Chapter 8

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN KRL

Management today is explained as being in part a social process - a process of confining techniques with men for the mutual benefit of both. With the growth of human relations movement, increasing emphasis has been given to the employee as a 'whole man'. No longer is he viewed solely as an economic tool but, rather as a human being who is driven and controlled by diverse elements of society and who has fears, frustrations, expectations, and desires which affect his total make-up. How he performs on his job (his efficiency and productivity) are dependent as much, if not more, on the external aspects surrounding his work place as on the tools and materials he uses.

As human beings all employees in an organisation do have an inner urge to communicate with their family members, colleagues, and friends. They are spending their eight-hour shift at work often engaging in communication of one kind or other on official matters. After this shift job an employee spends a sizeable amount of time in communication with his fellow members of society outside the realm of the work situations. Such communication activities are aimed at establishing, nurturing and maintaining human relations. These endeavours play an important role in the life of an employee.

This chapter deals with such non-official, informal, social communication happening in KRL in a systematic manner. Some of them are initiated by the
management, while a few are voluntary activities of employees themselves. While Part A of this chapter deals with the face-to-face social communication activities, Part B deals with JwalalDhwani the house-magazine. The activities highlighted are 'social interaction programme' (SIP), 'discover refinery programme' (DRP), 'Amity' friendship group, and 'Jwalagiri', the housing colony as a centre of social communication. All these activities had been participated by the researcher using the ethnographic method.

Part A: Face-to-Face Communication

8.1 Social Interaction Programme

In order to create opportunity for the employees and their families to come together and communicate in a group in an informal setting KRL was running a weekly activity called Social Interaction Programme (SIP). The SIP was introduced in 1992. This was an official, company-initiated programme which made use of the geographical advantage the organisation had.

The SIP was a simple activity in which a bus was provided to employee groups every week to go on a picnic programme free of cost. But it was a systematic, carefully planned and implemented programme aimed at fostering such values like equality, friendship and understanding among the target group - employees and their families.

The programme was co-ordinated by the public relations section of the company. One bus was provided for a group of employees for organising a
picnic on each Sunday. A minimum number of thirty members consisting of employees, their spouses and children was a prerequisite. Though any employee could become a group leader, it was a must that at least one officer was accompanying the members. He would act as a representative of the management to take on the spot decision in a contingency situation. The group had to be a cross-section of employees working in various departments and sections in different types of jobs. This meant that trade groups or other established groups who were already organised by virtue of their common nature of tasks performed could not avail the facility.

The bus could be booked through the public relations section up to two months in advance using a prescribed application form. The group leader who booked the bus had to submit the list of names and the information on the sections and the departments they were working along with the signature of each employee who was intending to participate. Through the head of the department in which the group leader belonged, the completed application should reach the co-ordinating section at least fifteen days prior to the date of journey. Besides the consent of the head of the department, normally the DGM, the application should have the written willingness of the accompanying officer. The time and place of commencement of journey, details of route and stoppages, expected time of return, pick-up and drop-off points, total distance of the trip and the final destination were all had to be recorded in the application.
In case more than one group applied for the allotment of a bus to travel on the same date preference was given to the group in which the majority of members had not yet availed the facility. An employee was not permitted to make use of the SIP more than once in six months. The majority of members were to be travelling with their families. Hence bachelors alone could not form a group and undertake a trip under the scheme.¹

The bus could leave Jwalagiri not earlier than 5 a.m. and had to return positively before 10 p.m. It was the responsibility of the travelling officer to ensure that the stipulated time was kept. Defaulters were banned to avail the facility in the future. However, so far no such case had been reported. All expenses, like food and refreshments, had to be borne by the groups themselves. Once the bus returned to Jwalagiri after the trip it could not be taken out later even if it was before 10 p.m. The travel to the picnic spot destination had to be on the shortest route.

The total kilometre run for a trip was not to exceed five hundred. It was not permitted for journeys outside the state of Kerala and was not allowed to club it with a journey outside the state. When the SIP was started picnic spots were not specifically mentioned. At that time employees could go virtually anywhere in the state. Later it was found that the facility was being misused for attending marriages of their friends and colleagues, defeating the purpose of the scheme.
Hence the company notified the locations of prominent picnic spots in Kerala and the groups had to avail any of the locations specified in the notification, which itself covered twenty of the prominent spots declared by the Kerala State Tourism Department. They include Alleppey, Thattekad, Kalady, Malampuzha, Peechi, Thenmala, Wagamon, Andhakaranazhi, Cherai, Kodanad, Munnar, Peringalkuthu, Thommankuthu, Athirapalli, Vazhachal, Greater Kochi, Kumarakom, Nelliyampathi, Thattekad, Trissur.²

Once the members, who might not know each other before, though working in the same organisation, entered the bus, there became a common purpose, as they were travelling together, singing together and experiencing nature together. The masks and inhibitions the participants had in the beginning were slowly seen melting and the ice was breaking. The strangers were slowly becoming acquaintances and later friends. The ‘false status’ feelings prevalent in such a hierarchical type organisation slowly used to break-down in the process. The games they organised, the music they sang and the food they shared were signs of sharing of feelings that they cared each other.

Once the group reached the picnic spot after a couple of hours drive the members were exposed to the beauty of nature. They could enjoy whatever smoothening feelings of the beautiful tourist attractions could provide. This was in an atmosphere of being in the company of a group of newly-found friends who all shared one unifying factor, of being associated with KRL directly. Even after
they return the experiences could linger in their minds for long and the friendships were seen continuing further.

Once the journey was completed, the group leader had to submit a report on the prescribed form with the names and signatures of all those who actually undertook the trip, to the co-ordinating section. They had to give a written feedback on the trip also.

