, do you think that internal communication is effective in your department? Please elaborate.</li> <li>5. Which area/department does internal communications fall under in your organisation?</li> <li>6. In your opinion, would you say that the people responsible for internal/organisational communication in your department/organisation are proactive or reactive? Please elaborate.</li> <li>7. In your opinion, do you have a platform to provide feedback on internal communication received? Please elaborate.</li> <li>8. What would you suggest to improve the communication that you are currently receiving?</li> </ol>
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9. Is there anything else you would like to add about internal/organisational communication?

### **Productivity**

1. Do you think that internal communication has an effect on productivity/work? Please elaborate.
2. Would you consider yourself to be an effective communicator? Please elaborate.
3. From your point of view, do you think that your line manager/supervisor understands your communication needs? Please elaborate.
4. In your opinion, do think that your colleagues (people on the same level as you) have the same communication needs/requirements as you do? Please elaborate.
5. How does your line manager communicate with you and how often?
6. What type of information does your line manager communicate to you?
7. What type of information do you prefer to receive from your line manager and how often?
8. What type of information do you NOT want to receive from your line manager? Please elaborate.
9. How do you communicate with your line manager and how often?
10. What type of information do you communicate to your line manager?
11. What type of information do you prefer to communicate to your line manager and how often?
12. What type of information do you NOT want to communicate to your line manager? Please elaborate.
13. How do your colleagues communicate with you and how often?
14. What type of information do your colleagues communicate to you?
15. What type of information do you prefer to receive from your colleagues and how often?
16. What type of information do you NOT want to receive from your colleagues? Please elaborate.
17. How do you communicate with your colleagues and how often?
18. What type of information do you communicate to your colleagues?
19. What type of information do you prefer to communicate to your colleagues and how often?
20. What type of information do you NOT want to communicate with your colleagues? Please elaborate.
21. Do you receive internal communication from any other line manager or colleague? Please elaborate.
22. What do you think of the reporting structure in your department? Is it effective or does it need to be changed? Please elaborate.
23. Would you consider yourself a part of the management team? Please elaborate.
24. What is your job in the department/organisation? Please describe the core activities that you do.
25. What communications functions do you perform in this position?
26. What prevents you from carrying out your job effectively?
27. Do you think that communication could help you in your work? Please elaborate.
28. Have you been exposed to internal communication in another organisation or department? If so, what were your perceptions of internal communication in that department/organisation?

### **The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

1. In your opinion, do you think that the right people are responsible for communication in your department/organisation?
2. In your opinion, do you think the people responsible for communication in your department/organisation are suitably qualified in the area of communications?
3. Please explain your understanding of a communications practitioner in as much detail as possible.
4. What do you believe should be the job of a communications practitioner in your department/organisation?
5. In your opinion, what characteristics should a good communicator have? Please elaborate.
6. In your opinion, does your department/organisation require a dedicated communications practitioner?

7. In your opinion, who is the best communicator in your department/organisation? Please elaborate.
8. In your opinion, is it necessary for one to have a qualification in communication in order to be a communications practitioner? Please elaborate.
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add to the information that you have already provided in this interview?

**Thank you for your time.**

### **3.5 Data Collection**

The data was collected in an automotive services organisation, where specific employees in the department were targeted (non-random sampling). A convenience sample was used, based on the inclusion criteria mentioned above. Willemse (1994:13) suggests that the definition of convenience sampling is samples made up of items selected on the basis of ready availability (convenience).

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

According to Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005:30), data analysis is done after the data has been collected. Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009:24) explain that content can be analysed on two levels. The first level of analysis is a descriptive account of the data; this is what was actually said, documented or observed with nothing read into it and nothing assumed about it. This is a basic level of analysis. The second level of analysis is interpretative, which is concerned with what was meant by the response, what was inferred or implied. This is a higher level of analysis.

Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009:24) further explain that analysis may involve the categorisation of verbal or behavioural data for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation. According to Moody (2002:3), qualitative data analysis is mainly subjective and relies heavily on the researcher's knowledge and experience to identify patterns, extract themes and make generalisations.

Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest and Namey (2005:30) mention that during the data analysis phase of the research, transcripts are coded according to responses of the participants to each question and/or to the themes emerging from the interviews. According to Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009:25), transcribing is the procedure for producing a written version of an interview. It is a full "script" of the interview or conversation.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

According to Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009), ethical implications should be considered with every method of data collection. Daymon and Holloway (2011:55) note that high standards of ethics in research are essential in any research project. These authors also note that when collecting data through human interaction, it is important to pay close attention to ethical issues, because there are inherent challenges related to the inductive and holistic nature of qualitative research and involves trust-based relationships between researcher and participants.

Boyce and Neale (2006) mention that the researcher/interviewer should seek informed consent of the interviewee (written or documented oral). Before the actual interview, the researcher/interviewer should also re-explain the purpose of the interview, the reason why the participant has been chosen, the expected duration of the interview, whether and how the information will be kept confidential, as well as the use of a note taker and/or tape recorder. According to Patton and Cochran (2002), consent and confidentiality are two key ethical issues that should be considered in any research project. In terms of consent, the participants in the study should freely consent to participation, without being coerced or unfairly pressurised. This means that they should be well-informed about what participation entails, and reassured that declining will not affect them in any way. In terms of confidentiality, the authors note that it is not always easy or even possible to measure the dangers of a certain context to a given population, let alone to individuals. It is, therefore, essential to protect the identity of the person or participants from whom information is gathered. If collected, the identity of the participants must be protected at all times and not be left lying around in notebooks or unprotected computer files.

The necessary ethical issues are attended to before the in-depth interviews take place. Permission to undertake this research is obtained from the senior team, as well as every participant to be interviewed in the automotive services organisation. This permission is in writing, which also includes e-mail. *Please see Annexure A: Letter to Country Manager of Organisation.*

As the research undertaken is on a voluntary basis, the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants are guaranteed. The employees are made aware of their rights to withdraw from the research at any stage, for whatever reason. The face-to-face, in-depth interviews take place in a boardroom, on the company premises, which is booked in advance. In terms of data protection, the researcher's notes, the audio

tapes, as well as the transcripts are properly labelled and filed. This file is kept at the researcher's place of residence.

### **3.8 Pilot Study**

The questionnaire was pilot-tested on a sample of two participants from another department, to iron out any glitches or ambiguities and to determine how long it will take to complete. This is an important step to ensure that the interview questions are relevant to the study and also to ensure that the same responses are not given for different questions. There may be some changes required to the questionnaire, should certain questions not be easily understood.

In this chapter, the research methodology to support the study on *the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa* was discussed. It started off with the aim of the study and then the four elements of a research process were briefly highlighted. There was also mention of the details on sampling, data collection and data analysis. The findings and interpretations of the research will be discussed in the chapter to follow.

## CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the aim of the study was highlighted and the four elements of a research process were briefly mentioned. Details on sampling, data collection and data analysis were also discussed. In this chapter, the findings and interpretations of the research are discussed.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the aim of this study was to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception, in order to provide recommendations to improve internal communication in the department. The objectives of this study were:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception;
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services organisation;
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation;
- To determine the role of a communications practitioner in the department/organisation.

In order to gauge the perception of internal communication in the automotive services organisation, the researcher chose face-to-face, in-depth interviews. The inclusion criteria of the participants were as follows:

- Employees permanently employed in the automotive services organisation.
- Employees who had been in the employ of the organisation for at least six months.
- Employees at various levels in the organisation's hierarchy.
- Employees whose job requirements focused on the automotive services aspect.

The in-depth interview questionnaire had two sections. Section 1 comprised of biographical data of the participants and Section 2 comprised of a series of open-ended questions, under the headings *internal/organisational communication*, *productivity* and *the role of the communications practitioner*. Questions in line with the objectives of the study were asked under these headings. The findings in this study are grouped according to the levels at which the participants are in the organisation, that is junior, middle and senior levels. This information was obtained from the company's organogram (Conexus 2013).

A total of eight in-depth interviews were set up with participants who represented the whole organisation. Both female and male participants were included and their ages ranged from twenty-four to thirty-seven. The participants represented various

positions and levels in the organisation, as follows: Test Drive Facilitator and Call Centre Agent at junior level; Project Co-ordinators and Quality Assurer at mid-level and Key Account Manager, Client Services Manager and Quality Manager at senior level. The participants were also permanently employed in the organisation for various lengths of time ranging from nine months to eight years. While race was not an inclusion criterion, the participants represented the Black, White, Coloured and Indian population groups. The sample also included a foreigner. All eight in-depth interviews were honoured by the participants.

#### **4.2 Data Analysis Process**

The data analysis process commenced after the in-depth interviews with the participants, when all the data was collected. The starting point of the data analysis was to transcribe each in-depth interview. Transcribing involved producing a written version/full 'script' of each interview in a Word document. When the transcribing was complete, the transcripts were coded according to the responses of the participants to each question in the interviews.

The data was then analysed on two levels. The first level of analysis (which was a basic level of analysis) was a descriptive account of the data; what was actually said by the participants and documented, with nothing read into it and nothing assumed about it by the researcher. This included the categorisation of the verbal data, for purposes of classification, summarisation and tabulation. The second level of analysis, (which was a high level of analysis), was interpretative, where the researcher had to determine what was meant or implied by the participants. The first and second levels of analysis were done on an Excel spreadsheet. As was mentioned in chapter 3, Moody (2002:3) suggests that qualitative data analysis is mainly subjective and relies heavily on the researcher's knowledge and experience to identify patterns, extract themes and make generalisations.

To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception and in order to provide recommendations to improve internal communication in the organisation, the findings were grouped according to junior, middle and senior levels. While analysing the data, assumptions were made based on the researcher's knowledge and experience and limited views were also mentioned. This was done under the headings: Internal Communication; Productivity; and The Role of the Communications Practitioner. Main insights were also highlighted under each section.



### 4.3 Biographical Data

The participants were asked their genders, ages, current positions and length of employ in the organisation. There were six female participants ranging from twenty-four to thirty-seven. Their current job titles included Call Centre Agent, Test Drive Facilitator, Project Co-ordinator, Quality Manager (and Acting Call Centre Manager) and Client Services Manager. They had been employed in the organisation for various periods of time ranging from nine months to six years.

There were two male participants aged twenty-six and thirty-seven. Their current job titles were Quality Assurer and Key Account Manager respectively. They had been employed in the organisation for one year and nine months, and eight years respectively.

**Table 4.1: Biographical Data of the Participants**

No.	Gender	Age	Current Position	Level	Length of Time in Company
1	Female	27	Project Co-ordinator	Middle	Nine months
2	Female	37	Project Co-ordinator	Middle	Four years
3	Female	35	Test Drive Facilitator	Junior	Four years
4	Male	37	Key Account Manager	Senior	Eight years
5	Male	26	Quality Assurer	Middle	One year and nine months
6	Female	24	Call Centre Agent	Junior	One year and two months
7	Female	26	Client Services Manager	Senior	Six years
8	Female	37	Quality Manager	Senior	Four years

The findings and interpretations of the research are discussed below under the headings *internal communication*, *productivity* and *the role of the communications practitioner*. The questions asked of the participants are mentioned first, the common themes are identified, where and if applicable and then the limited view mentions are discussed. The researcher provides interpretations of the responses and then summarises the main insights at the end of each section. In the findings, 'younger' employees fall into the 20 to 30-year-old age group, while 'older' employees fall into the 30 to 40-year-old age group.

### 4.4 Internal Communication

#### 4.4.1 Understanding Internal/Organisational Communication

The participants were asked what they understand by internal or organisational communication. The general understanding by the junior level employees is that it is communication *within* the organisation. One could assume that this is due to the

communication they are currently receiving and sending, which is predominantly from/to their supervisors and colleagues and which focusses on work-related matters.

The majority of the mid-level employees understand internal communication to be communication *between* employees. It can be assumed that this is how most of the internal communication takes place in their departments. Some of the mid- and senior level employees mention that it is about the *methods* of communication, for example; telephonic, email and/or face-to-face. The assumption could be made that these are the methods they use to communicate work-related matters to/with their teams and colleagues. At senior level, the majority of the employees understand internal communication to be communication *between* departments. This could be due to the nature of their job functions, which include the constant interaction with employees in other departments.

Limited view mentions by the mid-level employees include that internal or organisational communication is communication *to* employees and also *about* the organisation. It could be assumed that this is predominantly the type of internal communication which these employees receive from their line managers and also that these employees do not manage other employees or have employees reporting to them.

#### **4.4.2 Effective Internal/Organisational Communication**

The participants were asked what effective internal or organisational communication is in their opinions. All the junior level employees and the majority of the mid and senior level employees mention that it is communication that *informs people*. The assumption could be made that this is predominantly the type of internal communication that they may have been exposed to in the past and want to receive going forward. Through effective communication, employees at all levels are informed about the organisation and its departments on an ongoing basis. This includes information about work tasks, requirements, urgencies and expectations, which are discussed face-to-face and then documented in email. Effective internal communication impacts on productivity, on individuals and also on the organisation as a whole.

The junior levels and some of the senior level employees are of the opinion that effective internal communication is about *work requirements*. This could be attributed to their current roles, their levels of experience, as well as their interactions with their line managers or supervisors. The opinion of the majority of the senior levels and to a

lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees is that it is the *method* of communication used. This could be an indication of their levels of seniority in their departments and/or in the organisation as a whole, as well as the effective methods of communication used in their departments and also when interacting with employees in other departments. According to the majority of the younger, mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the senior level employees, effective internal or organisational communication is *clear* communication. One could assume that this is due to the positions they occupy in their departments and the organisation as a whole, as well as the tasks delegated to and follow-ups with direct reports and employees in other departments.

Effective internal communication is *ongoing* communication. This is the limited view mentioned by some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees. It could be assumed that this is due to their experiences with effective communication in their departments, as well as in the organisation as a whole. A further limited view opinion by some of the younger, mid-level employees is that it is communication *about* the organisation. This could be due to the length of time in their current positions, as well as the type of information received from their line managers and other managers in the organisation.

