The Communication Styles Used by Networkers from UNO, Front Row and Aim Global within De La Salle University- Dasmariñas

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Abstract

The emerging industry of multi-level marketing or also known as "networking" has acquired the title "The Business of the 21st Century." With the present economy of the Philippines, many of its people find it ideal to enter into this kind of business since the rate of unemployed and underemployed is increasing, thus, it capitalizes the word job. In recruitment and direct selling, the networkers use communication as their most prominent tool. The main objective of this study is to discern the top 3 communication styles that were used by the top 3 filipino-owned networking companies such as Unlimited Networks of Opportunities (UNO), FrontRow and Alliance in Motion Global (AIM Global) in De La Salle University- Dasmariñas. The study was limited to verbal communication styles. The study used qualitative method to undermine the selected companies. The researchers gathered data through in-depth and semi-structured interview with the top earners of selected networking companies. The researchers observed, interacted and participated together with audio recordings and detailed journals in the process of recruitment. Furthermore, this study also uncovered how these networkers use the communication styles and their methods of persuading their prospects to join the company.

Keywords: Multi-level Networking, Communication Styles, Persuasion

Introduction

Communication is a vital process in the lives of every human being. The way people communicate determines the success and failure of our goals. As there are a lot of nuances in human communication, it became more multifaceted, diverse and has numerous intentions. Communication serves as a tool with which, has influence on others, bring out changes in attitudes, motivate the people around and establish and maintain relationships with them. With regards to influencing and motivating, the communication in the field of network marketing industry is known. They have been using this viewpoint of communication to gain profit and endure the struggles in the business world.

On Network Marketing

Network marketing is a type of business opportunity that features a low upfront investment and the opportunity to sell a product directly to friends, families, and other personal contacts by means of relationship referrals and word of mouth. The sales force is compensated not only for sales they generate, but also for the sales of the other salespeople that they recruit. (*Xardel, 1993*). Most network marketing programs also ask participants to recruit other sales representatives (*Mcquail, 1994*). This recruited sales force is referred to as the participant's "downline", and can provide multiple levels of compensation (*Xardel, 1993*).

There are right ways and strategies on how to gain attention and trust every person in order to persuade them in joining networking business (*Go and Escareal-Go, 2011*). This includes the physical presentation that attains the charisma, approaching an individual through a small talk to something worthy and interrelation of each party. In these processes, it enables a situation to box the person's thinking and focus on the positivity *(Templeton et al., 2005)*.

With them, the power of speech comes the power of persuasion or the capability to influence others to assent an idea, a point, a view or a proposal. They should project knowledgeability, buoyancy and authenticity. It appeals not only to the intellect but to the emotions as well *(Villamazo, et al., 2000)*. In their efforts to present their best and most persuasive self, one may attempt an impression of maturity, assurance and trustworthiness by an appropriate front, dramatic realization and mystification *(Ross, 1995)*.

Persuasion represents a conscious attempt to influence the other party, along with an accompanying awareness that the persuadee has a mental state that is susceptible to change. One can't force people to be persuaded; one can only activate their desire and show them the logic behind your ideas. Their devotion and total commitment to an idea come only when they fully understand and buy in with their total being *(Whalen, 1996)*. The language used by the networkers is an important matter in order to persuade people in buying their products. Meaning, the effective techniques applied to maintain good image in the company with their goods and services are done through the word of mouth (*Grose, 2010*).

On Communication Styles

In building a successful network marketing business, analyzing just the words spoken on an exchange will be useful in figuring out "how" something is said since people tend to react to different styles intuitively and impulsively (*Newton, 2015*). It is not always about the content but in which way it was discussed, conversed, queried, and organized. This can be one of the complicated aspects of communication since people tend to react to different "styles" instantaneously and fervently (*Cristerna, 2014*).

With the presenter allowing others to control the conversation with consent, passive communication style is being used. These passive individuals do not retort openly to spiteful situations and just agree to whatever to avoid confrontations (*Cristerna, 2014*). With the presenter being intimidating or calculating, aggressive communication style is being used.