During the financial year 1999-2000 there were twenty-nine trips actually performed. Not all Sundays of the year were made use of by employees because Kerala had heavy rains for four to five months a year and during rainy days people were not generally interested in travelling on leisure particularly with their families. The total number of participants for the SIP during the period was 1395. Employees from all the departments had participated. Most of the spots mentioned above had been visited by some group or other from the organisation, under SIP. KRL had spent an amount of Rs. 1.35 lakhs for the scheme which was towards bus hire charges. (Appendix 4)

An important feature of the programme was that it was being continuously monitored to see whether there was any deviation occurring from the real purpose it was meant for. Corrections were done immediately to plug any loopholes as and when they were noticed. It was found that though at the beginning of journey there might be many strangers in the group while on return the bus carried a group of friends.
The written feedback given on the picnic experience at the end of the programme was studied for the year 1999-2000 and it was found that all the participants (100 per cent) stated that they enjoyed the programme. In the open-ended suggestions column some participants suggested that additional amenities like food, drinking water and channel music inside the bus could also be arranged by the company. These suggestions were not implemented by the management as they felt that the participants should contribute to some degree in arranging the programme in tune with the group preferences.

8.2 Discover Refinery Programme

Another social communication activity which was being organised by the company was the Discover Refinery Programme (DRP). It provided an opportunity for an employee, irrespective of his grade or nature of job he performed, to participate in an organisational tour programme, along with the members of his family and other close relatives. Normally visitors were not allowed inside the plant due to security reasons.

A typical DRP started with the arrival of employees and their relatives who had got prior confirmation of participation at a common assembly point outside the main entrance of the refinery. There was a bus with a banner in the front on which it was written Discover Refinery Programme, waiting there to carry the participants which included the employees, their close relatives like spouses, children, parents, brothers and sisters. There were a few “welcome”
sign-boards displayed outside the bus and at a few other places. At 9 am the bus started off to the administration building. The group was led by one member of the organising team. On arrival there they were taken to the main conference hall of the company.

The next phase of the DRP was an audio-visual presentation and a discussion on the various activities of the organisation. This related to the origin and stages of growth of the company, different functions and processes there, main strengths, achievements, objectives, goals and the future plans.

Details of various petroleum products manufactured along with their daily uses and applications were illustrated in the presentation. After the simple, yet serious presentation for around 45 minutes a discussion session followed. Doubts of the visitors were cleared. Light refreshments were also served there.

The next phase of the programme was the plant visit. The programme co-ordinator took the group in the bus and he conducted a visit to the factory premises scattered in about seven hundred acres. While travelling, a running commentary functions of various units were given. Here also the members of the organising team clarified the doubts of the members.

The DRP was organised once in a month, that was, on the second Saturday of each month. Though all Saturdays were holidays for the company the DRP was conducted on a second Saturday to enable those relatives of employees who were working in other organisations where only second
Saturdays were holidays. To participate in the programme the employee or any one in his family could register the name at the public relations section, which was the co-ordinating agency. Normally one trip could accommodate around 40 persons. If there were more than 70 aspirants on any one day of the programme then two buses were arranged with separate time slots. More than two trips were not conducted on a single day due to administrative reasons. If all the seats for one DRP was full an aspirant could register for the forthcoming month. Normally the wait-list was prepared for the forthcoming three or four months. The wait-listed member could get priority if any cancellations were made by confirmed members. Though the DRP was co-ordinated by the PR section assistance for technical presentation was taken from technical department. The task was performed by the co-ordinating officers on a voluntary basis without getting any material reward or remuneration.

The main objective of the DRP was to associate the family members of its employees, at least indirectly, with the activities of the organisation. Such a programme was intended to make them familiar with the magnitude of the company’s activities and also the role played by the organisation in making the lives of common people better. For example, one aspect stressed in the presentation was that every drop of petroleum products like petrol, diesel, kerosene or cooking gas available in the state of Kerala was coming out of this company and hence its presence was everywhere visible in the form of running
motor cars, or a burning stove, or a lit lamp and so on. This could enable the family members to understand the importance of the organisation in which one's husband, father, son, brother or sister was employed. For the employee this could result in an enhanced status in the eyes of his family members.

To assess whether this objective was met, a survey was conducted among the members, other than the employee participants, immediately after completion of the trip. In this random survey which was like a gallop poll only two simple questions were asked. One whether they liked the programme or disliked it and the second one was the reason for liking or disliking.

Out of the 480 members who had availed the DRP during 2000, one hundred were included in the written impact assessment survey. Except one participant all the others (ninety nine per cent) said they 'liked the programme'. About eighty per cent of the participants stated that they liked the programme because it was 'interesting and informative'. In the open-ended feedback form many of them explained how the presentation as well as the plant visit enhanced their understanding of the organisation and its activities. Being a rare opportunity to visit such a restricted place most of them felt proud of being indirectly associated with such an organisation.

More than what was stated in the survey, a sense of happiness and pride was visible on the faces of participants who were mostly women, children and
old persons, in the four such DRPs which were observed as a participant by the researcher.

Another outcome of the DRP was that it gave an opportunity to the family members of the employees to spend some time together on a specific mission. They often came as strangers but departed after a couple of hours as acquaintances and in some occasions as friends. They felt that there existed an invisible thread of commonality connecting them all with the organisation.

Though the cost involved for DRP mainly for the bus and light refreshments was not much, the impact of the programme in establishing a positive association with the organisation seemed to be high.

8.3 The ‘Amity’

The ‘Amity’ was a voluntary fraternity group consisting of 15 families who were employees of KRL in which spouses of employees and their children were also active members.

Started in 1990, ‘Amity’ was intended to create opportunities for the member families to meet together, communicate freely and to socialise in an atmosphere of friendliness, understanding and equality. The objective and philosophy of Amity were stated in its bye-law as follows:

In this modern society occasions to meet together even in the family of each one of us have become very rare. It is mainly happening because of our busy life and also due to lack of celebrations and ceremonies. No doubt, occasions do occur, but celebrations are avoided either due to finance problem or due to
hardship in organising. It is in this context the need for an ‘Amity’ arise. Moreover, in our nucleus family set-up, our children seldom get friends of the same age-group to get along with. Our meeting together would definitely be an opportunity for our children too.

The specific aim of Amity was to strive for overcoming the above-mentioned difficulties by arranging get-togethers, picnics and other welfare activities in the interest of the group. But their flagship activity was a get-together called ‘Amity meet’.