#### **4.4.3 Benefits of Effective Internal Communication**

The participants were asked what the benefits of effective internal or organisational communication are. *Improved performance* is seen as a benefit by the majority of the mid and senior level employees and to a lesser extent the older, junior level employees. One could assume that this is due to their work experiences and particularly past experiences with communication, where there were improvements in performances as a result of effective communication. Through effective communication, instructions to complete tasks are issued and followed correctly, which results in work being done properly from the beginning. It also results in projects being managed effectively, as per service level agreements, deadlines being met and clients being served more efficiently.

A limited view mention, by some of the younger junior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid and senior level employees is that *improved relationships* is a benefit of internal communication. Through effective internal communication, miscommunication and misunderstandings are eliminated, which results in improved relationships internally among employees at all levels and also externally with clients. The majority of the senior level employees and to a lesser extent the older, mid-level

employees view *meeting deadlines* as a benefit. This could be due to the nature and task requirements of their positions and also their interactions with stakeholders inside and outside the organisation. Through effective internal communication, work is done according to specification and in the timeframes stipulated. The specifications documented in service level agreements are adhered to and the objectives of projects and other work tasks are met within the stipulated timeframes.

*Not having to do rework* is seen as a benefit of effective internal communication by the majority of the mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, senior level employees. Through effective internal communication, work instructions are issued properly, feedback is requested and received, updates are provided and tasks are completed successfully. A further limited view mentioned by some of the younger, mid-level employees is that they view the *ability to plan* as a benefit of effective internal communication. Through effective internal communication, employees gain a better understanding of the organisation as a whole, the direction in which it is heading and what to expect in the foreseeable future. This, in turn, enables them to plan for their job functions, their departments, as well as their individual goals and objectives.

#### **4.4.4 The Effectiveness of Internal Communication in the Department**

Based on their understanding of internal or organisational communication, the participants were asked if they thought internal communication was effective in their departments and were asked to elaborate. A common theme present among all the senior levels, the majority of the mid-level employees and, to a lesser extent, employees at the junior levels is that internal communication *is* effective.

Reasons provided by the senior level employees include that most of the communication is done face-to-face. There was an issue with communication in the beginning of the year, but it has improved significantly. However, while communication within the department is effective, it is not the case within the larger organisation. At the mid-levels their reasons include that they work in small departments and communicate quite easily with each other. While the junior level employees mention that through effective internal communication, their performance and work-relationships have improved.

Internal communication is *sometimes* effective in their departments. This is a limited view mentioned by some of the younger, junior level employees who mention that sometimes they have to request certain information and feedback instead of the

information being communicated to them beforehand. According to some of the older, mid-level employees, communication is *not* effective in their departments. They reason that things are done without proper explanations and that it is assumed that people know why those things are being done. A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, senior level employees is that internal communication is *not effective in the organisation*. They are of the opinion that the issues experienced on projects, which are worked on between departments, are as a result of ineffective and insufficient communication.

#### **4.4.5 Internal Communications in the Organisation**

Based on their understanding of internal or organisational communication, the participants were asked in which area or department in the organisation they think internal communication fits. The common theme present amongst all the participants is that it fits into every department. Internal communication could be a simple message from a receptionist to a complicated project brief with a client. It also impacts every employee and job function at every level in the organisational hierarchy. Without internal communication, an organisation cannot function effectively.

#### **4.4.6 Proactive or Reactive Communicators**

The participants were asked, in their opinions, if they would say that the people responsible for internal or organisational communication in their departments / the organisation are proactive or reactive and were also asked to elaborate. The common theme present among the majority of the mid and senior level employees and to a lesser extent the junior level employees is that they are *reactive*. Reasons provided by the senior level employees include that there is no sense of urgency and that issues are only raised when something has already gone wrong. The mid-level employees mention that people do not ask for clarity if they do not understand something, instead they simply wait, which can result in bigger problems. At junior level, the younger employees are of the opinion that information is already known to some team members who do not see the need to share that information with the rest of the team.

The people responsible for internal or organisational communication in their departments/the organisation are *sometimes proactive and at other times reactive*. This is a limited view mentioned by some of the younger, mid and senior level employees.

According to the mid-level employees, communication is proactive when it is between the project co-ordinators and the key account managers and is reactive when people have to be pushed for their responses. Employees at the senior levels are of the opinion that communication is proactive when people are naturally good communicators and pay attention to detail. However, it is reactive when people have to fill in the communication gaps for themselves and when others view communication to be an administrative intensive task. A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, junior level employees is that the people responsible for internal or organisational communication in their departments/the organisation are *proactive*. Their reasons include that communication is conveyed clearly, so they understand it and if they have any issues with the communication, they are able to provide feedback and their concerns are heard.

#### **4.4.7 Platform for Feedback**

The participants were asked if, in their opinion, they have a platform to provide feedback on internal or organisational communication received and were asked to elaborate. The junior level employees, most of the mid-levels and to a lesser extent the employees at senior level, mention that they do have a platform to provide feedback. Some of the junior level employees and the majority of the mid and senior level employees mention 'meetings' as the platform for feedback.

A limited view mentioned by the majority of the senior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees is that there is *no formal, platform for feedback*. However, they are able to provide feedback on communication received and also obtain clarity on communication, which may not be clear, as and when they need to.

#### **4.4.8 Suggestions to Improve Communication**

The participants were asked what they would suggest to improve the communication they are currently receiving. Communication training was the common suggestion by the majority of the senior levels and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees. Communication training will be beneficial to the entire organisation and not only to certain departments and will assist employees at all levels to convey the correct message, using the correct method, to the correct recipients. The communication training should also cover the following aspects: the importance and purpose of the communication; the method and intention of the message; the type of response/s required by the recipients and the consequences of the communication. This will assist to reduce situations where, for example, emails are sent where the

recipients receive the message incorrectly. Learning to communicate effectively will also enable employees to communicate proactively.

Equally weighted, limited view suggestions, by the majority of the mid-level employees is that communication should be clearer and also more focussed, so that the right message is conveyed to the right recipients. Some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the older, senior level employees suggest transparency to improve the communication currently being received.

Communication should be timely and timeous. Sometimes it takes too long to reach the intended recipients, this includes feedback on tasks and other work-related matters which negatively impacts the department or organisation. These are further limited view mentions by some of the older, junior level employees. In order to improve the communication they are currently receiving, a few of the younger, mid-level employees suggest that people should listen more instead of listening to respond.

#### **4.4.9 Additional Information**

The participants were asked if there was anything else they would like to add about internal or organisational communication. A few of the younger, mid- and older, senior level employees mention that while their departments/ the organisation still have a way to go, there is an improvement in the organisation's internal communication. The importance of listening to understand and also of internal communication in general, (in the effective running of organisations) is added by some of the younger, mid-level employees. Some of the younger, senior level employees note that people should avoid taking things too personally.

#### **4.5 Main Insights**

The main insights in this section are that employees in the automotive services organisation understand internal/organisational communication to be communication *within* the organisation, *between* employees, about the *methods* of communication and also about communication *between* departments. The majority of the employees are of the opinion that effective internal/organisational communication is communication which *informs people* and see *improved performance* as a benefit of effective internal communication. In their opinions, internal communication *is* effective in the organisation and fits into every department. Employees at all levels have mentioned a meeting forum as the platform available to provide feedback on internal communication received. However, most of the employees are of the opinion that the

people responsible for communication in their departments/the organisation are *reactive*. Their suggestion is that communication training is required to improve internal communication currently being received.

#### **4.6 Productivity**

##### **4.6.1 The Effect of Internal Communication on Productivity/Work**

The participants were asked whether they think internal or organisational communication has an effect on productivity/work and were asked to elaborate. The common theme present is that internal or organisational communication *does* have an effect on productivity/work. This view is attributed to all the employees in the organisation. Some of the mid and senior level employees are of the opinion that effective internal communication assists to resolve work-related problems and also saves time.

One of the departments has experienced a significant improvement in productivity when set-ups and briefs are communicated and explained properly the first time. This includes quality checklists being drawn up, the relevant departments being communicated to and with and ensuring that all the relevant documents are in order. This has resulted in projects running smoother and also a better quality of productivity/work. Effective communication in another team has resulted in a significant reduction in rework, which has now led to the team being overstaffed.

In terms of saving time; unclear communication between departments prolongs the timeline to complete tasks. Time is also wasted when the recipient of the communication does not provide feedback as soon as she/he identifies a problem with it. Another factor is when the communication issue is not resolved quickly and/or if a key stakeholder is not easily accessible to provide clarity on the communication issue/s.

Limited view mentions by the junior level employees are that effective internal communication serves as a motivation factor to improve individual performance and also that timely communication has a positive impact on internal and external stakeholders. Through effective communication employees may strive to move to the next level personally and professionally. From a professional/work point of view, they are able to see the progress in themselves from feedback received from line managers, supervisors and colleagues. Through communication, employees also encourage each other.



Communication which takes too long to be sent or received negatively affects productivity in a department. Also, while much of the communication in the departments/ the organisation is relevant to all the employees, there are instances when information is communicated which does not concern or involve certain departments or teams. This may result in these teams feeling excluded or annoyed by the interruption of something which does not concern them. At the same time, communication and feedback, which is constructive in nature, may assist employees to identify areas in their jobs which need to be improved on. Also, positive feedback from internal and external clients may also encourage employees to keep up the good work.

Some of the younger, mid-level employees mention that effective internal communication assists employees and managers to plan properly for work. Ineffective communication directly affects the productivity of a department/team, since their work is dependent on the communication and productivity of other employees and colleagues. In order to resolve work-related issues and to ensure that the productivity is optimum, communication needs to be effective. This includes updates and feedback on tasks and issues, as well as resolutions to problems, which directly affects planning for work.

At mid-level, the older employees are of the opinion that internal communication (positive or negative) impacts directly on work relationships. A positive impact is when meetings are scheduled with internal and/or external stakeholders to communicate new projects, provide updates and feedback and raise issues/concerns. A negative impact is when employees become frustrated because an email is sent, which is not clear and they do not understand the contents of it.

A further limited view mentioned by the older, senior level employees is that effective internal communication will reduce misunderstandings and miscommunication. Ineffective communication may cause managers and employees to convey an incorrect instruction or request. This, in turn, will hamper productivity and will also have a negative impact on a department or team.

#### **4.6.2 Effective Communicators**

The participants were asked whether they consider themselves to be effective communicators and were asked to elaborate. The majority of the mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the older, junior and senior levels, consider themselves to be *effective* communicators. Employees at the mid-levels mention that they are good

listeners and also understand the consequences of communication. The junior-level employees are of the opinion that they communicate to inform or to resolve issues as soon as possible, while the senior level employees mention that they talk a lot by nature and, therefore, consider themselves to be effective communicators.

Limited view mentions by the majority of the senior level employees are that they consider themselves to be *moderately effective* communicators. Their reasons include that they strive to be better communicators and still require communication training. Other limited view mentions by some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the older, mid-level employees are that they *do not* consider themselves to be effective communicators. The junior level employees reason that they are afraid to ask questions or communicate, while at senior levels, they simply send emails assuming that the recipients understand what is being communicated.

#### **4.6.3 Communication Needs**

The participants were asked if from their points of view they think their line managers or supervisors understand their communication needs and were asked to elaborate. The common theme present among all the senior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees is that they think their line managers or supervisors *do* understand their communication needs. The senior level employees are of the opinion that the managers listen to them, follow up on communication sent, act on feedback received and also implement suggestions made. At mid-levels, the employees mention that the line managers understand them, give them personal attention and also that they have open, work relationships with their line managers.

Limited view mentions by the junior level employees is that their supervisors understand their communication needs *some of the time*. Their reasons include that the supervisors should communicate certain messages on a one-on-one basis with certain individuals and not in a meeting forum in front of the whole team. Also, they do not always agree with the decisions made by the supervisors and opt instead to agree to differ. A further limited view mention by the younger, mid-level employees is that they think their line managers *do not* understand their communication needs. Their reasons are that the line managers have too much responsibility and not enough time to focus on communication.

#### **4.6.4 Colleagues and Their Communication Needs/Requirements**

The participants were asked if they are of the opinion that their colleagues have the same communication needs or requirements as they do and were asked to elaborate.

A common theme present amongst all the junior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees is that their colleagues *do not* have the same communication requirements as they do. Junior level employees reason that they have different communication perspectives, based on their backgrounds and lengths of time in the organisation. At mid-level, their reasons include that they communicate differently and some colleagues communicate more than others.

In terms of the limited views, the majority of the senior level employees and to a lesser extent the older, mid-level employees are of the opinion that their colleagues *do* have the same communication requirements as they do. They have the same day-to-day, internal communication requirements and everybody experiences the same communication challenges with people not listening to, or understanding certain communication. These are the views of employees at senior levels. The mid-level employees reason that everybody requires effective communication. A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, senior level employees is that their colleagues have the same communication requirements as they do *some of the time*. Their reasons include that different colleagues have different communication strengths.

#### **4.6.5 Communication from Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked how their line managers or supervisors communicate with them and how often. Employees at all levels mention that their line managers or supervisors communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis. According to the majority of these employees, comprising all the junior and mid-levels and to a lesser extent the senior level employees, their line managers or supervisors also communicate with them by email on a daily basis.

A limited view mentioned by the junior level employees is that their supervisors communicate with them face-to-face, by email or a combination of both, but not necessarily on a daily basis. This could be due to the various campaigns and targets set in the call centre, which do not necessarily require daily updates and feedback.

#### **4.6.6 Information from Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked what types of information their line managers or supervisors communicate to them. The common theme present amongst all the employees is that their line managers or supervisors communicate predominantly work-related information to them.

The examples of work-related communication provided by the junior level employees include updates and feedback on targets and test drives booked, management and employee concerns, productivity issues, task reminders and code of conduct. The mid-level employees mention project-specific updates and feedback and also queries, requests and updates from other departments. At the senior levels, their examples include, project-related updates and feedback, employee and/or work-related issues to be addressed in the departments, sales figures required, feedback on or renewals or billings and reporting requirements. The majority of the employees, comprising all the junior levels and to a lesser extent the younger, mid and senior level employees, receive communication about the organisation as a whole and/or about other departments.

A limited view mentioned by some of the older, mid-level employees is that they also receive communication of a personal nature from their line managers. It could be assumed that this is due to their levels of seniority in the departments and also their good work and personal relationships with their line managers.