It embroils manipulation at all times. Individuals like these are skilled at influencing or controlling others to their own advantage. Exercising dominance in every word and tone. (*Ryan, 2014*). With the presenter appearing passive on the surface but is really acting out antagonism in a subtle, indirect way, passive-aggressive communication style is being used. Their spoken words hide an underlying message, of which the other person may be totally unaware. Manipulate by using dishonest messages (*Cristerna, 2014*). With the presenter having the confidence and clearly stating what needs to be said without resorting to games and manipulation, assertive communication style is being used. It is the sweet spot between being too aggressive and too passive (*Ryan, 2014*). As these network marketing businesses are growing today, many people are thrilled to know the secrets behind their success. Being the top network marketing companies in De LaSalle University- Dasmariñas, the researchers chose these three enterprises namely Unlimited Networks of Opportunities (UNO), Aim Global and Front Row to alleviate the knowledge on the communication styles they use. These are all direct selling companies and are targeting to persuade people to join them. Essentially, these three network marketing businesses are all established in the Philippines and are all Filipino-owned companies.

This study is significant, primarily because of its timing. This document should act as a hint into the perspective of the networkers and how they are able to convey their message towards their prospects using the communication styles. There are various communication styles but only the 4 basic communication styles were cited on this paper since those appear simpler, commonly used and highlight human relations more.

Literature Review

Elaboration Likelihood Model

The elaboration likelihood model (ELM) views persuasion primarily as the targets of persuasive messages use mental processes of motivation and reasoning to accept or reject persuasive messages. Developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), ELM posits two possible routes or methods of influence: centrally routed messages and peripherally routed messages. The more complex of the two paths is known as the central route, also referred to as an elaborated route. Centrally routed messages include a wealth of information, rational arguments, and evidence to support a particular conclusion. Centrally routed messages are much more likely to create long-term change for the recipient than are peripheral messages, however, not all individuals are capable of receiving centrally routed messages. As a result, when motivation or ability is missing from the target audience, the persuader can use the peripheral route to persuasion. Peripheral messages rely on a receiver's emotional involvement and persuade through more superficial means. Thus, ELM predicts that when the audience is unmotivated or unable to process an elaborated message, persuaders should focus on quick and easy ways to produce change. One significant drawback is that the peripheral route leads only to short-term change, if any change at all. ELM emphasizes the importance of understanding audience members before creating a persuasive message *(Petty and Cacioppo, 1986)*.

The Narrative Paradigm of Walter Fisher *(Griffin, 2012)* argues that humans are story tellers. He is convinced that we are narrative beings who experience and comprehend life as a series of ongoing narratives, as conflicts, characters, beginnings, middles, and ends and it invites listeners to interpret its meaning and assess its value for their own lives. He proposed that offering good reasons has more to do with telling a compelling story than it does with piling up evidence or constructing a tight argument. According to Fisher, the secular combination of pure logic on one hand and emotional stories stir up passions on the other.

Narrative rationality is determined by the coherence and fidelity of our stories as the world is a set of stories from which we choose, and thus constantly re-create, our lives.

Rhetoric Theory by Aristotle saw the function of rhetoric as the discovery in each case of the available means of persuasion. Rhetoric is defined as the ability to see what is possibly persuasive in every given case. This is not to say that the rhetorician will be able to convince under all circumstances rather he is in a situation similar to that of the physician: the latter has a complete grasp of his art only if he neglects nothing that might heal his patient, though he is not able to heal every patient. Similarly, the rhetorician has a complete grasp of his method, if he discovers the available means of persuasion, though he is not able to convince everybody. *(Rapp, Christof, 2010)*. Aristotle's view an orator will be even more successful when he just picks up the convincing aspects of a given issue, thereby using commonly-held opinions as premises. Since people have a natural disposition for the true and every man has some contribution to make to the truth there is no unbridgeable gap between the commonly-held opinions and what is true. This alleged affinity between the true and the persuasive justifies Aristotle's project of a rhetoric that essentially relies on the persuasiveness of pertinent argumentation.

Application to Communication Styles and Persuasion Strategies of Networkers

Persuasion leads to convincing people about a certain matter. Persuasion attempts to make a person become in a manner of embracing a viewpoint or a mindset that concerns such tradition, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Elaborate likelihood model has its advantage in the essence of networking business, the nature of persuasion is bombarded through the content of the messages being delivered. The power of words depends on how the speaker says the message. The said theory also contributes in the position of advertising in a way of endorsing products through the word of mouth and aims to encourage the consumers to buy. Through this, there will be a cash sustaining value and could possibly attract more consumers and create another negotiations.

