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Boss-employee talks more infrequent than believed, McKay says

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BOSS-EMPLOYEE TALKS
MORE INFREQUENT THAN
BELIEVED, MCKAY SAYS

MISSOULA---

"The boss never hears as much as he thinks he hears from his subordinates," said Dr. Quinn G. McKay at the University of Montana Wednesday (May 1).

Speaking on "Large Organizations and Problems of Communication" during a dinner for clergymen and other guests attending the University's 1968 Churchman's Workshop, Dr. McKay said communication between supervisors and their workers usually is considerably less than believed.

"A study has shown," Dr. McKay emphasized, "that workers tell their superiors only about 43 per cent of their work problems. The same study shows that the bosses or superiors think their workers tell them 93 per cent of their work problems."

Dr. McKay, who is dean of the College of Business and Economics at Weber State College, Ogden, Utah, listed several barriers to communication:

1. Semantics or the meaning of words and language to different individuals.

Dr. McKay said the most important factor in communication is not what the speaker says, but rather what the hearer understands.

2. Use of excessive words. "We use extra words to be tactful," Dr. McKay said. "Learning to be precise and yet complete is one of the barriers."

3. Who says it. The image the boss creates in an employee's mind is important in interpersonal communication. The poorer the image, the more infrequent or less meaningful the communication becomes.

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Dr. McKay read a quote by Adolph Hitler. Members of the audience guessed incorrectly that the quote was by such people as Abraham Lincoln, Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy. Dr. McKay said the message may have had a different meaning if the audience had known Hitler was author of the quote.

"A message from a boss, may have a different meaning, too," he added, "if someone other than the boss delivers that message.

"Often times, rather than sending someone else with a message to employees," the Utah educator added, "it's more important that the boss be there himself. The presence of the person, in this case the boss, causes the message to have a different meaning."

4. Emotional and social pressures.

5. Lack of interest. Dr. McKay said that employers should, in many cases, "explain the why of a thing" to help create interest and understanding with his employees.

6. Physical distance or the chain-of-command process. "The longer the chain-of-command or the further the message has to travel to the recipient," Dr. McKay explained, "the more garbled a message becomes."

He said communication "is like an iceberg, one-eighth above the water and seven-eighths below. About one-eighth of communication is conscious and seven-eighths is unconscious."

Concerning reaction to a message, he added, "The source of a message uses the spoken or written word to convey a message. The audience or message receiver may react several ways--through facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures and silence."