

# The Role of Business Communication in Increasing The Survivability of Law Firms

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**Abstract.** In the current environment, the involvement of an attorney in dealing with sensitive communication matters can also help to eliminate possible communication risks in business. This research was a case study research that used in-depth data collection. The data were collected from one law firm in Jakarta. The law office was chosen because it applied business communication. Although it was a new firm, it was able to compete with other law firms that had operated for a longer time. This research aimed at describing the effectiveness of business career based on communication skills. This research found that many attorneys had received training on communication skill, However, the majority were dissatisfied with the course content and quality. The results of the research showed that communication business is important for attorneys when they are not acting primarily as an attorney but, for instance, as a business advisor, member of the Board of Directors, or in another non-legal role.

## 1. Introduction

In law firms, communication is needed to run a business efficiently. Every business involves two types of communication: external communication addressed to actors in the business environment and internal communication or organizational communication directed to employees [1]. Attorneys at law firms spend much their working hours communicating because they always involve many people and gain something from the interaction with the people. In doing business in law firms, the main key is to have good communication skills. Business communication in the context of business communication at law firms can be defined as any form of communication to provide legal services and ideas or even build partnerships to enhance organizational or business activities [2].

Communication is one of the most crucial functions to be mastered so that law firms become successful in a today's increasingly competitive market, especially for law firms operating business internationally. Law firms' profitability is partly determined by the strategy and business communication skills. At any workplace, business communication plays several different roles. Communication business has helped in improving all functions within the organization. It means that through business communication, organizational functions in the workplace including internal functions, control, planning and sales, and reporting are coordinated in a better way with business communication. With good business communication, the efficiency and effectiveness of the organization can increase rapidly. Many sources such as Indonesia Ministerial of Law and Human Rights report that in many law firms, communication skills are very important and truly significant contributor to organizational success. Unfortunately, nowadays, law firms in Jakarta have not implemented business communication properly. Eventually, many clients turn to other law firms

that are better in providing good advice. Based on these facts, it is interesting to examine about the role of business communication in improving the ability to survive in Indonesia.

## 2. Literature Review

Communication is the main key in running a business. Communication plays a role in maintaining and developing the organization. Efficient management is very important in the success of an organization and it can only be achieved by effective communication. It is important that all departments and staff are informed in an appropriate manner about what they should know to be able to do the job efficiently. Increased work efficiency means saving costs and generating better profits than before.

Communication is a basic human function and prominent human needs; everyone, naturally, wants to send and receive messages, express their own thoughts, and relate to others. The following are six things must be known about communication [3] [4]:

1. Connecting with other people
2. Participating in something
3. Getting information about something
4. Getting information in a broad sense
5. Connection
6. Message

Business communication is not a behaviour that can stand alone. However, the assessment of communication itself needs to be linked to all other business or market behaviour. From an anthropological perspective, all market behaviour is tied to culture. Purchases and sales occur in a cultural framework [5]. Business communication can be defined as all types of communication in the business field at the organizational level designed to provide services, products, ideas or even build partnerships to increase the activities of the organization or business [2].

There are three reasons why effective communication is important to individuals and their organizations [6]. First, ineffective communication is very expensive. The ability to communicate is considered as the most important factor in making a person able to achieve a high level of office in a relatively short time. Second, the changing environment and increasing complexity of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace make communication even more important. The collaboration allowing organization to capitalize creative potentials in a diverse workforce depends on communication. Third, the world's economy is becoming increasingly globalized.

## 3. Methodology

This research was mainly based on the case study. Yin [7] defines a case study research method is "as an empirical investigation that investigates contemporary phenomena in real life contexts, when the boundary between phenomena and context is unclear, and where many sources of evidence are used" [7]. Case study research is a qualitative approach to explore a restricted system (case) or a number of restricted systems (cases). According to Yin [8], the generalization of the results of case studies, either from one or several designs, comes from theory and not the population. By replicating a case through pattern matching, a technique that connects several pieces of information from the same case with several theoretical propositions [9]. Some case designs enhance and support previous results. This helps increasing the reliability of this method. This research was conducted at several well-known law firms in Jakarta that had implemented business communication. This research was an empirical investigation of a contemporary phenomenon about the communication business at the Law Office. Data were collected from a law firm in Jakarta using in-depth method. The law office was chosen because it was a new office, but was able to compete with other existing law firms that had opened for a longer time. The law firms were able to compete with law offices that have long existed because the law office implemented business communication. The respondents were the leaders, senior lawyers, junior lawyers and office staff.