When the Amity was started it was decided to restrict the total strength to just ten families though later it was decided to increase it to 15. The activities of a year were co-ordinated by four members who were selected on a rotation basis, based on the principle that each member got an opportunity in organising and co-ordinating the common activities. The four co-ordinators comprised of a group leader, co-ordinator, lady co-ordinator and a child co-ordinator. They used to meet in every January to chalk-out programmes to be implemented during that year and a tentative list of programmes was prepared and distributed among the members, who were also called ‘Amitians’. Normally in a year at least five ‘Amity meets’ were organised.

An ‘Amity meet’ was a regular family get-together arranged at the residence of a member. The co-ordinators had to decide the specific activities like food and refreshments, competitions and cultural programmes to be organised, in consultation with the member-host. The members had to confirm
their participation in advance to the group leader, for each meet. Such meets were organised almost in every other month, normally on a Saturday evening. It started off with a general introduction by the co-ordinator and then the programme co-ordinator for the meet took over in conducting the programme. Then there was the invocation song, followed by variety entertainment programmes by the members. There were individual items and group ones like music, skit and quiz programmes. These would go on for about two hours. It concluded with an elaborate dinner, all prepared at the venue with the assistance of few other members. The host family could invite two non-member families also who were mostly the immediate neighbouring families. It was intended to be for keeping a good neighbourhood relations.

Expenses were divided equally and shared by the members who had confirmed their participation. It was the responsibility of the group-leader to intimate the amount to be shared by the members. The same procedure was being followed in the case of all other activities of the Amity which involved financial expenditure.

The Amity organised interaction programmes like picnics and leisure holidays. It also made use of the company arranged social interaction programme. Some of the other activities organised by ‘Amity’ in the years 1999 and 2000 are given below:
A children’s programme called ‘Ithirineram’ (a little time) in which the participants could spend a day with a popular writer in children’s literature, talking to him and listening to him was organised. Another activity was a greeting system by which birthday greeting cards prepared by Amitians themselves, were sent to children in Amity. A system to remind the members to greet themselves on wedding anniversary days was a popular activity. Amity stickers for pasting on cars and scooters were introduced. Informative and interesting books were procured in bulk and distributed to members, at discount rates. Amity News which was a bi-monthly newsletter was published to disseminate news relating to the members. Old clothes were collected by the members and distributed to a nearby leprosy hospital. ‘Mega anniversary cards’ were presented to those members who completed mile-stones like decades of their married lives. To encourage reading habits among children a ‘reader of the year’ award was given. The Amity had provided financial support to poor children for buying books and uniforms. Group-photos were taken by the members and they were displayed prominently in the homes of Amitians.

The activities of the Amity were all centred around socialisation for promoting harmony among its members. It was indirectly helping the members to become responsible individuals which in turn had a salutary effect so far KRL was concerned though the organisation was no way involved in the conduct of the activities of the Amity.
The success story of Amity in carrying out their activities regularly for the past one decade could be attributed to the general feeling of alienation felt by the people in the present day society where electronic communication technology like satellite television and computers used to take away the time they had been utilising for socialisation. Such experiments do create a feeling of interdependence which could help the social actors to maintain their own cultural identity.

8.4 Departmental Get-togethers

KRL had a regular official programme to felicitate smooth communication among members of each department. This was a department level assembly system which involved all levels of employees working under different sections within a department. Each department had to organise at least one such get-together in a year. The programme was started in 1999. The overall responsibility for organising the programme rested with the head of each department.

The salient features and procedural aspects of the programme are as follows:

The heads of departments had to initiate action to conduct the get-togethers involving all categories of employees. In the case of departments where they worked on continuous rotating shifts get-togethers had to be organised more than once to enable participation of all employees. An amount of
Rs.100 each per participating employee was made available to the head of the department by the company towards expenses like food, refreshment and others for organising the get-together. The company-owned club auditorium as well as the guest house hall were made available for conducting the event, free of rentals. However, departments were free to organise the events at outside locations, but within the financial limit mentioned above. It was the prime responsibility of the head of each department to successfully organise the event to encourage interaction among all employees in his department. They could also invite general managers and directors of their functional areas. A report of the activity conducted had to be submitted to the HRM department.

All the departments had conducted the get-togethers at least once a year. While some departments conducted the events for the sake of conducting, most of the departments organised in a manner envisaged under the scheme. A few departments organised the get-togethers involving family members of the employees. In such cases part of the cost was shared by the employees themselves.

In the most successful case the programme was planned in great detail in a participative manner by a committee with representatives from each section after several rounds of discussions to ensure active involvement of all members. There was a high participation level and most of the members came with their family members. It started at six in the evening on a Saturday and went on till
ten in the night. There were games and cultural programmes involving employees and family members. There were a number of activities like group music and group competitions. At the end there was a formal dinner.

The least successful one was conducted on a working day immediately after the office hours. Though there were a few cultural programmes performed by individual members of the department it lacked collective thinking, planning and co-ordination. Family members were not involved at all. It was more for meeting the target of conducting the event than for meeting the ultimate purpose of fostering real interaction and communication among all employees in a department. Because family members were not involved, it was more of an extension of an intra-departmental official meeting.

The departmental get-together programme, though well-conceived, had not taken off as an effective social communication activity in the organisation. This was mainly because of the hierarchical nature of the administration of the whole exercise. While SIP and DRP were not considered by the rank and file as official programmes of the company this programme was viewed by the employees as an activity of the management. They did participate in the get-togethers often unwillingly. But the programme could take-off well with minor changes in the implementation strategy using psychological tools for handling human behaviour.
8.5 The Jwalagiri

As an employee welfare measure KRL had set-up a housing colony called 'Jwalagiri' (Flame on Mountain) in which there were housing quarters, recreational facilities, guest-house, club facilities and a school.

These facilities could also be viewed as centres of social communication. The geographical proximity of dwellings was creating a feeling of living in one village where the members had common work style, shared common civic facilities and recreational activities.

Hence the housing quarters, play grounds, colony bus shelters, club house and the school were platforms where employees and their families communicate among themselves laterally.

In the club house almost all employees were members. It provided indoor recreational facilities as well as a small restaurant. Besides indoor games facilities, it had an outdoor park for small children. The club used to elect its office-bearers annually. A number of programmes like competitions, festival celebrations, cultural shows, film shows and drama festival were organised by the club regularly.6

There were a number of outdoor recreational facilities like football, volleyball, basketball, cricket and tennis courts.

