

**Exploring the effect of internal communication on retail employee job satisfaction**

By

Eva Pang

Submitted to the Faculty of Extension

University of Alberta

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Communications and Technology

August 25, 2014

## EFFECT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON JOB SATISFACTION

### **Acknowledgements**

This project would not have been possible without the love, support, patience, and encouragement of my husband, family and friends. Thanks to my supervisor, Stanley Varnhagen, who guided me throughout the entire process to complete my final project. Thank you to Cindy Gange Harris, whom I have known since beginning my career at Starbucks and helped me gain permission from Starbucks Coffee Company and made it possible to conduct this study. Thank you to my fellow partners at Starbucks Coffee Company for being supportive and helping me complete my project and my degree.

# EFFECT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON JOB SATISFACTION

## **Disclaimers**

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of either the University of Alberta or Starbucks Coffee Company.

# EFFECT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON JOB SATISFACTION

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	5
How do organizations communicate internally?.....	9
Why study the retail industry? .....	12
How does communication work in a retail organization? .....	12
Why study the effect of internal communication on employee job satisfaction? .....	17
Defining job satisfaction .....	21
Measuring communication and job satisfaction.....	22
Criticisms of the CSQ.....	25
Starbucks History.....	26
Research Question.....	28
Methodology.....	30
Case Study.....	30
Method.....	31
Sample.....	34
Results.....	35
Internal communications.....	36
Types of information.....	45
Job satisfaction.....	48
Discussion .....	51
Internal communications & Job Satisfaction.....	51
Job satisfaction.....	60
Further Investigations.....	61
Conclusion .....	62
References.....	65
Appendix A: Recruitment Poster & Altered Recruitment Poster .....	72
Appendix B: Initial Contact Email/Text Message/Phone Conversation.....	74
Appendix C: Survey Informed Consent Form.....	75
Appendix D: Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire & .....	77
Altered Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire	
Appendix E: Permission Form to use the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire.....	81
Appendix F: Permission to use the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire.....	82
Appendix G: International Communication Audit & .....	83
Altered International Communication Audit	
Appendix H: Additional Survey Questions & Altered Additional Survey Questions.....	92
Appendix I: Recruitment for Focus Group.....	97
Appendix J: Focus Group Informed Consent Form.....	98
Appendix K: Interview Informed Consent Form.....	101
Appendix L: Pre-Interview Verbal Informed Consent.....	104
Appendix M: Interview Questions.....	105
Appendix N: Participant Interview Transcriptions – Barista Participants.....	107
Appendix O: Participant Interview Transcriptions – Management Participants .....	128

# EFFECT OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION ON JOB SATISFACTION

## **Abstract**

As Starbucks grew from a small business into a large multinational organization, they adapted their internal communications strategy to ensure effective and efficient communication with thousands of partners worldwide. Success or failure in this regard can positively or negatively impact job satisfaction for retail store employees both at Starbucks, as well as any other similar retail organizations. Job satisfaction is a key factor in cultivating and maintaining retail store employees who will excel in representing and achieving company goals. Previous research has found employees' positive perception of organizational communication is related to job satisfaction (Pincus, Knipp & Rayfield, 1990). This research project attempts to go beyond the mere linkage of whether internal communications affects retail store employee job satisfaction, and delves into the particular aspects of internal communications that affect job satisfaction.

Through interviews, this study explored the perceived influence that internal communications has on employee job satisfaction. This study found that, although there are improvements to be made on internal communications in retail stores, they appeared to have little influence on employees' overall job satisfaction.

### **Introduction**

My interest in communications started while working at Starbucks, as I had never worked for such a large, complex, and international organization before. When I was first hired as a barista in 2007, I did what I was told without question, trusting that those above me would tell me everything I needed to know in order to do my job properly. One day, when a piece of equipment integral to our work, the coffee grinder, broke down the shift supervisor did not know what to do. When a repairman arrived to fix it, it turned out that it was not broken, only clogged and had seized from years of neglect, as no one had ever taken the coffee grinder apart to clean it. None of the shift supervisors seemed to be aware that cleaning the coffee grinder was a task they had to do on a regular basis, nor were any of them educated on how to perform this task. From this day forward, I began to take notice of instances when someone did not know something it seemed that they ought to know, or when customers asked us questions that we did not have the answer to, nor could we easily find the answer. Many of us felt that Starbucks should have informed employees in advance of sales and promotion of new products; instead, we constantly found out new information from our customers. This bothered us, as we felt uninformed and caught off guard, as we were unable to answer customer inquiries, or confirm or deny any information they brought forth to us. For such a large and iconic company as Starbucks, one would have thought that their internal communication methods would be better.

After working at Starbucks for three months, I was asked if I would be interested in a promotion to shift supervisor. I did not hesitate to say yes. After spending the summer observing the shift supervisors at my store I wanted a chance to set the example for the baristas. It also gave me the opportunity to learn more about how communications in the store was supposed to work, as opposed to my observations and opinions on how I thought it should work. Through my

training to become a shift supervisor, I learned there were many resource manuals that I could refer to. Each of these manuals contained specific information. One manual contained all the information I needed to know about maintaining and cleaning the equipment in the store, such as coffee grinder maintenance. This manual contained detailed information on how to clean and maintain the equipment, and common problems that could occur with the equipment. As well, there was a logbook titled the *Duty Roster* that listed all of the tasks that had to be done on a daily, weekly and monthly basis, which included everything from counting inventory to cleaning tasks. Listed amongst one of the weekly tasks was cleaning the coffee grinder, and although the *Duty Roster* has undergone several incarnations since I was first promoted to shift supervisor, cleaning the coffee grinder has always been a weekly task, one that my original shift supervisors simply did not communicate to us, nor educated us about when I first started as a barista. There was yet another manual with all of the coffee, tea, beverage, and product information, from the origins of coffee to the shelf life of products once they were opened. One of the training manuals even spoke of how to access all of the hard copy documents that existed through the store intranet, called the *Store Portal*. However, in all cases, the training manual encouraged us to ask questions of the retail store manager or fellow shift supervisors when in doubt.

From this point on, I became more keenly aware of how organizations communicated with employees. While working at the University of Alberta, there were several incidents where the local news media would report on an incident occurring on campus hours before staff and students were made aware of the situation by university administration. While working on a building project at the university, I was charged with seeking out policies and procedures such as the creation of fire evacuation procedures, the procurement, installation and upkeep of technology in classrooms and meeting rooms, and procuring services and equipment for

kitchens. One would have presumed that these policies and procedures would have been better documented, since these are things that must be done with every new building on campus. Yet any information that existed was scattered across several departments, and in many cases, it appeared that these procedures and processes were probably not documented at all. With an organization as old and complex as a post-secondary institution, one would have expected that policies and procedures would be readily available for others to find. However, this was not the case. It seemed that time and time again, my assumptions regarding how large organizations communicated or should communicate were not as expected. It made me question how organizations this large and complex could continue to function in an efficient manner given what appeared to be a lack of organization.

When I began the Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology (MACT) program, I was particularly excited to take the course on organizational communication. I wanted to learn more about organizational communication, how it was defined and what it consisted of. I wanted to know more about the various methods that organizations could utilize to communicate with, and the pros and cons that went with each method. I was intrigued to learn about the instances that each method could be utilized, and if there were examples as to when a method might be more or less successful in achieving communication goals. I also wanted to learn the downfalls of communicating within an organization, what factors lead to success, and what factors do not. As a casual observer of organizational communication until this point, I wanted to be able to relate my previous experiences to theory and see if I could discern the reasons behind why things I had witnessed succeeded or went awry. I thought perhaps if I could learn to navigate what seemed to be complex processes, that I could find ways to improve communications, at least in my own workplace. Perhaps it would help me to identify the reasons why communications failed



in my workplace, implement methods that would work better for the information that was being communicated, and would make internal communications at work more efficient. Until I began to learn more about communication theory and organizational communication, it was unclear to me whether success or failure to communicate was due to a single or multiple facets related to the method of communication, the type of information being transmitted, the culture of the workplace itself, or the employees themselves. It seemed as though something as basic as communication within the workplace should be straightforward and simple to implement properly, yet in reality getting the message out to everyone seemed to be a more complex challenge for organizations, and one that they were faced with on a daily basis. Considering my experience as an employee at a variety of different workplaces, I knew that having the right information could potentially make doing my job much easier. However, as a simple employee, I often found myself frustrated and confused as to why it was so difficult for the information to be relayed from management to employees in a timely manner. More often than not, it appeared that employees were not receiving the information they required in time, or received incorrect or incomplete information. Given my own feelings about communications at work, or at times the lack thereof affected how I felt about my job and how much I enjoyed being there, it seemed that it might be an issue that warranted further investigation. Having spoken to coworkers at many previous and current jobs, I knew that this was an issue that had an impact on many other people at one time or another.

### **Literature Review**

Communication, which is the act of sending, receiving and analyzing information, is an important aspect of daily life (Emanoil, Ramona & Lucia, 2013). Whether we realize it or not, we communicate to others each and every day via multiple pathways. In any interactions we have with others, we find a means to communicate in order to relate to one another, to build relationships, or to further ourselves both personally and professionally. Much communication occurs within organizations, which influence the daily lives of many people. Some work for an organization, belong to social organizations, while others are consumers of organizations such as retail stores or brands. Organizations can be defined as a group that “comprise people and their relationships with one another. An organization exists when people interact with one another to perform essential functions that help attain goals” (Daft & Armstrong, 2009, p. 9). Organizations can be small, owned and run by only a handful of people, or large multinational organizations, with thousands of stores around the world. They can be anything from the corner deli, banks, universities or hospitals. They can also differ in whether these organizations exist to generate monetary profits (e.g., clothing store), or if they are trying to create social impact (e.g., charity). Organizations have become a significant part of our lives, influencing both our professional and personal decisions (Daft & Armstrong, 2009). Being such an important part of our everyday lives, it is important that we understand organizations as a whole, and improve our understanding of organizational communications.

Organizational communication can be defined as attempting to achieve a common goal through the sending and receiving of information (Emanoil et al., 2013). Whether members of an organization realize it or not, a majority of their time is spent communicating with one another. It is the means by which employees learn and understand their role within an organization and

learn about the organization itself (Emanoil et al., 2013; Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014).

Without organizational communication, organizations would not be able to function, as it is the means by which they connect and inform their employees (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002). Much of the current literature on organizational communication has found that communication is key to more productive, motivated, and satisfied employees, ultimately leading to increased success for the organization (Argenti, 1998; Dolphin, 2005). This positive outcome is particularly true if “employees are exposed to appropriate communication (e.g., receive timely and adequate feedback, are kept informed of changes)” (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004, p. 428). Employees should therefore be viewed as important and valued assets of any organization; ultimately as the frontline face of retail organizations, they serve as the ambassadors for the products (Argenti, 1998; Dolphin, 2005). Much of the literature also views organizational communication as one of the many ways that organizations can become efficient and therefore successful (Emanoil et al., 2013).

Organizational communication is becoming a challenge for companies to address. Although large organizations are still a relatively new concept in society, they play an important role in the daily lives of most people, whom they either employ or provide services to. Organizations do not exist in a vacuum, they comprise of a group of people, structured in a particular manner, organized to achieve a specific goal. In the case of the retail industry, obtaining the goal relies heavily on the external environment, in particular, attracting and retaining customers (Daft & Armstrong, 2009). In order to be successful in today’s competitive retail environment, organizations must depend on their employees, who interact daily with customers in retail stores. These employees are the front line workers and the customers’

connection to the company. They are the representatives of the business, and organizations must ensure that they adequately prepare them to act as such.

Retail store employees communicate with potential customers in order to inform them of the products and services the organization provides. In return, customers communicate with retail store employees to let them know what they are looking for or would like. As such, it is important that the customers and retail store employees understand what the other is saying in order to minimize possible misunderstandings. Employees consequently create or retain customers for the company, help generate profits, and assist in ensuring the companies' reputation. Retail store employees must endeavor to have good external communication with the customers, while the organization itself must maintain good internal communication with their employees to ensure that they stay current and informed of needed policies and procedures including all the companies' current offerings. For this particular paper, we will be concentrating on the communications the organization has with its employees.

The retail industry faces particularly difficult challenges regarding organizational communication, mainly in the area of internal communications. Internal communications can be defined as communications that "occurs between managers and employees" (Mishra et al., 2014, p. 184) or "between individuals and groups at various levels" (Dolphin, 2005, p. 172). For this particular project, it will be defined to include all work related communications that happens internally within an organization, specifically at the retail store level. The purpose of internal communication is to "coordinate day-to-day activities" (Dolphin, 2005, p. 172) and "to provide employees with the information they need to do their job" (Quirke, 2008, p. xv). It is essential for employees in order for both themselves and the organization itself to function, so that tasks, policies and procedures can be coordinated (Dolphin, 2005). As well, it is essential to help

employees of all levels to build a relationship with one another through daily interactions (Argenti, 1998; Mishra et al., 2014). It is these relationships that will help increase employee commitment to an organization as well as make them feel that they are an asset and a valued member of their organization (Argenti, 1998; Mishra et al., 2014).

Similar to organizational communication, internal communications are also seen as beneficial to employee productivity, which ultimately has a positive impact on the success of an organization's reputation and finances (Kalla, 2005; Mishra et al., 2014). This can be attributed to a variety of reasons including increasing employee knowledge, making them feel like a valued part of an organization, and increasing employee motivation, knowledge, and skill (Mishra et al., 2014). Some studies have found that internal communications has an impact on an employees' decision to leave or remain with an organization (Emanoil et al., 2013). Given that internal communications can impact an employee's decision to leave or stay with an organization, it provides an even greater challenge for the retail industry, since their workforce is perceived as unstable with high employee turnover (McKay, Avery, Tonidandel, Morris, Hernandez & Hebl, 2007; Whysall, Foster & Harris, 2009). Retail work tends to attract more short-term employees, as opposed to those seeking long-term, career focused employment. For example, even though Starbucks is a leader in specialty coffee retail and offers all employees benefits that many other retail stores do not, they have trouble maintaining a stable team of employees in their retail stores (Michelli, 2007). Often retail employees come from diverse backgrounds, differing in age, cultures, education, and work experience. Although primarily a workforce dominated by younger employees between the ages of 15 to 24, post retirement employees are beginning to become a greater part of the retail workforce, thus making it an even greater challenge to find

communication methods that work for such a diverse range of ages (Jaworski, n.d.; “Job futures Quebec”, 2013).

A major communication challenge lies in keeping employees in retail stores well informed. Employees are an important asset and can contribute to a company’s success or failure. Effective communication is key to ensuring that employees are knowledgeable and productive. Employees that are well informed are more apt to interact and serve customers well, in addition to having a positive impact on the public’s perception of the company (Bottazzo, 2005; Murgolo-Poore & Pitt, 2001). The ability to maintain and deliver consistent internal communications with all retail locations grows more important as organizations become larger and more geographically dispersed. Internal communications should be delivered to a large number of employees in a timely, efficient, and effective manner. Given all of the reasons above, it seems important to investigate the state of internal communications, particularly as it relates to employee job satisfaction, to help organizations continue to succeed.

### **How do organizations communicate internally?**

Traditionally organizations have used a variety of methods for internal communications, and have found that using more than one method is often necessary in order to reach all employees, as well as to communicate a variety of information (Russ, Daft & Lengel, 1990). Traditional methods of communication include the use of print media such as newsletters, memos, and letters. These types of communications are often used en masse and are generic. Most often they are utilized to inform employees of routine information such as news, change in procedures and policies, announcements, etc. They are most useful when organizations want to reach as many employees as possible and are only concerned with one-way communication. These traditional forms of communication, e.g., the company newsletter, are a form of top-down

communication where information is created and passed down by very few people at higher levels to the many at lower levels (De Bussy, Ewing, & Pitt, 2003). Least to say this method is cumbersome and time-consuming, and does not allow for feedback from those receiving the information. Other forms include verbal communication such as face-to-face or telephone, which are useful for more personal conversations and for those who require two-way communication. However, they are only suited to communicating with employees one-on-one or in smaller organizations.

Since the mid-1990's electronic media has been introduced into the workplace as another communication method; in particular, Internet related media such as email and intranet sites. Many organizations are turning to technology in order to manage and maintain internal communications. Email has overtaken the workplace and is often used in place of traditional print media such as newsletters, memos, and letters. It offers the same ability to reach employees en mass almost instantaneously, but with the benefit of allowing employees to communicate back. It also offers a method that is simpler for management to coordinate, allowing information to go out to a lot of people in a small amount of time, with a smaller investment in time and money required to prepare each communication.

Use of a company intranet has increased in popularity, due to its ability to restrict access to only members of the organization and its resemblance to web pages found on the Internet, giving it a familiar feel to employees (Bottazzo, 2005; Gill, 2009; Knapp, 2009; Sinickas, 2005). An intranet is a knowledge management tool designed to allow people to share information across different platforms (McCreadie & Stevenson, 2000; Rose, 1997; Ruppel & Harrington, 2001). It can also be used to facilitate communication and learning (Ji & Salvendy, 2004; Murgolo-Poore & Pitt, 2001; Sinickas, 2005). Without Tim Berners-Lee creation of the World Wide Web, the

use of intranets for organizations would not be possible today. Berners-Lee who worked at CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, simply wanted to share large pieces of information to those outside of CERN, regardless of the computer platform and software the other viewers were utilizing (Berners-Lee, 2010; McCracken, 2014). First introduced to the public in 1991, it revolutionized the ability of people around the world to share information. After the Internet became widely available, organizations began to utilize this technology to create company intranets to facilitate easy and centralized access to information that was once found only in hard copy, giving large organizations the ability to communicate to geographically dispersed locations in an effective, efficient, and consistent manner. This allowed them to communicate with employees on a regular basis, and to ensure that all locations have access to updated information (Bottazzo, 2005; Gill, 2009; Knapp, 2009; Murgolo-Poore & Pitt, 2001; Sinickas, 2005). In addition, it empowers employees to instantly access information they need whenever they require it, without having to rely on management as a resource (Knapp, 2009).

Intranet sites are therefore similar to face-to-face or telephone communications, allowing organizations to communicate with employees in a dialogical manner. However this method also allows for horizontal communication amongst co-workers. Intranets in particular are coming to the forefront as a tool for managing employee communications, by empowering employees to contribute to discussions, share information and ideas, thereby ensuring the communication is not only a top-down process. It also allows everyone the opportunity to give feedback and interact with one another, often in real time, which traditional forms of print media did not allow (DeBussy et al., 2003). Despite all this potential, much of the onus to utilize and seek out information and communicate then is on the employees, unless management makes the information and communications readily available.



**Why study the retail industry?**

The importance of the retail industry in North America is greater than the average person might realize, as the retail trade sector has the highest employment numbers amongst all other employment sectors in Canada ("National household survey", 2013). According to a 2011 Statistics Canada report, it employs 11.5% of Canada's labour force, and was the most common occupation listed for both men and women (Campion-Smith, 2013). In 2011, food and beverage sales dominated the Canadian retail sector with over \$104 Billion in sales, with the highest percentage of market share at 22.8%, making it the number one subsector in the Canadian retail marketplace ("Consumer trends update", 2013).

**How does communication work in a retail organization?**

There are many communication theories that exist, but Russ et al. (1990) suggested that two theories that relate to communications in organizations and job satisfaction are those of symbolic interactionism and media richness theory (MRT; Daft & Lengel, 1983). They help explain how an organization comes to a common frame of reference, as well as how different types of communication mediums are chosen. Symbolic interactionism is a social cultural theory developed from the work of George Mead (Russ et al., 1990). Theorized by Herbert Blumer, it is based on the idea that communications are conveyed through symbols such as objects, sounds and numbers. Organizations, over time, develop symbols that have a meaning and common understanding within their environment. In an ideal situation, symbol communication occurs when members within an organization already have a shared frame of reference and symbols are already imbued with meanings that everyone knows, understands and have agreed upon. In this case, members of the organization can use these symbols in order to understand future communications and to assist them in making decisions (Russ et al., 1990).

Symbol creation occurs in situations where a common frame of knowledge does not exist and members of the organization must create their own interpretation or perceives things differently than other members. This occurs most often with messages that are subjective in nature, such as those that are personal or emotionally laden. In these cases, it is vital that the organization finds a way to use communication to ensure that a common frame of knowledge is created. Members of the organization must work together to negotiate common meanings to symbols that are relevant and meaningful to both the organization and the information they are conveying. They should also work together to ensure there is an easy method for others who join the organization to learn and understand these symbols. Those who have been within an organization longer will have a better understanding of the meanings related to symbols within an organization. Symbolic interactionism offers an explanation as to how media choices are made. Rich media is usually utilized to help create common frames of reference so that an organization can help their employees go from symbol creation to symbol communication (Russ et al., 1990).

The theory of symbolic interactionism is extremely important, particularly in an organization similar to Starbucks. Like many organizations, Starbucks has developed their own set of symbols in order to communicate (e.g., company specific jargon such as referring to employees as partners; the green apron is a symbol of Starbucks Coffee Company values). These symbols are very specific to their particular organization, and the dangers of symbol creation occurring whenever new employees are brought in can be high, as these symbols might have a different meaning to them. A medium must be chosen that will help them to transition from symbol creation to symbol communication.

The media richness model (MRT) also factors into symbolic interactionism in that when

uncertainty is present, the type of media chosen can either increase or decrease ambiguity (Russ, et al., 1990). MRT refers to how well information can be conveyed through certain types of media, by determining whether or not information conveyed through that media has the ability to be personalized, allows the receiver to give immediate feedback to the sender, if multiple cues by the sender can be conveyed through it, and if it allows for language variety (Brunelle, 2004; Gu, Higa, & Moodie, 2001; Kishi, 2008; Lan, Hung, & Hsu, 2011). The ability to personalize the message through the selected medium means that the receiver will more easily understand it. The ability for feedback allows the sender and receiver to interact with one another so that any misunderstandings can be clarified immediately. A media that allows for multiple cues could allow the sender to use a variety of different cues to assist them in conveying their message, such as body language, tone of voice, gestures, and even the use of symbols (Russ et al., 1990). Lastly, language variety refers to the media's ability to allow for the use of a variety of ways to convey a message. For example, the use of numbers can only convey precision, whereas the use of words can convey a broader set of concepts (Lan et al., 2011). MRT posits that if one can match the right type of media to convey information, then there should be a reduction in ambiguity in the message, resulting in more effective communications (Gu et al., 2011; Kishi, 2008). This is evident from anecdotal events in our everyday lives. Emails are often used at work to convey simple information, but humor written within them is often lost. This can be overcome by the use of emoticons, "symbols that convey emotions" (Kropf, 2004, p. 24). However care must be used however when utilizing emoticons in business emails in order to maintain professionalism (Kropf, 2004). Letters although personalized can easily convey what is going on in our everyday life, but the emotion behind the written words that are contained within might not be as powerful or as clear as if it was conveyed verbally (Russ et al., 1990).

There are two categories of media types, rich and lean media (Russ et al., 1990). Rich media is defined as a communication medium that can convey information with various cues and allows for feedback. Rich media methods usually include face-to-face or telephone communications, as both allow for immediate feedback and the conveyance of multiple cues. However, the richest communication medium is still considered face-to-face, as it is oral and synchronous media, allowing for language variety and a multitude of feedback methods. Lean media can only convey limited cues and although feedback is possible, is usually received at a slower rate because it is written and asynchronous (Kishi, 2008). This type of media is usually associated with written communications such as memos, letters, or emails.

Although there is a wide array of each type of rich and lean media to choose from, not all types of rich media are the same, as some types of rich media allows certain information to be conveyed that others cannot. For example, although face-to-face and telephone conversations can both be considered rich media, communicating via telephone does not allow for visual cues. One cannot see the person on the other end of the phone nodding or shaking their head, they cannot see the expression on the receivers face in order to check for understanding, nor can the sender see the posture of the receiver to see if they are taking the information seriously or not. On the other hand, auditory cues can be conveyed including tone of voice, hesitation in speech and pauses in conversation. Without all of these cues, it is difficult for the sender to check for understanding and correct misinterpretations (Kishi, 2008; Russ et al., 1990). Although email is generally considered a form of lean media, as it is both written and asynchronous, in some cultures and situations it can actually be considered a rich media. It can also be utilized to avoid misunderstandings particularly if there is a language barrier, allowing the sender time to construct and proofread written instruction in an unfamiliar language (Gu et al., 2011).