#### **4.6.7 Preferred Information from Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked what type of information they prefer to receive from their line managers or supervisors and how often. A common theme attributed to some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid and senior level employees is that they would prefer to receive predominantly work-related information from their supervisors or line managers. Of these, the junior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees would prefer to receive the information frequently. Some of the mid-level employees would prefer to receive the information at least twice a week, while some of the senior level employees would prefer to receive the information more often than not.

A limited view mentioned by some of the junior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees is that they would prefer to receive more information about the organisation as a whole and the direction in which the organisation is heading. The employees at junior level would prefer to receive this information at least twice a week, while the mid-level employees would prefer to receive the information on a weekly basis.

Some of the junior levels and to a lesser extent the senior level employees would prefer to receive more positive feedback about their job performance from their supervisors or line managers and would prefer to receive this feedback often. A few

of the mid-level employees, mention that they would prefer to receive information of a personal nature from their line managers at least twice a week.

#### **4.6.8 Information Not Wanted from Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked what type of information they do not want to receive from their line managers or supervisors and were asked to elaborate. The mid-level employees are comfortable to receive all types of information from their line managers and mention that there is nothing they do not want to receive from them. Their reasons include that they need to know everything in order to develop and learn from mistakes. They also prefer to be kept in the loop about everything and presently there is nothing unnecessary in and about the information they are currently receiving.

A limited view mentioned by some of the younger, junior levels and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees, is that they *do not* want to receive personal information from their supervisors or line managers. Their reasons include that personal problems raised in the past were not dealt with adequately and also that information of a personal nature is not useful to them. The majority of the senior level employees do not want to receive information about issues in their departments from their line managers. They mention that contracts are coming up for renewal and issues experienced now could mean that those contracts will not be renewed. Also, the line managers blur the lines between the departments because of their close working proximities and work relationships.

A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, junior levels and to a lesser extent the older, senior level employees is that they *do not* want to receive negative information about their performance from their line managers. They reason that negative information should not be conveyed in a negative manner and also if the negative information has to be conveyed by the line manager, it should be done face-to-face and not by email.

#### **4.6.9 Communication to Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked how they communicate with their line managers or supervisors and how often. A common theme attributed to all employees is that they communicate face-to-face with their line managers or supervisors. Of these, the majority of the mid and senior level employees also communicate telephonically with their line managers or supervisors. Some of the older, junior levels and to a lesser extent the younger, mid and senior level employees back up their face-to-face or

telephonic communication (with their line managers or supervisors) with email. The majority of the employees, comprising all the junior levels, most of the senior levels and, to a lesser extent, the mid-level employees, communicate with their supervisors or line managers on a daily basis, either face-to-face, telephonically, by email or a combination of the three methods.

A limited view mention by a few of the mid-level employees is that they communicate with their line managers either face-to-face or by email, immediately when/if a problem occurs. A further limited view mention by a few of the mid and senior level employees is that they communicate with their line managers face-to-face only when it is necessary to do so.

#### **4.6.10 Information to Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked what type of information they communicate to their line managers or supervisors. The common theme present is that all the employees communicate predominantly work-related information to their line managers or supervisors. The types of information communicated by the junior level employees include productivity, quality and target updates, as well as positive and negative feedback received from clients. Mid-level employees communicate project-specific information, as well as work challenges experienced. The types of information communicated by the senior level employees include project updates, employee matters, operational issues, sales figures, target tracking, debtors, client problems, escalations, as well as new ideas and initiatives.

Only a few of the older, mid and senior level employees communicate personal information to their line managers. It could be assumed that this is due to their levels of seniority in the organisation and also their work relationships with their line managers.

#### **4.6.11 Preferred Information to Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked what type of information they prefer to communicate to their line managers or supervisors and how often. All the employees prefer to communicate predominantly work-related information to their line managers or supervisors. Junior level employees prefer to communicate client feedback, whether positive or negative, any data issues experienced and, in general, anything to do with work. The mid-level employees prefer to communicate matters pertaining to their departments and the organisation as a whole, while the senior level employees prefer to communicate staff-related matters, operational issues, escalations and figures.

A limited view mentioned by some of the older, mid and senior level employees is that they also prefer to communicate personal information to their line managers as often as they need to. It could be assumed that this is due to their levels of seniority in their departments and also their work relationships with their line managers.

#### **4.6.12 Information Not to Communicate to Line Managers/Supervisors**

The participants were asked what types of information they do not want to communicate to their line managers or supervisors and were asked to elaborate. The junior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-levels and older, senior level employees *do not* want to communicate personal information to their line managers or supervisors. It could be assumed that this is due to past experiences where personal information was communicated to line managers or supervisors and that this information was not handled in a proper manner. Also, depending on their work relationships with their line managers or supervisors, employees may not feel comfortable to communicate personal information with them and may prefer instead to communicate this information to their colleagues.

A limited view mentioned by a few of the younger mid and senior level employees is that they *do not* want to communicate unnecessary information to their line managers. This may be information that is not work related, information about other people and/or information about the daily management of the department and its employees. According to the majority of the mid-level employees, there is not anything that they do not want to communicate to their line managers. In this instance, one could again assume that this is due to their seniority in their departments, as well as their work relationships with their line managers.

#### **4.6.13 Communication from Colleagues**

The participants were asked how their colleagues communicate with them and how often. The common theme present amongst all the junior and mid-level employees and the majority of the senior level employees is that their colleagues communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis. This could be throughout the day, depending on the nature of the communication.

A limited view mentioned by some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, mid and senior level employees is that their colleagues also often communicate with them by email. The reason for this could be due to the nature of the communication, the proximity of where they are seated in relation to their colleagues and also to ensure that there is an email trail, especially if the

communication is work-related. The colleagues of some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent, the older, senior level employees also communicate with them telephonically, some of the time. One could again assume that this is due to the nature of the communication and also proximity of where they are seated.

Other equally limited view mentions include the colleagues of some of the younger, senior level employees who communicate with them face-to-face, as and when it is required. This may be once a day or throughout the day. One can assume that this is due to the manner in which their departments operate and also the work relationships among colleagues. Some of the younger, junior level employees mention that their colleagues rarely communicate with them by email. This is because they sit together and have general work and personal-related conversations throughout the day. The colleagues of some of the older, senior level employees communicate with them telephonically and on a daily basis because they discuss predominantly work-related matters and also sit in different offices.

#### **4.6.14 Information from Colleagues**

The participants were asked what type of information their colleagues communicate to them. All employees mention that their colleagues communicate mostly work-related information. At junior levels, their colleagues communicate client updates and feedback, work to be loaded, issues with supervisors and requests for clarification. The colleagues of the mid-level employees communicate general information and requests for action on certain tasks. The senior level employees mention issues that they need assistance with, departmental and operational requests, call centre productivity and quality issues, project-specific matters, escalations and problems experienced with certain teams.

Limited view mentions by most of the mid-level employees are that their colleagues also communicate personal information to them. It could be assumed that this is due to their work relationships with their colleagues and also their time of service in their departments and the organisation as a whole.

#### **4.6.15 Preferred Information from Colleagues**

The participants were asked what type of information they *prefer* to receive from their colleagues and how often. The common theme attributed to the majority of the mid and senior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, junior level employees, is that they prefer to receive both work and personal information from



their colleagues on a daily basis. The reason for this is because they have good and balanced work and personal relationships with each other. In terms of work information, they prefer to receive positive feedback about their departments, as well as projects that they are involved in. They also note that, in order to have effective communication, it is important to know and understand who they are communicating to/with. In terms of personal information, employees who are facing personal challenges and who are not comfortable sharing this with their line managers, may be more comfortable sharing it with their colleagues.

Some of the older junior level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees prefer to receive only work-related information in terms of feedback from their colleagues. One could assume that this is a job requirement, especially in terms of receiving feedback from internal and external clients and also for the purposes of quality reports.

A limited view mentioned by some of the younger, senior level employees is that they would prefer to receive proactive information from their colleagues on a daily basis. If a certain department or team has identified a problem or a person who has a problem communicating work-related matters, the line manager of the department should get involved immediately and communicate on behalf of that person until they are confident that the person is able to handle the situation and/or the issue has been resolved. When and if there are issues in departments, colleagues, especially those in managerial positions should take accountability for the issues in their departments. This can be done by acknowledging that there is a problem and/or that a mistake was made and then also providing solutions to resolve the problem.

#### **4.6.16 Information Not Wanted from Colleagues**

The participants were asked what type of information they do not want to receive from their colleagues and were asked to elaborate. A common theme present among some of the older, junior levels and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-level employees is that they do not want to hear gossip from their colleagues. Office gossip is unnecessary; it makes people feel uncomfortable and does not contribute positively to the work environment.

Another common theme present is that they want to receive all types of information from their colleagues. This is the view of most of the mid-level employees. If colleagues have personal problems which may affect their work and if other colleagues are able to assist by listening or offering advice, they should do so.

Sometimes knowing what colleagues are going through on a personal level helps to understand when their work performances are not as they should be.

A limited view mentioned by some of the older, senior level employees is that they do not want to hear *negative comments*. They prefer instead to focus on positive aspects despite the situation. Other senior level employees do not want to receive information about *issues* in their own departments from their colleagues. They also do not appreciate it when colleagues insinuate that they are not able to manage their departments effectively, which happens more often than not. A further limited view mentioned by some of the younger, junior level employees is that they do not want to receive unnecessary and irrelevant information from their colleagues. One can assume that this is due to their experiences in their departments and also in the workplace in general.

#### **4.6.17 Communication to Colleagues**

The participants were asked how they communicate with their colleagues and how often. All the junior and senior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees communicate with their colleagues face-to-face and on a daily basis. One can assume that they sit in close proximity to each other and also have general conversations during tea, lunch and smoke breaks.

Email correspondence with colleagues on a daily basis is also the method of communication used by the junior levels, the majority of the senior levels and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees. The assumption could be made that these are the communication requirements of their departments, especially to ensure that there is an email trail for work-related matters.

At junior levels and to a lesser extent senior levels, employees also communicate with their colleagues telephonically on a daily basis. One could assume that this is due to the nature of their information or communication and also their proximities to their colleagues.

#### **4.6.18 Information to Colleagues**

The participants were asked what type of information they communicate to their colleagues. All employees communicate mainly work-related information to their colleagues. It could be assumed that this is because the employees are responsible and take their work seriously. They could be very busy with work, which means that there is not much time for socialising at work. It could also be due to strict work policies in their departments and the organisation as a whole.

A limited view mentioned by the majority of the mid-levels and to a lesser extent the senior level employees is that they also communicate personal information to their colleagues. The assumption is that this is due to their work-relationships with their colleagues and also their levels of seniority in their departments and the organisation as a whole.

#### **4.6.19 Preferred Information to Colleagues**

The participants were asked what type of information they prefer to communicate to their colleagues and how often. The first common theme present among the majority of the mid-levels and to a lesser extent the junior level employees is that they prefer to communicate *work-related* information on a daily basis. This includes updates, changes, planning, strategy and also communication. Once again, this could be due to their workloads, which allows little time for communication of a personal nature. It could also be due to strict work policies in their departments and the organisation as a whole.

The second common theme present amongst all the senior level employees is that they prefer to communicate *positive* information to their colleagues. This could be attributed to past experiences with their colleagues and also because there have been departmental changes which have resulted in positive outputs.

A limited view mentioned by some of the younger, junior and mid-level employees is that they also prefer to communicate *organisational information* to their colleagues. It could be assumed that this is due to their personality traits and also their job functions in their departments. A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, mid-level employees is that they also prefer to communicate *personal information*. This could be attributed to their work relationships with their colleagues and their time of service in the organisation as a whole. A few of the younger, mid-level employees prefer to also communicate *feedback* to their colleagues. This could be a requirement of their jobs and that of their departments'.

#### **4.6.20 Information Not to Communicate to Colleagues**

The participants were asked what type of information they do not want to communicate with their colleagues and were asked to elaborate. Some of the older, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid and senior level employees *do not* want to communicate their personal matters with their colleagues. These matters range from finances to family issues. It could be assumed that this is due to past experiences and also because they do not want to bring personal matters into the

work environment. *Personal issues pertaining to other people* is the type of information some of the junior levels and to a lesser extent the older, mid-level employees do not want to communicate with their colleagues. These issues are not relevant to the work environment and if they are, they should be addressed with the line managers and/or the Human Capital department.

A limited view mentioned by some of the junior level employees is that they do not want to communicate *information that makes them uncomfortable*. These matters may be personal or work related, such as not meeting a target for whatever reason and being questioned about it by colleagues. A few of the mid-level employees do not want to communicate *any information that they do not have to*. The assumption is that this is due to their current working relationships with their colleagues. A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, senior level employees is that they do not want to communicate *issues about supervisors* with their colleagues, while the younger, senior level employees do not want to communicate *issues that their colleagues should have picked up in their own departments*. It could be assumed that this is due to their experiences in their current positions and also because of the work relationships they have with their colleagues.

#### **4.6.21 Internal Communication from Other Line Managers/Supervisors or Colleagues**

The participants were asked if they receive internal communication from other line managers or colleagues from other departments and were asked to elaborate. The common theme present is that every employee receives internal communication from other line managers and/or colleagues from other departments.

At the junior levels, examples of internal communication received by the Test Drive Facilitators and Call Centre Agents from other Supervisors include; productivity reports, birthday wishes to colleagues, reminders of the code of conduct (usually dress code). They also receive comments and/or feedback from the Managing Director and the Project Co-ordinators. Some of the internal communication received by the Project Co-ordinators, at mid-levels include; newsletters from the Chief Executive Officer, as well as global newsletters from head office, while Quality Assurers mention that they receive project updates from the Key Account Managers.

At senior levels, the Key Account Managers receive internal communication from the Managing Director, Quality Supervisor and the Project Co-ordinators. Examples of internal communication received by the Quality Manager, who is also the Acting Call Centre Manager, include recruitment and training feedback from the Human

Resources Director, for the Quality department and the Call Centre. While, some of the internal communication received by the Client Services Manager includes feedback from a Business Unit Director, on how the business unit is faring, as well as problem areas in the business unit.