The cultural programmes as well as sports and games competitions were organised by the club, individual as well as group activities attracted not only
residents of Jwalagiri but also those employees who were living outside the colony. The annual sports competitions and the inter-house athletic meet drew a large number of participants. The monthly film shows organised by the club in which feature films were screened also attracted a large number of employees and their family members.

The colony had 449 quarters housing employees of all grades. The company guest house and the corporate training centre were also housed inside the colony. Halls of different sizes were available there with all modern facilities. In addition to these there was also a large auditorium in the school premises where common programmes could be hosted.

The school was another centre of social communication in the organisation. Students were all children of KRL employees. Its total student strength was 1038 and the teacher strength 61. The school followed the Central Board of Secondary Examination syllabus. It had well-equipped classrooms, library, computer laboratory and other infrastructure facilities.

Of late there was a tendency among the employees to live outside ‘Jwalagiri’ in their own houses as the company was giving sufficient soft loan for house construction to employees. As per the stipulation, on completion of construction they had to leave the colony. Hence mostly youngsters and juniors in official hierarchy only are living in Jwalagiri thereby limiting the degree of social communication.
Part B: The Print Medium

8.6 JwalaDhwani: The House -magazine

A house-magazine is a common communication tool made use of by most of the organisations, in the world, particularly in the corporate sector. It is also identified in other names like ‘house journal’, ‘news letter’, and ‘news-bulletins’. These regular, printed publications can be published exclusively for employees or for outside public or it could be a combined one which caters to both employees and outsiders. In other words, a house-magazine can have ‘internal public’ or ‘external public’ as target groups.

The main function of a house-magazine meant for employees is to establish and maintain mutual understanding and good-will among themselves and between them and the institution. It can be equally important as a motivator for the organisation itself and as a means of arriving at a consensus on what really matters. The production and publication aspects of the house-magazine are handled by the public relations personnel in close co-ordination with human resources management group.

JwalaDhwani had its beginning as newsletter called CRL Newsletter in 1966 which was a couple of cyclostyled sheets stapled together which contained official information from the management to the employees. It was not regularly published. In 1986 it transformed as a monthly publication in the conventional house-magazine style, with a lot of management information carrying pictures
and news item relating to top officials in the organisational hierarchy. It was following the conventional approach of journalism in its communication philosophy.

In 1992 the magazine started bringing-in professionalism in production aspects like typesetting, printing and circulation and in the editorial aspects like reporting, feature-writing and editing. Till 1997, though the magazine was published on every month it was released around fifteenth of each month. Then it was decided in 1998 that the magazine should be published on the first day of every month to increase ‘shelf-life’ of the publication. During the study period all the issues were published mostly on the first of every month and other occasions a couple of days ahead of schedule. No issue was released after the due date.

The punctuality of the house-magazine was bench-marked with that of commercial journalistic publications and the deadlines were kept as sacrosanct. Regarding the contents of the publication there had been a shift in emphasis in the philosophy of communication from the conventional journalism style to an alternative manner since 1992. Every year the magazine was moving towards more a democratic publication concentrating on the ordinary people in the organisation, than the powerful elite segment.

The company spent Rs.5.25 lakhs a year for bringing out this publication, which the management feels is a powerful means of employee communication.
The publication is mostly brought out by a large group of employees as a purely voluntary exercise and centres around the lives and activities of ordinary members of KRL family. The declared philosophy of the magazine is to be a platform for democratic communication stressing on giving a 'voice of the voiceless' in the organisation, and to foster such values like equality, peace, harmony, love and friendship among all members. Consequently the elite members within the organisation get only a secondary importance while the ordinary people get a preference in the coverage. In one issue of the magazine names and pictures of a large number of employees and their families are published so also their news, views opinions and aspirations.

The details of the magazine relating to the technical specifications, how it is run, and the contents are discussed below.

Technical specifications

The size of the publication was quarter demi having 32 pages. It was a tri-lingual publication which contained write-ups in English, Malayalam and Hindi. The type-setting, lay-out and designing were all done in computer. The printing process used was offset. While eight pages, including the cover pages and centre-spread were printed in multi-colour, all other pages were in two-colour format. The total number of copies printed in a month was 2750. The copies were distributed to all employees, retired employees and a few close
business associates free of cost. Circulation was done using internal mailing system in the case of employees and others using government postal system.

**Editorial Board**

*JwalaDhwani* had an editorial board consisting of four employees, besides the editor. Of the four members two were officers and the other two workmen. Women representation had also been ensured. Of the two officers one was a promotee officer working as deputy manager in the research and development department. A masters in chemistry he was interested in social communication. The other officer member was a deputy general manager heading the department of materials. He was a mechanical engineer who had experience in various other departments in KRL as well as elsewhere, including assignments in teaching and managing training. One workman nominee was working in the human resource management department in the area of industrial relations. A graduate in commerce he was known as a good as a speaker interested in writing particularly in Malayalam. The lady member who was a graduate in science was known as a person who was highly effective in her interpersonal communication skills. The editorial board members were nominated by the editor who was a deputy general manager in charge of corporate communications and administration. He had a masters degree in economics and in journalism, worked earlier in the fields of public relations, journalism and teaching.
The Correspondents

The magazine had 18 correspondents representing various departments in the company. Of them only five were officers, and two were working as teachers in the company-run school. The others were workmen. The correspondents represent the rank and file of the readers. Like editorial board members they also were working in different jobs having a variety of educational background like graduation in engineering or in arts and science, diploma in engineering and matriculation along with certification in industrial trades.

The correspondents were nominated by the editor. Though they did not have any fixed tenure those not showing keen interest were changed to give opportunity to new faces. The correspondents did not need to have any high flair for writing or other literary qualities. Only employees having a positive attitude towards people, interested in matters concerning others and those who were good at their work in the company were selected as correspondents. Whenever vacancies arose suggestions from existing correspondents were considered and then the suggested person’s background was studied. Only those who were interested in working on a voluntary basis without any materialistic expectations were selected. Once selected after getting their oral willingness the new correspondent used to undergo an informal induction programme in which they got to know closely how the magazine worked and the philosophy of the publication. Sometimes special get-togethers were arranged with senior
correspondents and editorial board members in which their experiences were shared.