The medium chosen to convey a message should generally consider whether or not the message sent is, or could be, considered ambiguous in nature. If the wrong type of medium is chosen then misunderstanding may occur. Managers often prefer the use of rich media such as oral communication, as it allows for the transmission of non-verbal cues. Rich media allows communications to convey a number of meanings and messages that organizations often must manage, including messages that are emotionally laden and can be viewed as subjective. This type of media also allows the two parties communicating to establish a common frame of reference so that they can reduce ambiguity in future interactions. It is also useful to allow the receiver to provide feedback if desired. Rich media allows for a broader range of symbol use, whereas lean media is restrictive and tends to be utilized to convey more precise communications where there is a wide range of understanding and little room for misinterpretation (Russ et al., 1990).

Not all lean media is the same, with some allowing for more personalization than others. Posters and fliers, for example, are generic forms of written media. These types of media are meant for large, generic audiences, conveying the same message to everyone. They do not allow for personalization or feedback or any sort. Letters and memos allow the sender to tailor the message to a particular person or to specific situations. Although the cues that can be conveyed through written media might be limited and feedback is slower, as the receiver may reciprocate back in written form, it can allow a richer message to be conveyed than through a more generic form of written media aimed at a broader audience. For situations where a common frame of reference has already been established and ambiguity is low, lean media including email, letters, and memos will most often be chosen as it is less time-consuming and work intensive than utilizing rich media. An organization cannot function by utilizing only one type of media, but

must use a variety of types, choosing the most suitable for the situation at hand (Russ et al., 1990).

For retail organizations, the choice of media used can be extremely important and difficult to make. Considering that management often does not have the opportunity to see all their employees in a given work day or even week, it makes it difficult to ensure that information is conveyed to all employees. Although the use of written media is often preferred for routine information such as updates to policies, procedures, and upcoming promotions, it is difficult to discern via the use of lean, written media if everyone understands the message and is able to incorporate the new information. When using lean media, one has to trust that if there is anything the receiver does not understand that the receiver will seek out a way to clarify the information. As an alternative, using rich media such as face-to-face for training and conveying new information can be too time and resource intensive. Therefore, combinations of media must be used as indicated by Russ et al. (1990), where upper management utilizes lean media to pass the information onto lower management, then leaves it up to lower management to pass the information onto the remainder of the employees and to check for understanding. This allows upper management to spend less on resources to convey their message to large numbers of people within their organization.

### **Why study the effect of internal communication on employee job satisfaction?**

Many factors can contribute to employee job satisfaction. However, researchers have found that when employees have a high level of job satisfaction there is less absenteeism, higher levels of productivity, overall improvement in an employee's perception of an organization, increased organizational loyalty and commitment, and they are therefore more likely to stay longer with a company (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004; Hill & Northouse, 1978; Pettit Jr., Goris, & Vaught, 1997;

Unzicker & Clow, 2000; Wanous & Lawler, 1972). It would then appear that anything that organizations can do to improve employee job satisfaction could only be beneficial to their overall business (Unzicker & Clow, 2000). One of these factors that researchers believe impacts employee job satisfaction is that of internal communication (Pincus et al., 1990).

Therefore, if communication has an impact on employee job satisfaction, studying whether or not employees within an organization are satisfied with communications might help organizations to determine whether or not their current methods of communications are effective or not. It might also help to identify what can be improved upon in order to improve employee satisfaction with communications and ultimately, the quality of their work life (Argenti, 1998; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). Communications can impact employees within an organization in a myriad of different ways, both positively and negatively. Within an organization, communication is an extremely important process, occurring verbally and non-verbally, intentionally or subconsciously, and there are many ways that the organization and those within it send and receive messages to one another.

Employees communicate with various parts of an organization on a daily and ongoing basis in order to get instructions and duties from superiors, to help them complete tasks, to meet the expectations of their role, to receive feedback on their performance so that they can improve and grow, to learn more about and clarify company policies and procedures, as well as for a variety of other reasons (Frone & Major, 1988). An employee's level of job satisfaction is also influenced by their perception of how well an organizations communication system is working; everything from what is being communicated, to how the message is communicated (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002). An organization with poor communication can pose problems not only for the organization, but also for employees at an individual level. If employees lack clarity about their

role or work, it can affect their ability to work as well as their self-esteem, causing them stress and eventually leading to burnout (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004).

The amount of information employees receive through verbal or written communication can become overwhelming. Regardless of whether the information is general or specific, much of it is time-limited. The volume of information that employees receive has increased over the years, especially with the advent of digital communication mediums, making communicating faster and easier (De Bussy et al., 2003). Another problem is that communication systems utilized by organizations can potentially deteriorate over time due to a number of factors, including not changing communication methods to keep up with current technology, a changing demographic in employees or a change in preferred communication methods by employees. This deterioration could lead to dysfunctional communication within an organization, causing dissatisfaction amongst employees and creating negative consequences, impacting the organizations ability to function properly such as damage to company reputation, dissatisfied customers, or loss of revenue.

Employees need communication in the workplace not only for work, but also as a way to satisfy their personal needs. Communication with co-workers helps them to feel included and can be enjoyable at a personal level, as well as assist employees to build working relationships with one another (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). Overall, communications appears to contribute to employees' day-to-day work life. If processes function well, communication can have a positive impact, making work a more pleasant place to be. Poor communication processes, on the other hand, can be a source of dissatisfaction for employees within an organization, making it more difficult for them to do their work properly and enjoy their job. As people spend the majority of their day in the workplace, it is worthwhile for a company to ensure that they do their utmost to



make it a good environment for their employees. The overall success of an organization is reliant on the people within it. If organizations do not take the initiative to increase their employees' job satisfaction through something as simple as communication, then they are being detrimental to themselves (Unzicker & Clow, 2000).

Job satisfaction and communication satisfaction are linked (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004; Pettit Jr. et al., 1997; Pincus et al., 1990). The majority of studies concluded that high levels of job satisfaction are related to high quality communication, whereas low levels of job satisfaction are related to low quality communication. Of particular importance is the quality of information received during supervisor-subordinate and co-worker communication, but this type of communication only increased job satisfaction for those employees that already felt a high level of job involvement (Frone & Major, 1988).

Communication satisfaction has been linked with job satisfaction over the past few decades, and was designed to assist in improving organizational communication by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of an organizations communication process (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). Research has found that employee job satisfaction and commitment to an organization can be related to their level of satisfaction with organizational communication. However, they are generally only satisfied or dissatisfied with a particular aspect of communication as opposed to it as a whole (Deconinck, Johnson, Busbin, & Lockwood 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004; Pincus et al., 1990; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). It has also been found that low levels of job satisfaction could be associated with low levels of communication satisfaction amongst employees (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002; Pincus, 1986).

Unzicker and Clow (2000) found a positive relationship between how the employee perceives the organization and their perception of communications with management, corporate

communication, organizational communication, hiring practices, training, teamwork, empowerment, performance reviews, and rewards and recognition. It is assumed that if employees have a positive attitude regarding their organization, they will keep the organizations interests at the forefront and be better employees (Unzicker & Clow, 2000).

When studying a retail organization with both full-time and part-time employees, it was found that all employees felt dissatisfaction with all the different aspects of communication. As well, retail employees felt that they were not receiving the information that they needed about the organizations goals, policies, and changes, nor was the information motivating them to meet the goals of the organization. However, when they compared full-time retail employees to part-time retail employees, they found that part-time retail employees were generally more dissatisfied with communications than full-time retail employees, and length of service with an organizational did not play a part with part-time retail employees, only full-time retail employees (Gray and Laidlaw, 2002).

### **Defining job satisfaction**

Job satisfaction has been defined in a multitude of ways. However, there is a difference between overall job satisfaction and job facet satisfaction, which is defined as “satisfaction with a particular facet of one’s job” (Wanous & Lawler, 1972, p. 95). Overall job satisfaction can be defined in one view as the “sum of job facet satisfaction across all facets of a job” (Wanous & Lawler, 1972, p. 95). Each job satisfaction facet is rated by importance as each facet holds a different value for each person (Pincus, 1986; Wanous & Lawler, 1972). Others define job satisfaction as the difference between how much satisfaction one should have and how much satisfaction they currently have on the different facets of their job. The overall job satisfaction is then the sum of all these differences. Therefore, dissatisfaction arises from unfulfilled desires

(Wanous & Lawler, 1972).

Job satisfaction can also be viewed as how favorably an employee views the work that they do (Pincus et al., 1990). However, Wanous and Lawler (1972) point out that many scholars agree that there currently lacks a “good theory about the very meaning of job satisfaction” (p. 102). It was not until the mid-1970’s that job satisfaction was studied with communications acting as a variable (Pincus, 1986).

### **Measuring communication and job satisfaction**

Communication audits are important tools as they can help to effectively and efficiently diagnose and compare problems across organizations. They also help organizations learn about their strengths and weaknesses, in order to build on their strengths in communications, improve on their weaknesses, and move forward (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). The most commonly used scale for measuring the association between organizational communication and job satisfaction is the Downs and Hazen (1977) Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ), which views communications as a multidimensional construct (Deconinck et al., 2008; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004; Pincus, 1986; Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994). Prior to Down and Hazen’s (1977) CSQ, many viewed organizational communication “as a uni-dimensional construct” (Deconinck et al., 2008, p. 145). The CSQ is still considered to be one of the most comprehensive measurements of organizational communication, as well as one of the easiest instruments to administer, and is commonly cited in research regarding organizational communication and job satisfaction (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002; Gray & Laidlaw, 2004).

The CSQ is a questionnaire that contains 88 items, divided into eight categories (Deconinck et al., 2008). These categories of communication are thought to contribute to the overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction that employees have. These aspects, which will be

discussed below, include supervisor-subordinate communication, co-worker communication, communication climate, corporate information, personal feedback, organizational integration, media quality, and general organizational perspective (De Bussy et al., 2003; Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Pincus, 1986). Although the CSQ will not be utilized in this study, the categories contained within the CSQ are still relevant to the overall question as to whether employee satisfaction with internal communications has an influence on job satisfaction.

Supervisor-subordinate communication is the communication that management has with employees, both top-down and bottom-up. Central aspects of this communication deal with the perception the subordinate has of their supervisor's ability to actively listen to them, as well as whether or not the supervisor assists the subordinate in troubleshooting work related issues. It has been found in several studies that, although employees generally feel neutral about the actual supervisor-subordinate communication relationship, they are dissatisfied to a certain degree with the communication received from supervisors (Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Pettit Jr. et al., 1997). Research has found that those who have a trusting and open relationship and dialogue with their superior will likely be more satisfied with superior-subordinate communication, particularly with their immediate supervisor (Pincus, 1986). It is important to note that it therefore should not matter from which actual supervisor the subordinate is receiving information. It is the act of the communication itself that employees have feelings towards. Therefore, studying the method of communications utilized within an organization will be important to study communication satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Communication climate deals with communication at both the organizational level, as well as the personal level (i.e. the individual). This includes how well the organization is doing to communicate with employees, how they motivate them to meet goals, whether or not the

communications within the organization are healthy, and whether or not the attitudes people have regarding communication within the organization are healthy (Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Pincus, 1986; Pincus et al., 1990; Smidts et al., 2001). At the organizational level it deals with the organization as a whole and how the communication climate is perceived overall (i.e. the majority of those within the organization are satisfied or dissatisfied with communications), whereas at the personal level, this is how a single employee views the current communication climate of their organization (i.e. they are personally satisfied or dissatisfied with communications). This study will focus on the personal level, to try to find out how individuals feel about the communication climate within their organization.

Personal feedback is the information employees want to know about how they are being reviewed by their superiors on their work performance (Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Pincus, 1986). Although personal feedback is important, it will not be explored in this study. Organizational integration deals with whether or not employees are receiving information they should know about their organization that might affect their work (Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Pincus, 1986; Smidts et al., 2001). Organizational integration will be discussed in this study, as the ability to do one's job effectively requires having the information they require to do their work, but will not be the focus. Media quality is concerned with the extent to which communications are clear. This means, if information provided is not only right but also the right amount or if the right type of medium is used to deliver the message (Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977; Pincus, 1986). Media quality will also be studied, as understanding the information employees require to do their job is vital to being able to do one's work. Having the appropriate amount of information can have an impact on an employee, as having too little information requires them to seek out additional information,

while having too much information requires them to filter out only the information they require.

General organizational perspective includes whether employees receive information regarding the organization, in general, that affect the organizations' ability to function. This type of information can include changes in the organizations finances, goals and policies, or government action (Deconinck et al., 2008). Although there will likely be information that arises with regard to general organizational perspective, it will not be an area that this study will specifically explore. There are other tools to measure communication satisfaction, which include the International Communication Association Audit (ICA). Although the ICA does not measure job satisfaction, it would assist in identifying any gaps in the organizations communication process that might account for either positive or negative perceptions of communication climate (Rubin et al., 1994). It does this by measuring both the current perception as well as desired status of respondents, and is made up of five tools that can be used either together or independently of one another (Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977). Although the ICA tool is not utilized in this study, questions will be asked of participants in this study that relate to their feelings on their organizations' current communication climate.

### **Criticisms of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire**

In Downs and Hazen's (1977) original study, they found that the most important factor in their eight-factor solution was that of communication climate. As such, it is important to know how people feel or perceive an organization's communication climate, or how well they think their organization is communicating with them, the employees. The most important factor that influenced job satisfaction also included supervisor-subordinate communication and personal feedback (Downs & Hazen, 1977). In other similar studies, the measures found to most strongly correlate with job satisfaction included superior-subordinate communication, personal feedback,

and communication climate, which confirms Downs and Hazen's findings (De Bussy et al., 2003; Gray & Laidlaw, 2002; Pettit Jr. et al., 1997; Pincus, 1986).

This project will study a large retail organization, specifically Starbucks Coffee Company and will look at the areas of media quality, organizational integration, communication climate, and superior-subordinate communication, with the major focus being on the areas of superior-subordinate communication and communication climate. It is hoped that attitudes, opinions, and information revealed by participants in regards to supervisor-subordinate communication and communication climate will shed light on attitudes related to job satisfaction, and how these two subjects might influence one another (Downs & Hazen, 1977). To better understand the organizational culture of Starbucks Coffee Company and the specific terminology utilized within their organization, a brief overview of the company history will be presented.

### **Starbucks History**

Starbucks Coffee Company has always placed great value on their employees. In 1991, Starbucks showed employees how valued they were in the company's success by granting over 700 employees stock options in what was then a privately owned company, therefore making them all partners in Starbucks. Now called Bean Stock, they annually grant stock options to partners in a now publicly traded company (Schultz & Jones-Yang, 1997; "Starbucks Company Timeline", 2011).

Starbucks first opened in 1971 ("Company Profile", 2014) in Seattle, Washington, USA as an independent whole bean coffee roaster and tea retailer with a single location in Seattle. It was once a very small company with only a handful of stores, and was able to maintain internal communications with retail store locations through printed media, delivered every Monday morning through the post. These mail packs included information regarding upcoming

promotions, new products, company news, and updated reference materials for the store including equipment maintenance manuals, beverage recipes, and store operations. In the last four decades, Starbucks has grown into an internationally recognized organization. Unlike their competitors who franchise their operations, Starbucks has maintained company-operated stores in 50 countries, with over 17,000 stores, and 137,000 partners - the term used to refer to employees, regardless of their position as a retail store manager, shift supervisor or barista in the store ("Company Profile," 2014; "Starbucks Company Statistics", 2014). They have shifted their focus from strictly whole bean coffee and beverage sales to include pastries, packaged foods, and retail merchandise (Behar & Goldstein, 2007; Schultz & Jones-Yang, 1997).

Internal communication soon became a challenge as the number of stores and partners grew from only a few hundred in North America to a few thousand around the world. This rapid growth and expansion required that they explore a new and more efficient form of communicating with stores and partners worldwide. Until 2004, internal communications were handled through a weekly mail pack delivered to stores, supplemented with a daily email download (C. Gange-Harris, personal communication, December 12, 2010). The email download contained information that needed to reach stores in a timelier manner such as promotional information and product recalls. However, neither of these methods allowed all of the employees in the stores to access the information they needed, nor did it allow them to access the information at their leisure, as there was no way to archive the communications.

As Starbucks continued to grow, the need for consistency, availability and timeliness of information grew even more urgent. They introduced the company intranet, named the *Store Portal*, in 2004 as a replacement to the mail pack and the email download. It allowed the company to provide updates to stores on a daily basis, with company news and important



announcements including product recalls, promotional information, and corrections to printed material appearing on the front page. The *Store Portal* also has additional information with sub-pages for Starbucks company culture, information on store operations for management teams, a calendar, a document repository, store look up, training modules, and a partner self-service area for updating personal information and retrieving online pay-stubs (“Plumtree Corporate Portal”, 2004).

### **Research Question**

As previously stated, studies on communication satisfaction have found that employee perception of organizational communication is related to their level of job satisfaction (Deconinck et al., 2008; Frone & Major, 1988; Pincus et al., 1990). It is believed that improving internal communications within organizations can lead to improved employee job satisfaction, which can help organizations to achieve their overall goals (Gray & Laidlaw, 2002). Many of these studies focused on communication as a single dimension, as opposed to realizing that employees are generally only satisfied or dissatisfied with particular aspects of communication, such as supervisor-subordinate communication and communication climate (Deconinck et al., 2008; Downs & Hazen, 1977).

Very little research seems to have been conducted regarding communication satisfaction as it relates to job satisfaction in the retail industry, other than studies conducted by Gray and Laidlaw in 2002 and 2004 in Australia. Despite the importance of the retail industry to a country's economy, it seems that this is an area of study that has been grossly overlooked and understudied. Internal communications is conducted on a daily basis in all aspects of the retail industry without employees actively realizing it, and its' importance cannot be overlooked. Effective internal communications can increase employee productivity and have a positive

impact on an organizations reputation and finances (Kalla, 2005; Mishra et al., 2014). Therefore, this case study will try to better understand if Downs & Hazen's (1977) previous research applies to the retail industry and if internal communications has an impact on employee job satisfaction, specifically looking at the aspects of supervisor-subordinate communication and communication climate.

Therefore, the research questions are as follows:

- 1) Does internal communication affect employee job satisfaction?
- 2) What particular aspects of internal communication affect employee job satisfaction?
- 3) How might internal communications be improved to increase employee job satisfaction?

## **Methodology**

### **Case Study**

A case study “explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). A case study approach was utilized for this study in order to study the effect internal communication has on job satisfaction in a retail store environment. In this particular case study, Starbucks Coffee Company was utilized, in order to understand how internal communication works in a retail store that focuses on selling beverages and food to consumers and whether or not internal communication has an influence on job satisfaction for employees of this type of retail environment. Although other business were not studied nor included in this case study, it is hoped that the findings of this case study can be applied to similar retailers.

### **Method**

The initial research method utilized a poster (see Appendix A) in order to recruit participants from Starbucks retail store locations in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. It asked participants to self-identify to the research to volunteer to participate in the study that was being conducted by a long-term partner as part of her master’s program. Participants were then asked to complete a survey online that was comprised of the Downs and Hazen (1977) Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (see Appendix D), the International Communications Association Audit (International Communication Association, 1976 [see Appendix G]), as well as questions developed by the researcher (see Appendix H). The surveys consisted of questions regarding the participants’ satisfaction with internal communication and their job satisfaction, rated using a Likert scale. Additional questions developed by the researcher consisted of questions in order to determine the participants’ length of service with the organization, their level of employment, the

approximate number of hours worked on an average week, age group, gender and their awareness and use of social media. Participants who completed the online survey were then asked if they would like to participate in a focus group session (see Appendix I). The focus group sessions would utilize a qualitative research method which consisted of a series of guided questions asking participants to further discuss their attitudes and opinions regarding internal communications, their job satisfaction and any additional information they wished to share regarding either of the two topics. Despite a second attempt at recruiting participants by posting a revised recruitment poster (see Appendix A) in stores across Alberta, and revising the online surveys (see Appendices C, G & H), an insufficient number of people self-identified to participate in the survey portion of the study to get meaningful results. Therefore it was deemed that utilizing the survey method would not produce a large enough sample to properly analyze. The use of a focus group was also dismissed, as only one participant self-identified to participate.

Therefore a different approach was developed, one that emphasized more of a qualitative methodology. It was decided that utilizing a qualitative method would be better suited than the quantitative approach. Some reasons included that a qualitative method would require fewer participants than quantitative methods, which would be advantageous given the difficulty in recruiting participants for a quantitative study. As well, qualitative researcher would allow the researcher to obtain richer data, as it allows for a deeper understanding of the participants, including their feelings, attitudes and behaviours. Qualitative inquiry also encourages participants to open up and expand on their responses and explore topics the researcher did not specifically ask about through the dialogue. Lastly, this type of research also allows the researcher to study participant's individual experience and explore their feelings and actions in relation to the individual. This study would utilize individual interviews, as it would

allow for a more personal approach to the participants than a survey would allow. As well, it would allow the researcher to ask probe or follow up questions after hearing the participants' answers. It would also be easier for participants to express their feelings and opinions through an interview than through a survey. The researcher visited several Starbucks retail stores in the greater Edmonton area, and approached Starbucks retail store employees in person to recruit them as participants. She identified herself as a long-term employee of Starbucks and explained that she was recruiting research participants for interviews in order to complete a masters-degree capping project. Potential participants were told that it was a research study to study what effect, if any, internal communications has on employee job satisfaction. Potential participants were informed that participation or non-participation would not affect their current employment with Starbucks and that participation was voluntary.

Starbucks retail store employees who agreed to participate were asked to provide their phone number and email address in order for the researcher to contact them in order to schedule one-on-one interview that would be conducted at the researcher's place of residence. Interviews were conducted in the researcher's home so there would be no interruptions and ensure complete privacy. It would allow for a quiet environment so that all interviews could be tape-recorded. Individual interviews were scheduled with each participant. Participants were asked to provide informed consent to participate in the interview by signing an informed consent form (see Appendix K). The interviewer also reviewed informed consent with each participant verbally (see Appendix L) to ensure everyone understood the content prior to beginning the interview. Participants were informed that their names would not be recorded, utilized in transcripts or written down elsewhere, nor would their participation be discussed with their employer, so that they could maintain their anonymity and their employment would not be at risk. Interviews were

scheduled to last between twenty to thirty minutes each; however, the interview could go longer if the participant had more to discuss related to the topics brought up in the interview questions. The participants would be asked a series of questions (see Appendix M) developed by the researcher to obtain their attitudes and opinions on communications at work including the types of information they receive and how they receive it. Participants were asked about their preferred methods of communication and other possible methods of communication that could be utilized to convey information to them. Participants were also asked about their job satisfaction, what types of information they received at work had an impact on their job satisfaction, and whether or not how the information was communicated to them has an impact on their job satisfaction. Lastly they were questioned about the amount of information they receive at work and how it made them feel.

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were emailed to participants in order to allow them to review and edit any of the answers they gave, or withdraw their participation completely. Once approval was given to the researcher on the completed transcript, participants had up to two weeks afterwards in order to withdraw their participation in the research study.

The researcher analyzed the transcripts based on themes and specific topics. The researcher was most interested in answers that identified whether participants had a common definition for internal communication, how they felt about internal communication at work, and what impacted their job satisfaction. Secondly, the researcher was interested in answers regarding the types of communication methods utilized at each retail location and whether or not feelings regarding these methods were similar or different across all participants. Thirdly the researcher was also looking for information that would indicate whether or not internal communication had any

impact on employee job satisfaction, whether it was a particular methods or simply the amount of information. Lastly, the researcher was interested in whether or not answers given by Barista Group and Management Group participants were the same or differed across the two levels of participants.

### **Sample**

There are approximately 800 retail store employees at any given time in Starbucks retail stores in Alberta, Canada. The researcher hoped to have a convenience sample of four to twelve Starbucks retail store partners participate in one-on-one interviews. The researcher was seeking participants representative of both Barista Group and Management Group. Barista Group participants would only consist of partners working at the barista level in Starbucks retail stores, while those in the Management Group would consist of partners working at the shift supervisor, assistant store manager or retail store manager level in Starbucks retail store.

## Results

The interviews lasted between twenty to forty-five minutes each. Five interviews were conducted in total, three participants were barista level – herein referred to as Barista Group (see Appendix N) and two were management level – herein referred to as Management Group (see Appendix O). Of the three Barista Group participants, two were female and one was male and the time they had worked for Starbucks ranged from four months to almost two years. Two of the Barista Group came from the same Starbucks retail store location, while the third Barista Group participant came from a different Starbucks retail store location.