#### 4. Case

Some lawyers from the law firm in Jakarta were expected to be effective communicators. The Commission regularly received complaints about some matters that could actually be easily avoided if the lawyers had communicated more effectively and/or politely in many cases with their clients. Critical thinking and business communication skills had gained increasing attention because lawyers today strongly believe that these skills are essential for the success of their organization [10, 11, 12]. For example, lawyers who had strong critical thinking skills could solve challenging problems they face in the current business environment [13]. Likewise, business communication skills are very important because they equip employees "with communicative skills and techniques and prepare them to critically analyse business as a field of study and social institutions/functions" [14].

In this case, the law firms stated a couple of steps that they can take to try to secure effective communication with their clients. The first was early detection. Problems are increased early. In advance, set a clear understanding about case updates. If an attorney's practice is to initiate contact only when a development occurs, the attorney should communicate it to the client at the outset of representation. If a client wants (and can pay for) regular updates regardless of whether developments have taken place, it can be told previously—even included in a written retainer agreement. The second is being reasonable. A defendant who called his or her attorney with a request by phone for information can indicate a willingness to speak with the lawyer's associate, secretary, or paralegal. The attorney may be too tied up on other cases to return the call personally, but may have time to pass along information through an assistant.

The results of the research showed that law enforcers successfully use business communication will generally get the ability to survive facing competition with other law firms.

#### 5. Analysis

The importance of communication should always be realized at all times because it is vital in which people connect within society. Working in business, government, or organization is impossible without communication. People must communicate with each other, exchange information, make decisions, and talk about innovation. Management is a complex practice so that people need to communicate with others. In an age when the business environment is turbulent in terms of competition, political instability, advanced technology, and diversity of labour, the need for good communication skills is increasingly felt by the managers at all levels. The ability to communicate effectively in various business situations must be developed. The organization can conduct and have a competitive manager then all workers must be equipped with communication skills. Many problems that occur in an organization are direct results of the failure to make effective and efficient communication. Large organizations need better communication skills in their employees, so they can work in teams with people from diverse backgrounds. Effective communication skills in today's business world have been discovered to have a direct impact on productivity.

Communication can serve many functions during change initiatives [15], namely

- a. Information Sharing: If changes are expected to occur over a long period and are likely to involve high uncertainty at some points, then this should be clearly communicated in advance in order to avoid potential loss of momentum, disappointment, and cynicism in certain groups of employees.
- b. Participation: It is generally regarded as a key success factor during organizational change. Communication can break down when employees are not involved in the change process.
- c. Vision and Motivation: In change management, it all starts from the vision and communication is the tool to make sure everyone involved with the change are aware of the vision and objectives related to it.
- d. Compliance: Change efforts can produce high-levels of anxiety, and communication is needed to determine employee responses to change, reduce potential fears, and encourage the establishment of social support systems among employees.

- e. Feedback: Change efforts require the structuring of communication processes that provide employees feedback about their performance during change initiatives and provide feedback to management regarding strengths and weaknesses of the change initiative.

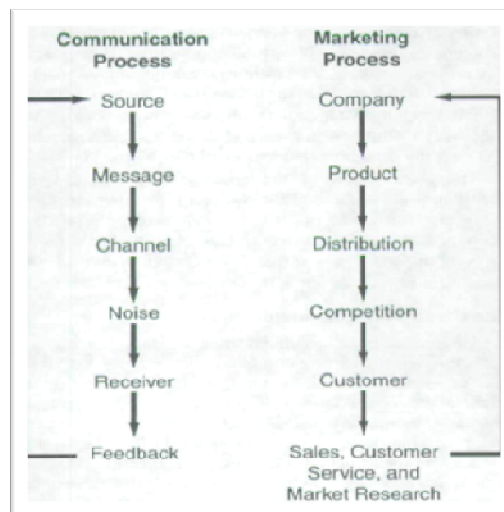
The purpose of business communication in a company organization can be described as supporting actions of business conduction for the benefit of the organization. Business communication as a manager's skill requires the ability to communicate management objectives, planning, controlling, and decision making. Therefore, based on the following functions in Figure 1, business communication occurs.