The primary responsibility of the JwalaDhwani correspondents is to be the ambassador of the magazine in his department. He acts as the eyes and ears of the magazine, keenly observing activities of the people to find out those information which could be of interest to others in the company. He collects those types of information that could be published in the magazine. It may be a trivial information or a major one. If it is trivial, he himself notes it down and sends it to the JwalaDhwani desk in the PR section. He tips-off major happenings or those items which could be made into features or profiles which are then covered by experienced reporters or sometimes by the professional PR personnel, who must have had professional training and experience in journalism.

The correspondents do not get any sort of remuneration for the work they are doing in this connection. However, they get recognition as their names appear prominently in the magazine every month. Moreover in their respective departments they feel proud when their colleagues approach them for getting news about them published in the publication. They get the same satisfaction a reporter of a normal publication gets.

Once a year one correspondent is selected as the best correspondent and he gets a plaque and citation at the colourful annual award function.
The Monthly Meeting

A combined meeting of all correspondents, editorial board members and a few other employees who are assisting in the production of the publication is held every month at a common place, which is held at the executive canteen room. This hour long meeting is held on the first Tuesday of every month at 3.00 pm. An invitation letter is sent to each participant to enable themselves to get released from their work-spots. The editor is the convenor of the meeting.

All the members sit around a big table thickly packed in the small airconditioned room undisturbed by external noises or distractions away from their workspot. The setting is very informal.

Though there is no agenda or minutes for the meeting there is a standard pattern in the conduct of the meeting. It starts off with evaluation of the previous issue of the magazine. Each member has to speak out on the feedback he collected from the department he represents or rather the constituency he represents. He is free to air his personal views also. It can be scathing criticisms on the errors or inaccurate presentation or omission of important items or applause on worthy and interesting matter. Often it is a mixture of bouquets and brickbats. The editorial board members and the employees who are in charge of production and co-ordination have to give answers or clarifications to the questions paused by the participants then and there. On the spot decisions are
taken to avoid mistakes in future issues. The good points, based on the feedback from the shop floor are retained.

After everyone has presented his feedback, an open discussion takes place on the important general points raised at the meeting. Based on that a collective decision is taken on how each member can contribute to improve the quality of the magazine.

The next item is the planning for the forthcoming issue of the publication. While any member can make any suggestion for coverage, often the discussion is on the main features of the issue. The focus topic is presented by the editorial board members. They explain the various facets of the topic and its relevance to trigger interest among the participants. The modalities of the coverage are worked out and deadlines are agreed upon. The monthly meeting is, in fact, a typical example of the information and knowledge sharing culture of the organisation.

The Communication Strategy

The contents of the magazine reflect the normal functions of a mass communication medium. Besides the three-fold functions namely to inform, to educate and to entertain, this magazine encourages its readers to socialise and to take advantage of the opportunity they have being part of this organisation.

A mass medium like this magazine can be viewed as a tool for making money like a publication which is run on commercial lines any other industry. It
can also be used as an instrument of power or a weapon to propagate political or religious ideologies. Hence logically no mass media are run just for the sake of it, without such clear objectives.

The main aim of JwalaDhwani is to create an atmosphere of goodwill, understanding, peace and equality among the employees as well as their families, by disseminating information in an interesting manner. The raw material is information which is positioned in a context to create a knowledge basis to it. Whatever is published in the magazine caters to satisfying the above-mentioned purposes, directly or indirectly.

The central theme of each issue is decided by the editorial board, after detailed discussions. The focus topics for the forthcoming two or three issues in advance by the board. However, there is flexibility in alternation based on sudden developments or unforeseen circumstances.

The central theme has a bearing on the corporate vision and mission of the organisation. The strong channels for routing this strategic communication are the editorials and the main features, though there are other items that are executing support functions in the same direction. Hence it is appropriate to have a close scrutiny of the editorial and feature items published in the magazine.

The editorial is one item published in every issue of the house magazine. Like that of any other professional publications the editorial reflects the view of
the management of the publication. In general it reflects the values cherished by the company management which is in tune with the declared policy of the main owner of the organisation, the Government of India.

The style of presentation of the editorial is also important. It is short, having around 200 words, and written in a brief, concise and comprehensive style. Words are short and simple. Most of the words have only two or three syllables. The display position is prominent, under the masthead on the facing sheet which is visible once the reader opens the front cover.

The topics dealt with are all on the positive side of life, and non-controversial issues, unlike its counterparts in conventional journalism. It draws the attention of the reader on the focus topic covered in the particular issue and highlights its importance in the framework of the present day society and in the organisation. In fact, it sets the mood for the main feature giving the importance of the topic. Often the editorial ends up with an exhortation to the reader to enjoy reading the features and to implement the learning experiences, derived from these, in their own lives.

Though apparently the editorials touch upon serious topics in a subtle manner they have strong invisible link with the corporate vision. But the link is only indirect and interwoven with the apparently unrelated subjects. Invariably the topics do have some bearing on the present day affairs of the organisation or society in which the employees live.
Features

Another item published prominently in terms of display and the number of pages is the main feature appearing in each issue of the magazine. Both the editorial and the main feature are inter-connected. The central theme of both are essentially the same. While the editorial theme is explicit, the message is implicit in the feature.

The various interviews with the editorial board members and correspondents revealed certain important data on the various aspects of the publication.

The Contents

The contents of JwalaDhwani include news items, features, profiles, editorial, letters to the editor, regular columns, literary items, illustrations, paintings, photographs, box items and advertisements. It contains most of the items seen in contemporary publications. In order to study the nature and quality of the items published in the magazine a content analysis of 24 issues of the magazine has been done. An analysis of the various categories in the contents and style is given below:

Cover Pages

The front cover, printed in multi-colour, on glossy art paper carries photographs of pleasant and attractive scenery or picture depicting people in a happy mood. Sometimes photographs of flora and fauna are also published.
Often pictures have some symbolic connection with the focus topic of the issue. In a few cases illustrations or drawings are also published on the cover page. Preference is given to the photographs taken by the employees and their family members. If no suitable photographs are received from them pictures are accepted from external sources.