The Management Group participants consisted of one male and one female and the time they had worked for Starbucks ranged from one year and one and a half years. One Management Group participant began as a barista and was promoted to shift supervisor after one year of employment, and was then sent to another store to work as a shift supervisor. The other Management Group participant was hired as a shift supervisor. The two Management Group participants had worked together at the same retail store location when one of the Management Group participants was still a barista, and was managed by the other Management Group participant. The two Management Group participants worked at different Starbucks retail store locations at the time the data was collected.

The Management Group participants did not work at the same retail store location as the Barista Group participants at the time the data was collected. However, two of the Barista Group and both of the Management Group participants had worked with one another at the same retail store location at least once on a temporary basis. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, two of the Barista Group participants and two of the Management Group participants were acquainted with one another.



In all cases, all partners at Starbucks are considered part time, although hours worked could range from twelve to forty hours per week. Participants in the Barista Group and Management Group in this case study did not specify the number of hours they usually worked, but the researcher was given the sense that Barista Group participants worked fewer hours per week than Management Group participants. In this case study, the Management Group participants actually worked as shift supervisors, who are considered part of the management team at retail stores in Starbucks. However they are not salaried as retail store managers and assistant store managers. Instead, they receive an hourly wage that is slightly higher than that of baristas, and share in the tips evenly with baristas. No retail store managers or assistant store managers contacted were able to participate in the study. All Barista Group and Management Group participants had worked at more than one store location during their career with Starbucks, either on a casual or long term basis.

Participants presented their thoughts and attitudes regarding communications at work, communication methods, job satisfaction, and how communications plays a role in their job satisfaction. Answers fell into categories including: internal communication, types of information and job satisfaction, and generally participants' answers reflected their feelings either positively or negatively on particular aspects of each category.

### **Internal communication**

Two of three Barista Group participants defined communications at work as the method in which it actually occurred. In other words, they spoke in detail of the communication method utilized in their retail store to relay information to all store partners. They indicated that communications were relayed from the retail store manager, to shift supervisors, who then passed the information onto baristas. One Barista Group participant also mentioned that

communications originated from headquarters in Seattle. One Barista Group participant defined communications at work as “talking about information, passing through the message.” One Management Group participant also defined communication at work as the method by which it actually occurred, while the other Management Group participant stated, “I would say a lot of it is just partner to partner communication.”

Other communication methods commonly listed by both Barista Group and Management Group participants included written communications from the head office posted to the *Store Portal*, a communications binder, a printed promotional publication entitled *The Siren’s Eye* and emails received by the retail store manager. Less commonly mentioned communication methods included a retail store managers meeting held either in person or via teleconference, messages relayed to the retail store manager by the district manager and staff meetings for big promotional launches. Although Barista Group participants were aware of the *Store Portal*; they admitted that they did not utilize it as a resource, while Management Group participants indicated that they regularly used it.

Both Barista Group and Management Group participants indicated that the most commonly used communication method was verbal. Generally, both Barista Group and Management Group participants indicated that all communication began with the retail store manager and was relayed through shift supervisors to the baristas verbally. Some also indicated that feedback from the retail store manager to baristas and from baristas to retail store managers was usually relayed by shift supervisors, because shift supervisors felt that they tended to talk with baristas more often than the retail store manager. A Barista Group participant indicated that they felt that communications at work have always been really effective and that Starbucks was “fairly adept at making sure they [we] have the information they [we] need to perform the duties they [we]

have to perform and give their [our] customers the best experience that they [we] can.” However two Barista Group participants and one Management Group participant felt that communications to baristas were not as effective as it was to shift supervisors. One Barista Group participant noted, “I think they’ve always been really strong. The managers communicate well to their shift supervisors, and then that trickles down to the baristas. Sometimes the communication to the baristas isn’t as strong as to the shift supervisors.”

Feelings participants had regarding the various communication methods utilized at Starbucks varied. One Barista Group participant and both Management Group participants felt that verbal communication worked well, as they were more likely to take in the information and it allowed people to elaborate if required. By conveying information in person, it allowed them to either ask further questions if needed, or look up additional information on the *Store Portal* later. It also allowed for discussion when conveying more serious information. They also felt it was more effective for ensuring everyone in the store had the same knowledge and understanding. Other reasons Management Group participants preferred verbal communication was it allowed them to convey how they felt about upcoming promotions. They explained how the retail store manager felt about a promotion played a role in how others felt about promotions when conveyed verbally. Verbal communication allowed them to convey their enthusiasm about things that they were passionate and excited about, and allowed them to share those feelings with others. They felt that conveying emotional cues for partners made a difference in their attitude towards a promotion. They also felt verbal communication was “more personal, easier to understand, easier to remember.” As well, they felt it was easier to keep people updated verbally, than through written communications that they felt often was not read. Also it allowed them to

make boring information sound more interesting. They felt that emotion and passion did not come across in written communication.

However, one Barista Group participant felt that verbal communication worked better for those that worked three shifts or more per week, as they felt partners were more likely to see the retail store manager the more often they worked. Whereas they felt that those that did not work very often might feel that they missed some information. Another Management Group participant felt that verbal communication worked well but it depended from whom the information came. They felt that some people could be trusted to pass on information correctly while others might pass on incorrect information. In this same vein, one Barista Group participant felt that verbal communication being passed from retail store manager to shift supervisor to barista worked well for communicating daily information, but preferred to receive information regarding promotions or major events directly from the retail store manager or receive it in writing so they could trust the information they received was accurate. More than one Barista Group participant mentioned a preference for receiving information in written form to ensure accuracy of information. In comparison, Management Group participants preferred to receive information verbally from the retail store manager.

Both Management Group participants felt the store communication binder was not useful as they felt that people did not check it frequently, the information was often outdated, and the frequency with which partners and when the binder was checked was inconsistent. One Management Group participant elaborated that the communication binder was sometimes forgotten about, so information within it was outdated, and they felt that over time it was forgotten about completely by all partners in their store. One Management Group participant did not have a preference for a particular communication method, but noted that the communication

method that worked the best could be dependent on their mindset that day or the information that is being communicated. They felt that most communication methods utilized at Starbucks worked well for them, but felt that some methods were more conducive to communicating particular types of information than others. One example was if they were reprimanded or if there were a personal issue, they would prefer to deal with the issue face to face as opposed to receiving this information in writing. For more procedural information such as new policies and procedures or how to order supplies, they felt that written communication via the *Store Portal* or email would suffice. One Barista Group participant felt that there were too many communication methods, and they felt overwhelmed by the repetitiveness of information.

Both participants of the Management Group thought that communications at work were pretty good, although they admitted there were weak points. In particular, they felt they were too reliant on the retail store manager, so when the retail store manager was away, it was hard to keep communication flowing, and they found it unusually stalled. All of the participants went on to elaborate that they relied on the retail store manager as their primary source of information. They noted that most of the information originated from the retail store manager, who then communicated it to the rest of the partners in the store through a variety of communication methods. One Management Group participant described their reliance on the retail store manager for information, “whenever something important is happening, my manager always lets me and the other supervisor know right away and tells us to inform all the other staff. Our manager’s always in the know of everything that’s going on and [they] gives it to me and the other supervisor because [they] knows we’re the ones that talk with the staff the most.” Another described the challenge with relying on the retail store manager for information, “I think we need to figure out a way to get the, the information from the top to the bottom quicker before new

things come into play and everybody's really caught off guard. So I think it's just a matter of not necessarily having the manager be there all the time to tell you face to face all these new things that are happening." The Management Group participants felt that they should have access to the information sent to the retail store managers, so they could ensure that communication within the store did not stall if the retail store manager was away for an extended period of time.

All participants indicated seeking out information on their own was required at times, however the reasons for the information seeking behavior varied. All Management Group participants noted that they felt empowered to check for information via other sources such as the *Store Portal* or *The Siren's Eye* should they require additional information. Management Group participants indicated that they personally checked the *Store Portal* on a regular basis in order to stay updated on communications posted via the *Store Portal*. One Management Group participant felt that the *Store Portal* was a good method of communication as long as people knew where to look for the information they needed. They indicated that they generally conveyed new information to baristas before baristas sought it out, particularly if they were working with a barista whom they have not seen in several days or a week. They said that they tried to filter the information prior to conveying it, so they could relay only the basics they felt were relevant in order to do their job. However, both Management Group participants felt that Barista Group participants did not actively seek out information and were in the dark if the information was not communicated to them. One Management Group participant felt that the baristas should feel more able to rely on shift supervisors for information.

Whereas all Barista Group participants stated they generally had to ask shift supervisors for information, instead of being told the information they needed without them asking. One noted that shift supervisors generally had the information they needed, but did not convey it prior to

them asking for the information “I find it a lot that I have to go and ask for information. But the shift supervisors are very helpful when I do ask. It’s just they’re ready with the information; they just don’t convey it prior to me asking for it.” One Barista Group participant said they felt embarrassed when customers knew information regarding promotions that they did not know about, “I find out from customer. Then I have to go find out from shift... And then sometimes they give the wrong information to customers and then they got confused because they heard something else from other Starbucks.” One Barista Group participant felt that shift supervisors needed to ensure they were more conscientious to ensure they shared information they received from the retail store manager to baristas, “I think if the shift supervisors were more conscientious of making sure people are informed. I find that the manager seems to be more organized in terms of making sure you know what you’re doing. So that trickle down effect should just be stronger in that case...the manager should make it much more important for the shift supervisors to make sure they’re informing their baristas, instead of baristas feeling like they’re missing that level.” The Barista Group participants felt that communications at work needed to be improved, as it was important to have the correct information in order to help them work better and do their job properly.

There was no consensus regarding what communication methods participants would consider official versus unofficial. Participants identified a variety of official communications that included written and verbal information. Written communication methods included *The Siren’s Eye*, official documents with or without Starbucks letterhead, and items posted to the *Store Portal*. Verbal communication methods include staff meetings, discussions with the retail store manager, and on-the-job training. Participants described unofficial communication as tips they receive throughout their shift that were sometimes specific to the job or task that they were

doing, information that is known through the company such as policies, gossip, things told to them by others but not confirmed, talking about other partners, talking about things partners are excited about, talking about what happened the previous evening, talking about new things or just chatting between partners.

As for ways to improve internal communication, one Barista Group participant suggested ensuring that shift supervisors become more conscientious in making sure everyone was informed with any new information. They felt the retail store manager to shift supervisor to barista method of relaying information was not as strong as it should have been. Barista Group participants felt they were missing out on information. One Management Group participant agreed that this method should be improved while one Barista Group participant thought that it worked well the way it was. One Barista Group participant suggested that the retail store manager and shift supervisors make it a priority to get together to talk about information that needed to be conveyed to everyone in the store. They worked at another store previously where this was done and they thought it made the communication from retail store manager to shift supervisor to baristas stronger.

All participants felt less reliance on the retail store manager for information would improve communications. Management Group participants felt communications at work could be improved if they received the information that the retail store manager received as well either via work email or the *Store Portal* that way they could share the information with other partners as they received it, instead of waiting for the retail store manager. It would allow them to remain knowledgeable and rely less on the retail store manager. The same Management Group participants also felt that there should be more emphasis on all store partners to be self-reliant and to seek out the information they needed by utilizing resources such as the *Store Portal* and



communications binder, instead of relying on or waiting for other people to convey the information to them. One Management Group participant felt that the communications binder could be very useful if store partners were more diligent in keeping the information in the binder up to date and checking for new information in the binder on a regular basis.

Two Barista Group participants suggested receiving written information via email or as a newsletter would help improve communications at work. That way information would be easily available, and receiving it electronically would allow them to feel prepared prior to their shifts at work. However, one Barista Group participant disagreed, stating they would prefer not to receive work information on their personal email, as they preferred to have time away from work.

One Management Group participant felt that receiving information via social media such as Twitter or Facebook would allow them to prepare for their shift before work and share information such as sales with partners and friends. They believed it would be an efficient way to inform partners of promotional information, especially since they believed that most people in their age range working at Starbucks utilized their mobile phone for social media, which would allow them to receive the information from anywhere. They believed it would compliment the current communication methods at work though and not replace them. However none of the Barista Group participants wanted to utilize social media as a method of communication, as they wanted to keep their personal life and their professional life separate.

One Barista Group participant noted that the communication method that most impacted their job satisfaction and their ability to do their job was verbal communication. They noted that when verbal communication was working well and partners felt free to ask question without fear, then they believed that the communication method was very supportive and positive. Both Management Group participants noted that verbal communication impacted how much they were

enjoying their work particularly due to the tone with which information was conveyed from the retail store manager. If they were told information in an excited tone, then they also felt excited. As well, they felt when they read the same information in text it did not elicit the same excitement, as there was no emotion conveyed via the written word, and it made them feel neutral about the information or found it boring.

### **Types of information**

Both Barista Group and Management Group participants described the type of information they received as mostly promotional material such as new drink recipes, new food items, in store promotions, and new store set up for signage and merchandise. Other types of information participants indicated they typically received included day to day information such as what tasks had and or had not been done, passing on messages, new policies, feedback from other partners, and a variety of feedback from customers regarding the condition of the store, partners, as well as comparisons of other stores they have visited. They also mentioned information such as new issues that had arisen, issues that partners should be aware of, and new systems such as a new computer system for partners to punch in and out of work. Additional types of information also included how to treat partners, questions that might come up from customers, and how to answer them. Two Barista Group participants mentioned receiving information regarding store inventory such as supplies that need to be ordered, should not be ordered, what items the store has in stock or needs, and what items can be borrowed from another store. One Management Group participant mentioned they also receive information regarding store goals via the retail store manager. There were many different types of goals for their store, but they specifically mentioned meeting the weekly sales target as one of the goals, as well as working with other store partners to set specific goals for their particular store.

Almost all Barista Group and Management Group participants found the information they were given at work to be useful. Many mentioned that the information helped them to do their job better, and the importance of the information they received, in particular when it related to new drinks or products, as it ensured they had the recipes to make the new drinks properly. One Barista Group participant indicated that most of the information was very detailed and straight forward, and that Starbucks always told them what they needed to know, although they did not necessarily give them a reason or an explanation. It was noted by one Barista Group participant that at times the amount of information given was overwhelming which made the information less useful to them. While another Barista Group participant felt that sometimes the information they received from shift supervisors was not useful as they felt that sometimes the shift supervisor did not know the information very well themselves.

One Barista Group and both Management Group participants mentioned that the type of information that impacted their job included customer feedback, which was received at the store level in a summarized report of all survey results called *Customer Voice*. The point of sale randomly generated the *Customer Voice* surveys, with more surveys generated when a store was busy. One Management Group participant felt that all customers should have the opportunity to complete the survey, as it would give a clearer picture as to what the store was like, as they felt that it was more likely that those who would like to give accolades were not given the opportunity to provide their feedback. They felt since more *Customer Voice* surveys were being handed out when the store was busy, they were less likely to receive a positive review due to the short interaction during peak hours, thus making it less likely there were able to affect a customer's day in a positive way. These participants indicated when they saw great comments from the *Customer Voice* results, it made them love their job more, while bad comments made

them feel negatively, which impacted their mindset, how they felt about their workplace and overall morale.

Other types of information that participants indicated impacted their job enjoyment included feedback from fellow partners and their retail store manager. One Management Group participant noted that, “When you receive positive feedback you know it’s always great, it makes you feel good, you’re just ready to put in that effort and keep it up. When you receive negative feedback, sometimes it’s a little bit of a downer but it helps you recognize what it is you need to improve on and what you need to put more focus into in the workplace, so it’s all good in the long run.”

One Barista Group participant noted that information they received at work did not impact how much they enjoyed their job for the most part. They noted there was an exception such as news that Howard Schultz, the CEO of Starbucks, told the board of Starbucks that if they did not support Starbucks support of equality and equal marriage, they could take their money and go elsewhere. It made the participant feel prouder to work at Starbucks and increased how much they enjoyed working for the company. They felt more loyal towards the company, wanted to work harder and made them enjoy their job more. Another Barista Group participant found new training material they received affected them negatively because it was training that was given to everyone which they felt did not necessarily apply to them. They felt it was a waste of time as they thought some of the information in the training material was straightforward. One Management Group participant felt that the more information they had, the more effectively they were able to do the job, which made them enjoy their job more. They felt frustrated when they did not know what they were doing or did not have the information they felt they needed to do their job.

One Barista Group and both Management Group participants stated they felt there was too much information provided as well as too many methods of providing information to store partners, and that not all the information received from each method was repetitive. The Barista Group participant felt overwhelmed when they received information from a variety of sources, particular when similar methods were used, such as verbally from a variety of people such as from the district manager, retail store manager, assistant store manager, shift supervisor and fellow baristas. They felt they had to filter the information they received in order to figure out what information was useful. They noted that they would have preferred one method and source of communication, such as a newsletter.

Management Group participants felt the amount of information would not feel overwhelming if they received small pieces of information continually, one piece of information at a time as opposed to all at once. One Barista Group participant noted that it could be difficult to retain all the information provided, so they often had to pick out the pieces of information they felt were most relevant in order to ensure they were not overwhelmed by all of the information provided, as they felt that the rest of the information could be learned over time. Management Group participants indicated they felt some of the promotional material provided too much information and that some of the information was not relevant to their store, which made the amount overwhelming. They suggested that sending promotional information relevant only to Canadian stores would make it less overwhelming, instead of requiring partners to filter out what they felt was or was not relevant themselves.

### **Job satisfaction**

All participants said that the customers and their customer interactions were what made their job enjoyable. Interactions included getting to know customers through conversation,

making customers days more enjoyable, and potentially becoming friends with customers. There was a variety of reasons participants enjoyed customer interaction, which included allowing them to be outgoing and socialize with people, as they did not normally socialize and were not outgoing outside of work. Another Barista Group participant who was an artist used their interactions with customers to network; meet other artists they could collaborate with, meet potential audience members, and even possibly patrons. Other reasons participants said they enjoyed their job was they enjoyed working with other partners, it was a fun work environment, they had a flexible work schedule, there was always something new happening, and they had the authority to make their own decisions. One Barista Group participant indicated they enjoyed drinking the beverages, and making beverages, as they found it challenging and exciting. One Management Group participant also enjoyed the opportunity to learn and progress in their career at Starbucks. One Management Group participant enjoyed their job because they liked working for a company with ethics and principals they believed in such as environmental stewardship, ethical sourcing, and fair trade. Only one Barista Group participant indicated an aspect of their work that they disliked, which included tedious tasks such as cleaning, as they felt it was below what they were capable of and made them dislike their job.

The suggestions for ways to improve their job varied greatly amongst participants. One Barista Group participant felt that their store was very slow and did not provide very much stimulation, and thought that if there were more customers and it was busier, they would be happier to work there. Another Barista Group participant indicated they would like it if someone would check to make sure that they were making drinks and performing their duties correctly, as they found out recently they had been making a particular drink wrong for a long time. They felt that someone should check in with partners regularly, as things could be forgotten over time,

particularly if partners did not have to make certain beverages or do specific tasks very often. They also indicated they would like to see more focus on improving coffee knowledge for baristas and ensuring baristas were aware of what the quality assurance standards assessment for Starbucks entailed.

One Management Group participant felt that their job would be improved if a handful of partners at their location were no longer working at their location, as they felt that these partners did not mesh well with others and were “not doing their job as effectively as they would like them to.” They elaborated that additional training and coaching had been done with these partners. They also indicated that turnover was an issue and it was difficult to get more staff, and their job could be improved if they could get more quality staff for the store. The other Management Group participant noted that there had been an issue with staffing at their store, making them the only person for several months other than the retail store manager who was able to open and close the store. This made it difficult for them to get a good night sleep between work and school as they were always closing the store, then opening it the next day. They suggested that having more staff would make a big difference for them, as without more staff, there was not very much flexibility in their schedule. The same participant felt that their job had already begun to improve as they had a new retail store manager who was ensuring that there was “no slacking off and everybody’s pulling their weight.” They felt the only other way to improve their job would be a promotion.

### **Discussion**

When the study was revised from a quantitative method to a qualitative method, the information that was ultimately collected differed somewhat than the information the researcher hoped to gain from the original design. The interviews allowed the researcher to pick up on emotional cues that would not have been possible through a survey to further explore answers that seemed to elicit an emotional response from participants. It allowed for further probing into the specific aspects of internal communication that the participants wanted to speak more about. Instead of simply rating how they felt about internal communications, detailed information was collected about how the participants felt, and how it had an impact on their ability to do their job.

#### **Internal communications & Job Satisfaction**

It was interesting that not a single participant defined the concept of internal communications, but instead immediately described a specific method of communication utilized most often at their retail store location. Had a survey been utilized, it is unlikely that the researcher would have known that participants did not speak about internal communications as a concept. All participants noted that the primary method of communication utilized was verbal. This is consistent with other research that indicates that, “face-to-face communication is considered more reliable than written communication in a business context because it provides greater information to the other party” (Mishra et al., 2014, p. 187).

It was also interesting to note that only Management Group participants felt empowered to seek out information from sources other than the retail store manager and felt that they generally did a good job of relaying information to those at the barista level on a regular basis. All Barista Group participants felt that there lacked consistency in being told information verbally by shift supervisors and whether or not the information given verbally was trustworthy. They all felt that



they had to constantly seek out information from shift supervisors and that they generally had to ask if there was new information instead of being told the information before they needed it. But despite uncertainty from Barista Group participants as to whether or not information from a shift supervisor was accurate, they still utilized them as their single source of information, as opposed to utilizing other sources of information available to them such as the *Store Portal* and *The Siren's Eye*. It is not certain why Barista Group participants still sought out verbal information from shift supervisors, whom they implied were unreliable at relaying information, as well as relaying information accurately, as opposed to utilizing other channels of communication. Some suggestions include a preference for face-to-face communication, and one Barista Group participant had commented that other channels, including the *Store Portal* was difficult to use. It is unlikely that the retail store managers are aware of the baristas concerns that there is a lack of information flowing downward to them in a timely manner, considering the opposing views between the Management Group and Barista Group participants. Especially considering those Management Group participants are all shift supervisors, they felt that they were doing a good job of informing baristas prior to being asked for the information. It would therefore appear that subordinates feel negatively regarding the aspect of supervisor-subordinate communication.

There appears to be an onus placed on shift supervisors to act as the conduit between the retail store manager and baristas, but this reliance on shift supervisors to relay information between the two could prove to be problematic as it means there is one extra person information has to be sent through, and information has a tendency to change the more people it is passed through. Also baristas can work with multiple shift supervisors on a single shift, but it is common that shift supervisors never see one another when one ends their shift and the other begins their shift, making it difficult to coordinate what has or has not been communicated. It

also might not be appropriate in certain situations, such as when baristas are having issues with another partner, or it is an issue that applies only to them. Likewise, passing information that applies to a specific barista from the retail store manager through the shift supervisor; these are issues that require clarification that the shift supervisor would not be equipped to handle as they are acting only as a messenger in these cases. As well, the information could be misinterpreted, presented inaccurately, or incompletely, therefore causing further issues such as lack of understanding. This could cause a variety of problems, including distrust of information as indicated by some Barista Group participants.

As mentioned previously, some Barista Group participants indicated they felt negatively in the area of supervisor-subordinate communication. Effective communication is part of shift supervisor's duties, yet two Barista Group participants indicated they often felt they were missing information and had to seek it out, while one indicated they felt that they could not necessarily trust the information they were being told. One Management Group participant indicated that the information received from a shift supervisor could not necessarily be believed depending on whom they received the information from. This seems to indicate that one of the skills shift supervisors could improve upon are in the area of internal communications. More consistency on part of the shift supervisors to share information they have needs to occur in order to ensure baristas receive the same information as the retail store manager and the shift supervisors. Communication is part of a shift supervisors' success profile, but it would appear that they might not be fulfilling the obligations of their position. The success profiles are lists of behaviors that Starbucks expects their employees to demonstrate. The retail store manager utilizes these success profiles when they sit down with each partner to do their biannual review. They are broken up into four grades: Must Improve, Meets Expectations, Above Expectations

and Consistently Exceeds Expectations. These four grading categories determine whether or not a store partner will receive a raise or if further coaching on a particular area is required. For shift supervisors, one of the communication behaviors that they must demonstrate in order to meet expectations is “communicates relevant, need-to-know information with manager and team” (“Success profile: Shift supervisor”, 2009, p. 5). Given what Barista Group participants have said about needing to seek out information, it appears that shift supervisors and retail store managers need to be more aware of consistently sharing information forward to baristas. Also formal systems could be developed to ensure that everyone in the retail store is receiving important information. Such as designating specific people to relay the information onwards based on the work schedule or having a chart of partner names where people can check off or initial beside the persons name when they have communicated the required information to them.