#### **4.6.22 Reporting Structure**

The participants were asked what they think of the reporting structures in their departments, whether they are effective or if they need to be changed and were asked to elaborate. There are two common themes present. The first, by some of the younger, junior level employees and to a lesser extent the older, mid and senior level employees, is that the reporting structures in their departments *are effective*. They are happy with whom they report to, they are comfortable to address issues with their supervisors and line managers and the current reporting structure seems to work for the organisation as a whole.

The second common theme, by the majority of the younger, mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the older, junior level employees is that *only some parts* of their reporting structures are effective. They are effective when line managers do a good job communicating and relaying information to the employees who report to them; when employees have comfortable work relationships with line managers, so that when they are not in the office, their direct reports are able to call or send SMSes about work matters, also, when employees are able to approach a supervisor from another department when their supervisor is too busy. The reporting structures are not effective when line managers do not communicate effectively to those who report to them; for example, when line managers have too much responsibility and do not have enough time to work through emails and when supervisors feel disrespected when their colleagues are consulted on certain matters and not them.

A limited view mention by the majority of the senior level employees is that the reporting structures in their departments are *not* effective. Their reasons include that there are too many 'chiefs' and not enough people who want to do the work and also that the senior account managers are too involved in the operational aspects and assisting the junior account managers instead of mentoring and growing the junior account managers to help themselves.

#### **4.6.23 Part of the Management Team**

The participants were asked if they consider themselves part of the management team and were asked to elaborate. All the junior and mid-level employees and to a

lesser extent the senior level employees *do* consider themselves part of the management team. The reasons provided by all the mid-level employees and some of the senior level employees are that they are involved in strategic and managerial decision-making. According to some of the younger, mid and older, senior level employees their input is requested and they attend management meetings. While a few of the older, junior level employees mention that it is because of their experience, time spent in the organisation and also because they think like managers.

A limited view mentioned by some of the older, senior level employees is that they *do not* consider themselves part of the management team, because they are of the opinion that there are too many hierarchies in the organisation and it is not clear who reports to whom. One could assume that this is due to changes in their departments and the organisation as a whole, as well as additional roles and responsibilities that have been assigned to them.

#### **4.6.24 Brief Job Description and Core Activities**

The participants were asked what their jobs are in their departments/the organisation and were asked to describe the core activities that they do. At junior levels, the Test Drive Facilitators book test drives, while the outbound Call Centre Agents call clients to determine their levels of satisfaction.

At mid-levels, the Quality Assurers supervise the Quality team, do external training and client liaison, while the Project Co-ordinators liaise between the Key Account Managers and the Call Centre. Their core activities include receiving client briefs from the Key Account Managers, briefing the Call Centre and setting up, co-ordinating and overseeing the projects. Other Project Co-ordinators are responsible for specific clients, send out campaigns and ensure that the Call Centre Agents achieve their targets.

At senior levels, the Key Account Managers manage internal and external clients, client accounts and projects. The Quality Manager, who is also Acting Call Centre Manager, is responsible for managing the operational aspects of the Call Centre, managing the Supervisors, attending to the needs of the Agents and also recruitment. In the Quality department, the responsibilities include assessments, quality training and development for the whole organisation. The core activities of the Client Services Manager include: client management in terms of client relationships and project management; escalations; driving sales in the business; marketing activities; and ensuring that profit margins are met.

#### **4.6.25 Communications Functions in Current Positions**

The participants were asked what communications functions they perform in their positions. Communicating within their departments and also to clients externally is the common theme present amongst all employees in the organisation. The mid and senior level employees also communicate to and with colleagues in other departments, which is not the case for the junior-level employees. The reason for this could be that their job functions pertain only to their departments. All employees also communicate by telephone and email. However, the mid-level employees and the majority of the senior level employees also perform communication functions face-to-face, which may include general discussions, meetings, presentations and/or training.

#### **4.6.26 Working Effectively**

The participants were asked what prevents them from carrying out their jobs effectively. Various reasons are provided. The junior level employees mention equipment that is not in working order, such as telephones and/or personal computers and also system-related issues.

At mid-levels they mention ineffective communication and also the delivery times of colleagues. Senior level employees mention the volumes of administration, the negative culture in some departments and also the lack of certain resources such as certain skills, tools and job functions.

#### **4.6.27 Communication and Work**

The participants were asked if they think communication helps them in their work and were asked to elaborate. According to all the employees communication *does* help them in their work. Some of the employees, comprising all the junior levels and to a lesser extent the mid-levels, mention that communication makes work easier. Some of the older, junior and younger, mid-level employees are of the opinion that communication aids in meeting work deadlines and also enhances work relationships with line managers/supervisors, colleagues and clients. A few of the mid and senior level employees mention that work-related issues can be avoided through communication.

Limited view mentions by the mid-level employees include that effective communication improves client satisfaction and also has a time-saving effect. A further limited view mention by some of the younger, senior level employees is that communication makes business sense and is what sells in their departments.

#### **4.6.28 Exposure to Internal Communication in Another Organisation or Department**

The participants were asked if they have been exposed to internal communication in other organisations or departments and if so, what their perceptions were of the internal communication in those organisations/departments. The common theme present is that all employees have been exposed to internal communication in other organisations and departments. All the junior and senior levels and to a lesser extent the younger, mid-levels, have a *negative perception* of the communication to which they were exposed. The junior level employees mention that the communication was vague and email was the preferred channel of communication. When meetings were scheduled, these were done at short notice and with no agenda or reasons offered. The manner in which things were communicated and how things were done was also not good.

At the mid-levels, their reasons include that internal communication was lacking and that management did not keep employees informed about matters in the organisation, which caused dissatisfaction and even unrest. The organisation also followed an outdated business structure and there were things the employees needed to know but this information was withheld by management, which negatively impacted on the employees' jobs. The employees at the senior levels mention that the organisation was run military style and nobody stood up for or defended anybody. The work environment was also too formal and the communication approach followed was predominantly top-down. However, there was mention that the communication was improving.

A limited view mention by some of the older, mid and senior level employees is that they have a *positive perception* of the internal communication to which they were exposed in other organisations and departments. The communication structure was good and briefings took place every morning with follow-ups around mid-day. If employees were on track with their work, they were permitted to leave work earlier. These are the views of the mid-level employees. At senior-levels, they mention that the work environment was open, free and comfortable, and employees were happy to talk freely and raise issues without fear.

#### **4.7 Main Insights**

The main insights in this section include that employees at all levels are of the opinion that internal communication *does* have an effect on productivity/work and the majority of the employees consider themselves to be *effective* communicators. Most employees think their line managers or supervisors *do* understand their



communication needs and also think that their colleagues *do not* have the same communication requirements as they do.

The line managers or supervisors of the majority of the employees communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis and communicate predominantly work-related information, which is what the employees prefer. They are also comfortable to receive all types of information from their line managers and mention that there is nothing they do not want to receive from them. Employees at all levels communicate face-to-face with their line managers or supervisors and communicate predominantly work-related information, which is also what they prefer. The majority of the employees *do not* want to communicate personal information to their line managers or supervisors.

The colleagues of most of the employees communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis, which may be throughout the day, depending on the nature of the communication. These colleagues communicate mostly work-related information; however, the majority of the employees prefer to receive both work and personal information from their colleagues on a daily basis. Gossip is the only type of information the employees do not want to receive from their colleagues. Most of the employees at all levels communicate with their colleagues face-to-face and on a daily basis. While they communicate mainly work-related information and prefer to do so, they also prefer to communicate *positive* information. The employees *do not* want to communicate their personal matters with their colleagues, which range from finances to family issues.

Every employee receives internal communication from other line managers and/or colleagues from other departments. With regard to the organisation's reporting structures, some employees are of the opinion that their reporting structures are *effective*, while others find *only some parts* to be effective. An interesting point to note is that the majority of the employees at all levels *do* consider themselves part of the management team. The employees highlighted their jobs in their departments/the organisation and also described their core activities. For all employees, communication functions in their current positions include communicating within their departments and also to clients, externally. According to all the employees communication *does* help them in their work; however, various aspects of communication also prevent employees from carrying out their jobs effectively. All employees have also been exposed to internal communication in other organisations and departments. Of these, the majority has a *negative perception* of the communication to which they were exposed.

## **4.8 The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

### **4.8.1 People Responsible for Communication**

The participants were asked if, in their opinion, the responsibility for communication has been given to the right people in their departments/the organisation and were asked to elaborate. The first common theme present among the majority of the senior level employees and to a lesser extent, the older, mid-level employees is that they are of the opinion that the responsibility for communication *has not* been given to the right people. At senior levels, their reasons include that some communicators are not diplomatic, which causes tempers to flare and, also, while it is everybody's responsibility to communicate, this responsibility is given without the proper tools, for example agents who are promoted to supervisor level and who have no training on how to type or send a business-related email. At mid-levels, their reasons include that some communicators have negative attitudes and will only communicate with/to people on their levels.

The second common theme present among some of the junior level employees and to a lesser extent the mid and senior level employees is that the responsibility for communication has been given to the right people only *some of the time*. The junior level employees are of the opinion that the responsibility for communication has been given to the right people; however, employees do not always agree with everything that is said and done. At the mid-levels, the employees reason that some people who have been given the responsibility are doing well, while others could do better. Some communicators are effective, but others require communication training. This is the view of the senior level employees.

A limited view mentioned by some of the older, junior levels and younger, mid-level employees is that the responsibility for communication *has* been given to the right people. The junior level employees are of the opinion that their supervisors and the personal assistant are the main communicators and are good at it. The opinions of the employees at mid-levels include that everybody is communicating with everyone at different times and, for the most part, communication is relayed effectively.

### **4.8.2 Suitably Qualified Communicators**

When asked if they are of the opinion that the people responsible for communication in their departments/the organisation are suitably qualified in the area of communication, the responses vary. A common theme present amongst all the mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the junior and senior level employees is that the people responsible for communication *are not suitably qualified in the area of*

*communication*. The reasons provided by the junior level employees include that at times they are effective communicators and other times they tend to forget to communicate effectively. Reasons provided by the mid-level employees are that while they do not do a bad job at communicating, there is a lot of room for improvement and also that being an effective communicator is a skill which is acquired on the job. The senior level employees mention that some communicators do not cope well with negative feedback/criticism and take offence instead of trying to resolve the issues.

A limited view mentioned by the majority of the senior level employees is that only *some of the people* responsible for communication are suitably qualified. Their reasons include that people do not understand the importance of communication and that there is a lot of room for improvement not only in their departments but also in the organisation as a whole.

A further limited view mentioned by some of the older, junior level employees is that the people responsible for communication *are* suitably qualified in the area of communication. Their reasons include that information is conveyed in a proper manner and also on time.

#### **4.8.3 Communications Practitioner**

The participants were asked to explain their understanding of a communications practitioner, in as much detail as possible. Employees at the junior levels understand a communications practitioner to be someone who knows how to communicate, what to communicate and does so timeously. The mid-level employees mention that it is someone who is able to effectively communicate with people on all levels, face-to-face and in writing and who ensures that knowledge and information are shared. It is also someone who is eloquent and able to make their needs, as well as those of the department or organisation understood.

According to the senior level employees, a communications practitioner is someone who is an expert, practices communication and understands the barriers to communication. It is someone who is emotionally intelligent; communicates effectively across the board and is able to receive and provide constructive criticism. It is also, someone who bears in mind the softer, more tangible side of communication when s/he communicates.

One can assume that their understanding of a communications practitioner is based on their past experiences and possibly communication training that was done. It is

also interesting to note that the depth of understanding increases from the junior to mid-levels and from mid to senior levels.

#### **4.8.4 The Job of a Communications Practitioner**

When asked what they believe should be the job of a communications practitioner in their departments/the organisation, the responses vary. The job of a communications practitioner should be to convey relevant information and effective communication, whether positive or negative and should also receive feedback. These are the opinions of the junior level employees. At mid-levels they believe it should be someone in a managerial position who not only provides information but also assists the departments and the organisation as a whole to work together and identify effective means of communication to ensure increased productivity. The senior level employees mention that a communications practitioner should assist departments to identify people who are weak communicators and then upskill them. They also mention that it is someone who is able to communicate effectively across the board, which includes the ability to relay messages to achieve the intended outcomes.

It could be assumed that the employees at all levels have had some exposure, to a greater or lesser degree, to a communications practitioner or someone who fulfils a similar role. They have mentioned job functions of a communications practitioner which range from tactical to more strategic.

#### **4.8.5 Characteristics of a Good Communicator**

The participants were asked what characteristics a good communicator should have in their opinion and were asked to elaborate. Characteristics mentioned by the junior level employees include: manners, respect, open-mindedness, as well as the ability to understand people and explain communication. The mid-level employees mention politeness, patience, good listening skills, as well as the abilities to read body language, deal with people and obtain information from them.

Characteristics such as, approachability, honesty, attention to detail, as well as the ability to provide more than one method of communication are listed by the senior level employees. They also mention taking the audience into consideration and knowing how to adapt communication in relation to the audience. From the above, it can be seen that the employees have described the characteristics of an effective communicator, which is relevant to them, their departments and the organisation as a whole.

#### **4.8.6 A Dedicated Communications Practitioner**

The participants were asked if they are of the opinion that their departments/ the organisation require/s a dedicated communications practitioner and were asked to elaborate. A common theme present among the majority of the senior levels, some of the younger, junior levels and to a lesser extent the mid-level employees, is that their departments *do not* require a dedicated communications practitioner.

The senior level employees reason that their departments have good and moderately good communicators and that the moderately good communicators should learn from the good communicators. Also, while their departments do not require a dedicated communications practitioner, the organisation as a whole does, since effective communication takes place only about ten per cent of the time. The employees at junior levels mention that while a dedicated communications practitioner is not required, they do need somebody who knows how to communicate effectively and who also has good manners. The mid-level employees are of the opinion that their department is like a family-unit and, although a dedicated communications practitioner is not required, they do need somebody to offer a few sessions to provide some guidance in terms of communication.