Another purpose of making the cover page attractive is primarily to invite the attention of the target audience. Unless they find the magazine visually attractive they may not carry it home or bother to pick it up even though it is given free of cost. Hence the primary aim of getting the publication into the hands of the employee is served to a large extent by the attractive cover page. This has been observed by the researcher on the day the magazine was distributed among the employees. It has also been reiterated in the monthly editorial meetings.

The purpose of making the cover page attractive is to make the employees feel proud of the institution, they work with. Once the cover looks like a professionally brought out commercial publication they like to carry it home and also keep it in their drawing rooms. Hence the cover is designed in such a way to ensure that it can compete any other magazine laying alongside.

Back cover pages always carry paintings drawn mostly by children of employees. The caption contains the name of the artist and the parent along with his department, as well as the medium of painting. The idea is to foster
artistic talents of the employees and their family members and to create a platform where they can express their latent talents. It is also a method of giving recognition to them by publishing their original work of art on each copy of the magazine reaching the hands of his colleagues and friends and their families. Most of them keep the magazine carrying their work for long to show as a testimony of their achievement.

Advertisements

_JwalaDhwani_ publishes a couple of advertisements carrying a social theme or about the performance of the company or on similar social communication activities or with some messages exhorting the readers to act for a good social cause. All the front cover, inside pages of the 24 issues analysed carried multi-colour advertisements with attractive photographs or illustrations. The themes were generally exhortation to 'conserve nature', participate in the 'suggestion scheme of KRL', highlighting the importance of learning and creativity, depicting KRL as a company which encourages innovation, importance of childhood, the message of Christmas, the message highlighting the team spirit in KRL and also information on the web site of the company.

It has been found that in most of the issues the advertisements carried had a bearing on the main focus of the issue or a recent development in the company. The illustration was always prominent and messages were packed in an attractive manner, though sometimes in a subtle fashion.
The inside back cover is also printed in multi-colour. It is a family page filled with photographs of employees and their family members. In the ‘honeymooners’ section marriage photos of employees are given. In the ‘kiddies corner’ photos of kids of employees are published. All the pictures bear captions indicating the names of employees, their spouses, names of kids and their parent along with the department he works. Occasionally to break the monotony an ‘art gallery’ section is published with one or two small size paintings done by children of employees. Photographs and names of 10 to 15 employees and family members are published on this page every month.

A case study involving the content analysis of 12 issues during 1999-2000 showed the following results. The central theme of one issue was the usage of computer. This was at a period when the company had decided for massive computerisation programme. As a communication medium the magazine took a cue from this management decision and decided to create an atmosphere in which employees accept the new technology. To prepare the right mindset among them, the editorial board decided that the magazine can take up the role of informing and educating them discretely on the advantages of using computers. Once this decision was taken, the methodology of executing this strategic communication was finalised. It was decided not to have any serious articles on the subject and also not to publish views of any member of the top management.
The editorial titled as ‘Master or slave?’ gave a setting for the subject. It was to invite the attention of the neutral readers as well as those who had already a mindset against computers such a heading was given. To illustrate the content and form of an editorial containing strategic communication inputs the editorial is reproduced here.

We are now witnessing the fruits of electronic revolution. In our daily lives the technology of information management is bringing in drastic changes.

All process of information management, be it collecting, storing, processing or disseminating, have become handy, user friendly and yet cheaper than ever before.

Tools like personal computers, E-mail, internet, mobile phones, cable TVs, satellite communication systems, are all meant for making our lives easier, faster and ultimately happier. Such associated systems like ‘enterprise resource planning’ and ‘supply chain management’ are ways for improving the efficiency of the organisational processes.

One important point we must remember is that these are only tools or instruments to achieve a goal and not an end in itself. We are the masters and we should not let these tools make us slaves.

In this issue of our magazine we have tried to put together some useful information and insights into this IT revolution particularly those we thought would be of relevance to our readers. Hope you enjoy reading.

It can be noted that nowhere it is mentioned that the management had decided on computerisation. The editorial explains the advantages of computers and other tools of electronics as extensions of technology. A word of caution on the inappropriate usage of technology is also given.
But the strategy adopted for the feature is not direct communication as in the editorial. Here it is a compilation of short first person write-ups of a cross-section of officers. Six officers representing different departments were speaking about how user friendly, interesting and informative were the computers with vivid examples.

Each report has small sub-headings with the author’s names and the department he works in. The headings are “I can’t go without it”, “Let’s be prepared”, “Computers inspire me”, “I’m grateful”, and “Computer helps me a lot”. The photographs of the authors are also published.

Besides the editorial and the main feature there are short write-ups on other aspects of computers and other new electronic gadgets like mobile phone, and iridium. The headlines of such write-ups other than the editorial and main feature are: “Iridium: towards global village”, “Go surfing with a TV”, “What if TV is replaced with computer”, “A mobile gift”, “IT, IT bang bang”, “All about software”, “Meet, Mr Martin.com”, “A Bazar on Net”, “Compact package”, “A wonder box from the 80s”, “A computer to prevent theft”, “What can a cellular phone do that an ordinary phone can’t”, and “Our new look website”. The cover inside advertisement has an illustration of a computer exhorting the readers to visit the company website in which the website address is prominently displayed.

It can be seen that when it comes to strategic communication a well-orchestrated approach is employed so that a number of columns have been made
use of in different angles to ensure that the message reaches the readers and also that it is reinforced in their minds.

The focal theme and other aspects relating to the contents in the next immediate issue of a strategic communication volume is often a light and soft issue. While the April 1999 issue had a strong content of computer and information technology the May 1999 issue focused on holidaying and enjoying the summer vacation. The headlines of contents in this issue were: “Fine summer”, ‘Summer of 1999’, ‘Defusing explosive people’, ‘Try these speech starters’, ‘Join social interaction programme’, ‘A Sunday cruise for a rupee’, ‘To let emotions flow free’, Image India’, ‘Sense of the goose’, ‘Net music’, ‘The Ootty of Kerala’, ‘A journey to dream city’, and ‘A bus journey’.