<i>Decision Making</i>	<i>Instruction</i>
<i>Planning</i>	<i>Ideas and Facts</i>
<i>Controlling</i>	<i>Facts</i>

**Figure 1.** Business communication as function of management

Business communication 'is an ambivalent term because the various fields of application the term business communication emerged from various sectors applying different terms and perspectives in using the term. We can distinguish three areas, namely business communication as technical communications, business communication as linguistic communication, and business communication as corporate communication. In theory, business communication is the process of information and meaning exchange using the systems of symbols, signs, and general behaviors. The examples are written and audio channels, listening, and electronic [14],[16],[17],[18],[19],[20],[21],[22]. Business faculties and business leaders agreed that the basic definition, which is a topic discussed in the course of business communication and the importance of preparing business programs with this knowledge, many experts interpret business communication as something different. This difference, in turn will affect the definition of business communication. Therefore, there is a definition of business communication based on instructional values [14],[16],[23],[24],[25],[26],[27].[28].

In addition, law firms must increase effective communication in their marketing approach. Each approach emphasizes two-way communication through better listening, interactivity, and the idea to customers that communication before, during, and after a transaction can build or destroy important brand relationships. From a communication theory perspective, the Waterschoot and Van den Bulte model, which places persuasion as a function of integrative marketing communication, reverses the relationship between communication and persuasion. In most communication models, persuasion is an element of communication and communication is an integrative factor, not vice versa. Schramm [29] makes the connection clear: "Persuasion is basically a process of communication." Here, and in other communication models in communication textbooks, persuasion is just one area of traditional study and research.



**Figure 2.** Parallel communication and marketing processes

In recent developments in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, many new law firms have emerged and this has resulted in the need for competitiveness advantages from the existing law firms that want to compete in the recent competition market. Based on data collected, there were at least 435 law firms in Indonesia and there are only 38 large law firms. The law firm used as the object of research, even though it was only developing, was one of 38 big firms. Besides that, it applied effective business communication in running its business.

Law firms in Jakarta generally did not provide special attention to good business communication and are only concerned about knowledge. This can be seen from the enormous number of legal complaints submitted by the client because of lacking effective business communication. The key factor that helps law firms surviving during competition is the ability of effective business communication. In the observed law firms was implementing the importance of business commitment to the maximum. By the frequent training, employees are able to conduct business communication well. In addition, the clients were generally satisfied with the services provided and stated that the employees of the company tended to be friendly and polite. This also caused clients to happily come back and recommended the law firm to their colleagues who are also experiencing legal problems. This could help the new law firm surviving and being able to be included in the top 38 in Jakarta. This law firms also had applied the theory of efficient business communication by implementing persuasive communication to convince the client about their idea and services. From the aforementioned case, communication business played important roles in helping the business and organization to survive and also affirmed the theory of the existing communication business.

## 6. Conclusion

At law firms in Jakarta, especially the newly developed law firm, business communication plays a key role as far as the coordination and direction of activities by two levels of management are of concern. Rădulescu [30] states that business communication also increases interaction between senior lawyers and junior lawyers with clients and prevents conflicts. In addition, office staff must practice business communication with guests or clients who come to the office.

As seen from the case of the new developing law firm that could survive well, the new law firm gave special attention into communication business. By giving the special attention, the new law firm could survive well and could top other law firms that have been established earlier. The professional application of 'business communication' refers to any law firm which sells facilities or services with 'business communication'. Many legal experts understand that their long-term competitiveness is conditioned by customer retention. To achieve this, there is a need to change the way customers feel

by applying bilateral communication with them, by winning 'client strength' or by treating the clients as partners who can contribute to value creation.

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