In the Narrative Paradigm of Walter Fisher, the network marketing business is evident on how the networkers encourage their prospects to join and tell them the success of their own stories or their higher ups. Another significant factor is the stories being shared by those who have been successful in business. The testimonials of those networkers to the prospects during business meetings, sends message to the prospects that they themselves can be successful. Through the testimonies by the networkers, their prospects become more engage, so that they will be able to achieve what the top earners or the successful ones did.

The Rhetoric by Aristotle is relevant on how the networkers apply reason to imagination for the better moving of their free will. With the networker's type of persuasion, they will first use the artistic proof to highlight the chance of success then afterwards use the inartistic proof to emphasize the huge possibility. The five cannons of rhetoric are highly relevant to the networker's use of persuasion to make reasonable point about joining the company. Capturing the attention and establishing the networkers credibility using different communication styles to tell their prospects how serious they are in working with them to have a successful future. Naturalness and having a full blown knowledge is one's key to motivation.

Research Design and Methods

In this study, qualitative method will be used to investigate the networking companies within De LaSalle University-Dasmariñas specifically UNO, Front Row and Aim Global. The researchers have observed and participated in the process being done by different networkers when they are trying to convince one person into joining their company. The data gathering was divided into two sections such as in-depth interview as it is useful when

detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors is needed and executed observation and interaction with the participants throughout the research process. The tool that was used for data gathering is documentation particularly, audio recording. The researchers analyzed the data by the transcribed audio material from the individual interviews and observations will be recorded either through an audio documentation or an observation checklist.

Population

The researchers prepared a set of interview questions for the in-depth interview and another set of open-ended questions for the semi-structured interview. The participants consists of students and alumni of De LaSalle University- Dasmariñas who were Adrian Feliciano, AJ Adan and R-jin Sarmiento from UNO, Kat Olino, Vincent Tio and Fatmah Keita from Frontrow, and Baldwin Caballero, KM Villanueva and Micko Joson from Aim Global.

Findings and Discussion

Communication Styles used by Networkers

The nine networkers have answered passive-aggressive as their top characteristic when it comes to recruiting and second is aggressive, and third is assertive. From the company, Aim Global, they have said that being passive-aggressive is always a part of their recruitment process and they call it framing which is about showing their good, friendly and warm side to easily build relationship. They also see their selves as playful because they do not want to be hindered by awkwardness and they see this as an easy way to convince their prospects. They also said that comfortability is also another factor they want to highlight whenever they recruit people since in business, there is money involved and with that they need to build the trust, make their prospect at ease with them and must always portray calmness. With the company, FrontRow, they have said that being passive-aggressive is a part of any business transactions since there will always be this path that they need their prospects to go or lean to and it will always be a part of their plan to motivate people to join their company. In line with that, they mostly use word play, their cleverness in communication to attract their prospect and lean towards the path they wanted in the first place. They sometimes use humor to bait their prospects in and then grab the opportunity to discuss their business. The description of their selves varies from one adjective to the other but they all agree with making their prospect realize that they can be family and that they can be trusted. From the company UNO, they believe being scheming will help their prospects realize that they can be a lot of help to a person who dreams big and joining their company is the first action that person needs to undergone to fulfill the dreams. They are already beginning to create a mindset that they will use until the end of their recruitment process. With UNO, excitement leads them to radiate confidence while having fun, they need to look enjoyable with what they are trying to sell, which is their company to their prospects.

Talking to their prospects seemed to be easy for them because of the characteristics they portray. They claim that naturalness attracts their prospects to feel like they are already close as well as the familiarity even though they just met for the first time. They mostly build their prospect's curiosity to be highly encouraged with what their business is all about. They call it anchoring, which is to feel connected and relatable to their prospects. They open topic about their prospect's lives to assess what could be the best way to approach them. They want to empathize and understand their prospects better. They are just maximizing what their prospects could get when they join their company by relating the experiences that they now hold based on their observation and understanding of the prospect's characteristics and knowing what factors they could use to persuade their prospects into joining.