Besides editorials, features and items used for strategic communication the other regular columns are: Letter to the editor, company news, news scan, faces, petro world, calendar of events, voices, diary, people, newcomers, news in pictures, training, cool sites, health, children’s page, know your future, Hindi section, Malayalam section and around Jwalagiri

The letters to the editor page contains six to eight letters from the readers mostly employees and their family members. Letters are published both in English and in Malayalam. Most of the letters are appreciation of the contents of the previous issue of the magazine.
‘The company news page’ carries a news report with a photograph on a recent activity, normally highlighting a success story of the organisation. It is intended to inform employees on the latest developments in the organisation.

‘The news scan page’ contains news reports, normally a dozen items on two facing pages, on the various activities conducted in KRL and other information of interest and relevance to the readers. A few photographs are also published. This closely edited page is more like a daily newspaper page written in a ‘straight news style’.

‘Faces’ page is a profile on an ordinary employee or his spouse or child who has some interesting information to share. It is a depiction of an individual who has accomplished in any field, who is a learning person and cherishing positive values. His photograph, often action picture, is also published. The interesting aspect of this column is that it deals with lives of ordinary people who are not known as elite or prominent individuals. Only persons with a positive outlook and whose actions send indirect messages in line with the values the magazine fosters like equality, love and peace. Employees consider this as a great recognition and reward for their good work. They strive hard to keep up the published image if not try to improve it. However there are quite a number of readers who feel that sometimes the positive factors are exaggerated weakening the credibility of the column.
The ‘petro world’ column gives an interesting information on a latest development in the world of petroleum. The purpose of the column is to make the readers abreast of the modern trends in the industry in which they are working. It has a function of knowledge dissemination. The ‘calendar of events’ column does the agenda-setting function. It guides the readers about the forthcoming activities in the organisation. They can plan their programmes based on this useful information. The date, time and venue of such events are also given in the column.

In the ‘voices’ column about ten employees express their opinions and news on a specified topic. The topic is placed as a headline in the form of a question. Some of the questions covered are: ‘Should smoking be banned in public places?’ ‘What if TV is replaced with computer?’ ‘Is Onam losing its charm?’ ‘Caning children is no good?’ ‘Is it difficult to live in a flat?’

Normally ten and sometimes up to fifteen employees share their views in one or two sentences. The employees are selected on a random basis. But care is taken to take views only from those who are not having opportunities or platforms for expressing their voices or talents. Hence prominent members like senior executives, trade union leaders and members of committees do not find a place in this column.

Similarly those employees who are good at literary work, artistic pursuits, performing arts, and others who have opportunities and capabilities to express
their talents are excluded. Often ordinary employees who do not find a place in the conventional channels of communication are selected to express their views. In fact, questions are asked by the correspondents and they do not even need to write their views. They need to express their reflections in some form. The correspondents, in turn record that and submit them to the editorial desk where minimum editing is done for reasons of brevity and clarity.

The names of employees are printed immediately after their statements in bold letters. To identify them the names of the corresponding departments are also published.

The ‘jwaladiary’ column is a regular write-up on a light topic relating directly or indirectly to the present day life of an employee in KRL. It is a humorous anecdote written in a lucid, simple and journalistic style. There is a strong hidden message embedded discretely which nurtures the values the magazine cherishes. Sometimes the topic is connected in some way with the focal theme of the issue. Otherwise it would be of contemporary interest to most employees.

The ‘people’ page publishes ‘service citation’ column with names and photographs of employees who have completed milestones in their career in KRL like 10 years, 15 years and 25 years. The names of their respective departments are also published for easy identification. On completion of each such milestone every employee gets a friendly letter from the editor of the
magazine congratulating him on the achievement of reaching the milestone and inviting him to take a photograph at the company’s cost in a nearby studio from where the magazine collects the pictures for printing in the magazine. Employees feel proud of getting this reward of recognition.

On the same page appears another column in which the names, designations and departments of all employees who are promoted as well as transferred recently are published. This column is widely read even though it is nothing but a list of names and some details of identification. It also gives a sense of pride and belongingness to those whose names are appearing.

Yet another column under the ‘people’ page is the ‘newcomers’ column in which details of recently joined employees are published. Their photographs, names, places from which they come, designation, name of department, and the details of previous experience are published. This gives an impetus to the newly joined employee and he gets a feeling of self-respect, pride and belongingness with the organisation. The personal details given facilitate other employees to communicate with the newcomer on the basis of his common interests like place of origin or previous employment. Sometimes their hobbies are also published creating yet another point which could trigger social communication.

The ‘condolences’ column publishes obituary details of close relatives of employees, while the ‘honeymooners’ column gives the names of newly weds
among employees. The ‘felicitation’ column announces the birth of babies in which names of employees as well as their spouses are published.

The ‘training’ column enlists the names of employees who have undergone training programmes. Internal training and external training details are given separately. Details such as the topic, faculty, dates and places are also included.

Another column is the ‘cool sites’. This deals with useful, interesting and timely bits of information on the Internet. Details about the possible sources of information, education and entertainment using the Internet are published in a simple, crisp and interesting manner. The topic selected each time is often relating to the focal theme and otherwise it is of topical relevance. This column is handled every month by an officer who is interested and proficient in the subject. It is intended to encourage employees to capture knowledge using the Internet.

The ‘children’s page’ includes literary and artistic work of children including news items and reports on their activities. Care is taken to publish more and more names of children. Whenever names of children are published their parents’ names are also published along with the name of the respective departments. To make the page live and interesting for children a special layout and design style is used. Interaction columns like crossword and quiz contests
are also included to ensure participation of children in the communication process.

The centre-spread is a photo feature on any one theme. Seven or eight colourful pictures are used with suitable text and captions to drive home a specific message. It is often used to reinforce the messages addressed in the focus theme.

The magazine has a full page regular column called ‘know your future’ which is nothing but a star forecast. Most of the readers go through the page with great interest. They feel that the forecasts are often true and dependable. It seems that this page is more for making the magazine interesting and to ease the stress and tension in the minds of employees.