Several participants preferred written communication as they felt that verbal communication was not as accurate as information provided in print. These participants were not sure whether or not the information they received verbally could be trusted. This distrust of verbal communication is possibly inherent in the fact that verbal communication can easily change from person to person simply by changing the wording. It could also have stemmed from previous experiences these participants had receiving incorrect or incomplete information verbally. Although verbal communication is often more convenient than requiring someone to read printed material, it is a medium that can change information without the person communicating it intending to do so. Also verbal communication does not guarantee understanding by the receiver, nor does it allow for uniform presentation to every receiver like written communication does. However, much of the information the retail store manager receives originates in writing, which they pass on verbally to others. These documents could be made

available to all store partners so they can verify any verbal information they received if they wished. However, making these documents available to all store partners requires active participation from everyone. Although Barista Group participants indicated seeking out information, they only spoke of seeking out information from shift supervisors and did not mention the use of other resources such as the *Store Portal* or *The Sirens Eye*. Without them being willing to actively seek out this information, having it available to them would not improve internal communications.

It was interesting to note that Management Group participants liked verbal communication, as it allowed them to elaborate if required, had tone so that they could convey the emotions associated with the information, and some felt it was more personal than written communication. They felt that written communications lacked emotion and were therefore more boring than verbal communication. However, by attempting to relay the same information with the same emotional cues as the retail store manager can be problematic. Tone can change with each time the information is verbally told and other emotions can be unintentionally presented such as sarcasm through physical cues such as the use of air quotes or other body language. However, much research has been done that indicates that face-to-face communication is the preferred method of communication amongst employees and is likely why it is the most utilized method (Quirke, 2008).

Participants consistently described a hierarchical top down method of relaying information. In larger organizations, this type of communication method is unavoidable, and is particularly appropriate when “message consistency is important” (Welch & Jackson, 2007, p. 187). This is also likely as all participants indicated there was a reliance on the retail store manager as their primary source of information. This hierarchical method of relaying information from the retail

store manager to the shift supervisor, and then finally to the barista was likely created to ensure that everyone was receiving the information in an orderly manner. It is also possible that this hierarchical method of relaying information with the shift supervisor playing a seemingly indispensable role as a go between for the retail store manager and baristas was created as a method to more clearly delineate the role of the shift supervisor from that of the barista. The role of the shift supervisor is essentially the same as that of the barista, with a few additional duties including inventory control, cash control, and being the key holder for the store. Shift supervisors might also prefer that the baristas get the information from him or her instead of from other sources such as the *Store Portal* or *The Siren's Eye*, in order to ensure they are seen as an important part of disseminating information. It has created a potential communication issue when someone in this chain of information is missing, lacks information, misinterprets, provides inaccurate information, or does not pass information onwards, causing this communication method to become ineffective.

There is far too great an onus placed on this top down communication method, too heavy a reliance on the retail store managers as a single repository of information and to instigate the communication of information. This reliance could prove problematic should the retail store manager be absent for a long period of time or fail to relay information they received. More emphasis could be placed on lateral communication, specifically as it relates to promotional and procedural information so that store partners can inform each other, as well as for everyone to become self-reliant on becoming and staying informed. This type of information needs to be readily available for all store partners, and not available only to a single person. Studies have shown that organizations that do not have a hierarchy for communications encourages all employees to become better informed and share information forward to others (Dolphin, 2005).

Information that the retail store manager receives via email, at meetings, or on teleconferences could be put into writing and placed somewhere, such as the *Store Portal*, to allow others to access the information as needed. This would mean that partners would not need to rely on their retail store manager to create the printed documentation of this information and place it where they could access it.

Unfortunately at the moment, all of the information available on the *Store Portal* is targeted towards North American operations as a whole, and do not allow individual districts to post their own content. Nor do many partners seem to find the site user friendly, and they therefore avoid using it as they find it difficult to find the information they are seeking. Some baristas have indicated to the researcher anecdotally that they do not even know the password to access the *Store Portal*, nor do they feel as though they are given time to read the material on the site. The *Store Portal* was intended to be the main hub of information, as the training material for shift supervisor states, “The store portal is your one-stop resource to access customer, partner and business-related information” (“Shift supervisor training: Store communications”, 2012, p. 3). It certainly has potential to be the main communication method to disseminate information to all retail store locations as all participants indicated they knew of the existence of the *Store Portal*, although Barista Group participants indicated they did not utilize it. It is not clear if this underutilization is due to retail store partners preference for rich media over lean media, or whether it has to do with other factors, such as how in many retail environments, employees feel they do not have time to read and absorb written information (Sinickas, 2005). Lack of access can be an issue in retail stores (Murgolo-Poore & Pitt, 2001; Sinickas, 2005). As an intranet can only be accessed via a computer on the company’s network, it requires that partners use a computer located within the store. As most partners do not require access to a computer, many

retail stores have very few computers through which the *Store Portal* can be accessed, which can make accessing it an inconvenient process. As well, although baristas are told of the existence of the *Store Portal*, they are not specifically trained on using it. As well, the password to access the *Store Portal* changes several times a year and baristas are not necessarily notified when the password changes, or what the new password is. A poorly designed store intranet, making it difficult to use can prevent employees from utilizing the intranet (Sinickas, 2005). Intranets must be set up in a manner that employees will find intuitive. It should also be familiar in the sense that it is reflective of the current Internet. If the intranet is set up in a complex manner, information is hard to find; if the site is poorly structured and not intuitive, it can be difficult and frustrating for employees to use (Holtz, 2008). Frustration resulting from the degree of difficulty of its use has negatively impacted employees' view of the intranets' usefulness (Ji & Salvendy, 2004; Sinickas, 2005). From speaking with the Barista Group participants involved in this study, it seems as though they are interested in seeking the information out, but would prefer the information to be easily accessible. If it was possible to make the *Store Portal* accessible via their smart phones or tablets, there is a possibility that they would look at the information found there. Although it is unclear how many would look up work related communications outside of work hours or own their work breaks, even though two out of three Barista Group participants indicated they would like to receive work related information via email prior to going to work so they could feel prepared prior to work. Another suggestion would be to allot time to partners each week to allow them to read pertinent communications and information. However, with this approach it would be best if all the information could be located in one place as opposed to having the partners seek out the separate sources themselves. However, this approach also requires that all partners are willing to actively seek out the needed information on their own.

Other retail companies, such as American Eagle (AE), have been successful in launching an intranet for internal communications that contains employee-generated content that is similar to the Web 2.0 movement. Web 2.0 consists of user-generated, constantly evolving, interactive content, which is the polar opposite of the static beginnings that the Internet was built upon (Holtz, 2008; O'Reilly, 2005). With a user-friendly content management system, AE associates are able to refresh and post new information quickly and easily. By including employees as content creators, they are able to foster a high level of engagement from employees, as well as focus on content that they are interested in. As well, AE associates are best able to determine the type of information and content their fellow associates would need or want. By keeping the intranet simple, making information easy to find, and keeping it interactive, it keeps their intranet relevant, and a place that their associates repeatedly visit and view as a valuable communication and information resource (Borden, 2010).

Despite interviewing participants who worked in different retail store locations, participants could not think of other methods of communication that was utilized in their store. It would appear that most retail stores consistently use the same method of communication and do not explore other potential methods of communication such as text message and social media. This could be due to the fact that since there are certain official channels of communication put into place by Starbucks, that they are encouraged to utilize and focus on these channels. It is possible that other methods are discouraged, require additional time and effort to implement and maintain, or they are encouraged to keep communication methods similar across all retail store locations. It is also possible given the wide range of ages and backgrounds that people come from that work at Starbucks, using social media or text messages might alienate those that do not have the knowledge, skills, or resources (e.g. internet at home, a smartphone, an unlimited text



messaging or data plan on their phone) to utilize text message and social media. Also, it could be problematic to ask people to check work related communications on their personal, unpaid time as those that works in retail are paid hourly only when at work. As well, there might be privacy or liability issues with posting proprietary information on public platforms such as social media websites. Although there were aspects of communication climate that all participants seemed to feel negatively towards, they did not seem to feel negatively about communication climate as a whole.

### **Job satisfaction**

All the participants indicated that they enjoyed their work, however when asked what made their job enjoyable or not enjoyable, they primarily listed customer interaction. The majority of participants enjoyed their work due to their interaction with customers, which is not uncommon as another study by Broadbridge, Swanson & Taylor (2000) also found that customer interaction was a source of satisfaction for employees. Neither the aspects of supervisor-subordinate communication, nor communication climate came up as a topic that related to job satisfaction for participants. It would appear that although communication can influence employee job satisfaction, internal communication does not seem to have as much of an impact as external communication does on employee job satisfaction. When asked about ways their jobs could be improved, most of the initial answers given by participants had to do with customer interaction, promotions, and their coworkers. Only when probed specifically about internal communications was it a subject that they discussed in further detail. Generally most of topics they discussed without probing included external communications with customers. Although many participants noted when asked further about internal communications, that the use of verbal communications as an internal communication method impacted how they did their job most, and information

such as *Customer Voice* results could make them feel happier or sadder, it did not seem to have a major impact how much they enjoyed their job.

### **Further investigation**

If I were to conduct a similar study in the future, I would like to include participants who work as retail store managers or assistant store managers in order to get a more balanced picture of the three levels (barista, shift supervisor, retail store manager) of positions that exist within Starbucks retail store locations. Although shift supervisors are part of the management team, I suspect that a third viewpoint regarding the state of internal communications might emerge from those actually working as retail store managers, especially given that shift supervisors and baristas felt as though retail store managers were far removed from the day to day communications with baristas. Conducting a focus group with participants from each of the three position categories: retail store manager, shift supervisor and barista - might yield-interesting discussion regarding the effectiveness of the current communications methods utilized in retail stores. This could yield particularly fruitful insights if they were able to discuss and debate their viewpoints in the same focus group session. However, the ability of participants from the three position categories: retail store manager, shift supervisor, and barista – participating in the same focus group might be somewhat problematic in that they might not feel the ability to speak freely amongst one another. There is the potential that baristas would not feel able to speak their minds around shift supervisors or retail store managers, for fear that there could be repercussions to their employment should they express any negative thoughts or feelings. Those in the shift supervisor level might also feel an inability to express themselves around those at the retail store manager level for the same reasons as those at the barista level. As well, some shift supervisors might not want to say anything that would contradict the attitudes they try to portray to those at

the barista level below them, as it could mean losing respect should they portray themselves as unsure or negative. At the retail store manager level, since they must set an example for those below them and might feel hindered to speak freely around those at the shift supervisor or barista level that would be contrary to the example they want to set. Since participants would likely feel unable to speak freely if baristas, shift supervisors, and retail store managers participated in the same focus group, it would probably be better to conduct separate focus groups for each group of participants

The current participants of this study all appeared to be younger in age and all but one seemed to share similar cultural backgrounds as Canadians. There was one Barista Group participant who was from another country and had answers that were least congruent with the other participants. I suspect that if another study was undertaken with more participants from a variety of cultural backgrounds and countries, the results might have a greater variance than the current study. If further investigations were to be conducted using the same methodology, I would suggest recruiting more participants, and intentionally recruiting participants who varied in age, gender, cultural background and work experience. Given the age of the participants in the current study, it is a possibility that since they were younger that they did not have much prior work experience, so they would have little to compare the current state of internal communications and their level of job satisfaction with. Also the majority of the participants in this study were female, and perhaps a study with a greater balance in genders might yield different results.

### **Conclusion**

These findings might be unique to this particular type of retail store, as working in the beverage and food industry is likely quite different than a retail store that sells books, clothing or

electronics. What we can observe from this case study is that the state of internal communications seems to have limited impact on employee job satisfaction in this type of retail environment, and it is rather external factors such as customers that had a greater impact on whether or not employees enjoyed their work. Although employees have positive and negative feelings towards specific aspects of internal communications, as a whole they seem to view how it is currently working in their retail store locations in a positive manner. This is congruent with research done by Deconinck et al. (2008) who also found that employees were only satisfied or dissatisfied with particular aspects of communication as opposed to it as a whole. In this particular study, we did not find that supervisor-subordinate communication and communication climate had any influence on employee job satisfaction. Also Gray and Laidlaw's findings from their 2002 and 2004 studies, that part time employees are generally more dissatisfied with communications than full time employees seems to be congruent with this study as well. The Barista Group participants seemed to imply they worked fewer hours than Management Group participants and they were generally more dissatisfied with internal communications than Management Group participants. However, this could be due to the fact that Management Group participants had an obligation to seek out information, as it was a part of their duties.

In the end, the major problems with internal communications at Starbucks appears to be too heavy a reliance on the retail store manager on providing information and a lack of methods to easily provide information to all store partners in a place that partners can actually access. These areas should be addressed in the future in order to ensure that the majority of their retail store workforce is better informed. As stated by many participants in this study, having the information they need makes them feel more prepared to do their job, and the more prepared they feel, the more they enjoy their work. A lack of preparation could have a negative effect on

employees, and one participant even indicated made them feel embarrassed when customers knew information they did not. Since the number of retail store managers and shift supervisors at each store is significantly less than the number of baristas, they need to put more emphasis on ensuring those are the people that are well informed. Those working as baristas interface with the customers most often, are the ambassadors of the company, and are those that customers rely on to have the information they are seeking. If Starbucks wishes to remain successful, they must not forget about those that helped make them successful.

This research could potentially apply to any retail store environment with a similar structure, as there are generally more people working at non-managerial levels in each retail store location than those working at the managerial level. That makes the non-managerial retail employees key to an organizations' success. Despite the fact that they are not decision makers within the organization, they do help customers make decisions regarding what they will and will not be purchasing from an organization, and ultimately it is the consumers that determines if a company succeeds or fails.

### References

- Argenti, P. A. (1998). Strategic employee communications. *Human Resource Management*, 37(3-4), 199–206. doi:10.1002/(SICI)1099-050X(199823/24)37:3/4<199::AIDHRM3>3.0.CO;2-R
- Behar, H. & Goldstein, J. (2007). *It's not about the coffee: Leadership principles from a life at Starbucks*. New York, NY: Portfolio.
- Berners-Lee, T. (2010). Long live the web. *Scientific American*, 303(6), 80-85.
- Borden, R. (2010). American Eagle Outfitters creates a branded intranet that unites its associates. *Global Business & Organizational Excellence*, 29(2), 40-46. doi:10.1002/joe.20307
- Bottazzo, V. (2005). Intranet: A medium of internal communication and training. *Information Services & Use*, 25(2), 77-85. Retrieved from Academic Search Complete database.
- Broadbridge, A., Swanson, V., & Taylor, C. (2000). Retail change: effects on employees' job demands and home life. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 10(4), 417-432. doi: 10.1080/09593960050138967
- Brunelle, E. (2009). Introducing media richness into an integrated model of consumers' intentions to use online stores in their purchase process. *Journal Of Internet Commerce*, 8(3/4), 222-245. doi:10.1080/15332860903467649
- Campion-Smith, B. (2013, June 26). National household survey: Retail clerk is Canada's most common job. *The Star*. Retrieved from [http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/06/26/national\\_household\\_survey\\_retail\\_clerk\\_is\\_canadas\\_most\\_common\\_job.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/06/26/national_household_survey_retail_clerk_is_canadas_most_common_job.html)
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

- Daft, R.L., & Armstrong, A. (2009). *Essentials of organizational theory and design* (Canadian ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing.
- Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. (1983). Information richness. A new approach to managerial behavior and organization design. Retrieved from <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA128980>
- De Bussy, N. M., Ewing, M. T., & Pitt, L. F. (2003). Stakeholder theory and internal marketing communications: a framework for analysing the influence of new media. *Journal Of Marketing Communications*, 9(3), 147-161.
- Deconinck, J., Johnson, J., Busbin, J., & Lockwood, F. (2008). An examination of the validity of the Downs and Hazen communication satisfaction questionnaire. *Marketing Management Journal*, 18(2), 145-153. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Dolphin, R. (2005). Internal communications: Today's strategic imperative. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 11(3), 171-190. doi:10.1080/1352726042000315414
- Downs, C. W., & Hazen, M. D. (1977). A factor analytic study of communication satisfaction. *Journal of Business Communication*, 14, 63-73.
- Emanoil, M., Ramona, T., & Lucia, F. (2013). Efficient organizational communication: A key to success. *Studies in Business & Economics*, 8(2), 74-78.
- Frone, M., & Major, B. (1988). Communication quality and job satisfaction among managerial nurses: The moderating influence of job involvement. *Group & Organization Management*, 13, 332-347. doi: 10.1177/105960118801300306
- Gill, L. (2009). Case study: LBMC: Taking internal communications to a new height. *CPA Practice Management Forum*, 5(4), 9-13. Retrieved from Business Source Complete database.

- Goldhaber, G. M., & Krivonos, P. D. (1977). The ICA communication audit: Process, status, critique. *Journal Of Business Communication*, 15(1), 41-55.
- Government of Canada. (2013). *2011 National household survey: Portrait of Canada's labour force* (Publication No. 99-012-X2011002). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada.
- Gray, J., & Laidlaw, H. (2002). Part-time employment and communication satisfaction in an Australian retail organisation. *Employee Relations*, 24(1/2), 211-228. Retrieved from EBSCOhost. doi: 10.1108/01425450210420929
- Gray, J., & Laidlaw, H. (2004). Improving the measurement of communication satisfaction. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17(3), 425-448. doi:10.1177/0893318903257980
- Gu, R., Higa, K., & Moodie, D. R. (2011). A study on communication media selection: comparing the effectiveness of the media richness, social influence, and media fitness. *Journal Of Service Science & Management*, 4(3), 291-299.
- Hill, S., & Northouse, P. G. (1978). A research design for studying communication climate within a organization. *Journal Of Business Communication*, 15(2), 37-44.
- Holtz, S. (2008). Bring your intranet into the 21st century. *Communication World*, 25(1), 14-18. Retrieved from Communication & Mass Media Complete database.
- Industry Canada. (2013). *Consumer trends update: Canada's changing retail market*. Retrieved from [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/vwapj/CTU-2013\\_Q2\\_Canadas\\_Changing\\_Retail\\_Market-eng.pdf/\\$file/CTU-2013\\_Q2\\_Canadas\\_Changing\\_Retail\\_Market-eng.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/vwapj/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf/$file/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf)
- Jaworski, B. (n.d.). Return of older workers to the workforce. *Monster.ca*. Retrieved from <http://hiring.monster.ca/hr/hr-best-practices/recruiting-hiring-advice/strategic-workforce-planning/return-of-older-workers-workforce.aspx>



- Ji, Y., & Salvendy, G. (2004). Interface methods for using intranet portal organizational memory information system. *Ergonomics*, 47(15), 1585-1597. Retrieved from CINAHL Plus with Full Text database.
- Kalla, H. (2005). Integrated internal communications: A multidisciplinary perspective. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 10(4), 302-314.  
doi:10.1108/13563280510630106
- Kishi, M. (2008). Perceptions and use of electronic media: Testing the relationship between organizational interpretation differences and media richness. *Information & Management*, 45(5), 281-287. doi:10.1016/j.im.2008.02.008
- Knapp, A. (2009). Plugged-in employees. *Credit Union Management*, 32(11), 28-31. Retrieved from Business Source Complete database.
- Kropf, A. (2004, October 29). E-mailers beware of first impressions :-O. *Business Journal (Central New York)*, 24.
- Lan, Y., Hung, C., & Hsu, H. (2011). Effects of guided writing strategies on students' writing attitudes based on media richness theory. *Turkish Online Journal Of Educational Technology - TOJET*, 10(4), 148-164.
- McCracken, H. (2014). The web at 25: Revisting Tim Berners-Lee amazing proposal document. *Time.com*, 1.
- McCreadie, S., & Stevenson, J. (2000). Use of an intranet to improve communication and manage knowledge in a large multisite pharmacy department. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 57(15), 1430-1436. Retrieved from CINAHL Plus with Full Text database.
- McKay, P. F., Avery, D. R., Tonidandel, S., Morris, M. A., Hernandez, M. & Hebl, M. R.

- (2007). Racial differences in employee retention: Are diversity climate perceptions the key? *Personnel Psychology*, 60, 35–62. doi:10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00064.x
- Michelli, J. A. (2007). *The Starbucks experience: 5 principles for turning ordinary into extraordinary*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Mishra, K., Boynton, L., & Mishra, A. (2014) Driving employee engagement: The expanded role of internal communications. *Journal of Business Communications*, 51(2), 183-202. doi:10.1177/232948841452539
- Murgolo-Poore, M., & Pitt, L. (2001). Intranets and employee communication: PR behind the firewall. *Journal of Communication Management*, 5(3), 231. doi:10.1108/13632540110806794
- Pettit Jr., J. D., Goris, J. R., & Vaught, B. (1997). An examination of organizational communication as a moderator of the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction. *Journal Of Business Communication*, 34(1), 81-98.
- Pincus, J. (1986). Communication satisfaction, job satisfaction, and job performance. *Human Communication Research*, 12(3), 395-419.
- Pincus, D., Knipp, J., & Rayfield, R. (1990). Internal communication and job satisfaction revisited: The impact of organizational trust and Influence on commercial bank supervisors. *Public Relations Research Annual*, 2, 173-191. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Plumtree corporate portal and Plumtree collaboration server deployed to nearly 5,000 Starbucks offices and stores: Starbucks portal drives shared corporate identity, improves store productivity. (2004, January 21). Retrieved from [http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi\\_0199-616684/Plumtree-Corporate-Portal-and-Plumtree.html](http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-616684/Plumtree-Corporate-Portal-and-Plumtree.html)

- Quirke, B. (2008) *Making the connections: Using internal communications to turn strategy into action*. Burlington, VT: Gower.
- Rose, D. (1997, October 20). Come meet the intranet, Internet's hot, new cousin. *Austin Business Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.bizjournals.com/austin/stories/1997/10/20/focus7.html?s=print>
- Rubin, R., Palmgreen, P., & Sypher, H. (1994). *Communication research measures: A sourcebook*, (Eds.). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Ruppel, C. P., & Harrington, S. J. (2001). Sharing knowledge through intranets: A study of organizational culture and intranet implementation. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 44(1), 37. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.
- Russ, G. S., Daft, R. L., Lengel, R. H. (1990). Media selection and managerial characteristics in organizational communications. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 4(2), 151-175. doi: 10.1177/0893318990004002002
- Schultz, H., & Jones-Yang, D. (1997) *Pour your heart into it: How Starbucks built a company one cup at a time*. New York, NY: Hyperion.
- Service Canada (2013). *Job futures Quebec: Retail salespersons and sales clerks*. Retrieved from [http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/qc/job\\_futures/statistics/6421.shtml](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/qc/job_futures/statistics/6421.shtml)
- Sinickas, A. (2005). The role of intranets and other e-channels in employee communication Preferences. *Journal of Website Promotion*, 1(1), 31. Retrieved from MasterFILE Premier database.
- Smidts, A., Pruyn, A. H., & Van Riel, C. M. (2001). The impact of employee communication and perceived external prestige on organizational identification. *Academy Of Management Journal*, 44(5), 1051-1062. doi:10.2307/3069448

Starbucks company statistics. (2014, July 12). Retrieved from [https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/vwapj/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf/$file/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf)

[bc.nsf/vwapj/CTU-2013\\_Q2\\_Canadas\\_Changing\\_Retail\\_Market-eng.pdf/\\$file/CTU-](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/vwapj/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf/$file/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf)

[2013\\_Q2\\_Canadas\\_Changing\\_Retail\\_Market-eng.pdf](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/vwapj/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf/$file/CTU-2013_Q2_Canadas_Changing_Retail_Market-eng.pdf)

Starbucks Corporation. (2014). *Company profile*. Retrieved from

<http://globalassets.starbucks.com/assets/233b9b746b384f8ca57882614f6cebdb.pdf>

Starbucks Corporation (2009). *Success profile: Shift Supervisor*.

Starbucks Corporation. (2012). *Shift supervisor training: Store communications*.

Starbucks Corporation. (2011). *Starbucks company timeline*. Retrieved from

<http://globalassets.starbucks.com/assets/0e40b1ea48b34b82ae0a987175f1df25.pdf>

Unzicker, D., & Clow, K. E. (2000). The role of organizational communications on employee

perceptions of a firm. *Journal Of Professional Services Marketing*, 21(2), 87.

Wanous, J. P., & Lawler III, E. E. (1972). Measurement and meaning of job satisfaction. *Journal*

*Of Applied Psychology*, 56(2), 95-105.