A limited view mentioned by the majority of the mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the younger, senior level employees, is that their departments *do* require a dedicated communications practitioner. The mid-level employees are of the opinion that there is a lack of communication in their departments and the organisation as a whole, where they do not communicate with each other and require a middle-person to assist with communication. They also mention that a dedicated communications practitioner is required to keep everybody in the loop and to iron out communication mishaps that could result in serious problems. Employees at the senior levels mention that a dedicated communications practitioner is required, especially for communication to external clients. However, everybody internally should also acquire communication skills to avoid issues, should the communications practitioner leave the organisation.

#### **4.8.7 The Best Communicator**

When asked to identify the best communicators, in their opinion, in their departments/the organisation, a few employees in senior positions were mentioned. The best communicator in the organisation in their opinion is a senior, male key account manager.

This is the common theme attributed to the majority of the senior level employees and to a lesser extent the junior level employees. Their reasons include that he always has the right answers and is always willing and able to assist, whether he is at the office or not. If there is a problem, he addresses it with the senior manager first, to obtain their advice, either by email or face-to-face, and then he will take up the matter with the supervisor and call centre agent. This senior key account manager has also been tasked to guide two problematic supervisors and, through his communication and influence on them, their work-related problems were resolved.

The majority of the mid-level employees are of the opinion that the best communicator in the organisation is the call centre manager. Their reasons include that she has emotional intelligence and has a way of making them understand and even listen. They also mention that she communicates well by email and face-to-face, even if she is conveying bad news.

The following are equally limited view mentions. Some of the younger, mid-level employees are of the opinion that the client services manager is the best communicator in the organisation. They reason that she has a hands-on approach and enquires about the well-being of people. Also, she asks questions and is keen to know if there is anything that the employees need. Some of the older, senior level employees are of the opinion that the best communicator is a senior, female key account manager. They reason that she is firm and eloquent by email and face-to-face and they know exactly what is expected of them. A further limited view mention by a few of the older, junior level employees is that there is nobody in the organisation who is the best communicator.

#### **4.8.8 Qualifications in Communication**

The participants were asked if they think it is necessary for one to have a qualification in communication in order to be a communications practitioner and were asked to elaborate. The view attributed to all the junior and mid-level employees and to a lesser extent the older, senior level employees, is that it is *not* necessary for one to have a qualification in communication to be a communications practitioner.

According to the junior level employees anyone can be a communications practitioner and that only certain qualities are required, such as the ability to communicate well. At mid-levels, their reasons include that the communications practitioner can and should learn to understand people and that communication is a skill acquired through working with people for a number of years. Also, some training or understanding is

required to determine what communication is; its importance in the organisation, as well as the consequences of ineffective communication. The senior level employees mention that a communication qualification is not required; however, a communications practitioner should think before s/he speaks and also take into consideration that s/he is dealing with human beings.

A limited view mentioned by the majority of the senior level employees is that *it is* necessary for one to have a qualification in communication to be a communications practitioner. Their reasons include that a communications practitioner needs to have a public speaking background and should be able to interpret body language and other gestures. They also reason that a qualification in marketing and sales is required, because there is a significant improvement in the team's communication to internal and external stakeholders after a basic, two-day training session; therefore, a formal qualification would yield even better results.

#### **4.8.9 Additional Information**

The participants were asked if there was anything else that they would like to add to the information they had already provided in this interview. According to the junior level employees, communication in the organisation has improved significantly over the years and the management team is trying and is doing its best. In the past, there were communication issues, which were not up for discussion, but now the management team is prepared to listen. Also, the communication style has moved from 'dictatorship' to more of a 'negotiation' style, especially between the management, the supervisors and the call centre agents.

While it has not been formally communicated, everyone in the department is aware of the 'open-door policy' in the organisation, where they have access to supervisors, key account managers and other levels of management and where they are able to raise issues and make suggestions and know that someone is listening to them. Also, supervisors are now being upskilled.

The mid-level employees suggest that employees firstly need to learn to listen when communicating to others and, secondly, they should listen to what is being communicated, as opposed to listening to respond. At senior levels, they mention that communication starts with the individual and what they think about themselves. They suggest that employees should also be true to themselves and recognise their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, employees should simply communicate.

#### **4.9 Main Insights**

Under this section, the main insights include that some employees are of the opinion that the responsibility for communication *has not* been given to the right people, while others mention that the responsibility has been given to the right people but only *some of the time*. The majority of the employees also mention that the people responsible for communication *are not suitably qualified in the area of communication*. Various responses were provided for their understanding of a communications practitioner, the job of a communications practitioner and the characteristics a good communicator. According to most of the employees, their departments *do not* require a dedicated communications practitioner and it is *not* necessary for one to have a qualification in communication to be a communications practitioner. A few employees in senior positions were highlighted as the best communicators in their departments/the organisation.

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

In-depth interviews were conducted in an automotive services organisation in South Africa to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception. Employees at all levels of the organisation participated in the interviews and provided their honest opinions.

Effective internal communication helps to eliminate work and personal problems and has a positive effect on productivity. It is important in communication to listen to understand and to relay the correct information. Employees at various levels in the automotive services organisation are of the opinion that internal communication is very important for the effective running of the organisation. However, while communication in the automotive services organisation is better than it was in the past, it could still improve.

The findings and interpretations of the research on *the effects of internal communication on the productivity and perception of employees in the automotive services industry in South Africa* were discussed in this chapter. The findings were discussed under the following headings: Biographical Data; Internal Communication; Productivity; and the Role of the Communications Practitioner. In the following chapter, the research findings will be compared with the literature review. Recommendations will then be made to improve internal communication going forward. The limitations of the study will also be mentioned and suggestions for future research will be made.



## **CHAPTER FIVE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to determine *the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa*. In the first chapter, the introduction and background to the research were discussed. The literature review, which provided the theoretical perspectives upon which this study is based, was discussed in the second chapter. The third chapter highlighted the aim of the study and the four elements of a research process. It also included details on sampling, data collection and data analysis. In the fourth chapter, the findings and interpretations of the research were discussed under the headings: Biographical Data; Internal Communication; Productivity; and the Role of the Communications Practitioner.

In this chapter, the research findings are compared with the literature review, under the headings: Internal Communication; Productivity; and The Role of the Communications Practitioner. The relevant study objectives are also mentioned under each section. The aim of this study, namely to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in order to provide recommendations to improve internal communication in the organisation, will be achieved in this chapter. The research feedback will then be submitted to the management of the automotive services organisation to incorporate into their planning. Recommendations to improve the internal communication will also be made to management. It is envisioned that this study will benefit all the employees, at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. The limitations of the study are briefly mentioned, as well as suggestions for future research.

### **5.2 Internal Communication**

#### **5.2.1 Understanding Internal/Organisational Communication**

The employees in the automotive services organisation have various opinions about what internal/organisation communication is. This includes that internal communication is communication *within* the organisation, *between* employees, about the *methods* of communication and also about communication *between* departments. According to Mazzei (2010), internal communication is generally defined as the communication flow among people within the boundaries of an organisation. Therefore, the employees in the automotive services organisation have a proper understanding of internal communication, which is applicable to their experiences

with internal communication, their positions, departments and the organisation as a whole.

### **5.2.2 Effective Internal/Organisational Communication**

The majority of the employees are of the opinion that effective internal/organisational communication is communication which *informs people*. Perry (2007) suggests that good internal communication not only requires considerable levels of skill, but also well-developed processes to maintain competent and effective communication. The employees in the automotive services organisation agree that effective internal communication is keeping people in the loop at all times about what is happening in the organisation and also that it should develop a person. To them, effective internal communication is clear and concise and not misleading. It is also first discussed face-to-face and then confirmed by email. Therefore, according to the majority of the employees at all levels, the automotive services organisation has well-developed processes and competent communication.

### **5.2.3 Benefits of Effective Internal Communication**

*Improved performance* is seen as a benefit by the majority of the employees at various levels. One of the most important purposes of employee or internal communication is to motivate employees to support the objectives of the organisation. It is also to ensure that employees feel part of the organisation and that they understand and buy into the vision, mission and goals of the organisation. This, according to O'Neil (2008:1), is achieved when the channels of communication are open, which enable the employees to become aligned to the goals of the organisation.

The employees in the automotive services organisation agree that the benefits of effective internal communication are that it provides employees with better foresight and scope of the organisation, as well as contributes towards their own growth. Other benefits are that work gets done and deadlines are met. Effective communication will also improve performance and work relationships by avoiding chaos, miscommunication, confusion, rework and misunderstanding. This, in turn, motivates employees and also assists the organisation to achieve its goals.

### **5.2.4 The Effectiveness of Internal Communication in the Department**

A common theme present among most of the employees is that internal communication *is* effective in the organisation. According to Yates (2006:73),

effective communication translates into action that produces positive business and financial results.

Through effective communication in the automotive services organisation, instructions to complete tasks are issued and followed correctly, which results in work being done properly from the beginning. It also results in projects being managed effectively, as per service level agreements, deadlines being met and clients being served more efficiently. This definitely has a positive impact on the organisation, which will also impact the financial results.

### **5.2.5 Internal Communications in the Organisation**

All the employees in the organisation are of the opinion that internal communication fits into every department. In the literature, D'Aprix (1996), as well as Harris and Nelson (*in Berger, 2008:s.a*), suggest that communication is the foundation of modern organisations and is one of the most dominant and important activities in organisations.

In the automotive services organisation and according to the employees, internal communication ranges from a simple message from the receptionist to a project brief with a client. It also impacts every employee and job function at every level in the organisational hierarchy. Without internal communication, the organisation will not function effectively. Therefore, internal communication is one of the most dominant and important activities in the automotive services organisation.

### **5.2.6 Proactive or Re-active Communicators**

Most of the employees are of the opinion that the people responsible for communication in their departments/the organisation are *reactive*. Fulmer (2000) notes that every employee as a stakeholder needs to know precisely what the organisation's business is every day in order to be empowered to realise opportunities and correct mistakes at ground level.

According to the employees in the automotive services organisation and in terms of the people responsible for internal communication in the organisation, there is no sense of urgency and issues are only raised when something has already gone wrong. Employees do not ask for clarity if they do not understand something, instead they simply wait, which can result in bigger problems. A further point is that information is already known to some team members who do not see the need to share that information with the rest of the team. Therefore, employees as

stakeholders in the automotive services organisation do not know precisely what the organisation's business is on a daily basis and are not empowered to realise opportunities and correct mistakes at ground level.

### **5.2.7 Platform for Feedback**

In the automotive services organisation, employees have mentioned that there is a platform available to provide feedback on internal communication received. O'Neil (2008:1) suggests that organisations should also provide formal feedback opportunities in their employee communication practices and strategies. Their platform includes daily sessions or meetings, where employees are able to discuss things they may not understand. It is also an opportunity to highlight concerns or issues, as well as positive aspects. While it is not a formal platform for feedback, it does serve an opportunity for the employees and they are comfortable using it.

### **5.2.8 Suggestions to Improve Communication**

Communication training was the common suggestion by the majority of the employees in order to improve internal communication currently being received. Perry (2007) is of the opinion that internal communication is complex and contains both soft and hard elements. Soft elements include planning and implementing communication strategies within the organisation's structure and hierarchical levels, as well as the skills of employees and managers to communicate with one another. The hard elements include communication channels; such as publications, notice boards, electronic media and meetings.

In the automotive services organisation, communication training will be beneficial to the entire organisation not only to certain departments and will assist employees at all levels to convey the correct message, using the correct method, to the correct recipients. The communication training should also cover the following aspects: the importance and purpose of the communication; the method and intention of the message; the type of response/s required by the recipients; and the consequences of the communication. This will assist to reduce situations where, for example, emails are sent conveying incorrect messages to the recipients. Learning to communicate effectively will also empower employees to communicate proactively. If it is the right type of training it will cover both the hard and soft elements of communication, which will improve the internal communication currently being received in the organisation.

The abovementioned findings pertain mainly to the following objectives of this study:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception.

- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services department/organisation.
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation.

### **5.3 Productivity**

#### **5.3.1 The Effect of Internal Communication on Productivity/Work**

Employees at all levels are of the opinion that internal communication *does* have an effect on productivity/work. In the literature and according to the 2003/2004 Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study, companies with highly effective internal communication practices produce superior financial results and enjoy greater organisational stability. According to the employees, ineffective communication prolongs the timeline of completing tasks and employees become angry and upset if communication is not clear and understandable. This negatively impacts the financial results and stability of the organisation. However, according to the employees, positive client feedback is encouraging, while constructive criticism helps the teams to perform better. This produces better financial results and organisational stability.

#### **5.3.2 Effective Communicators**

The majority of the employees in the automotive services organisation consider themselves to be *effective* communicators. In the Internal Communications Best Practice Guide by Lancashire Communications Network (2005:3), good internal communication involves frequent and effective two-way communication with all employees at all levels of the organisational hierarchy. The reasons provided by employees at all levels include that they are good listeners and also understand the consequences of communication. They communicate to inform or to resolve issues as soon as possible and they also talk a lot by nature. From the above, it can be seen that there are some employees in the automotive services organisation who believe they are effective communicators.

#### **5.3.3 Communication Needs**

According to most of the employees, their line managers or supervisors *do* understand their communication needs. Besancon (2012), mentions that issues, managerial activities and organisational processes are all affected by employees' perceptions. These perceptions are developed from employees' observations and interpretations of managers. In the automotive services organisation, some of the line managers understand how to communicate to get the best out of the employees; while others request feedback after email or face-to-face communication takes place. Some line managers have transparent work relationships with their teams and

communicate comfortably by email and face-to-face, while other line managers are good listeners. Therefore, the managerial activities, as well as the organisation's processes are positively perceived by the employees in the automotive services organisation.

#### **5.3.4 Colleagues and Their Communication Needs/Requirements**

A common theme present among most employees is that their colleagues *do not* have the same communication requirements as they do. The literature states that improving the quality of communication, providing adequate internal communication resources and using multiple channels of communication will greatly contribute to employee engagement and organisational effectiveness (Perry, 2007). The employees in the automotive services organisation are of the opinion that each employee is unique and has a different perspective on how s/he views things and, therefore, has different communication requirements. The various backgrounds of the employees and the length of time each employee has spent in the organisation also determine her/his communication needs. Adequate internal communication resources at all levels, as well as the utilisation of multiple channels of communication are required to ensure that the communication needs of all the employees are met and that organisational effectiveness is prevalent in the automotive services organisation.