The Hindi section has two pages with literary work in Hindi. This page is done in Hindi as part of the official language implementation policy of the company to popularise the use of Hindi. This is the only opportunity for an author to get a financial incentive of Rs.100/- to Rs.500/- if his work is published in the magazine. All the other contributions are of purely voluntary in nature.

The Malayalam section carries mostly literary work like poems, short stores, anecdotes, humour and other write-ups by employees and their family members. There are also features which are journalistically written based on interviews with ordinary people.
The last page in the Malayalam section is a humour column "around jwala' which is a satire on the wrong practices among the employees themselves. For such columns, illustrations are also included to make them live and interesting to capture the attention of the readers. At the end of the column there is also a hidden message or moral in tune with the values the magazine cherishes.

Reader Survey Results

A readership survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire (Appendix 5). The total number of respondents were 300. The findings of the survey are given below.

Table 8.1
Readers’ Credibility Pattern of Information Published in JwalaDhwani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree not disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Only genuine facts are published</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey results.

Regarding the quality of production 94 per cent gave positive responses like ‘good’ (30%) ‘very good’ (40%) and ‘excellent’ (24%) ratings.

To study the creditability perception, the respondents were asked to rate their preferences on a statement ‘only genuine facts are published in JwalaDhwani’ on a 5-point scale. As shown in Table 8.1 50% stated that they ‘agree’, 15% ‘strongly agree’, 22% neutral, 10% ‘disagree’ and 3% ‘strongly disagree’. This means that 65% of respondents are positive in their perception
on the credibility of information published in the magazine. Though most readers like the literary and social communication aspects the serious information provided were often considered as the management views.

Another question was asked to find out the readers' perception on the utility of JwalaDhwani to them by giving another statement that it 'helps in knowing fellow employees better'. As shown in Table 8.2, there are 76% readers agree to the statement. Hence the majority of readers value the social element of communication through the magazine.

Table 8.2

Readers' Perception on the Utility of JwalaDhwani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Not agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helps in knowing fellow employees better</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey results

Readers were asked to rate the attitudes towards the magazine in a four-point scale. While 69% of respondents stated that they ‘liked it’, 23% stated that they ‘liked it very much’ as shown in Table 8.2. According to the survey nobody disliked the publication, and only 8% were indifferent. This means that 92% of the employees of KRL have a positive attitude towards the publication.
Table 8.3
Readers’ Attitude towards *JwalaDhwani*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Like very much</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like it</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t care</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey results

While 33% respondents rated that the content of *JwalaDhwani* was ‘very good’ 50 per cent stated that it was “good” and nobody rated them as poor and only 17 per cent rated them as “fair”. However nobody rated the contents as “excellent” which means that there is enough scope for the publication to further improve its contents, as the readers expect a better quality in terms of contents.

**Annual Award Function**

Annually an award presentation function is organised by the *Jwala Dhwani* to honour those who have made contributions to the magazine in a particular year. Awards are judged by an external jury consisting of well-known journalists and literary personalities. Once a person is selected for an award he is excluded for consideration for the awards for the next two years so as to encourage newcomers and to avoid monopolisation of media usage by the talented. The awards are presented by a chief guest, who is a personality well known throughout the state. The total number of prize winners in an year is
around 22. Participants are invitees who are award winners, correspondents, editorial board members, regular contributors and other well-wishers. All are invited to come with their families. The awardees are given a brass plaque with their names and prize details inscribed on it. They also get a chance to share their feelings on getting this recognition. All the editorial board members are seated on the dias and have a role to place in the formal meeting. The correspondents act as volunteers to arrange and co-ordinate the programme to make it a sort of family get-together. The function ends with a high tea and a group photo session involving all prize winners as well as correspondents and editorial board members. On the next day, photographs of awardee's receiving the prizes are reached to the concerned individuals directly. This activity could be termed as a convergence of print and face-to-face communication for which the common goal is social communication.

8.7 Critique

A workforce who knows roughly what is going on within their company are more likely to have confidence in it, themselves and their future. They are also likely to be prepared to work harder and more conscientiously which usually results in higher and more consistent levels of quality in what they are doing. And in the Indian context the family members do have a great impact on the formation of attitudes of employees. Hence the DRP can be described as an innovative activity, involving both employees and their close relatives, which
shows a positive trend in enhancing the trust and confidence, among the participants towards the organisation.

The availability of different types of social communication endeavours in KRL to strive for meeting the needs of socialisation as well as of enhancing the knowledge on the organisation itself. Hence these activities have to be viewed in the light of establishing and continuously maintaining a congenial human resource environment where interpersonal understanding, mutual trust and fraternity are essential factors. It is more relevant in the modern business environment where increased usage of computers at work and at home is causing shrinkage of direct interpersonal communication experiences.

But oral communication has its own inherent limitations due to its lack of permanency and chances of miscommunication. In order to plug the loopholes in such communication system KRL has been making use of other media like the print.

The publication of an in-house magazine is a common employee communication activity carried out by many of the established organisations, the world over. In most cases it carries photographs and statements of the head of the institutions and other members of the top management. It is virtually the mouthpiece of the management. Conventionally the house-magazine is produced by a single person in the PR section, or the task is entrusted with an external agency or public relations consultancy firm. Such house-magazines,
though printed in glossy paper and in multi-colour, are cut off from the target readers and the latter is considered as hapless consumers of messages emanating from the top management desk.

'JwalaDhwani' is a publication run with a specific objective involving a large number of employees themselves at every stage of the communication process from planning to designing, from reporting to editing, from circulating to evaluating. It is an example of an alternative publication. But the publishing of 'horoscope' does not fit into a culture of information and knowledge sharing.

In addition these social communication activities in KRL are cross-cultural in nature while the organisation is having a multi-cultural pluralistic and diverse workforce. All the social communication activities discussed in this chapter have a levelising effect in terms of building bridges among the minds of people using the single thread of being part of one organisation.

Such social communication activities do help the organisation in fostering the spirit of learning process. The next chapter discusses the management culture prevailing in KRL and the innovative aspect of communication experiment there, in the background of a learning organisation.

References