Welch, M., & Jackson, P. (2007). Rethinking internal communication: A stakeholder approach.

*Corporate Communications: An international Journal*, 12(2), 177-198.

doi:10.1108/13563280710744847

Whysall, P., Foster, C., & Harris, L. (2009). Job dissatisfaction among retail employees: a study

of three leading UK retailers. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and*

*Consumer Research*, 19(2), 179-198. doi: 10.1080/09593960903109519

[illegible]

**Altered Recruitment Poster****Call for volunteers!**

I am looking for Starbucks partners to voluntarily complete a survey on communication and job satisfaction.

It would be **greatly appreciated** as a fellow partner if you would volunteer to participate in this study!

If you are interested in participating, the survey can be found online at the following link:

**<http://www.surveymonkey.net/s/MACTCommunicationsurvey>**

This survey is part of the final project in order to complete my Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology degree at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of the study is to determine if internal communications at Starbucks has an affect on Starbucks retail store employee job satisfaction. As well as what methods of communication partners feel would be most effective in a retail store environment. It is voluntary, will in no way impact your position at Starbucks, and is not being administered by Starbucks.

The survey will take approximately **20 minutes** and should done in one session.

Eva Pang, MACT Student  
University of Alberta  
[epang@ualberta.ca](mailto:epang@ualberta.ca)  
780-497-1933

**Appendix B**  
**Initial Contact Email/Text Message/Phone Conversation**

Thank you for contacting me regarding my research study for the completion of my Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of the study is to determine if internal communications at Starbucks has an affect on Starbucks retail store employee job satisfaction. As well as what methods of communication partners feel would be most effective in a retail store environment.

Remember that all answers will be kept anonymous and confidential, your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and will have no impact on your position at Starbucks.

The link to the online survey is as follows:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MACTCommunicationSurvey>

. The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete, and should be completed in one session.

### Appendix C Survey Consent Form

---

#### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Title of Study:** Exploring the effect of internal communication on retail employee job satisfaction

**Principal Investigator:**

*Eva Pang*  
*MACT Student*  
*Faculty of Extension*  
*University of Alberta*  
*(780)497-1933*  
*epang@ualberta.ca*

**Research/Study Coordinator:**

Dr. Stanley Varnhagen  
Academic Director, Evaluation & Research Services  
Faculty of Extension  
(780)492-3641  
Stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca

---

You are being invited to participate in this research study being conducted by Eva Pang, a Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology student at the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, and Shift Supervisor at Starbucks – Omega Location (10504 99 Ave, Edmonton, AB). The purpose of the study is to examine how internal communication at Starbucks affects employee job satisfaction. As well as what methods of communication partners feel would be most effective in a retail store environment.

The anonymity of all participants will be completely confidential. Only the researcher working on this project will have access to the information that is provided. No other instructors and University administrators will have access to the responses. Your employer will not have access to the responses. The consent forms will be stored separately from the questionnaires/data so there is no way for a participant's name to be identified with any data.

To participate in this study, we request that you fill out the following survey. The survey should take between 30 and 40 minutes to complete.

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary, and if you decide at any time that you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so simply by not submitting the survey. Participation in this survey will not in any way impact your employment with Starbucks. Starbucks will not be made of aware of your participation or withdrawal, nor will they be provided access to any answers you provide.



The responses you provide will be saved on SurveyMonkey servers, which are housed in the United States of America, where they are subject to American privacy laws including the Patriot Act. The information provided will be used in a research paper, that might be shared with others once the study is completed, in either a summary format or in its original format as a research paper. The research paper will not be published or presented at conferences. The identity of all participants will be kept confidential and only group data and themes will be utilized.

The data analyses will be conducted with group data only. No names will be attached to any quotation we use. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office on the University of Alberta campus for 5 years, following the guidelines of the University of Alberta. After 5 years, the questionnaires and related materials will be shredded and destroyed.

This research can potentially contribute to the advancement of our understanding of how people adapt to cultural environments. There are no foreseeable risks or direct benefits to participants in this study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

If you have any questions about the research now or later, or you wish to obtain a final copy of the research report, you can contact Eva Pang, Dr. Stanley Varnhagen at the number and address below.

**Research Investigator**

Eva Pang  
MACT Student  
(780)497-1933  
epang@ualberta.ca

**Supervisor**

Stanley Varnhagen  
Faculty of Extension  
(780)492-3641  
stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca

By clicking “OK”, you indicate that you have read and understand the nature and purpose of the study. As well, this indicates that you are willing and consenting to participate in this research study.

**Appendix D**  
**Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) &**  
**Altered Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire**

**Organizational Integration**

1. Information about my progress in my job
2. Personnel news
3. Information about departmental policies and goals
4. Information about the requirements of my job
5. Information about benefits and pay

**Supervisory Communication**

6. Extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me
7. Extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job related problems
8. Extent to which my supervisor trusts me
9. Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas
10. Extent to which the amount of supervision given to me is about right

**Personal Feedback**

11. Information about how my job compares with others
12. Information about how I am being judged
13. Recognition of my efforts
14. Reports on how problems in my job are handled
15. Extent to which superiors know and understand the problems faced by subordinates

**Corporate Information**

16. Information about company policies and goals
17. Information about government action affecting my company
18. Information about changes in our organization
19. Information about our organization's financial standing
20. Information about accomplishments and/or failures of the organization

**Communication Climate**

21. Extent to which the organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals
22. Extent to which the people in my organization have great ability as communicators
23. Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it
24. Extent to which I receive in time the information needed to do my job
25. Extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels

**Horizontal and Informal Communication (Co-worker Communication)**

26. Extent to which the grapevine is active in our organization
27. Extent to which horizontal communication with other employees is accurate and free flowing

- 28. Extent to which communication practices are adaptable to emergencies
- 29. Extent to which my work group is compatible
- 30. Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate

#### Media Quality

- 31. Extent to which my company's publications are interesting and helpful
- 32. Extent to which our meetings are well organized
- 33. Extent to which written directives and reports are clear and concise
- 34. Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are basically healthy
- 35. Extent to which the amount of communication in the organization is about right

#### Withdrawal Cognitions

- 36. Within the next six months, I intend to search for another job.
- 37. Within the next year, I intend to leave this profession.
- 38. Within the next six months, I would rate the likelihood of leaving my present job as high.

#### Job Satisfaction

- 39. I find real enjoyment in my job.
- 40. I like my job better than the average worker does.
- 41. I am seldom bored with my job.
- 42. Most days I am enthusiastic about my job.
- 43. I feel fairly well satisfied with my job.

#### Organizational Commitment

- 44. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.
- 45. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
- 46. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
- 47. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
- 48. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
- 49. I do not feel strong sense of belonging to my organization. (R)

*Note:* The Downs & Hazen (1977) Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire is from

Deconinck et al., 2008, p. 150.

Listed below are several types of information often associated with a person's job. Please indicate how satisfied you are with the amount and/or quality of each kind of information by circling the appropriate number at the right.

## Organizational Integration

- ## Supervisory Communication

- ## Personal Feedback

- ## Corporate Information

- ## Communication Climate

21. Extent to which the organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals
22. Extent to which the people in my organization have great ability as communicators
23. Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it
24. Extent to which I receive in time the information needed to do my job
25. Extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels

#### Horizontal and Informal Communication (Co-worker Communication)

26. Extent to which the grapevine is active in our organization
27. Extent to which horizontal communication with other employees is accurate and free flowing
28. Extent to which communication practices are adaptable to emergencies
29. Extent to which my work group is compatible
30. Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate

#### Media Quality

31. Extent to which my company's publications are interesting and helpful
32. Extent to which our meetings are well organized
33. Extent to which written directives and reports are clear and concise
34. Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are basically healthy
35. Extent to which the amount of communication in the organization is about right

#### Withdrawal Cognitions

36. Within the next six months, I intend to search for another job.
37. Within the next year, I intend to leave this profession.
38. Within the next six months, I would rate the likelihood of leaving my present job as high.

#### Job Satisfaction

39. I find real enjoyment in my job.
40. I like my job better than the average worker does.
41. I am seldom bored with my job.
42. Most days I am enthusiastic about my job.
43. I feel fairly well satisfied with my job.

#### Organizational Commitment

44. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.
45. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
46. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization. (R)
47. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization. (R)
48. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
49. I do not feel strong sense of belonging to my organization. (R)

*Note:* The Downs & Hazen (1977) Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire is from

Deconinck et al., 2008, p. 150.

**Appendix E**  
**Permission Form to use the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire**

PERMISSION TO USE THE COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION QUESTIONNAIRE

Cal W. Downs, Phd

Communication Management

[commgt@yahoo.com](mailto:commgt@yahoo.com)

785-550-9080

Permission is granted solely for educational research if the researcher will agree to the following conditions, print this letter of agreement, sign it and return it to Communication Management, 1515 W. 21<sup>st</sup>, Lawrence, KS 66046.

1. Permission is for this one time usage for an educational research project.
2. The factor structure will not be published or shared with anyone.
3. A copy of the study will be sent to the address 1515 W. 21<sup>st</sup>, Lawrence, Kansas 66046..
4. If the Comsat is translated into a non-English language, a copy of the translation will be sent.
5. We keep a summary data file, so please send a copy of the SPSS data summary that you develop. We can help you develop this.

Signed: Eva Pang

Address: 603-9917 110 St NW, Edmonton, AB, T5K 2N4, Canada

Permanent contact point: Eva Pang, 780-497-1933

Cal W. Downs, PhD

## Appendix F

### Permission to use the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire



Eva Pang <epang@ualberta.ca>

---

#### comsat

1 message

---

**Cal Downs** <commgt@yahoo.com>  
Reply-To: Cal Downs <commgt@yahoo.com>  
To: "epang@ualberta.ca" <epang@ualberta.ca>

Thu, Jan 10, 2013 at 4:32 PM

Dear Ms. Pang:

Attached is an agreement that I would like for you to sign. I am happy to give permission for academic studies.

I am doing research on the link between communication and commitment. Would you consider (with your advisor) whether or not you could use my commitment scale of 9 items to contribute to my databank?

I wish you well in your study.

Cal W. Downs,  
Communication Management, Inc.

---

**CMI agreement.doc**  
24K

**Appendix G**  
**International Communication Association Audit (International Communication Association, 1976) & Altered International Communication Association Audit**

**A**  
**Receiving Information from Others**

*Instructions:* For each topic listed on the following pages, mark your responses on the answer sheet that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you are receiving on that topic and (2) the amount of information you need to receive on that topic in order to do your job.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I receive now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to receive." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Topic area

How well am I doing in my job

My job duties

Organizational policies

Pay and benefits

How technological changes affect my job

Mistakes and failures of my organization

How I am being judged

How my job-related problems are being handled

How organization decisions are made that affect my job

Promotion and advancement opportunities in my organization

Important new product, service or program developments in my organization

How my job relates to the total operation of my organization

Specific problems faced by management.

**B**  
**Sending Information to Others**

*Instructions:* For each topic listed on the following pages, mark your responses on the answer sheet that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you are sending on that topic and (2) the amount of information you need to send on that topic in order to do your job.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I send now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to send now." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Topic area

Reporting on what I am doing in my job

Reporting what I think my job requires me to do



Reporting job-related problems  
 Complaining about my job and/or working conditions  
 Requesting information necessary to do my job  
 Evaluating the performance of my immediate supervisor  
 Asking for clearer work

### C

#### Follow-Up on Information

*Instructions:* Indicate the amount of action or follow-up that is and needs to be taken on information you send to the following:

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of follow-up now," the second, "This is the amount of follow-up needed." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

#### Topic area

Subordinates  
 Co-workers  
 Immediate supervisor  
 Middle management  
 Top management

### D

#### Sources of Information

*Instructions:* You not only receive various kinds of information, but can receive such information from various sources within the organization. For each source listed below, mark your response on the answer sheet that indicates: (1) the amount of information you are receiving from that source and (2) the amount of information you need to receive from that source in order to do your job.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I receive now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to receive." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

#### Sources of information

Subordinates (if applicable)  
 Co-workers in my own unit or department in my organization  
 Individuals in other units, departments in my organization  
 Immediate supervisor  
 Department meetings  
 Middle management

Formal management presentations  
 Top management  
 The “grapevine”

### E

#### **Timeliness of Information Received from Key Sources**

*Instructions:* Indicate the extent to which information from the following sources is usually timely (you get information when you need it – not too early, not too late).

[Editors’ note: A Likert-type scale appears to the right of each item. The scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

#### Sources of information

Subordinates (if applicable)  
 Coworkers  
 Immediate supervisor  
 Middle management  
 Top management  
 “Grapevine”

### F

#### **Organizational Communication Relationships**

*Instructions:* A variety of communicative relationships exist in organizations such as your own. Employees exchange messages regularly with supervisors, subordinates, coworkers, etc. Considering your relationships with others in your organization, please mark your response on the answer sheet.

[Editors’ note: A Likert-type scale appears to the right of each item. The scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

#### Relationships

I trust my coworkers  
 My workers get along with each other  
 My relationship with my coworkers is satisfying  
 I trust my immediate supervisor  
 My immediate supervisor is honest with me  
 My immediate supervisor listens to me  
 I am free to disagree with my immediate supervisor  
 I can tell my immediate supervisor when things are going wrong  
 My immediate supervisor praises me for a good job  
 My immediate supervisor is friendly with his/her subordinates  
 My immediate supervisor understands my job needs

My relationship with my immediate supervisor is satisfying  
 I trust top management  
 Top management is sincere in its efforts to communicate with employees  
 My relationship with top management is satisfying  
 My organization encourages differences of opinion  
 I have a say in decisions that affect my job  
 I influence operations in my unit or department  
 I have a part in accomplishing my organizations goals

## G Organizational Outcomes

*Instructions:* One of the most important outcomes of working in an organization is the satisfaction one gets or fails to receive through working there. Such satisfaction can relate to the job, one's immediate supervisor, or the organization as a whole. Please mark your response on the answer sheet to indicate the extent to which you are satisfied with:

[Editors' note: A Likert-type scale appears to the right of each item. The scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

### Outcomes

My job  
 My pay  
 My progress in my organization up to this point in time  
 My chances for getting ahead in my organization  
 My opportunity to "make a difference" – to contribute to the overall success of my organization  
 My organization's system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance  
 My organization's concern for its members welfare  
 My organization's overall communicative efforts  
 Working in my organization  
 My organization, as compared to other such  
 My organization's overall efficiency of operation  
 The overall quality of my organization's product or service  
 My organization's achievement of its goals and objectives

## H Channels of Information

*Instructions:* Listend below are a variety of channels through which messages are transmitted. Please indicate on the answer sheet (1) the amount of information you now receive through that channel, and (2) the amount you need to receive through that channel.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I receive now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to receive." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3),

*great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Channels

Face to face

Written memos, letters, and notices

Bulletin boards

Corporate newsletter

Plant newsletter

Procedural manual

Home mailings

Pay envelope stuffers

Communication committee minutes

Safety steering committee minutes

Shift briefings

Meeting with supervisor

Meeting with divisional management

Meeting with plant management

Departmental safety meetings

*Note:* The International Communication Association Audit is from Rubin et al., 1994, pp. 200-205.

**Altered International Communication Association Audit (International Communication Association, 1976)**

**A**

**Receiving Information from Others**

*Instructions:* For each topic listed on the following pages, choose the appropriate number that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you are receiving on that topic and (2) the amount of information you need to receive on that topic in order to do your job.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I receive now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to receive." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

**B**

**Sending Information to Others**

*Instructions:* For each topic listed on the following pages, choose the appropriate number that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you are sending on that topic and (2) the amount of information you need to send on that topic in order to do your job.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I send now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to send now." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

Topic area

Reporting on what I am doing in my job

Reporting what I think my job requires me to do

Reporting job-related problems

Complaining about my job and/or working conditions

Requesting information necessary to do my job

Evaluating the performance of my immediate supervisor

Asking for clearer work

**C**

**Follow-Up on Information**

*Instructions:* Indicate the amount of action or follow-up that is and needs to be taken on information you send to the following:

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of follow-up now," the second, "This is the amount of follow-up needed." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

## D

### Sources of Information

*Instructions:* You not only receive various kinds of information, but can receive such information from various sources within the organization. For each source listed below, choose the appropriate number that best indicates: (1) the amount of information you are receiving from that source and (2) the amount of information you need to receive from that source in order to do your job.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I receive now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to receive." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

#### Sources of information

Subordinates (if applicable)

Co-workers in my stores in my organization

Individuals in other stores in my organization

Immediate supervisor

Department meetings

Middle management

Formal management presentations

Top management

The "grapevine"

## E

### Timeliness of Information Received from Key Sources

*Instructions:* Indicate the extent to which information from the following sources is usually timely (you get information when you need it – not too early, not too late).

[Editors' note: A Likert-type scale appears to the right of each item. The scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

Sources of information

Subordinates (if applicable)

Coworkers

Immediate supervisor

Middle management

Top management

“Grapevine”

**F****Organizational Communication Relationships**

*Instructions:* A variety of communicative relationships exist in organizations such as your own. Employees exchange messages regularly with supervisors, subordinates, coworkers, etc. Considering your relationships with others in your organization, please choose the appropriate number that best indicates how you feel about each relationship.

[Editors’ note: A Likert-type scale appears to the right of each item. The scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

**G****Organizational Outcomes**

*Instructions:* One of the most important outcomes of working in an organization is the satisfaction one gets or fails to receive through working there. Such satisfaction can relate to the job, one’s immediate supervisor, or the organization as a whole. Please indicate the extent to which you are satisfied with:

[Editors’ note: A Likert-type scale appears to the right of each item. The scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

Outcomes

My job

My pay

My progress in my organization up to this point in time

My chances for getting ahead in my organization

My opportunity to “make a difference” – to contribute to the overall success of my organization

My organization’s system for recognizing and rewarding outstanding performance

My organization’s concern for its members welfare

My organization’s overall communicative efforts

Working in my organization  
 My organization, as compared to other such  
 My organization's overall efficiency of operation  
 The overall quality of my organization's product or service  
 My organization's achievement of its goals and objectives

## H Channels of Information

*Instructions:* Listed below are a variety of channels through which messages are transmitted. Please indicate (1) the amount of information you now receive through that channel, and (2) the amount you need to receive through that channel.

[Editors' note: Two Likert-type scales appear to the right of each item. The first is headed, "This is the amount of information I receive now," the second, "This is the amount of information I need to receive." Each scale has a range of 1 to 5, including *very little* (1), *little* (2), *some* (3), *great* (4), and *very great* (5). The respondent circles a number from each scale for each item.]

Rating scale will include a N/A for Not Applicable as some questions/situations might not apply.

### Channels

Face to face  
 Written memos, letters, and notices  
 Bulletin boards  
 Corporate newsletter  
 Store newsletter  
 Procedural manual  
 Home mailings  
 Pay envelope stuffers  
 Communication committee minutes  
 Safety steering committee minutes  
 Shift briefings  
 Meeting with supervisor  
 Meeting with assistant store management  
 Meeting with store management  
 Departmental safety meetings

*Note:* The International Communication Association Audit is from Rubin et al., 1994, pp. 200-205.



**Appendix H**  
**Additional Survey Questions & Altered Additional Survey Questions**

Do you use Social Media?

Yes/No

Which forms of Social Media have you heard of (check all that apply)?

FaceBook

Twitter

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Google +

Other (Please Specify)

Which forms of Social Media do you use?

FaceBook

Twitter

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Google +

Other (Please Specify)

Do you use email?

Yes/No

Do you use text messages?

Yes/No

Do you prefer to receive communications regarding work inside the store or outside of the store?

Inside/Outside

Would you read communications from Starbucks if it was delivered outside of work hours?

Yes/No

If Yes, what method(s) would you prefer?

Email

Text Message

FaceBook

Twitter

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Google+

Secure Intranet Site

Other (Please Specify):

What is your role at Starbucks?

Barista  
Shift Supervisor  
Assistant Store Manager  
Store Manager  
Other (Please specify):

How long have you been with Starbucks?

0-3 months  
4-6 months  
7-12 months  
1-3 years  
4-5 years  
6-10 years  
10 years or more

Gender  
Male/Female

Age:  
16-18 years  
19-22 years  
23-26 years  
27-30 years  
31-35 years  
36-40 years  
41-45 years  
46-50 years  
51-55 years  
56-60 years  
61 years or older

Highest level of education completed:

Junior High  
High School  
Post Secondary  
Graduate School

Average hours worked at Starbucks per week

16 hours or less  
16-20 hours  
21-25 hours  
26-30 hours  
31-40 hours

Would you like to participate in a Focus Group?

Yes/No

**Altered Additional Survey Questions**

Do you use Social Media?

Yes/No

Which forms of Social Media have you heard of (check all that apply)?

FaceBook

Twitter

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Google +

Other (Please Specify)

None of the Above

Which forms of Social Media do you use?

FaceBook

Twitter

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Google +

Other (Please Specify)

None of the Above

Do you use email?

Yes/No

Do you use text messages?

Yes/No

Do you prefer to receive communications regarding work inside the store or outside of the store?

Inside/Outside

Would you read communications from Starbucks if it was delivered outside of work hours?

Yes/No

If Yes, what method(s) would you prefer?

Email

Text Message

FaceBook

Twitter

Pinterest

LinkedIn

Google+

Secure Intranet Site

Other (Please Specify):

What is your role at Starbucks?

Barista

Shift Supervisor

Assistant Store Manager

Store Manager

Other (Please specify):

How long have you been with Starbucks?

0-3 months

4-6 months

7-12 months

1-3 years

4-5 years

6-10 years

10 years or more

Gender

Male/Female

Age:

16-18 years

19-22 years

23-26 years

27-30 years

31-35 years

36-40 years

41-45 years

46-50 years

51-55 years

56-60 years

61 years or older

Highest level of education completed:

Junior High

High School

Post Secondary

Graduate School

Average hours worked at Starbucks per week

16 hours or less

16-20 hours

21-25 hours

26-30 hours

31-40 hours

Would you like to participate in a Focus Group?

Yes/No

**Appendix I**  
**Recruitment for Focus Group**  
*(Will appear at end of online survey)*

I am looking for Starbucks partners to voluntarily agree to participate in a focus group on effective internal communication and preferred communication methods.

This focus group is part of the final project in order to complete my Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology degree at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of the study is to determine if internal communications at Starbucks has an effect on Starbucks retail store employee job satisfaction. As well as what methods of communication partners feel would be most effective in a retail store environment.

Note that although Starbucks has approved allowing me to post the call for volunteers in stores for the survey you are currently completing, Starbucks will in NO WAY be apprised or given access to individual responses, or told who has or has not participated. All answers will be kept anonymous and confidential, your participation in this research is completely voluntary and you are in no way should feel obligated to participate. Your choice to participate or not to participate will have no impact on your position at Starbucks.

The focus group will take approximately 90 minutes. We will meet on a date and location that is convenient for all participants.

If you are interested in participating or want more information, please fill out the fields below to indicate your name, email address, phone number, position at Starbucks, then hit “submit”.

Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number:

Position at Starbucks (please choose one):

Barista

Shift Supervisor

Assistant Store Manager

Store Manager

Other (Please Specify):

**Appendix J**  
**Focus Group Consent Form**

---

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Study:** Exploring the effect of internal communication on retail employee job satisfaction

**Principal Investigator:**

*Eva Pang*  
*MACT Student*  
*Faculty of Extension*  
*University of Alberta*  
*(780)497-1933*  
*epang@ualberta.ca*

**Research/Study Coordinator:**

Dr. Stanley Varnhagen  
Academic Director, Evaluation & Research Services  
Faculty of Extension  
(780)492-3641  
Stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca

---

You are being invited to participate in this research study being conducted by Eva Pang, a Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology student at the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, and Shift Supervisor at Starbucks – Omega Location (10504 99 Ave, Edmonton, AB). The purpose of the study is to examine how internal communication at Starbucks affects employee job satisfaction. As well as what methods of communication partners feel would be most effective in a retail store environment.

I understand and consent that Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology student, Eva Pang, will interview me in a focus group and ask me questions that include, but not limited to my opinions on communication in the workplace, what makes effective communication, and my preferred methods of communication.

The focus group should last for approximately 90 minutes.

I hereby give my permission to participate in a focus group. I understand that the focus group will be audio recorded and that the recordings, focus group transcripts, and field notes will be used for educational and research purposes only, including research reports, research articles, and presentations. I also understand that the recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes will be kept in a secure locked place for a minimum of five years and then destroyed. All data for all uses will be handled in compliance with the aforementioned University Standards.