#### **5.3.5 Communication To and From Line Managers/Supervisors and Colleagues**

The line managers/supervisors of the majority of the employees communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis and communicate predominantly work-related information, which is what the employees prefer. They are also comfortable to receive all types of information from their line managers and mention that there is nothing they do not want to receive from them.

Employees at all levels communicate face-to-face with their line managers or supervisors and communicate predominantly work-related information, which is also what they prefer. The majority of the employees *do not* want to communicate personal information to their line managers or supervisors.

The colleagues of most of the employees communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis, which may be throughout the day, depending on the nature of the communication. These colleagues communicate mostly work-related information; however, the majority of the employees prefer to receive both work and personal information from their colleagues on a daily basis. Gossip is the only type of information that the employees do not want to receive from their colleagues.

Most of the employees at all levels communicate with their colleagues face-to-face and on a daily basis. While they communicate mainly work-related information and prefer to do so, they also prefer to communicate *positive* information. The employees *do not* want to communicate their personal matters, which range from finances to family issues, with their colleagues.

Communication within traditional organisations occurs on multiple levels. Fielding (1993) suggests that interpersonal or face-to-face communication is the primary form of communication and occurs between individuals. According to Berger (2008), group-level communication occurs in teams, units or interest groups and is characterised by information sharing, issue discussion, task co-ordination, problem-solving and the like. Organisational communication focusses on matters such as the vision and mission, policies, new initiatives, organisational knowledge and performance. Internal communication is often cascaded downwards, from managers at the top of the hierarchical levels, to employees at the lower levels.

Berger (2008) is also of the opinion that a network, which may be formal or informal, represents how communication flows in an organisation. Traditionally, in formal communication networks, messages travel through official pathways like newsletters, memos and policy documents, which reflect the organisation's hierarchy. In informal communication networks, messages move along unofficial paths like the grapevine, which has now become electronic, fast and multi-directional. Communication that passes along this network includes rumours, opinions, aspirations and expressions of emotions.

One of the most important purposes of employee or internal communication is to motivate employees to support the objectives of the organisation. A key role of communication is to ensure that employees feel part of the organisation and that they understand and buy into the vision, mission and goals of the organisation. This, according to O'Neil (2008:1), is achieved when the channels of communication are open and enable the employees to become aligned to the goals of the organisation. Perry (2007) suggests that good internal communication not only requires considerable levels of skill, but also well-developed processes to maintain competent and effective communication. In contrast, Pettinger (2000) is of the opinion that good internal communication is instrumental in driving the relationships and behaviour of the organisation's employees and is an important factor in organisational effectiveness.

The line managers/supervisors, employees and colleagues in the automotive services organisation communicate predominantly through interpersonal or face-to-face communication. Group-level communication also occurs in teams or departments, which is characterised by information sharing, issue discussion, task co-ordination, problem-solving and the like. In the organisation, internal communication is cascaded downwards from managers at the top of the hierarchical levels to employees at the lower levels.

The communication networks in the automotive services organisation are both formal and informal. In the formal communication networks, messages travel through official pathways, such as meetings and policy documents, which reflect the organisation's hierarchy. Employees at all levels prefer formal communication in the workplace. In informal communication networks, messages move along unofficial paths like the grapevine, which has now become electronic, fast and multi-directional. Communication that passes along this network includes rumours, opinions, aspirations and expressions of emotions. While there are positive aspects of communication in the informal networks, the majority of the employees in the organisation do not want to receive or participate in gossip, rumours and discussions about colleagues.

### **5.3.6 Internal Communication from Other Line Managers/Supervisors or Colleagues**

Every employee receives internal communication from other line managers and/or colleagues from other departments. Fielding (1993) is of the opinion that organisational communication may also be described as vertical, horizontal or diagonal. Vertical communication can be downward or upward flowing, that is, moving from higher to lower levels in the organisational hierarchy or vice versa. Horizontal communication refers to communication amongst employees who have no hierarchical relationship. Berger (2008) suggests that diagonal or omnidirectional communication occurs amongst employees at different levels and in different functions.

In the automotive services organisation, a Project Co-ordinator receives newsletters from the Chief Executive Officer, as well as global newsletters from head office; an Agent receives comments and/or feedback from the Managing Director, while the Quality Assurer receives project updates from the Key Account Managers. The Quality Manager and Human Resources Director communicate about recruitment and training for the Quality department and the Call Centre, while the Client Services Manager receives communication from a Business Unit Director. Therefore,



communication in the automotive services organisation may be described as vertical, horizontal and diagonal.

### **5.3.7 Reporting Structure**

Some employees are of the opinion that their reporting structures are *effective*, while others find *only some parts* to be effective. Leach (2013) notes certain factors that contribute to the success of internal communication in an organisation. These include an organisational structure that connects internal communicators with the rest of the organisation, horizontally, vertically and diagonally. There should be a good understanding that strong internal communication will have a positive return for the organisation. The organisation should have effective tools and practices to listen and communicate a message. Also, there should be a strong commitment to keep employees at all levels informed in a timely fashion.

Therefore, only some of the reporting structures in the automotive services organisation are effective. The entities of other parts of the organisation as a system do not connect employees and internal communicators with the rest of the organisation. This, in turn, has a negative impact on the return for the organisation.

### **5.3.8 Part of the Management Team**

Employees at all levels in the organisation *do* consider themselves part of the management team. Organisations need to implement strategies to communicate to and deal with various stakeholders, based on their needs and requirements. Steyn and Puth (2000) suggest that communication to stakeholders about stakeholders requires a shared meaning and active listening, where all stakeholder comments, feedback, suggestions and the like are considered by the organisation. The employees in the automotive services organisation consider themselves part of the management team because they are involved in strategic and managerial decision-making, their input is requested and they attend management meetings. It is also as a result of their experience and time spent in the organisation, and because they think like managers. Therefore, the automotive services organisation practices shared meaning and active listening where the comments, feedback and suggestions of its internal stakeholders, its employees, are considered.

### **5.3.9 Brief Job Description and Core Activities**

The employees at all levels highlighted their jobs in their departments/the organisation and also described their core activities. In the literature, Botha, Chaka, du Plessis, Kraus, Rawjee Porthen, Veerasamy and Wright (2007:60), are of the

opinion that a business organisation or system is made up of interrelated functions or subsystems, such as public relations, marketing, human resources and production. Each subsystem, as well as the system as a whole, has boundaries which distinguish it from the rest of the environment.

In the automotive services organisation, the employees occupy various positions, which have several core activities. These include Agents who book test drives and call clients to determine their levels of satisfaction. Quality Assurers supervise the Quality team and provide external training and client liaison. It includes Project Co-ordinators who liaise between the Key Account Managers and the Call Centre and who send out client-specific campaigns. It also includes Key Account Managers who manage clients internally and externally, a Quality Manager who is responsible for assessments, quality training and development for the organisation and a Client Services Manager responsible for client relationships and project management, as well as ensuring that profit margins are met.

Therefore, the automotive services organisation is a business organisation or system which is made up of various interrelated functions or subsystems. In the organisation, each subsystem, as well as the system as a whole, has boundaries which distinguish it from the rest of the environment.

#### **5.3.10 Communication Functions in Current Positions**

For all employees, communication functions in their current positions include communicating within their departments and also to external clients. Pettinger (2000) is of the opinion that good internal communication is instrumental in driving the relationships and behaviour of the organisation's employees and is an important factor in organisational effectiveness.

According to the employees in the automotive services organisation, various communication functions are performed in their positions and at various levels of the organisational hierarchy. These communication functions include: Agents who liaise with clients telephonically and by email, Quality Assurers who receive updates on requirements and progress from various departments, Project Co-ordinators and Supervisors who communicate to share information on the progress of Agents and who also liaise with the Key Account Managers regarding project reports, updates and system-related issues. It also includes the Quality Manager's management meetings and feedback to the Supervisors and Key Account Managers from Quality

meetings, as well as the Client Services Manager's product training, relaunching of products, marketing 'emailers' and sales targets communication.

Therefore, in the automotive services organisation, communication is instrumental in driving the relationships and behaviour of the employees and is also an important factor in the effectiveness of the organisation.

### **5.3.11 Working Effectively**

Various reasons, which prevent employees from carrying out their jobs effectively, were provided. Malik (2013) says that the job satisfaction of employees can lead to better engagement in the organisation. Greater participation of the employee can be productive for the organisation; and improving the engagement of employees can improve their productivity.

In the automotive services organisation, various issues hamper the employees and, therefore, hinder job satisfaction. These issues include telephone, computer and system issues, ineffective communication and miscommunication. The delivery times of colleagues, volumes of administration, the negative culture in some departments and the lack of resources, such as certain skills, tools and job functions are also mentioned. Once these issues have been addressed, employees at all levels will enjoy job satisfaction, which will lead to better engagement in the organisation.

### **5.3.12 Communication and Work**

According to all the employees interviewed, communication *does* help them in their work. Grunig (2011:2) is of the opinion that organisations are realising that employees are their greatest competitive advantage, and effective communication helps unleash the talents and energies of their employees. Internal or employee communication, which was once considered a 'soft skill', is now seen as having 'hard business impact' in customer service, product quality, innovation and other areas. The commitment and loyalty of the internal stakeholders of an organisation will assist the organisation to strive towards its vision.

Effective communication makes the jobs of the employees in the automotive services organisation easier and helps them meet client deadlines. Timeous communication results in potential issues being resolved and, also, part of the business in the automotive organisation is to sell information which is part of communication. Without effective communication, the employees will not be able to work and will not know what is happening in the organisation until it is too late. Internal communication in the

automotive services organisation already has 'hard business impact' on customer service, product quality, innovation and other areas of the organisation

### **5.3.13 Exposure to Internal Communication in Another Organisation or Department**

While all the employees have been exposed to internal communication in another organisation or department, the majority of the employees have a *negative perception* of the communication which they were exposed to. In his research, Perry (2007) found that internal communication does indeed affect the culture of an organisation, its climate and the engagement of its employees. Good internal communication not only increases the morale of the employees, but also enhances employee engagement, has an impact on the performance of employees, as well as the reputation of the organisation. Thus, internal communication is at the heart of an organisation, as it has an impact on the level of employee engagement and is critical to organisational success.

The negative perceptions of the employees in the automotive services organisation indicate that the internal communication in those departments/organisations is not good and does not increase the morale of the employees. It also hampers employee engagement which has an impact on the performance of employees and on the reputation of the department/organisation.

The findings under Productivity, relate to the following study objectives:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception.
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services department/organisation.
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation.

## **5.4 The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

### **5.4.1 People Responsible for Communication**

Some employees are of the opinion that the responsibility for communication *has not* been given to the right people, while others mention that the responsibility has been given to the right people but only *some of the time*. In the literature, Goodman (2006) suggests that public relations practitioners/communication specialists must become aware of the new era of transparency, which is creating an opportunity for building trust through strategic organisational communication initiatives. In this regard, communication can assist top management by identifying and engaging the internal stakeholders of an organisation in the social, financial, and environmental accomplishments and actions of the organisation.

In the automotive services organisation, some communicators are not diplomatic, which causes tempers to flare. Thus, while it is everybody's responsibility to communicate, this responsibility is given without the proper tools. An example is agents who are promoted to supervisor level and who have no training on how to type or send a business-related email. Some communicators also have negative attitudes and will only communicate with/to people on their levels. These are some of the examples where the responsibility for communication has not been given to the right people.

Some communicators, who have been given the responsibility, are effective, while others require communication training. The responsibility for communication has been given to the right people, however, employees do not always agree with everything that is said and done. These are examples where the responsibility for communication has been given to the right people some of the time. Managers in the automotive services organisation need to ensure that the responsibility for communication is given to the right people. If not, it will hamper top management's attempts to identify and engage the internal stakeholders of the organisation.

#### **5.4.2 Suitably Qualified Communicators**

A common theme present among the employees is that the people responsible for communication *are not suitably qualified in the area of communication*. One of the most important purposes of employee or internal communication is to motivate employees to support the objectives of the organisation. A key role of communication is to ensure that employees feel part of the organisation and that they understand and buy into the vision, mission and goals of the organisation. This, according to O'Neil (2008:1), is achieved when open channels of communication enable the employees to become aligned to the goals of the organisation. Perry (2007) suggests that good internal communication not only requires considerable levels of skill, but also well-developed processes to maintain competent and effective communication. Pettinger (2000), in contrast, is of the opinion that good internal communication is instrumental in driving the relationships and behaviour of the organisation's employees and is an important factor in organisational effectiveness.

In the automotive services organisation, if the people responsible for communication are not suitably qualified in the area of communication, they will have difficulty motivating the employees to support the objectives of the organisation. One of the reasons for this will be because the channels of communication are not open,

resulting in the employees not aligning to the goals of the organisation. If this is the case, employees will not feel part of the organisation and will not understand and buy into the vision, mission and goals of the organisation. Communicators who are not suitably qualified in the area of communication will lack the skills to develop processes to maintain competent and effective communication. This will, in turn, negatively impact the relationships and behaviour of the organisation's employees, which will hamper organisational effectiveness.

#### **5.4.3 Communications Practitioner**

The employees provided various responses for their understanding of a communications practitioner. Goodman (2006) suggests that public relations practitioners or communication specialists must become aware of the new era of transparency, which is creating an opportunity for building trust through strategic organisational communication initiatives. In this regard, communication can assist top management by identifying and engaging the internal stakeholders of an organisation on the social, financial, and environmental accomplishments and actions of the organisation. Therefore, organisational or internal communication must be built around the understanding of the organisation's environment.

According to the employees in the automotive services organisation, a communications practitioner is someone who knows how to communicate, what to communicate and does so timeously. It is someone who is able to effectively communicate with people on all levels, face-to-face and in writing and who ensures that knowledge and information are shared. It is also someone who is eloquent and able to make their needs, as well as those of the department or organisation understood. A communications practitioner is an expert, practices communication and understands the barriers to communication. S/he is emotionally intelligent; communicates effectively across the board and is able to receive and provide constructive criticism. It is also, someone who bears in mind the softer, more tangible side of communication when s/he communicates.