They said that even though they agree with jokes as a technique, they also use aggressive style as it is the most formal way of inviting prospects and sharing their proposition, as well as, they could get the feeling of authority and respect which they need to earn for the prospects to feel that they are genuine and they tell the truth. They feel that they must not fail to deliver the results that the prospects need to see in order for them to be encouraged. With high regard with respect, they are being dominant to earn that respect in return. Building their credibility is quite difficult since most of them are getting negative feedbacks. Still, they know how to handle these objections by taking time to explain to their prospects what they deemed the prospects need to know. They usually show evidence of their company's legalities and evidence that they are really earning lots of money. They let their prospects say everything they thought they knew about the company because these networkers are certain that after those bursts, their prospects will be all ears of what they have to say. Sometimes, some prospects are still difficult to persuade. In these kinds of times, they use their prospect's words against them to make them realize that there is more about their business than they knew. They claim that it is not to create a conflict but to let them see the positive side of their proposition. They also use reverse psychology to have their offer more appealing and comparison to highlight their proposition.

These networkers claim that even though they are passive-aggressive and aggressive, they can still be assertive by being confident and clearly stating what needs to be said. There is still a truth from it by discussing what their business and products are all about. They said that they are already confident in what they are doing because they have been in the business for far too long, they have already earned a lot and they have already helped numerous people. They furthered that confidence must always be shown when they are recruiting because some people use this as a basis for deciphering the truth from the lie. All of them said that they are just sharing the opportunity so they are not hiding anything from the prospects and just wants them, their prospects, to understand what their business is all about. They claim being straightforward. When they do meet-ups, they tell immediately that they will be talking about a business which is networking. Consistency for them is one of the factors the prospects want to see when they are explaining their products and compensation.

The Way the Networkers Use the Communication Styles
With how the networkers use the communication styles when recruiting prospects, they mostly dominate the conversation or being aggressive and do sweet talks or being passive-aggressive. Based on their answers and the researchers' observation, these two are interconnected but also interchangeable depending on the situation they are in.

They dominate the conversation to attract authoritativeness and respect since they are the ones who know everything about the business and the products. They shape the environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results. The reliability and dependability must ooze from their personality to show their mastery in the network. They want their prospects to see them as knowledgeable and already an expert with the business they are offering as well as they must phrase their sentences according to what can affect most their prospect's minds. Also, they said that some prospects need to see their determination in recruiting them and their capability to do so. They do not want to be hindered by any external factors when recruiting, though they think some would have an impact, still, they do not want to limit themselves. For them, their business is for everyone who wants to earn money; and when people see an opportunity to have money, they will immediately grab it. They just think that with every factor, they are things that they need to consider. Based on the researchers' observation, they mostly ask questions that are answerable only by yes and/or favorable to their proposition to send a sense of leverage among the prospects that they are right.

They sweet talk the prospects without them hinting because this is a part of their technique which is already incorporated in every word and sentences they use. As the way passive-aggressive communicators deliver their sentiments, they usually talk with sugary sweet voices and touch others as pretends to be warm and friendly. Since mostly, they are entering that hostile part of people's mind about networking, they do sweet talk to change their views about things and to open their minds about the business that they are offering. Additional with their sweet talks is the materials that they are using as evidence to bridge the gap either between them and their prospects or the successful persons and their prospects.

They mostly show pictures of successful persons because they want to create an image that their prospects will also have the same fate as their higher ups if they join the company. They also call this bridging, which is leading their prospects to think that they could also prosper in the business. Moreover, they use the pictures of activities which they mostly post on their social media accounts to touch the curiosity of their prospects. They said that a legitimate networking company has products to offer so they also show the product testimonials to their prospect to make way for the possibility of them joining the company. Moreover, the materials will be based on the needs and wants of the prospects, according to the networkers.

These networkers also have their difficult times convincing their prospects to join and they are all fond of saying, "we don't please people," but their explanations seems in contrast with it. When asked further, they created different strategies to satisfy their desire to share the opportunity. With this, they will do instant rapport to build the trust and the relationship they desire as future business partners, as they say. Making the person curious and making them realize their needs and wants are some of the best tactics they use. Another is they let their uplines do the talking and explaining of the business more.