The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants is the shared responsibility of all focus group participants. The research will follow procedures to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of all focus group participants but cannot guarantee the behavior of others. Only the researcher working on this project will have access to the information that is provided. No other instructors and University administrators will have access to the responses. Your employer will not have access to the responses. The consent forms will be stored separately from the questionnaires/data so there is no way for a participant's name to be identified with any data.

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary, and if you decide at any time that you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so simply by leaving the focus group session. However we will need to keep the data that we have already collected, as it will be difficult to discern from the audio recordings who said what. As well, your contributions prior to withdrawing might have had an effect on other participants responses. Participation in this focus group will not in any way impact your employment with Starbucks. Starbucks will not be made of aware of your participation or withdrawal, nor will they be provided access to any answers you provide.

The information provided will be used in a research paper, that might be shared with others once the study is completed, in either a summary format or in its original format as a research paper. The research paper will not be published or presented at conferences. The identity of all participants will be kept confidential. The data analyses will be conducted with group data only. If we use a quotation that you provided, no names or titles will be used. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office on the University of Alberta campus for 5 years, following the guidelines of the University of Alberta. After 5 years, the audio recordings, transcripts, and related materials will be shredded and destroyed.

This research can potentially contribute to the advancement of our understanding of how people adapt to cultural environments. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

If you have any questions about the research now or later, or you wish to obtain a final copy of the research report, you can contact Eva Pang, Dr. Stanley Varnhagen at the number and address below.

**Research Investigator**

Eva Pang  
MACT Student  
(780)497-1933  
epang@ualberta.ca

**Supervisor**

Stanley Varnhagen  
Faculty of Extension  
(780)492-3641  
stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca



Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understand the nature and purpose of the study. Your signature indicates your willingness and consent to participate in this research study.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

---

Participant's Name (printed)

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

**Appendix K**  
**Interview Consent Form**

---

**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Title of Study:** Exploring the effect of internal communication on retail employee job satisfaction

**Principal Investigator:**

*Eva Pang*  
*MACT Student*  
*Faculty of Extension*  
*University of Alberta*  
*(780)497-1933*  
*epang@ualberta.ca*

**Research/Study Coordinator:**

Dr. Stanley Varnhagen  
Academic Director, Evaluation & Research Services  
Faculty of Extension  
(780)492-3641  
Stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca

---

You are being invited to participate in this research study being conducted by Eva Pang, a Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology student at the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, and Shift Supervisor at Starbucks – Omega Location (10504 99 Ave, Edmonton, AB). The purpose of the study is to examine how internal communication at Starbucks affects employee job satisfaction. As well as what methods of communication partners feel would be most effective in a retail store environment.

I understand and consent that Masters of Arts in Communication and Technology student, Eva Pang, will interview me individually and ask me questions that include, but not limited to my opinions on communication in the workplace, preferred methods of communication, and my job satisfaction.

The interview should last for approximately 60-90 minutes.

I hereby give my permission to participate in an interview. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and that the recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes will be used for educational and research purposes only, including research reports, research articles, and presentations. I also understand that the recordings, interview transcripts, and field notes will be kept in a secure locked place for a minimum of five years and then destroyed. All data for all uses will be handled in compliance with the aforementioned University Standards.

The researcher will follow procedures to maintain anonymity and confidentiality of all research participants. Only the researcher working on this project will have access to the information that is provided. No other instructors and University administrators will have access to the responses. Your employer will not have access to the responses. The consent forms will be stored separately from the questionnaires/data so there is no way for a participant's name to be identified with any data.

Your decision to participate in this study is completely voluntary, and if you decide at any time that you would like to withdraw from the study, you may do so simply by ending the interview. Participation may also be withdrawn up to two weeks after the researcher checks the accuracy of the data they have collected from you. Participation in this interview will not in any way impact your employment with Starbucks. Starbucks will not be made aware of your participation or withdrawal, nor will they be provided access to any answers you provide.

The information provided will be used in a research paper, that might be shared with others once the study is completed, in either a summary format or in its original format as a research paper. The research paper might be published or presented at conferences. The identity of all participants will be kept confidential. The data analyses will be conducted with group data only. If we use a quotation that you provided, no names or titles will be used. The data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, in a locked office on the University of Alberta campus for 5 years, following the guidelines of the University of Alberta. After 5 years, the audio recordings, transcripts, and related materials will be deleted, shredded and destroyed.

This research can potentially contribute to the advancement of our understanding of how communication can have an impact on employee job satisfaction. There will be no direct benefits to participants. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615. This office has no direct involvement with this project.

If you have any questions about the research now or later, or you wish to obtain a final copy of the research report, you can contact Eva Pang, Dr. Stanley Varnhagen at the number and address below.

**Research Investigator**

Eva Pang  
MACT Student  
(780)497-1933  
epang@ualberta.ca

**Supervisor**

Stanley Varnhagen  
Faculty of Extension  
(780)492-3641  
stanley.varnhagen@ualberta.ca

Please sign below to indicate that you have read and understand the nature and purpose of the study. Your signature indicates your willingness and consent to participate in this research study.

---

Participant's Signature

---

Date

---

Participant's Name (printed)

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

**Appendix L**  
**Pre-Interview Verbal Informed Consent**

- Participating in a project for the completion of a Masters degree
  - Goal is to examine how internal communications at Starbucks affects employee job satisfaction
  - Interview will last a maximum of 60-90 minutes. You may end the interview at any time. However, if you wish, you may also continue the interview past 90 minutes.
  - Participation or non participation is voluntary
  - Can withdraw participation at any time by simply stopping interview
  - Can withdraw participation between interview and fact checking
  - Can withdraw participation up to 2 weeks after fact checking
  - Participation or non participation will not affect your employment at Starbucks
  - Participation or non participation will be kept confidential
  - Please refrain from speaking about your participation or non participation with others at Starbucks in order to keep you involvement or non involvement confidential
  - Your individual answers will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher and their supervisor
  - Your answers will not be shared with the employer
  - Any answers shared to the public via an executive summary, the final paper, at conferences, etc will be in summary format only
  - No individuals will be identified by name, only by an identifier.
  - The interview will be audio recorded.
  - The researcher will transcribe recordings and recordings will not be reviewed or heard by anyone else.
  - The researcher will email you the transcription to allow you to fact check. You may correct or omit any information you wish at this point.
  - All data, recordings, field notes, transcriptions will be kept for a minimum of five years than destroyed. It will be kept in a secure location in the research supervisors' office in Enterprise Square.
-

## **Appendix M**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Demographic Information**

Role at Starbucks – Predetermined as interviewees will be targeted based on their role

How long have you been with Starbucks?

0-3 months

4-6 months

7-12 months

1-3 years

4-5 years

6-10 years

10 years or more

#### **Interview Questions**

**Major Question #1:** Thinking about your work here at Starbucks, how would you define communications at work?

**Sub Question #1.1:** Thinking about your definition of communications at work, what would you consider official communications?

**Sub Question #1.2:** Thinking about your definition of communications at work, what would you consider unofficial communications?

**Major Question #2:** In the context of this communications at Starbucks, what types of information do you receive at work?

#### **Probes:**

- New promotions/products
- Sales
- Recall of products
- Changes in procedures

**Sub Question #2.1:** What types of communication methods are used at Starbucks to get work information to you?

**Sub Question #2.2:** How do you useful do you find the types of work related information that you receive at Starbucks and why?

**Sub Question 2.3:** What do you think about the communication methods that Starbucks uses to get information to you? Can you explain why you think a particular way about the methods that you mentioned?

**Sub Question #2.4:** Are there ways of communicating information that seem to work better for you? Can you tell me why?

**Sub Question #2.5:** Are there ways of communicating information that you think could be improved? How might that look?

**Major Question #3:** We have talked a little about the current methods of communication that Starbucks uses to get information to you. What other methods of communication would you like to see Starbucks use to get information to you and why?

**Sub Question #3.1:** Of the communication methods you would like to see used in the future, would you think that these should be used to complement current communication methods or replace them and why?

**Probes:**

- Store portal
- Hard Copy (communications binder, bulletin board)
- Social Media (FaceBook, Twitter)
- Electronic (email, text message)

**Major Question #4:** What aspects about your job do you find enjoyable and why?

**Sub Question #4.1:** How could your job be improved and why?

**Major Question #5:** What type of information has an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work?

**Probes:**

- New promotions/products
- Sales
- Recall of products
- Changes of procedures

**Major Question #6:** Do you feel that the communication methods that Starbucks uses has an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work? (Examples: Oral, print, etc.)

**Major Question #7:** How do you feel about the amount of information that Starbucks communicates to you?

### **Appendix N**

#### **Participant Interview Transcriptions – Barista Participants**

**Interviewer:** So if you need any clarifications on any of these questions, please let me know. So first questions pretty easy, how long have you been working at Starbucks?

**BP:** Altogether, probably a year and 6 months?

**BP:** September 2011. So but I was working and then maybe eight months, then I quit because my permit. Then I got rehired six months later because I got another work permit.

**Interviewer:** Oh, ok.

**BP:** Yah, so maybe total almost 2 years?

**Interviewer:** Long time.

**BP:** Long time, yah.

**BP:** I recently returned in December of last year, so approximately 4 ½ months.

**Interviewer:** OK, so all of these are in the context of work at Starbucks. So my first question is, thinking about your work at Starbucks, how would you define communications at work?

**BP:** Talking about information, passing through the message, like what's going on, update the new stuff like promotion, that kind of thing. And maybe, like if day to day communication in my opinion would be like what has been done, what has not been done, like if I start of my shift in the afternoon so I want to know what is done already so I wouldn't do the same work right? So that's why we don't have to do more work, and we can do other thing else. And if you think about long term, maybe like a promotion. But really think communication at Starbucks like when they have a new promotion, you know hazelnut macchiato? People just like showing the paper, copy of paper, and then like one day I came up to work and I didn't know about that, I haven't heard about this at all. And then like, just give me the free drink, and I go to ask my shift, I don't know what to do, I just came to work, like you know what I mean? That's why I think communications should be message on the board telling like hey, we have a new promotion going on, kind of stuff. I think Starbucks not really good at that point, for the new event coming up, we don't really know.

**Interviewer:** So at your store, then you feel like you're not really getting information?

**BP:** No, not really. For day to day information is ok, but, then something like, sometimes like, we got run out of lactaid milk, we got run out of the juice or stuff, and then when I took the order and went to make the drink I find out later is nothing, there's nothing to make it. Then I have to ask customer, then they get upset. So I think communication, they should tell us what's like important, right? More information.



**BP:** Define the concept?

**Interviewer:** Like if you're explaining what communications at work was to someone who's never had to work a day in their life. How would you say that it works at Starbucks? How you get information?

**BP:** I would say Starbucks is fairly adept at making sure that we have the information we need to perform the duties we have to perform and give our customers the best, the best experience that we can.

**Interviewer:** OK, but how does communication, I guess, at your work work?

**BP:** Communication filters down through from the main company in Seattle, through all of the different channels, to the manager on the store portal, and then it's through the manager, assistant manager, through the shift supervisor down to the barista level.

**BP:** I think they've always been, I think they've always been really strong. The managers communicate well to their shift supervisors, and then that trickles down to the baristas. Sometimes the communication to the baristas isn't as strong as to the shift supervisors.

**Interviewer:** OK, what would you consider like official communications?

**BP:** Anything that's posted, like on Starbucks letter head, ie. Frappuccino chips are 7 days not 2 days, or 2 days not 7 days. Basically anything from head office that is sent to the portal.

**BP:** Official?

**Interviewer:** Yah. Like how would you define official communication versus non official communication? Take your time.

**BP:** Well definitely I would say staff meetings are official, or when the manager takes someone aside for like a quick or small training modules that happen on the job, I'd say those are official. And then like little tips here and there throughout the shift, just like more asides almost, I would say that's unofficial communication.

**Interviewer:** So when you mean tips, do you mean when people talk to one another or managers talking with you or?

**BP:** Yah, specific to the job that you're doing. So if the manager sees that you're out of sequence on your coffee cadence or something or you're not following the proper milk steaming or things like that come up, I'd say that's more unofficial than like a meeting.

**BP:** Official? Official like in the written form?

**Interviewer:** What you consider is official.

**BP:** Maybe in the board, saying something, having notes, printed out, getting updated information for the week. What I think like it would be better if they have like update every week, like on the board. I don't know, like in my store we nearby the alarm, the thief alarm, there will be a big board right? I think it'd be better if they put something new on top and then like, kind of like, tell barista, first thing you come in, read the board or maybe some new information so you know right, what's going on. I think that that would be good communication in my opinion, official, writing, not just like talking.

**Interviewer:** So then thinking about again, your definition of communication, what would you consider unofficial communication?

**BP:** Just chatting. Talking at work, and maybe just speaking, that's all, in my opinion, unofficial. Or maybe leaving the notes, just leaving the notes on the till or something.

**Interviewer:** So when you talk about chatting, are you talking about chatting about work or are you talking about personal things?

**BP:** Work.

**Interviewer:** Work? OK.

**BP:** Definitely. No gossiping.

**BP:** Unofficial communication would be anything that hasn't come from the portal, but is known throughout the company. I guess like policies, which someone returning to Starbucks may not know all of the policies. So the manager relays it to them that the policy for making whip cream is now changed.

**Interviewer:** OK, now thinking about your current store, how do you feel about the communications currently at work?

**BP:** At work? I would say this store is fantastic now, given our new manager. Communication is... sorry.

**Interviewer:** OK, like think about your whole time, as well. I mean you can divide it into your current manager versus your previous manager if you'd like as well.

**BP:** The previous manager was good at relaying stuff, but I don't really think he was in it, like his brain wasn't there, so he really didn't care. Whereas the new manager is in it for the long haul, so he's more interested in conveying everything to the partners.

**Interviewer:** So in this context, what types of information do you receive at work?

**BP:** Any new policies, recipes, promotions, mark downs, like sales. Then there's informal communication between the partners about what to order, what not to order, what we need in the store, what we need to actually go to another store to get. I think that's...

**BP:** What do you have choice?

**Interviewer:** Type of information, things like you were saying, when come in someone telling you what's been done, or you're out of lactaid milk. Are there any other types of information you get at work? You mentioned promotions?

**BP:** Let me think.

**Interviewer:** No problem, take your time.

**BP:** Somebody quit. We got new hire, somebody got promotion. Unofficial maybe like this person just got promoted to be shift supervisor...

**Interviewer:** Oh, it doesn't matter if it's official or unofficial. The type of communication you get at work, like what people tell you at work. Or like...

**BP:** We got new stuff, we got new syrup, we got new recipe, this is recipe to make blah blah blah, that kind of thing. Yah like when we got the hazelnut macchiato launch, there was like, I have to ask them what's the recipe. I think that's the kind of communication, new recipe. And new promotion, new food, new items to sell. And new system, like time clock. We usually punch out at the back and now we can punch out at the front. And that's all that I can think about.

**BP:** I find that I, because I'm there less, I only actually work 10 hours a week, I find that I'm out of the loop probably more than anyone else. Like I just found out that there's a new frappuccino coming out and I had no idea that was happening. Or promotions and stuff that happen, I kind of seem to find out not head of time, like right when it's happening. But other people around me seem more informed so I can always figure things out from other people.

**Interviewer:** And is that a function of them working more than you or...

**BP:** Probably. I think so.

**Interviewer:** And when you don't have this information do you find it problematic in any way or ...

**BP:** The only time its problematic is if a customer asks me a question directly like when during the 12 days of gifting I never had any clue what our gift of the day was or deal of the day, so that was problematic because I would be asked and I would have to find where the pamphlet was and then I would have to look things up. But in general, no, it's easy to ask a question.

**Interviewer:** What kinds of methods do they use at work to get information to you? Like communication methods?

**BP:** I know that Starbucks uses internet, like emails, they use their website, the portal, they also use, biweekly, I think it's biweekly. Every two weeks or so there's an actual managers meeting

over the phone, where the managers talk with the district manager, and then that information isn't necessarily relayed to us, but things change in the store based on the information. And then there's also in person.

**Interviewer:** So you mean like face to face, verbal?

**BP:** Yah, like if the district manager happens to be in the store and something's coming to change, she might tell the manger, which would then trickle down to the barista level.

**BP:** Just talking, speaking and meeting, like I don't know how often we have the meeting, I didn't keep track.

**Interviewer:** Like staff meeting?

**BP:** Staff meeting, that's how they communicate. Maybe just only the big matter for launch drink like pumpkin spice, or for drink or some stuff, that's the communication that they have, and maybe newsletter, like the file that they have. Customer feedback.

**Interviewer:** Does anybody ever show you things from, you know that book we get at the beginning of every launch, the Siren's Eye, do they ever show you that or ever show you information on, you know on the computer in the back, there's the store portal you can log into?

**BP:** [Shakes head]

**Interviewer:** No?

**BP:** No. Nothing.

**BP:** Just verbal.

**Interviewer:** Verbal?

**BP:** Yup.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever use things like the Store Portal, or reading the workbook or...

**BP:** Sometimes they get us to do the workbook. I find that that has like a really gung-ho start to it and then it slowly dissipates then it's not as important or it's not as focused on. Like when the new training just came in for all the new, well not even new, but really focusing on customer service, we were supposed to have a new goal every week. So for the first two weeks it was really pushed that these goals were accomplished and then we haven't had a goal meeting in, I don't even know. It's been weeks now.

**Interviewer:** How do they communicate these goals to you?

**BP:** That was started at the beginning of the shift when someone would come on. Your shift supervisor would go through the workbook that was there, you'd go through the information, they'd ask you if you understood, you signed off on it, continue your shift.

**Interviewer:** Ok, just asking. Just wondering. So how do you, how useful do you find the information that you receive at Starbucks and why? Like how useful is the information, like the work related information? Like how does it, does it help you do your job? How does it help you do your job?

**BP:** It does help. Out of 5 I'd give it a 4.5. New recipe. I love that they give me the real printed, the official printed recipes, it's good communication. It can make me make the right drink and but some promotions, like the hazelnut macchiato, that really bothered me, I think they don't communicate that well, because as a barista we don't know what to do and how to accept or should we accept the scanned one or the no scan or with the barcode or no barcode or something. Sometimes it's not really useful, because it's from shift and shift doesn't know.

**Interviewer:** Oh, ok, so you weren't told about it from your shift when it happened?

**BP:** No.

**Interviewer:** So with those kind of promotions, like when Starbucks has promotions like that, are you generally told by your shift or your manager? Or is that something you generally wind up finding out from a customer?

**BP:** I find out from customer. Then I have to go find out from shift and then shift, sometimes shifts like Um, I'm not sure, but I think maybe. Ok sure. And then sometimes they give the wrong information to customers and then they got confused because they heard something else from other Starbucks, that kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** So how does that make you feel about your job when that happens?

**BP:** Feels like, they should improve communication because communications is really important doing job. You can work better for sure. But I'm not going to quit for sure.

**BP:** I find everything to be very, it's useful, but it's sometimes overwhelming, which causes it to be less useful.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean by it's overwhelming? Is it the type of information, is it the amount, or how they get it to you?

**BP:** It's the amount of information, like having four or five different ways they can give it to you, all the same, not all the same information. But receiving five different ways of getting information, and then having to filter it all. Rather than just having just one, say one newsletter that comes out. You have your manager telling you something, the portal telling you something, another barista telling you something, your shift supervisor telling you something, the assistant manager, the district manager, everybody telling you something or giving you something to do,

and it's a little overwhelming when your brain is like trying to figure out exactly which information is useful.

**Interviewer:** So is it just that the information's repetitive or there's just too many methods of getting information?

**BP:** Too many methods. I mean there's always, I mean I like the portal for going to look information up to get policies or recipes, or whatever. But going on the portal to actually, having to go on there to make sure I'm actually getting all the information and then double checking with my manager, it's kind of repetitive, but it's also overwhelming.

**BP:** I found that training a waste of time. I thought that was all relatively straightforward. I guess I can see how maybe in some stores if they have an issue with customer service or if you have a specific employee, then those things need to be brought up. But being that I'm good at my job I actually found it insulting to be told, no, you can't tell a customer that they can't get a double double here and you can't be rude to the customer. Like, when I'm rude to a customer, bring that up to me.

**Interviewer:** So you found that the information was too generic.

**BP:** Yah.

**Interviewer:** So what do you think of the communication methods that Starbucks uses currently to get information to you and can you explain why you think a particular way about that?

**BP:** I think for people who work full time or even more solid part time, like if they're there three or four shifts a week at minimum the communication is fine. You get what you need, and you're bound to run into your manager at least a couple of times so you can get questions answered. But for someone like me whose barely there I don't find it really effective because I do miss out on things. So even like if we were all connected through email reminders or something like that. Like if we got weekly updates as to what was coming up, then we could kind of prepare before the shift. Even just to know like simple "hey when you come to your next shift, can you ask about this new beverage that's happening"? Would be really helpful.

**BP:** I think having the manager discuss it with the shift supervisors and then the shift supervisors discussing it with the partners is a good way to do things, because then you have sort of an umbrella whereas having to go and look up the information isn't, doesn't always happen. And then it ends up it comes out of the umbrella anyways. Sorry, what was the question again?

**BP:** Email is basically through the manager, so. But the portal basically I find it completely useless, except for when I'm looking for information.

**Interviewer:** And why is it useless in your opinion?

**BP:** It's, you have to know exactly what you're looking for and you have to know, you have to know the information before you actually go to get the information. And it's there, but it's sort of

like you have to put in the exact typing of something with the right capitalization in order to find it.

**Interviewer:** OK. So it's very specific?

**BP:** Yes, which is good but it's not good. I mean you can type in whip cream recipe and it will bring up how we make whip cream. But if you're looking for how to order something through IMS, then you, it comes up with like 45 different things and you don't know which one to go into. It takes too much time to read each one, so then you have to go back and research for something more specific or less specific.

**Interviewer:** So you talked about verbal mostly. How do you feel about that as a method? Do you think it's good, do you think it could be improved? Like you mentioned sometimes when you get on a shift, sometimes they don't tell you what's been done, like, do you like the way they currently communicate?

**BP:** [Shakes head]

**Interviewer:** Nope?

**BP:** Nope, I don't like it. I mean I for daily work it's ok to be told what to do, told haven't been done. But for promotion, for big stuff, big event, we should have good communication, like writing, more official stuff. Maybe manager told us, but I didn't meet the manager so often.

**Interviewer:** So in terms of, you said you like more official communication like promotions, you would prefer something in writing. Is it just easier for you to be able to find that information then? Or is it just then you don't have to rely on someone else? Or...

**BP:** I would say it's more accurate, I can trust that information right because it's in writing. I know that somebody doesn't change the information. It's just easy, correct and efficiency kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** OK.

**BP:** I prefer it that way.

**Interviewer:** So you mention that the part timers and people that work full time have more opportunity to speak with the manager. Do you think in that case it's more important to actually be able to touch base with the manager on a regular basis? As opposed to others who work around you and might already have that information?

**BP:** I think if the shift supervisors were more conscientious of making sure people are informed. I find that the manager seems to be more organized in terms of making sure you know what you're doing. So that trickle down effect should just be stronger in that case. It should be more, the manager should make it much more important for the shift supervisors to make sure they're informing their baristas, instead of baristas feeling like they're missing that level.

**Interviewer:** So as a barista, you're feeling like you're trying to pull information?

**BP:** Sometimes yah. Generally I have to ask instead of I'm told.

**Interviewer:** And when you feel like you have to ask do you feel like you have to ask because you feel like you're missing something or do you just generally ask?

**BP:** Yah

**Interviewer:** You mentioned email, do you think there are other ways that would work better for you? And any particular reason why?

**BP:** No, I think email would be, I think that's the easiest way overall. Everyone has an email, generally it comes right up to your phone. It's pretty instant to get information that way. So I would think that would work the best. And it's still kept really professional. Whereas if you did like a staff Facebook page or something, that takes away the professionalism to it.

**Interviewer:** Ok, so you mentioned the trickle down effect from the managers to the shifts to the baristas in terms of verbal communication is not as strong. Do you have any opinions on how that might be improved as a communications method?

**BP:** I don't know, at this store I'm at, I don't know how often the shifts and the manager actually get together altogether and chat. I know what my previous store, it didn't happen very often. So I think making that more of a priority is important because then the trickle down will be stronger. Whereas if you're not having meetings very often, then things just sort of get pushed aside.