From the above, it can be seen that the employees at all levels in the organisation have a good understanding of a communications practitioner, which is based on their past and present experiences, as well as their exposure to people who fulfil communication roles. It is also based on their current communication requirements.

#### **5.4.4 The Job of a Communications Practitioner and the Characteristics of a Good Communicator**

Various opinions about the job and characteristics of a communications practitioner are provided by the employees. The role of a communications practitioner is to help organisations develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external stakeholders through excellent communication. Verwey (*in* Lubbe & Puth, 1994:67) is of the opinion that effective public relations is dependent on effective communication. The communications practitioner communicates on behalf of the organisation with the organisation's internal and external stakeholders about organisational issues. This is done through specific channels and media.

According to Young and Post (1993), certain communication practices and characteristics can improve the ability of senior management to effect large-scale change in organisations. These include, lived messages, which is the match between words and actions. It also includes commitment to two-way communication and an emphasis on face-to-face communication. Other characteristics include the willingness to share bad news, as well as good news and to have a clear focus on employees as customers and audience. Also, a clear and compelling communication strategy that provides message context and content which helps align individual jobs with the organisation's objectives. While these characteristics were identified over twenty years ago, they are still relevant to internal communication today and may also be applied to general internal communication.

The employees in the automotive services organisation mention that the job of a communications practitioner should be to convey relevant information and effective communication, whether positive or negative, and should also receive feedback. The practitioner should be someone in a managerial position who not only provides information but also assists the departments and the organisation as a whole to work together and identify effective means of communication to ensure increased productivity. S/he should assist departments to identify people who are weak communicators and then upskill them and should also be able to communicate effectively across the board, which includes the ability to relay messages to achieve the intended outcomes.

According to the employees an effective communicator should have the following characteristics: someone who is able to listen; who is polite and patient; and who knows how to address people and read body language. Other characteristics include emotional intelligence and being a good communicator across the board, as well as

being open-minded. An effective communicator respects and understands people and does not judge. It is also someone who is approachable and honest, who maintains confidentiality. It is someone who pays attention to detail and is always taking the audience into consideration. An effective communicator knows how to adapt in relation to the audience s/he is talking to and provides more than one method of communication.

In the automotive services organisation, the employees have a clear understanding of the job and characteristics of a communications practitioner. This is based on their experiences in the workplace in general and also their past and current internal communication requirements. From the above, it can be seen that they view the role of a communications practitioner as one to help the organisation develop and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with internal and external stakeholders through excellent communication. Through certain communication practices and characteristics, the communications practitioner is able to assist senior management to improve the ability to effect large-scale change in organisations through various messages and communication channels.

#### **5.4.5 Dedicated Communications Practitioner**

Most of the employees are of the opinion that their departments *do not* require a dedicated communications practitioner. According to Verwey (*in* Lubbe & Puth, 1994:67), effective public relations is dependent on effective communication. The communications practitioner communicates on behalf of the organisation with the organisation's internal and external stakeholders about organisational issues. This is done through specific channels and media.

The automotive services organisation does not have a dedicated communications practitioner or someone who is predominantly responsible for communication. This is one aspect that hampers effective communication with internal and external stakeholders through specific channels and media. While the organisation does not currently have a dedicated communications practitioner to fulfil internal communication functions, this might be a consideration in the foreseeable future.

#### **5.4.6 The Best Communicator**

A few employees in senior positions were highlighted as the best communicators in their departments/the organisation. Watson Wyatt (2003) defines an effective communication organisation as one that excels in the following eight areas:

- Educating employees about organisational culture and values.



- Helping employees understand the business.
- Aligning employees' actions with customer needs.
- Providing employees with financial information and objectives.
- Providing employees with information on the value of their total rewards programmes.
- Explaining and promoting new programmes and policies.
- Integrating new employees into the organisation.
- Exhibiting strong leadership by management during organisational change.

Yates (2006:72) affirms that these eight areas are the communication components of organisational effectiveness. They are critical for providing employees the information, perspectives and motivation they need to take the actions that will ultimately lead to desired business outcomes. Top performing organisations engage in very specific communication practices that deliver quantifiable results. These practices comprise the Hierarchy of Effective Communication, which is discussed below.

According to the employees in the automotive organisation, the best communicators have the following characteristics: emotional intelligence, the ability to communicate on a level that the person understands and also on a personal level. They also have the ability to communicate effectively by email and face-to-face and convey negative news without making the person feel bad; and they also have the right answers and are helpful. Other characteristics include the ability to influence employees through communication, the ability to communicate in a calm manner even in difficult situations, having a hands-on approach and showing concern for others. From the above, it is clear that there are employees in the automotive services organisation who are effective communicators. These effective communicators provide the employees with the information, perspectives and motivation they need to take the actions that will lead to desired business outcomes. They also engage in very specific communication practices that deliver quantifiable results. This, in turn, results in an effective communication organisation.

#### **5.4.7 Qualification in Communication**

The majority of the employees are of the opinion that it is *not* necessary for one to have a qualification in communication to be a communications practitioner. According to Grunig and Grunig (*in* Gillis, 2006:11), two-way symmetrical communication is based on research and uses communication to enhance public participation and manage conflict with strategic publics and, as a result, produces better long-term relationships with those publics. Communication is used to negotiate with the publics, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organisation and its publics. The four dimensions: the purpose of communication being symmetrical; the direction of communication being two-way; communication

activities being mediated and interpersonal; and also communication following rules of accountability that make it ethical, underlie the two-way symmetrical communication model and also serve as characteristics of excellent communication.

Without communication qualifications, communications practitioners might not effectively use communication to negotiate, resolve conflict, and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organisation's internal and external stakeholders. Such a practitioner will not be aware of the theoretical foundations of communication and might not be aware of the dimensions of the two-way symmetrical communication model, which also serves as characteristics of excellent communication.

The findings mentioned above are relevant to the following study objectives:

- To determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception;
- To determine how employees perceive internal communication in an automotive services organisation;
- To determine the communication preferred by the employees in an automotive services department/organisation;
- To determine the role of a communications practitioner in the department/organisation.

## **5.5 Top Findings**

### **5.5.1 Internal Communication**

In the automotive services organisation, the employees have a good understanding of internal communication. Most of the employees are comfortable with the internal communication that they are receiving, because it *informs people* inside and outside about the organisation. According to the employees, *improved performance*, personally, in their departments and in the organisation as a whole, is seen as a benefit of effective internal communication. The employees find internal communication to be effective in the organisation and agree that it fits into every department. While it is not a formal platform for feedback, meetings present opportunities for employees at all levels to provide feedback on internal communication received.

Findings to pay attention to include that most of the employees are of the opinion that the people responsible for communication in their departments/the organisation are *reactive*. They also suggest communication training for employees at all levels to improve the internal communication currently being received.

### 5.5.2 Productivity

In terms of productivity, employees at all levels are of the opinion that internal communication *does* have an effect on productivity/work. Of these, most consider themselves to be *effective* communicators. According to the majority of the employees, their line managers/supervisors *do* understand their communication needs, and communication requirements differ.

The line managers/supervisors and colleagues of the majority of the employees communicate with them face-to-face and on a daily basis and communicate predominantly work-related information, which is what the employees prefer. The employees at all levels communicate face-to-face with their line managers/supervisors and colleagues and communicate predominantly work-related information, which is also what they prefer.

Employees at all levels receive internal communication from other line managers and/or colleagues from other departments. Most of the employees interviewed consider themselves to be part of the management team. The employees highlighted their job functions and core activities in their departments/the organisation. This also includes communication functions in their current positions which comprise communicating within their departments and also to external clients. All the employees interviewed are of the opinion that communication *does* help them in their work.

Aspects to pay attention to under productivity include that most of the employees *do not* want to communicate personal information to their line managers/supervisors and colleagues. Employees also do not want to receive gossip from their colleagues. According to some employees, their reporting structures are *effective*, while others find *only some parts* to be effective. The employees at all levels also provided various reasons which prevent them from carrying out their jobs effectively. While all the employees have also been exposed to internal communication in other organisations and departments, most have a *negative perception* of the communication which they were exposed to.

### 5.5.3 The Role of the Communications Practitioner

With regard to the role of the communications practitioner, the employees provided valuable feedback in terms of their understanding of a communications practitioner, the job of a communications practitioner and the characteristics of a good

communicator. Some of the employees in senior positions were mentioned as the best communicators in their departments/the organisation.

Feedback to pay attention to includes that some of the employees in the automotive services organisation are of the opinion that the responsibility for communication *has not* been given to the right people. Other employees mention that the responsibility has been given to the right people but only *some of the time*. Most of the employees interviewed are also of the opinion that the people responsible for communication *are not suitably qualified in the area of communication*. The majority of the employees believe that their departments *do not* require a dedicated communications practitioner and that it is *not* necessary for one to have a qualification in communication to be a communications practitioner.

## **5.6 Recommendations**

### **5.6.1 Internal Communication**

#### **5.6.1.1 Suggestions from Employees**

The employees in the automotive services organisation provided some suggestions to improve the internal communication which they currently receive. These include that employees at all levels should listen more to gather the information that is being relayed, rather than to listen to respond. Employees at all levels should be more specific in their communication and should learn how to address each other properly.

#### **5.6.1.2 Communication Training**

Communication training should be provided to all employees to ensure that communication remains effective. This training should also look at the importance of communication, different types of communication and provide a better understanding of communication. Employees should also learn how, when and where to relay a message.

#### **5.6.1.3 Proactive Communicators**

With regard to the reactivity of the people responsible for internal communication in the organisation; the researcher recommends that employees at all levels should ask for clarity as soon as they do not understand something. There also needs to be a sense of urgency when issues are raised and not only when something has already gone wrong. Proactivity may avoid potentially big problems. Employees at all levels should learn to be proactive in their communication. This is from making announcements to following-up on tasks. They should also request and receive

constructive feedback from their line managers/supervisors and colleagues to enhance their communication abilities.

To further strengthen the team spirit in departments, team members and colleagues who receive certain information before the others, should be proactive and share that information with the rest of the team, especially if the information is relevant to the progress of a particular task or project.

#### **5.6.1.4 Culture of Effective Communication**

To improve internal communication, a culture of effective communication should be established and maintained at all levels in the organisation. This should highlight the importance of communication, so that some employees do not view communication as an administrative intensive task. The employees in the automotive services organisation should find other, effective channels to communicate with each other to ensure that relationships are established or enhanced and that work gets done properly.

#### **5.6.1.5 Consideration**

All the employees and specifically line managers/supervisors in the organisation should be mindful that their departments/the organisation comprise people of different ages, backgrounds, strengths and abilities. Therefore, their communication efforts should consider these differences. Line managers/supervisors specifically should not rely only on email as a form of communication with their teams, but should also make use of the various channels of communication in their departments and in the automotive services organisation as a whole.

#### **5.6.1.6 Formal Platform for Feedback**

To encourage effective two-way communication at every level in the organisation, various formal and informal platforms for feedback should be communicated and provided. In their management meetings, managers/supervisors should also highlight and share what works for them in terms of successful communication with their teams.

### **5.6.2 Productivity**

#### **5.6.2.1 Informal Networks**

Line managers/supervisors and employees in general should pay more attention to the informal networks in their departments and the organisation. While positive aspects of information are shared via the informal networks, there are also negative

aspects such as gossip and rumours, which can be harmful to individuals, departments and the organisation as a whole. A culture of transparency and respect should be emphasised in the automotive services organisation.

#### **5.6.2.2 Reporting Structures**

Senior managers should review their reporting structures, as feedback indicates that only some of the reporting structures in the automotive services organisation are effective. Feedback from direct reports and colleagues (in other departments) will assist to identify what works and what does not in terms of reporting lines. This feedback will help senior managers to connect employees and internal communicators and will also ensure that all the entities in the organisation function well both independently and as part of a greater system.

#### **5.6.2.3 Working Effectively**

In the automotive services organisation, employees at all levels mention various issues that prevent them from doing their jobs effectively. Issues such as telephones, computers and systems not working, ineffective communication and miscommunication, the delivery times of colleagues, volumes of administration, the negative culture in some departments and also the lack of certain resources, such as certain skills, tools and job functions need to be addressed by management as soon as possible. Depending on the nature of the issue, regular feedback sessions are required with employees. Line managers/supervisors should also make notes of how often certain issues are raised and should deal with them accordingly. Once the issues that hinder them from doing their jobs effectively are addressed, employees at all levels will enjoy job satisfaction. This, in turn, will lead to better engagement of the employees in the organisation, which will have a positive impact on productivity/work.

#### **5.6.2.4 Roles and Responsibilities**

Line managers/supervisors should constantly be made aware of the importance of their roles in the organisation and should also be better equipped to manage their teams and to handle work-related matters more effectively. They should receive on-going training, which may include conflict resolution, effective business communication, workplace diversity and other training relevant to their jobs and the workplace. Managers should also be assigned mentors and should also be mentors to employees at junior levels in the organisation. The primary roles of managers/supervisors should be to manage and develop employees. Therefore,

managers/supervisors should not be overloaded with too many responsibilities and administrative tasks, which leave them with little to no time with their teams.

#### **5.6.2.5 Projects and Teams**

Project briefings should be scheduled well in advance and sufficient time should be allocated with the entire project team. In these briefings, the team should be allowed to raise any questions or concerns about the project, which should be noted and addressed. Managers/supervisors should not assume that employees know or understand why certain things are being done and should provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and seek clarity should this be required.

#### **5.6.2.6 Exposure to Internal Communication in Other Organisations**

Many employees at all levels have been exposed to bad or ineffective communication in other departments/organisations. They should, therefore, assist management to highlight effective and ineffective communication in their current departments. This will assist to plan for and improve the communication disseminated and received in the organisation as a whole.

### **5.6.3 The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

#### **5.6.3.1 Responsibility for Communication**

Managers in the automotive services organisation need to ensure that the responsibility for communication is given to the right people, all the time. Addressing issues such as the lack of diplomacy of some communicators, the lack of proper support and tools to communicate, negative attitudes and communication training requirements will improve internal communication and the perception of the employees. This will also assist top management to identify and engage with the organisation's internal stakeholders.