The Way the Networkers Persuade the Prospects

Goal setting is their most effective tactic when it comes to persuading their prospect since they claim that it must be automatically done in any business. To make them relatable to their prospects, they share experiences connected to their prospect's interest. They will tell their own stories which are always from rags to riches, as they say. They will share their own visualization of what they want to have and want to be. Since the foundation of their relationship is trust, comfortability and familiarity, they chose safe topics as their second most effective way because they asserted that this is a people's business so the right handling and good attitude towards their prospect are the things they value. The approach must always be humanized as well show emotion in analyzation and knowing the interest of their prospects are the two challenges they need to fulfill to persuade them to join. Last but not the least is the show off. Not to boast but show proof that they are earning money with their business. They claim that this is one of most concrete way to encourage their prospects to have a taste of their business.

With the methods they use to influence the prospects to join, they mostly responded with building trust and friendship, making the stories relatable to their prospect by focusing on the interest, goals and motivational factors the prospects have while baiting themselves. The networkers persuade their prospects using the strategies of reverse psychology, comparing actions or comparison, refutation, self-actualization and arousing emotions. With reverse psychology, they often use this when prospects are hard to persuade and they think that there is a 50 percent chance that they will be able to sway the prospect's point of view. With comparative-advantages pattern, most of the time, they give their prospects a scenario which the solutions is what they want the prospects to do. A participant compared a 6k worth of shoes or a 6k worth if investment. The participant explained that if it will be shoes then no money will ever come back but if the prospect invest it to their company, he could even get

12k in return. With refutation, they use this for prospects that are in the worst case scenario to make them realize that these networkers are the experts. They have this term called "basag" which makes their prospects contemplate with what they have said because the gravity of the question returned to them is hefty. With self-actualization, they portray and believe that they are someone with good heart and so this is reflected by how their prospects see them. With arousing the emotion, they plead to their prospects' ego. The background of the prospect is already established from the beginning so they will use this as the prospects' weakness to sway his or her thoughts.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to know the top 3 communication styles that the networkers use, their ways of using it and their methods in persuasion. The researchers conclude the study and acquired the following results: The top communication style used by networkers is passive-aggressive style as they claim that this style is a must for any businesses as they are always scheming and they always sweet talk their prospects into joining the company. The second is the aggressive style because they see it as the most formal way to invite a prospect as they want to get the feeling of authority and respect, thus, to be seen as knowledgeable. The third is the assertive style because they claim that they are confident in stating what needs to be said and they tell immediately that their proposed business is networking. With how these networkers use these communication styles, they use passive-aggressive style and aggressive style. These two styles are interrelated and interchangeable depending on the situation. With their methods of persuasion, they use reverse psychology, comparing actions or comparison, refutation, self-actualization and arousal of emotions.

Limitations

A study of networking can result in one joining the company and being more efficient and effective in the said field. However, the researchers put more emphasis on the aspects of communication present in the three specific networking companies namely UNO Front Row and Aim Global.

It was not within the scope of this paper to give an in-depth analysis of all the aspects of communication strategies. It was limited only to verbal communication styles and persuasion strategies of these networkers. The study pointed out that there may be other factors besides the communication styles used by the networkers that may affect the interpretation and adoption of prospects.

In addition to that, the researchers were open and willing to adjust whenever there are new and additional information during the span of the study to a limited extent only. The researchers' major concern will usually be in the variety of communication styles found in the gathered data. When researchers reported their findings, some raw data (e.g. direct quotations from participants) as well as analyses of the data based on what was gathered were included.

Implications

The study aims to discover the communication styles of the networkers in the Universities in Dasmariñas, Cavite which would be useful for persons who are interested in joining the network marketing or multi-level marketing. These include not only employees, professionals, and businessmen who want to have a part-time job to earn extra income but also students.

The study is beneficial for aspiring leaders and those who would want to establish their own business. Networkers are not only persuaders but are also good leaders especially

in handling the activities of their recruits. The researchers aim to prove that everyone may adopt this kind of leadership in different facets.

This paper is also beneficial to future researchers who wish to generate and prove further study, emphasis and justification on matters which the researchers were not able to do due to the given time frame and other limitations.

This study is also beneficial to students and professor as they will have an additional knowledge as to how to communicate effectively with each other. This can also be useful for the professors to motivate their students to join various school activities, to come regularly in class and to participate well in class. With regards to dealing with people and conflict, those are already part of people's lives though this study will also be helpful as to knowing the communication style needed to be used when dealing with other people or preventing conflicts.

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