**Interviewer:** OK. So are there ways of communicating information that seem to work better for you and why?

**BP:** For me, person to person, like face to face. My manager telling me what I need to do, or my shift supervisor telling me what I need to do, and why. I'm more likely to, to take the information in, and then explore it on my own. Like if I need to find information on the portal I'll take what the manager said, or the shift supervisor and then go look it up on the portal. So then it's like, Oh, ok, that's why we do it this way.

**Interviewer:** OK. And do you find as a barista, the shift supervisors are often approaching you with information? Or do you find that you have to go ask them for information?

**BP:** I find it a lot that I have to go and ask for information. But the shift supervisors are very helpful when I do ask. It's just they're ready with the information, they just don't convey it prior to me asking for it.

**BP:** Like what?



**Interviewer:** Like you mentioned they sometimes leave little notes at the till and you know, obviously they use verbal communication. Is there, there's no other way at work that they try to communicate to you? Like meetings? Like is there any, of those methods is there one of them you like more than the other?

**BP:** I would say, in writing, in printing on the board. I don't like it just like telling about information, because I don't know that it's correct.

**Interviewer:** OK, so you feel like it's not reliable because somebody may not have gotten the information accurate or two people might tell you different things.

**BP:** Maybe newsletter. Newsletter. Yah, it would be good, or email.

**Interviewer:** Email?

**BP:** Yah, kind of like, email would be good, updates the information, every week. Sometimes, some people working part time, so they came to work and they don't know anything. Everything change every week, maybe lot of events going on.

**Interviewer:** So would the email be a work email you checked at work or would it be an email they sent to you when you're at home?

**BP:** I would say send email at home because work email, I don't really have time to just login at work email right. Because personal email I check, I think everyone check fairly regularly right? So I think that's better then how they communicate, personal email I'd say.

**Interviewer:** OK. So you talked about verbal communication, is there a way that you think that the verbal communication at your store could be improved?

**BP:** Like what?

**Interviewer:** Well you mentioned right now it feels like you can't trust the information, like there is a particular reason you feel like you can't trust the information?

**BP:** Because when I heard shift say Um, maybe. You know, like maybe, I'm not sure, how can I trust that information, right? If they even not sure about what they're talking about or saying, how can I trust them, because it has to be like Oh yah, I just read the newsletter or I just read, where did they get information from? Because they might get from other people and that people might know something wrong. They have to be more like OK, yah, I read from this, I was told by manager or kind of stuff.

**Interviewer:** So you would feel better if you knew that the shift supervisor got their information directly from an official source like the manager?

**BP:** Yah, because I think shift supervisor have access to an email or read something what's going on right? Yah, and then they can tell us, OK, this happening and then. I remember at [my

old store] I used to see like, email posted at just very close to the computer login. So sometimes I read those information what's going on, the new promotions coming up, when kind of thing. It's kind of close to the computer. I don't personally, I didn't really look at the board next to the thief alarm unless I was told to.

**Interviewer:** So you mention about possibly using the board on your wall so, is that something that you would check on a regular basis yourself or is that something that you would have to be told to check if they started using it on a more regular basis?

**BP:** It has to be officially told like in the meeting, OK, you have to read it every time you come in first thing before you start a shift. I have to be told that every, be more official. So in that case I know what's going on right? But this time like, I nobody told me to read anything. I just expect nothing going on, nothing new coming up or stuff. Sometimes I kind of have a quick look and then it's just like old posts. I don't know, I didn't even read it like, the dress code or something. It's kind of old information, so I thought it is the old one. So I didn't even bother to look it.

**Interviewer:** So generally when it comes to information, you don't go looking for it unless a customer tells you something that you didn't hear about. So you're expecting someone else to tell you information if there's something new?

**BP:** Exactly, I expect because I didn't expect something to be happening, unless somebody told me. Like maybe I heard something from my friend like they have buy the drink in the morning and you get \$2 after 2pm, right? \$2 drink. That one I know from my friend and what's going on and ok, I know what's happening, yah.

**Interviewer:** OK,

**BP:** I think regular meetings would help.

**Interviewer:** Regular meetings? Like for the whole staff or just during your shift or?

**BP:** Whole staff would be good, but I know is hard right.

**Interviewer:** Yah, so you mentioned email as a possible other method, would you see that as a communications method that would compliment the current methods that Starbucks uses to get information to you or would you see it as replacing how they currently get information to you?

**BP:** I think it just make it more effective. Not really replace but we need verbal communication as well, just in case we need more information or something change. I know it's hard to get email, send email twice a day, to correct something right. And maybe communication from shift supervisor to me what has changed, but it has to be from reliable source.

**Interviewer:** OK, so are there ways of communicating information at work that you think could be improved and how might you think that could look like in the future?

**BP:** Honestly, I have no idea about improvement on it. I know that they're one of the better companies out there for communication, and we do, communication is what we do. Like even just we sell coffee, yes, but talking with our customers, that's what we actually do. So I mean our communication is good and it's continually upgraded when there's a new way to do something, they figure it out. I think that they're actually doing Skype meetings, like for the board or whatever, I've heard. But honestly, maybe like a newsletter, rather than having us have to go look it up. Something that is posted, so that we can actually say, I read this months newsletter, this is what's going on at Starbucks.

**Interviewer:** OK. So in terms of alternate methods of communication, I know a lot of younger people these days use their cell phone a lot, they're on social media, what do you think about those alternate methods of communication?

**BP:** I think Starbucks actually utilizes most methods of communication. I don't actually know...

**BP:** As a partner, I technically wouldn't want Starbucks on my Facebook. For social media, it's like, OK, creepy. I have my away time now. So I mean I wouldn't want my manager to be on my Facebook and be like, Oh, can you take your 6 O'clock shift and move it to 4 O'clock and blah blah and, yah, I would be a little creeped out. Email, probably, like personal same thing. I like where I work, but I don't want it to be my entire life and I don't want it to invade other certain parts of my life. Which I think Starbucks knows.

**BP:** I don't have the Facebook, first thing. I don't want to be friends with the managers Facebook. I used to have temperamental manager, he doesn't give Facebook to anybody or maybe social media, no I don't like it.

**Interviewer:** No?

**BP:** No. I even thought they had maybe if the store manager create Starbucks [current store] then update information right, but they can see our personal stuff as well, so I don't want to like let them know what's going on in my life.

**Interviewer:** So you want to keep your personal life and work separate?

**BP:** Exactly. Sometimes I want to complain about work, like they're going to see my complain you know. I know that you can set it like to friends only or how to say...

**Interviewer:** Privacy settings

**BP:** Yah but it kind of bother me and I have los of friends on Facebook, like 400 friends, I have to make them be into separate group, too much work. Better not to be friends, no Facebook. Oh another communication maybe message!

**Interviewer:** Text message?

**BP:** Yah! That would be cool. Yah, new promotions going on, who will come to work this morning, that kind of stuff, updating. We'd be updating! Would be enough for me I think, like for the new promotion that's going on because it's happen once in a while and promotion last for a week right or maybe like hand crafted drink for \$2 and sandwiches for \$2 kind of thing. Yah, we'd be update, would be nice for be sent from manager not shift supervisor, you know. Or something like, I don't know. I don't think Starbucks manager has their own work cell phone right?

**Interviewer:** Nope.

**BP:** No, yah, that kind of update would be cool.

**Interviewer:** So what aspects of your job do you find enjoyable and why?

**BP:** I like the customers, I like dealing with customers. Most customers. I like working on bar, I take a lot of pride in that, in speed and in efficiency. That part of the job I find, can be challenging and can be exciting when there's a lot of things to do. I like being challenged and I find that that's where I get my challenge. I hate cleaning. I find for a lot of people who are students and who have other aspirations, there are certain things about the job that are great like customer service and what not, but then some of the really tedious tasks just feel like they're below what you're capabilities are.

**Interviewer:** In terms of customer service, you mention that's something you enjoy, is it the interaction you enjoy or the people themselves?

**BP:** I think it's I think it's a mix. I read people really well so if someone comes in at 7 o'clock in the morning and they're quiet and they don't want to talk then we don't talk and I think they're happier just getting their drink and going on their day. But obviously someone comes in on a coffee break or later in the afternoon they're generally a little more chatty and then I like getting to know people and it's way for me as an artist to network as well. I get to meet other artists or even just audience members who would come and support things. So that's almost important to my other career choices to have this kind of network.

**Interviewer:** So working at Starbucks basically assists your other work.

**BP:** It filters through.

**BP:** I enjoy that we can make our own decision. We can do what we think is right and yah give us more authority. But some place they oh you have to ask your shift and you cannot do, what you are allowed to do. Like for example what I like is that about Starbucks, if you make the drink wrong, you can remake it without asking shift supervisor. If you know like that is the right way so you do it, that's how I like about Starbucks. And I like about all people have been trained well, I feel like they're professional. They have a good training and they respect each other and what they do they have rules and they have standards, they're not just like OK, I feel bad today, you have to do this one, I don't like that way. I have, I used to work other places and the owner manager just unreliable, they fluctuate. Today I'm not in a good, I'm in a bad mood, then they

grumpy all day and kind of like talking to me badly. That's how I don't like about other place. But when I work Starbucks I feel like it's fun, it's good place to work with, people are nice. Customers, I think because Starbucks is more higher standard, so most of the customers they have money. So they're more like not really stingy, less whiners. Yah, it's like you're coffee's too expensive, they should know about our quality because Starbucks have kind of good quality and famous. They don't really complain much because if I work at a place that have bad quality drinks definitely whiners, right? That's why I like Starbucks. Does it have to be about communication?

**Interviewer:** Nope it can be about anything you like about working at Starbucks.

**BP:** Oh ok. Discount! Free drinks! Free stuff! Perks! Yah, and I like how they, I don't know how to use the right word, the payroll stuff, payroll, hours that we just punch in by minute, paid because we punch in right not just because the hour fixed by schedule. And it's flexible at Starbucks, everything's so flexible, like if you came late you can call in maybe and then maybe, if you need help, if they need my help, then I just like, I can stay longer. Or I like that we can help at another Starbucks if they need help, like kind of thing. I love that manager concerned about stuff. They kind of like, OK, you need more hours, OK, I will try to give more hours because you are good worker, kind of thing. And that's how they care about staff. And another thing is they have a review about like how good do you do and they got a raise right? But then it's not, it depends on manager as well, but they have rules to fill the form kind of thing. They have standards, so that's kind of cool, not just because of, Oh manager like you. That's how I like about it. Oh one more about flexibility. You can set your own preferred hours. Yah, when you when you want to work, when you off, when you availability, then they try to make schedule as your preferred hours, that's what I like about it. Most of the time I love manager, shifts, they're nice and they've been trained well, they know a lot of information, they learn a lot...

**BP:** I honestly like the people that I work with. The new people that I get to meet everyday and the people that I get to converse with, our regular customers. Starbucks just feels like home and I don't ever know why I left, but I love my job.

**Interviewer:** Is there something in particular about the customers that you find enjoyable?

**BP:** Getting to know any of the customers is fun for me, because I'm not essentially all that outgoing in my regular life. So when I get off work, I go home and I play with my dogs and I don't really communicate a lot, at all, with anybody outside of my family. So when I go to work I get to be that outgoing person that I know I am, I just don't do it in my personal life. So I get to joke around and have fun and that's why I came back to Starbucks in the first, well in the second place, was to actually have fun and to finish school and make sure that I'm able to actually able to do everything that I need to.

**Interviewer:** How do you think your job could be improved and why?

**BP:** Actually I just find this store that I'm at is really slow, so if I had more customer stimulation I think that would improve it for me. The reason I'm there is because the hours are more flexible,

the managers flexible with me and it's a job I know I can do and leave and leave that job behind. So I just think having more stimulation at work would make me happier when I'm there.

**BP:** My job keeps getting better because everything at my store's falling into line now that we have our new manager whose basically making everybody tow the line. There's no slacking off and everybody's pulling their weight. So my job is getting better. The only way I could see it actually getting better is if I was promoted again.

**BP:** My job? Like what?

**Interviewer:** So working at Starbucks as a barista, how could that be improved, if there's anything. Is there anything you think that could be improved?

**BP:** Maybe like it would be better if somebody come and check our work. Like if whether we do our work right. Sometimes you know what, I've been working for two years, I did one drink wrong for so long, vanilla bean Frappuccino. I put vanilla syrup until last two months, I was told, don't put syrup. I didn't know that, do you know what I mean? Somebody can did something wrong and nobody come and check your work. Yah, maybe a test would be nice, a test that how many pumps of for this one, like regularly check so kind of like, make sure that they have the knowledge And one more thing about coffee tasting, kind of thing. I want it to be official, like, not just like, OK, I feel like I want to taste coffee today. Just go and grab it and then the person will taste like and Oh, that's good, OK, yah it have nutty smell but then they don't, not really from expert. Would be cool to improve barista knowledge about coffee and maybe about QASA? That's one thing, I don't know about QASA, I've been told differently about QASA, but then it's not really officially told, you know. And then I got confused a lot.

**Interviewer:** So you feel you know about it but you want someone who is an expert in the store to officially sit down with you and explain it?

**BP:** Or maybe just a copy of it made. A book maybe? That would be good. Maybe shift study about it right and shift had to learn about QASA, no?

**Interviewer:** Well, not officially.

**BP:** Oh right. Yah, one shift say this thing, one shift say another thing, because I've been working for so long at another store, so I know QASA like this way. And then when I saw new barista coming, I kind of train kind to teach the QASA, this is wrong. And then did you know what she said? But that person say a different thing. Like OK, yah, maybe I'm wrong, I don't know. That makes everything confusing. Yah, that's how I think they should improve about QASA. About communication more, from expert, from the person who really really knows about it.

**Interviewer:** What types of information have an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work?

**BP:** What type of information that impact my work?

**Interviewer:** Yup.

**BP:** Maybe verbal communication?

**Interviewer:** Like, when I, sorry. What I mean, I mean types of information. So verbal communication would be a method of communication. So when I say types I mean information on new promotions or information on new drinks, changing how you do things at work.

**BP:** People hate changing I know. Who likes changing? It's like a habit. I would say information about to improve things would be awesome. I mean, how to make things more effective, that would be good information. That make me work better in job and I learn new things, not just like, promotion is OK, it's just not really enjoy, make me enjoy the work because we're going to work harder right? Like promotion like the Frappuccino hour is like that's very sad, I don't want to know about it, don't tell me.

**Interviewer:** But being a more efficient worker would make you like working there more?

**BP:** Mmmhmm. And something about like, I don't know, you know what, like information when they have new partner coming, transfer from another store or something, they bring like, wisdom, knowledge about how to clean stuff. I didn't, I learn information about how to clean the rubber, how do you say the rubber stuff, the part, on the fridge. I just know how to take it off, and then another shift told me to lift up the whole blender so it's clean underneath. And you taught me to clean the tank, sink tank and stuff and how to clean it is, I think it's the kind of information that kind of make me want to make me, want me to make the environment better.

**BP:** I think really the only thing that I ... I just found that this new training, that really bugged me. So that kind of affected me negatively because I felt like Starbucks as a company was putting this blanket over everyone that it didn't necessarily apply to. And I just felt like the meeting I went to in the first place was a 3 hour waste of time, we just talked about things that should be pretty straight forward. And then these mini meetings before the shift, I also found them a waste of time. So I think that kind of general information can be... can counteract what it's actually trying to do.

**Interviewer:** So basically you feel like even though the information comes from headquarters and the store manager, the shift supervisor's have to get it out, you feel like maybe they should be more targeted?

**BP:** Yup.

**BP:** Type of information?

**Interviewer:** So you had mentioned things like sometimes you find that you have to ask your shift supervisor for information and you're doing that before they're giving it to you. So for example, I know it's happened to myself where a customer will come in front of me and ask me about a promotion that I don't know about.

**BP:** What was the question?

**Interviewer:** What type of information has an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work?

**BP:** Not a lot really. My enjoyment of work doesn't really have, it doesn't really, the information comes, but it doesn't affect how I enjoy my job. Other than the fact, like world events, like if someone, I don't know, there's a huge. Howard at the last, at the last big meeting for the board basically told everybody that if they didn't like the 28% increase that they'd gotten on their investment and they wanted more because of the boycott for equality, equal marriage, that they could take their money and go elsewhere. Which actually made me prouder, more proud, prouder, to work at Starbucks, and it actually increased the amount I enjoy working for the company. I guess would, make counted more as employment loyalty. So I feel more loyal towards the company because of it, which makes me want to work harder and makes me enjoy my job more.

**Interviewer:** What about things like customer voice, when you read comments from customers?

**BP:** I'm not, I technically don't like customer voice. I believe that we should have feedback, but I think that it should be more consistent than every 10<sup>th</sup> customer or every 100<sup>th</sup> customer. I think that anybody that buys a drink at any Starbucks should be able to go in and say, You know what, my visit was really good. Or my visit was really bad. And I mean I know that they can complain, but Starbucks I think should make it more available for those that want to give accolades or just say, You know what, this person just made my day. So and I mean, that would be a much clearer picture of what happens at our stores. Because 9 times out of 10, you're giving someone a customer voice survey when it's just, it's busy, and there's no way that you have, that you can affect their day any more than you already have in a nice way. So you end up getting a bad customer voice. At my store it's really difficult.

**Interviewer:** OK. So, do you feel that the communication methods that Starbucks uses, so for example, verbal, written has an impact on your job and how you enjoy your work?

**BP:** [Shakes head]

**Interviewer:** Nope. OK, so it doesn't impact you at all as opposed whether or not you're getting, for example, if you read about a promotion in the workbook and it's just you know, in print, versus hearing it directly from your manager whose really excited about it?

**BP:** When you put it that way, I guess, yes. If your manager, which is generally what they pay the managers to be, is excited about any new promotion that comes out. If anybody's excited about anything it's going to going to change the way you perceive it. My old manager was extremely excited about Tribute Blend when it came out and I was not all that impressed with it myself, but the rest of the partners became excited about it because, even if it was only a 2 or 3 week promotion for that one coffee, the rest of the partners became excited about it. So yes it



does have an effect on the actual store and the partners. Which would essentially make you enjoy your job more or less, depending on the, how you got the information.

**BP:** Verbal? Doesn't really, if they give me the wrong information like verbal information and the wrong information and confuse me, I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to give the wrong information, so I don't really enjoy the day that I got the confusing information and have to talk to customers and customers just like complaining. Then I have to deal with the complains and listen to what they heard about it and try to deal with it because different information. So, I don't like the verbal communication that much. About important things.

**Interviewer:** Important things, like stuff that effects the customer?

**BP:** Exactly. But if the verbal communication about the just cleaning stuff, you have to do this, what is left to be done or yah, that would be nice. That just telling you what to do, that's it, that's ok for that kind of information.

**BP:** I think verbal communication when it's happening is great, I think that's important. I never feel like I can't ask questions, I never feel like I will be belittled if I ask anything, even if it's something I should probably know. So in that way I find that the communications is very supportive and very positive. It's just sometimes the information that is forced upon us is silly.

**Interviewer:** And how do you feel about the amount of information that Starbucks communicates to you?

**BP:** Not much.

**Interviewer:** Not much?

**BP2:** Not much. Because I start working like maybe, I mean when I start working sometimes it was at Starbucks 5 minutes before I start, right? So I don't really talk much with my shift. It was like talking personal stuff. Sorry. So not really talking about work and information comes only when something happens, issues happen. So in that case, I know about it. Like one day I know about promotion, like the blonde roast, I didn't even know when it ends, when it starts or whatever. I know, I know that blonde roast \$1, the pouch of coffee, from newsletter, customer newsletter from Starbucks. That's how I know about that promotion. When I came to work, nobody told me anything. But I know what's going on because I'm a customer too. I got the email from the Starbucks.

**Interviewer:** So you feel like as a barista who works there, you're not getting enough information?

**BP:** No, not enough at all. You should talk more about work, not personal stuff. But they communicate a lot, just only daily task, that's it. But not about promotion, what's going on and even, yesterday, my friend, she bought a water mug, just called water mug. You know what, it was like \$20, but when she scan it, it was \$10. And then like How come, customer behind me, you know what she said, Oh, it's a clearance sale. She knows about it and even my friend, she's

a barista, she just finished work, she didn't even know why is like, that price. How bout, how come, how bout if she working and then customer how comes it's different price, we don't know, we wasn't told. Or told the wrong things, I don't like to confuse customer.

**Interviewer:** So how does it make you feel when the customer knows more about what's going on than you do?

**BP:** Oh no, it's all like, I feel I'm so embarrassing like you should work here. I don't know what I'm doing here. I should be told more about stuff, what's like, what's updating right, what's new, kind of thing. Yah, so embarrassing for sure.

**Interviewer:** So does that have an impact on how you feel about your job?

**BP:** Yah, definitely. Like kind of bugging me, bothering me sometimes, but because overall environment is good right. So that kind of information doesn't really happen much often, like the big stuff doesn't happen. So it doesn't have much impact on the work, the overall work. So if you think about how, most of the things I enjoy it, like most of the days I like it, right. It bother me for sure but not much.

**Interviewer:** So when you do get information from your shift supervisors about big things like promotions and stuff like that, does it have an impact on you because you said that most of the information they tell you is verbal. Does it have an impact on how they say it? Like if they're happy about something or they sound like they're not happy about something?

**BP:** They don't even have much feeling about it. They're just like Oh here this is what's going on, yah. Not expression that much, just information, no feeling. One more thing, I think about can you remember, we have to dump the urns, how we close the urns at night at the end of the shift? Because like my shift told me that if you leave water, put it in, warming up at night all the bacteria, might kind of develop up at night, so it's more dirtier. It's kind of like, it's better to dump it out, but don't put it at the back so no heat charge, so in that case, no bacteria develop up in. Because it is warm water is good place for bacteria right? They have something to suck on because they have coffee, they food too. That's how, that's like, ok, she told me this thing and now another told me another thing. Ok, what's happening? I don't know, OK. Whatever you told me I will do that thing, kind of bother me sometimes. OK you told me what to do.

**Interviewer:** So you feel like there's a lot of contradicting information?

**BP:** Right, that's right.

**Interviewer:** It's confusing.

**BP:** Yah, and another thing like, how we close the bar. Like when I was taught, when I was trained, it was like OK, you have to leave the stick just like that, don't have to put water in and some stuff. When I come to another store you have to put ice water in the steam wand. OK then another person you have to put hot water with the tablet in. It's like so many ways, OK, what

should I do, tell me. So but I know whose I'm working with so I know their style, because I don't want to get confused right?

**Interviewer:** OK, so you change how you work depending on who you're working with?

**BP:** Right.

**Interviewer:** Is there a way you think that the contradicting information could be clarified or at least corrected for you?

**BP:** Yes. You know what, I ask my shift what should I do? You know what she said? Ask manager. Depends on manager. OK, whose manager? Sure I'll ask that person. Yah. So maybe from manager would be better, but then every manager have their own way to do it too. So maybe not just manager knows about it, but should be like more written official thing, like this from QASA said we should do this way or maybe QASA said, my managers right too, and other manager's right, so you can do both ways, kind of thing, ok, so whatever is acceptable.

**Interviewer:** So you'd like it if there was a written place where you could, if you weren't sure, you could refer to it and say that is officially what Starbucks told me to do?

**BP:** Yah, especially if I was told this way and if I help out another store it might be a bit contradictory because if I close another store my own way, the partner from that store opening might be like What's going on here? You know what I mean? Oh another one about communication at Starbucks that they improved, like they have the table of like how each ingredient is good for, for how long. They used to have that, they don't have it at [my old store] but at [my current store] they start having it, how many weeks, that's what I like about it. Maybe another thing they should communicate more, like maybe about when customer want to have their coffee bean ground they'd like be I don't know what number it is, it should be like maybe more information. Like flat bottom, number this one, paper cone, this one, or kind of stuff. Or if they say French press or something, more written and put it on there so they don't have to ask supervisor, right, and it's correct anyway. It should be written, put it on there, no questions and shift supervisor can do something else, not just deal with answering same questions every day right?

**Interviewer:** Do you feel like the shift supervisors in your store deal with a lot of questions from baristas?

**BP:** For sure, me! I ask lots of questions. Its like, I know they kind of, I know I bother them. But I know what to do and I want to know what's going on, I want to know what I should do, right?

**Interviewer:** Do you feel like the shift supervisors are well informed?

**BP:** Yah. They like ok, sure, yah you have to do this, you have to do that. They don't feel annoying. As long as I ask in a nice way.

**BP:** I think that if you are passionate about what you're doing and you are willing to take all the time necessary to go through all the workbooks and read everything that's sent out, and keep up with what's on the portal, they give you everything you need to know, probably more than everything you need to know. And then if you are someone like me whose pretty much just there to work her hours and go home after, I also find that I can, even if I am frustrated sometimes that I have to ask, the information is readily available.