#### **5.6.3.2 Suitable Qualifications**

In the automotive services organisation, making suitably qualified people responsible for communication will assist to motivate the employees to support the objectives of the organisation. Management should ensure that the right people and qualifications are in place. By doing so, the channels of communication will be more open and employees will feel part of the organisation, will understand it and buy into its vision, mission and goals. Suitably qualified communicators will have the skills to develop processes to maintain competent and effective communication. This will, in turn, positively impact the relationships and behaviour of the organisation's employees, which will have an effect on organisational effectiveness.

### **5.6.3.3 Dedicated Communications Practitioner**

While the automotive services organisation does not currently have a dedicated communications practitioner and most of the employees mention that their departments *do not* require one; this is a role that management should consider creating in the near future. A communications practitioner could assist to enhance the internal and external communication disseminated and received in the automotive services organisation and will contribute to organisational effectiveness.

### **5.6.3.4 Effective Communicators**

In the workplace, communication needs and abilities, as well as communication platforms and technologies are ever-changing. From the findings in this study, management has an opportunity to identify and highlight effective communicators at all levels in the organisation. As with other disciplines, effective communication training should be ongoing and available to employees at all levels in the organisation, especially those employees who are less effective communicators.

### **5.6.3.5 Feedback**

It is recommended that line managers/supervisors conduct regular and even anonymous feedback sessions with employees at all levels. This will help to identify areas of ineffective communication, as well as employees who require additional communication training.

## **5.7 Significance to the Study**

As mentioned in chapter 1, the significance of this study is to make a contribution to the automotive industry in South Africa and particularly to automotive services organisations. The aim of this study, which is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in order to provide recommendations to improve internal communication in the department/organisation, was achieved. All the objectives of this study, to determine *the effects of internal communication on the productivity and perception of employees in the automotive services organisation in South Africa*, were also met, as follows:

- The effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in an automotive services organisation were gauged.
- The employees' perceptions of internal communication in the organisation were determined.
- The types of communication preferred by the employees were identified
- The role and importance of the communications practitioner in the automotive services organisation were also determined.



Through this study, the researcher was also able to determine whether the communication received was relevant to all and/or the majority of recipients and was able to identify the effectiveness of the tools of communication used to disseminate internal communication in the automotive services organisation.

The study results yield suggestions to improve the internal information and communication being received in the organisation. While there are no suggestions to utilise new tools such as social media, to disseminate internal communication, there are suggestions to utilise the current tools more effectively.

Muller (2009:75) is of the opinion that there is a missing link between the perceptions of employees, about how they can make a difference in their jobs, and the information communicated to them. With regard to the findings in this study of the employees' perceptions, line managers/supervisors and employees at all levels now have opportunities to make a difference in their jobs and the information communicated to them.

The recommendations to improve internal communication in the future are made under internal communication, productivity, and the role of the communications practitioner within the organisation. These recommendations will be submitted to management to incorporate into their planning. Effective internal communication will benefit all the employees in the organisation, when the recommendations are fulfilled. Once measures for effective internal communication are put into place, communication internally and externally will improve and will impact on and benefit the entire organisation in South Africa and, also, in terms of its links, globally.

## **5.8 Limitations**

There were a few limitations in this study. One limitation was that initially, a few participants at mid-level were not too keen to participate in the study. The reason for this was because they did not understand the value of their contribution.

A second limitation was the limited literature on research done in automotive services organisations. It has been a challenge to find literature about the automotive services industry, to serve as a basis for this study.

The third limitation was that there are various types of automotive services organisations in South Africa. This study was done in one type of organisation and, therefore, the results may be relevant to such an organisation.

## **5.9 Future Research**

Since the automotive services organisation studied comprises fewer than 150 employees, in future, every employee should be included in communication and other studies. It would be beneficial to conduct a quantitative study with every employee, to gauge how effective internal communication is throughout the organisation.

Given the limited literature available on the automotive services industry, it could benefit from various other types of research. This will enhance understanding of the industry and make more literature and knowledge available about the industry.

## **5.10 Major Recommendations**

### **5.10.1 Internal Communication**

- Listen more to understand what is being communicated; be more specific in communication and learn how to address each other properly.
- Provide communication training to all employees on an on-going basis.
- Ask for clarity, as soon as something is not understood.
- Have a sense of urgency when issues are raised and learn to be proactive in communication.
- Request and receive constructive feedback from line managers/supervisors, colleagues and direct reports.
- Establish and maintain a culture of effective communication at all levels in the organisation.
- Work on improving work relationships to ensure that work gets done properly.
- Find other effective channels to communicate with each other.
- Be mindful that departments/the organisation comprise people of different ages, backgrounds, strengths and abilities and consider these differences when communicating.
- Do not rely only on email as a form of communication with teams, but also make use of the various other channels of communication in the organisation.
- Encourage effective two-way communication at every level in the organisation. Communicate and provide various formal and informal platforms for feedback for all types of communication.
- Highlight and share what works in terms of successful communication with teams.

### **5.10.2 Productivity**

- Pay more attention to the informal networks in the various departments and the organisation.
- Review the organisation's reporting structures.
- Take note of how often certain issues are raised and deal with them accordingly.
- Become aware of the importance of each role in the organisation.
- Handle work-related matters more effectively.
- Schedule ongoing training, which may include conflict resolution, effective business communication, workplace diversity and other training relevant to the workplace.
- Have mentors and be mentors to employees at junior levels in the organisation.
- Spend more time developing employees, which should be the primary roles of managers/supervisors in the organisation.
- Schedule project briefings well in advance with sufficient time allocated with the entire project team.

- Do not assume that employees know or understand why certain things are being done and provide opportunities for employees to ask questions and seek clarity should this be required.
- Manage effective and ineffective communication in the various departments in the organisation.

### **5.10.3 The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

- Ensure that the responsibility for communication is given to the right people, all the time.
- Ensure that the right people and qualifications are in place.
- Consider creating a role for a communications practitioner in the near future.
- Identify and highlight effective communicators at all levels in the organisation.
- Ensure that effective communication training is ongoing and available to employees at all levels in the organisation.
- Conduct regular and even anonymous feedback sessions with employees at all levels.

## **5.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the research findings were compared with the literature review to *determine the effects of internal communication on the productivity and perception of employees in the automotive services industry in South Africa*. The study objectives which were met were mentioned under the headings: Internal Communication; Productivity; and The Role of the Communications Practitioner. To achieve the aim of this study, recommendations to improve the internal communication in the organisation were also made under the abovementioned headings. The limitations of the study were mentioned, as well as suggestions for future research. The research feedback will be submitted to the management of the automotive services organisation to incorporate into their planning.

There are aspects of internal communication in the automotive services organisation which are effective and others that require attention and improvement. Regular and ongoing research should be conducted by the management team for internal communication to remain current and effective. The research should be varied and should consider the different aspects and elements of the organisation and employees at all levels, internally and externally. Improvement to internal communication and organisational effectiveness should not be a once-off task.

In an ideal organisation or system, there is sufficient interaction and communication with individuals and teams of employees, to achieve the organisation's objectives. The flow of communication and information is vertical, horizontal and diagonal. Downward communication is generally accepted and, if not, it is openly and candidly questioned by employees. Upward communication through the hierarchy is also

effective. Also, managers and the people who report to them have a good working relationship because the managers know and understand their problems well.

According to Grunig (2011:2), internal communication is at the core of fundamental workplace issues, such as retention of top talent, employee engagement and change management programmes. Relationships amongst employees (in an organisation) are established through internal/employee communication. These relationships are important and determine how the organisation will function and survive.

Internal/organisational communication is a complex process and is important to the success of the organisation, especially in an ever-changing global marketplace.

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## APPENDIX A: LETTER TO COUNTRY MANAGER OF ORGANISATION

52 Birch Street,  
Mayberry Park  
Alberton, 1448

Cell: 071 671 2344  
Email: [lesleince@gmail.com](mailto:lesleince@gmail.com)

<Date>

Dear Sir/Madam

I am in the process of completing a master's degree in Public Relations Management, at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

As part of the requirements for my studies, I need to complete a mini-dissertation, which will be based on a qualitative study.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa.

I hereby request permission to undertake this research within your organisation.

I would like to approach eight (8) participants at various levels of the organisational hierarchy for in-depth interviews.

Participation in this study will be **voluntary**. While participation is very important and the input of participants is very valuable, they may choose not to participate and may also opt to stop participating in the study at any point without any negative consequences.

The study will take the format of **anonymous**, in-depth interviews, which means that the names of participants will not appear on any documentation.

The in-depth interviews will be tape-recorded and notes will be made during the course of the interviews.

The information provided by the participants during the interviews will be handled confidentially, which means that nobody will be able to identify them by their feedback. The information provided by the participants will also be securely stored.

As the researcher, I will contact the participants to arrange suitable dates and times for the in-depth interviews, should they agree to participate in this study.

The results of this study will be used for academic purposes and may also be published in an academic journal. The study findings will be made available to you. However, a summary of the study findings will be made available to the participants, should they request this.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact my supervisor, Professor Nirvana Bechan on email: [BechanN@cput.ac.za](mailto:BechanN@cput.ac.za)

Should you permit me to undertake this research within your organisation, please sign below.

Yours sincerely

Leslé Ince-Garcia

-----  
Signature

-----  
Date

## APPENDIX B: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

52 Birch Street,  
Mayberry Park  
Alberton, 1448

Cell: 071 671 2344  
Email: [lesleince@gmail.com](mailto:lesleince@gmail.com)

<Date>

Dear Participant

My name is Leslé Ince-Garcia and I am a Public Relations Management master's student, at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

As part of the requirements for my studies, I need to complete a mini-dissertation, which is based on a qualitative study.

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa.

I am hereby inviting you to participate in the study.

Should you agree to participate in this study, it will be done on a **voluntary** basis. Your participation in this study is very important and your input very valuable; however, you may opt not to participate and you may also choose to stop participating in this study at any point without any negative consequences.

The study will take the format of an **anonymous**, in-depth interview, which means that your name will not appear on any documentation.

The in-depth interview will be tape-recorded and notes will be made during the course of the interview.

The information which you will provide during the course of the interview will be handled confidentially, which means that nobody will be able to identify you by your feedback. The information provided by you/your feedback will also be securely stored.

As the researcher, I will contact you to arrange a suitable date and time for the in-depth interview, should you agree to participate in this study.

The results of this study will be used for academic purposes and may also be published in an academic journal. A summary of the study findings can be made available to you, should you request this.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact my supervisor, Professor Nirvana Bechan on email: [BechanN@cput.ac.za](mailto:BechanN@cput.ac.za)

Below, please sign that you have read and understood the information provided above and also to give your consent to participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Yours sincerely

Leslé Ince-Garcia (Researcher)

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Participant Signature

-----  
Date

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**Research topic:** *The effects of internal communication on employee productivity and perception in the automotive services industry in South Africa*

### **Section 1: Biographical data**

- Gender
- Age
- Position
- How long have you been employed in the organisation?

### **Section 2: Questions**

#### **Internal communication**

1. What do you understand by internal/organisational communication?
2. In your opinion, what is effective internal/organisational communication?
3. What are the benefits of effective internal communication?
4. Based on your understanding of internal/organisational communication, do you think that internal communication is effective in your department? Please elaborate.
5. Which area/department does internal communications fall under in your organisation?
6. In your opinion would you say that the people responsible for internal/organisational communication in your department/organisation are proactive or reactive? Please elaborate.
7. In your opinion, do you have a platform to provide feedback on internal communication received? Please elaborate.
8. What would you suggest to improve the communication that you are currently receiving?
9. Is there anything else you would like to add about internal/organisational communication?

#### **Productivity**

1. Do you think that internal communication has an effect on productivity/work? Please elaborate.
2. Would you consider yourself to be an effective communicator? Please elaborate.
3. From your point of view, do you think that your line manager/supervisor understands your communication needs? Please elaborate.
4. In your opinion, do think that your colleagues (people on the same level as you) have the same communication needs/requirements as you do? Please elaborate.
5. How does your line manager communicate with you and how often?
6. What type of information does your line manager communicate to you?
7. What type of information do you prefer to receive from your line manager and how often?
8. What type of information do you NOT want to receive from your line manager? Please elaborate.
9. How do you communicate with your line manager and how often?
10. What type of information do you communicate to your line manager?
11. What type of information do you prefer to communicate to your line manager and how often?
12. What type of information do you NOT want to communicate to your line manager? Please elaborate.
13. How do your colleagues communicate with you and how often?
14. What type of information do your colleagues communicate to you?
15. What type of information do you prefer to receive from your colleagues and how often?
16. What type of information do you NOT want to receive from your colleagues? Please elaborate.
17. How do you communicate with your colleagues and how often?
18. What type of information do you communicate to your colleagues?
19. What type of information do you prefer to communicate to your colleagues and how often?
20. What type of information do you NOT want to communicate with your colleagues? Please elaborate.
21. Do you receive internal communication from any other line manager or colleague? Please elaborate.

22. What do you think of the reporting structure in your department? Is it effective or does it need to be changed? Please elaborate.
23. Would you consider yourself a part of the management team? Please elaborate.
24. What is your job in the department/organisation? Please describe the core activities that you do.
25. What communications functions do you perform in this position?
26. What prevents you from carrying out your job effectively?
27. Do you think that communication could help you in your work? Please elaborate.
28. Have you been exposed to internal communication in another organisation or department? If so, what were your perceptions of internal communication in that department/organisation?

### **The Role of the Communications Practitioner**

1. In your opinion, do you think that the right people are responsible for communication in your department/organisation?
2. In your opinion do you think the people responsible for communication in your department/organisation are suitably qualified in the area of communications?
3. Please explain your understanding of a communications practitioner in as much detail as possible.
4. What do you believe should be the job of a communications practitioner in your department/organisation?
5. In your opinion, what characteristics should a good communicator have? Please elaborate.
6. In your opinion, does your department/organisation require a dedicated communications practitioner?
7. In your opinion, who is the best communicator in your department/organisation? Please elaborate.
8. In your opinion, is it necessary for one to have a qualification in communication, in order to be a communications practitioner? Please elaborate.
9. Is there anything else that you would like to add to the information that you have already provided in this interview?