**Interviewer:** OK, now you had mentioned that Starbucks gives you too much information. Do you think that there's a way they can improve that? Like, should they try to amalgamate information? Should they try to eliminate some communication methods? Do they need to streamline how they get that information to you so it's not overwhelming?

**BP:** I would say like, more continual. Like if you're giving me a piece of information today and a piece of information tomorrow and a piece of information the next day, then it's not all that overwhelming once you've caught up. So which is what I guess is what the portal about. But I don't know any partners at my store that actually go onto the portal to look up information, so which puts it on the shift supervisor then to actually make sure that they have the information. As a barista I don't, I know that I don't go look at the portal.

**Interviewer:** So then do you find that maybe the reason you're getting too much information is because instead of the shift supervisor giving you bits of information over time, they're just dumping it all on you at once?

**BP:** Yes, that would be a fair assessment.

## **Appendix O**

### **Participant Interview Transcriptions – Management Participants**

**Interviewer:** First for the easy question. How long have you been with Starbucks?

**MP:** Just over a year and a half.

**MP:** Almost a year.

**Interviewer:** First question, it's kind of in a few parts. So thinking about your work at Starbucks how would you define the concept of communications at work? Like what would you consider when you think about communications as a concept?

**MP:** Communications would be how information is passed along from upper management and from baristas throughout the rest of the people in the store, the district and the company.

**MP:** I feel like, kind of like how we communicate at work. That's what you mean?

**Interviewer:** Yup.

**MP:** I would say a lot of it is just partner to partner communication. We have a communication book that we will sometimes read and then there's communication that is received from head office from the portal, and the Siren's Eye and stuff like that. But it's a lot of word of mouth, I've found.

**Interviewer:** OK, now thinking about your current store in particular what do you think about the communications at your store?

**MP:** For the most part I think we're doing alright. Being as there's a dual manager now, communication can be lacking at some points of the day. But most of the answers I've been able to find via the Siren's Eye or just trying to call a couple of times just to get the answer from the manager. I think it's been, other than a little bit of shortfalls, it's been pretty effective.

**MP:** They're pretty good. We definitely have some weak points, but we get all of the important stuff across.

**Interviewer:** OK, now thinking about how you defined communications as a concept, what would you consider official communications?

**MP:** Official communications, I'd consider that information passed down from the district manager or store managers about important things that are happening in the store, upcoming events, things like that.

**MP:** I would say the Siren's Eye is the most official communication that we have. Everything that we need to know is on there.

**Interviewer:** And then if you think about what unofficial communications at your store would be?

**MP:** Gossip, there's always gossip. Maybe hearing information from somebody beneath you in the company that you don't necessarily deem to be true, or you've never heard of before, that can be pretty unofficial until you've confirmed it yourself from the manager or the internet.

**MP:** Unofficial communications. I'd probably say that would be just general talking amongst baristas and stuff about not really important stuff.

**Interviewer:** And when you say just talking amongst baristas, is it work related or is it personal?

**MP:** It could certainly be both. Talking about other partners, talking about things we're excited about, new things, talking about what happened last night, just general, not official communication.

**Interviewer:** So in this context of communications at Starbucks, what types of information do you get at work?

**MP:** Upcoming promotions, the way that we should be having the store set up, they're giving us lots of information of how we would be treating partners with new issues or questions that might come up. Doing a lot of reading on the, how to treat the different partners and how to communicate better with them, so I'm getting the hang of a lot of, being more of an effective communicator.

**MP:** I get a lot of feedback about the staff, feedback on the condition of the store, feedback on the quality of our partners. I get feedback about comparisons between different stores in the district.

**Interviewer:** Do you ever get communications about other things such as promotions or changes in procedures, information about retail products?

**MP:** There's different ones that come up in the portal that I notice whenever I go and check it, like to do IMS or anything. We try and keep our communications binder up to date. We've tried assigning partners to it and they kind of go hard at first and then start slacking after a while until they forget about it. And that's happened a few times, so it's a little, a little off. But being a supervisor I stay fairly up to date with what happens with the portal and my manager telling me what's going on.

**Interviewer:** So you mention you guys have a communications binder and it doesn't necessarily stay up to date. So how do you deal with making sure everyone has information that may not be in the binder?

**MP:** Well, whenever something important is happening, my manager always lets me and the other supervisor know right away and tells us to inform all the other staff. Our manager's always in the know of everything that's going on and she gives it to me and the other supervisor because

she knows we're the ones that talk with the staff the most, we give her all our feedback, we give them all her feedback.

**Interviewer:** So you mention that you and another shift supervisor talk to your manager often about information that needs to be passed on. Is that a formalized communications method in your store? Or is that sort of informal, just something that happens that you didn't exactly discuss how it was going to happen?

**MP:** You could almost go with both. It's definitely formal, it's crucial for the store, a lot of important information is passed that way, but a lot of the time it's just, it comes up in conversation.

**Interviewer:** So you mentioned the store portal and a communication binder and just verbal communication. So are there any other types of communication methods that is used at your store to get information to you?

**MP:** Not that I can think of.

**Interviewer:** OK, so what types of communication methods are used at Starbucks to get this work information to you?

**MP:** The portal, the manager will let all of the supervisors know of anything that's important that they need to know about. The communication book that's very rarely read, but still there. Siren's Eye, did I say Siren's Eye?

**Interviewer:** And how useful do you find the types of work related information that you get at Starbucks and why?

**MP:** It's very useful. Like a lot of the times before I go to the manger to find out answers to the questions I'll just, I'll look and see what information there is in our training manuals and books and on the store portal and stuff like that, because it's all very straight forward, it's very well detailed, there's pictures which are lovely. I don't think I've had any concerns with the communication that we get. They do a really good job of telling us what we need to know, not always telling us why, but at least there's a, there is what there is.

**MP:** A lot of it's really important especially when it's new products we're coming out with, new focuses for the week, things that we should be focusing on upselling, stuff like that. We need to stay up to date because the company's always changing and they like to keep all the stores monogamous. So the new sales, new Siren's Eye, things like that, we need to stay up to date with. So that's important stuff.

**Interviewer:** And you mentioned goals, like weekly goals. So how do you get that information and how do you stay updated on where you are with your goal?

**MP:** We have a couple of different types of goals. Meeting sales is one of them, and our manager takes care of that and the updates us. Inventory management is a really big one so that happens

every Wednesday, we do the count, Thursday my manager will review it with me because I'm in charge of all the inventory, and then with a couple of the other staff with things we need to work on and what kind of other goals do we set? Customer count, that's a really big one. Recently all the stores were asked to try and get three more customers in every half an hour during our peak periods. So that's something we've been working really hard on keeping the line going, keeping those sales up and meeting the target sales for the week's also really important, so upselling, suggesting, suggestive selling, things like that. So we try and impress that on our other staff as well.

**Interviewer:** OK, so what do you think about the communication methods that Starbucks currently uses to get information to you and can you explain why you feel or think a particular way about these methods that you mentioned?

**MP:** I think that they're practical there are some fuzzy areas though. Our store manager went to Vancouver for two weeks and when she was gone it was just, it wasn't very pretty. Some things did happen. There was one sale that we didn't know about until the district manager called us and asked what our targets were for the sale and we were like Oh my god, we didn't know this was happening, like we need our manager back here to tell us what to do. So there's a lot of focus on her and her keeping us up to date.

**Interviewer:** So it's very top down in your store then?

**MP:** Very much so. All the information goes to her and then it gets relayed down to us. And then there's just things I'll pick up on the portal or the other supervisor will. Nobody goes out looking for this information though and if we're told it then we're just in the dark.

**Interviewer:** OK. So basically all the information you guys get then for the communications binder also I'm assuming would come from your manager then?

**MP:** Yah, she'll get new email about whatever that's happening and she'll put it and tell us there's this new important thing in the binder, get people to read it. She's always the one that's updating it, filling it with new things, and then she'll assign someone to make sure that everyone else knows about it.

**Interviewer:** OK, so basically things stall when your managers not there to keep that communication flow going?

**MP:** Pretty much, yah.

**Interviewer:** OK and is there a way that you could think of or any opinions you might have on how that could be improved?

**MP:** I'm not sure. As a supervisor, I feel like we should be getting some of this important information first hand as well. How that would happen, I'm not sure. Like there's the portal and such, but sometimes I feel like there could be a more efficient way to let us know right away



what's happening when it's happening and then we could share the information with other partners. A little bit less reliance on the manager. How that would happen though I'm not sure.

**MP:** I think they're pretty handy as long as you know your way around the portal. It's, there's nothing really hidden from you that you need to know. I mean there's different stuff for a supervisor as opposed to a barista and a manager, but I think it's quite good, they're not trying to hide information from anybody, so.

**Interviewer:** OK, like you mentioned verbal communication. What do you think about the verbal communication?

**MP:** I think depending on who you hear it from, like the manager and a couple of the fellow supervisors at work, you can trust what they say, because you know that they've looked over this information and they know what they're talking about and they're not just spewing out words because they heard it from somebody. So I would say depending on who it comes from, it's really effective, it's trust worthy, it's good. But there are certain people that it's useless hearing them any information about Starbucks, or Starbucks practices, anything, hearing it from them I just take it with a grain of salt because it's very unlikely that they read that anywhere, so.

**Interviewer:** So are there ways of communicating information that seem to work better for you and can you tell me why?

**MP:** I feel like I'm well adapted to a number of different kinds of communication. I don't necessarily prefer one kind, it just depends on the day, it depends on what it is. There's a number of variables that it could be that I would prefer to get information from if I was, if I was being reprimanded for something I would prefer to hear it face to face as opposed to writing. If it's information about a new procedure or a new way of ordering, something like that, any sort of written communication or an email or like the stuff that we get off the portal is just fine. But other than that, like if somebody has an issue on a more personal level about how we, about how I work at Starbucks, I would rather talk to somebody about it as opposed to getting a nasty letter or getting written up or something like that.

**Interviewer:** And is there a reason you'd prefer to talk to someone about it? Like what is about verbally speaking with someone about an issue like that?

**MP:** I think it's polite as well as more effective because you, you would get the understanding that somebody would want to help you fix it. As opposed to just telling you what you're doing wrong but then not giving you a chance to remedy the situation. So there's a lot of times I've come across it before that these people just don't know that they're, what they're doing is not the best way or the proper Starbucks way to be doing something. So I would rather have a chance to hear about it prior to it going to any other extreme. It's just a personal kind of thing.

**MP:** I find verbal communication really efficient. Just word of mouth, I hear it, I see them say it, and I know what needs to get done and I know what I need to do. And then I make sure I can let all the other staff know as well. When it's verbal it's like right here right now this is what's up, it's very straight up and effective.

**Interviewer:** We talked a little about the ways that Starbucks currently gets information to you at work. Are there other ways that you can think of that you would like to use Starbucks use and why?

**MP :** I'm not sure, I think, for the most part, communication is, is done pretty well. There are always things to improve on because everything can always be better. I think it would be really nice to get a little bit more communication from our district manager. There's a lot of people who don't necessarily know who she is, they might have seen her in passing but they don't get a chance to talk to her and find out how she feels everything is going and find out her concerns and her praises from the store. I think it would also be really nice for some of the baristas and some of the shift supervisors who don't take the time to find a more comprehensive way of finding out how some of the customers are communicating with us. Because we have the customer voice and they, it's posted in the store, but I don't think everybody reads it, I don't think they take the time to find out how the customers feel and how what they are communicating to us about what we're doing well and what we're doing not so well on. I think that there would be a really good, and I don't know how to make it better, but I think it could be better communicated to the whole store about how we're doing from the other side of the counter, not necessarily just from a partners perspective. But I like the combination of written and verbal communication that we have now. I just think everything can be improved on, I just don't exactly know right now how to do that.

**Interviewer:** OK, so some other examples of communication methods that, and I'm just going to throw these out there, just to get your thoughts on them, you know, that could potentially be used could be email. You know a lot of people, particularly your age, use cell phones so like text message, social media, like what would you think about of any of those types of communication?

**MP:** I like the idea of those because it like cell phone usage is really prevalent in people, most of the people that, that age range that are working at Starbucks because they are all 20's to mid 30's kind of everybody uses social media in one way or another. I think it would be really nice to have something specifically for partners that they can feel free to ask questions about, to have really up to date constant information about the business. And at the same time kind of keeping a little bit of an anonymous nature to it, just because if there are concerns or there is kind of a weird question that they have to ask, they have to the right to know, and they have the right to not be judged for it either. So I think social media would be really, really good. Email as well, I think it would be nice for the shift supervisors to also have access to an email directly to the district manager, the regional manager, and even other managers in the area because sometimes we have no way of contacting them. Because if we call and they're not there, that's kind of, that's it right? Like there's no other way of getting a hold of them. So I think that would be really nice and it would be really effective. But at this point, to my knowledge we don't have that ability to talk to other managers or to send them an email if they're not in the store.

**Interviewer:** So if potentially if there was an email system, would it be a work email that you would see that you could access at work or would it be an email you could access outside of work?

**MP:** I think it would be important to keep this email only accessible at work. I think when you, other than the managers who I know have an email that they can access at home if they need to. I think anything under that I think it's important to keep work and home very separate. Just so that there's no bad blood mixed in with it. People, you work with tons of people, so there's always going to be some sort of drama and I think it's important to keep home drama away. So I think it would be something nice to be in the portal that we can just go into and if we have a question for somebody else, then we'll find out and we'll get the answer the next time, the very next time that other person we're asking is at work. It'll be much quicker than trying to track them down on the phone or going into their Starbucks when they're at work or something like that.

**Interviewer:** OK so, of the communication methods we've discussed that could potentially be used in the future, would you think they'd be used to compliment the current communication methods or replace them and why?

**MP:** I don't think the current communication we have should be replaced because I think it's quite good. I think it should be used to compliment because it would just make everything run a lot more smoothly and a lot nicer.

**MP:** I almost think it would be a good idea for supervisors to have access to certain work emails as well. That's where our manager gets a lot of information about targets, promotions, things like that and if we were to get something more personalized, something that we receive personally, it would be a lot more effective. Keep us in the know how and it would be instant.

**Interviewer:** So would this be an email that you would check when you got to the store or would this be an email you could access outside of work?

**MP:** It could potentially be both. In terms of just keeping things efficient, up to standard and safe, it would probably be best if it was just something you access in the store, not a personal email. Keep it strictly business.

**Interviewer:** And what about, just because I know people your age are really into cell phones and social media and stuff like that. Would that be a possibility or do you think that that's crossing the line between being at work and not being at work?

**MP:** No, I think that that would be alright. I mean to get a tweet or an update saying this is what's happening, prepare yourself you know or share with other partners or friends that this sale is coming up, I think that that would be a good idea. I mean, I already follow like, I like the Starbucks page on Facebook so I'll get updates like that and sometimes I've found out we have a new coffee coming out or a new sales coming out from Facebook and I'm like, I should know this before the rest of the world does, I work for the company. But it is efficient and it definitely works, so I could see it being a good idea.

**Interviewer:** So you mentioned email as a possible other method, would you see that as something that would complement the current methods or could possibly replace it and why?

**MP:** I'd see it complementing the current methods. It definitely wouldn't replace it, because verbal communications is always going to be there and always going to be an important part of the store regardless of how much technology we have. It would just keep us more in the loop and it would bring the information more readily available to us so we could share it with other partners. I can't see it replacing any of our other forms of communications though.

**Interviewer:** OK, so are there ways of communicating information that think could be improved and how might that look?

**MP:** I think the communication between going from manager to supervisor to barista could be improved because the communication book I think is a really good resource that we have. I just don't know that a lot of our new baristas especially the newer ones are aware that it exists. So they kind of hear really late in the game that things are happening and things are changing and they're just really caught off guard. So I think we need to figure out a way to get the, the information from the top to the bottom quicker before new things come into play and everybody's really caught off guard. So I think it's just a matter of not necessarily having the manager be there all the time to tell you face to face all these new things that are happening, but find a really effective way of making a communication book known or letting them know that they have the ability to go onto the portal and find new information themselves and they're really expected to know these things instead of just waiting for us to tell them they're doing something wrong. Or doing something differently than the way that we used to do it. They have the ability and they're expected to do these things as part of their job.

**Interviewer:** OK, so you mentioned, you know, not having the manager there necessarily as a resource to, to always relying on him for information. Do you find that at your store, baristas and shift supervisors rely on your manager for the information they need?

**MP:** I think, I think they're getting the hang of not having to rely on the manager so much. Not because he's an unreliable person by any means. I think that baristas are learning that they are able to rely on the shift supervisors a little more, certain ones, anyways. Because they're stepping up, and they're starting to learn all these things to help the manager in the communication process, because he's not there all the time anymore. So, I don't know, I forgot where I was going with this. Yah I think it's just finding new ways of communicating because of the new situation that we're in.

**Interviewer:** OK, so you mentioned a sort of a chain. So information goes to the manager, to the shift supervisor to the barista. So as a shift supervisor, do you actively seek out information or do you wait for the manager to give you the information you need?

**MP:** I actively seek it out now, when I first started I didn't. I didn't really know where to look for it. And not that I didn't care to know, I would just wait to find out from the manager. I felt like he felt like it was important for me to know then he would tell me. Now being as I'm training to be at a higher position, I'm taking the initiative to seek out all this information when a couple of months ago I wouldn't necessarily. So I do learn things a lot quicker than I did before because I'm taking 15 minutes out of my day to go through the new Siren's Eye for Summer 1 or

Summer 2 and doing all of those things. As opposed to just waiting for him to tell me because he wants me to do something that night or something like that.

**Interviewer:** So as a shift supervisor, your job is to relay the information to the baristas. So is that something that you do on a regular basis? Do the baristas seek out information from you? Or are they waiting for you to tell them things when things happen or when maybe they're not aware of something going on, and it's obvious to you they're not aware, then you tell them?

**MP:** If they have specific questions by all means, they seek me out for it. But I have gotten into the habit of relaying new information about new, new expiry dates, new promotions, stuff like that, the most recent stuff that we've been dealing with. I've gotten into the habit of it, of just telling them if I haven't seen them for a couple of days or a week or so and I know I'm closing with them that night or I know these things have come about in the last week. I will take a few minutes to just let them know the basics, I don't go into great detail about it cause some of that stuff they, I don't think they care to know necessarily and they don't need to. They just need to know what their job requires them to know. So if I feel that it's relevant for them or I feel that it's just kind of interesting information that's come up in Starbucks then I will tell them. There are times where they will seek me out because I've forgotten to say something or they've heard from another barista or somebody that they don't necessarily trust in the company. They've heard something and they just want to know and I will answer any questions that they have and sometimes I just forget to say things, it happens.

**Interviewer:** So what aspects of your job do you find enjoyable and why?

**MP:** I enjoy working with the customers, I love the drinks, I love drinking them and I love sharing them with other people. I enjoy the work environment, the people I'm with. I love the company itself, you know what they stand for, their business ethics. I love, I love Starbucks.

**Interviewer:** So you mentioned customers, what aspect of dealing with customers is it that you really find enjoyable.

**MP:** Well there's the regulars that come in and you know their name, you guys joke around, it's like you're friends, you are friends. You'll see them walking on the street and stop and say hi and have a little chat, it's just a great social environment where you get to meet people, you get to create these relationships, it's more than just a transaction. And then there's like new customers that come in and they're lost and you can joke around, ask them what's happening, oh you're from out of town, you know they're fascinated by being in the centre of this big city because they're from nowhere ville Saskatchewan and you're a superstar working at Starbucks, but it's just it's cool, you get to have a good time and meet tons of different kinds of people.

**Interviewer:** OK, and you mentioned you really enjoy the drinks, what is it about the drinks at Starbucks, like making them, drinking them that is enjoyable for you?

**MP:** Well there's just the quality of the beverages right off hand that's just, they're all phenomenal. Getting my caffeine fix, especially when I'm staring at 5:30 in the morning, if I had

a rough night, it's like bam, energetic, smiling, good to go for the day. So sometimes Starbucks is what gets me through my shift at Starbucks. And then they're just tasty.

**Interviewer:** And you said you also just really like the company so and what they stand for. So what in particular is it that you, you know, identify with? You know really like about what Starbucks stands for?

**MP:** There's a couple things. Their environmental stewardship is impressive, you know recycled materials, recycling our boxes, products, things like that. Their ethical sourcing, fair-trade participating in acts like that is all like phenomenal. What they do for the people in those third world countries, you know, supporting families and actually paying them fair wages, I think that's just great.

**Interviewer:** OK, and you said you also just enjoy the work environment. So what in particular about the work environment do you enjoy?

**MP:** It's just cheery, it's upbeat, keeps me busy. There's new faces, new people, new drinks, it's always changing. It's not just going to work doing the same thing day after day, there's always something new happening, something new coming out like it's always changing, it's always exciting.

**MP:** OK. I've worked in the service industry since I was 15 years old. And I've always enjoyed working with people, but I've never enjoyed working with people as much as I do at Starbucks. We have the opportunity to kind of make peoples day a little bit. They come in for coffee and some of them are kind of dragging and we're there to give them what they need and we have the opportunity to get to know a lot of people. So I really enjoy having that opportunity to connect with customers and I've met a lot of new people through Starbucks in the short time that I've been there so far. I've like, I've made new friends, I've made new acquaintances, I've gotten along with the staff that I work with better than I have at any other job and I know that I can trust and rely on them for most things. I enjoy making drinks, as weird as that sounds, I think I would I would be able to do this for a long time cause, I don't have a desire to work with food anymore than I do, but making the beverages, it's just kind of fun. I like that I have the opportunity to learn more and progress in my career at Starbucks because I would like to, to move up to manager and hopefully move into corporate at some point, or even just gain the experience and knowledge and then go on and share the Starbucks personality and their vision for their business with other people. I like that I don't have to wear pants, but I don't know if that's relevant.

**Interviewer:** OK, so how could your job be improved and why?

**MP:** This is going to sound terrible but there's just a couple people that need to be weeded out of the location that I'm currently at. I think 90% of the time we run very smoothly, we run very effectively and there's just a very small handful of partners that I feel kind of create road blocks at work. Like they just, they don't mesh, they kind of just get in the way sometimes, they're not doing their job as effectively as I would like them to. And despite the coaching that's been done, and despite the retraining that's been attempted to do and the conversations that have been had, it just doesn't, it just isn't working. I think that's the only thing that's really frustrating, because

everything else I have no issues with and if I ever have a concern I can very easily raise it, and if it's able to be remedied its remedied.

**MP:** Personally I was the only supervisor at my location for about three months, and working that around my school schedule I was doing non-stop clopens. So my sleep schedule was just trashed. We finally got a second supervisor so it started to level out but there's still not very much flexibility at all. So there's issues with staffing that really do affect all of us partners, putting in overtime, losing sleep, working sporadic shifts. So just being more comfortable with the staffing would make a big difference.

**Interviewer:** So basically you're looking for more stability is kind of what I'm hearing.

**MP:** Mmmhmm. There's layover in staff and trying to get more people, trying to get quality people, it's difficult and it really is hard for the whole store.

**Interviewer:** OK. So what type of information do you receive at work has an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work?

**MP:** A big one would be our customer voice. Do I need to explain what that is?

**Interviewer:** Yes.

**MP:** OK. Customer voice, so every once in a while our tills randomly will print out little surveys that we give out to our customers where they give us feedback on the store, the quality of the drink, the partners, they're overall experience, they rate the store and then we get all of these results back and its each store individually and post them for all of the partners to see. And I'm not going to say it's a contest between other stores what kind of results you have, but it kind of is. And those results can make a big impact. Like if you go to a store and you see that their voice report is only like 23%, you're going to think poorly of that store and you feel bad for the people that work there. And then when you're at your store and you see those results sometimes they're great, people say amazing things about the store, they leave awesome comments, it just makes you love your job that much more and then sometimes you'll get these terrible ones that just make you feel awful and you're like that's not my fault but it is my fault because it's my store. So those have a big impact just kind of on your mindset and how you feel about your workplace.

**Interviewer:** So basically when you're reading through the comments whether it's good or bad, it has an impact on your personal morale and how you feel about yourself and your work?

**MP:** Definitely.

**MP:** I feel like the more information I have the more I'm able to effectively do my job and the more effectively I'm able to do my job the more I enjoy it. So you don't feel frustrated that you don't really know what you're doing or that you're kind of flying by the seat of your pants. The communication that we receive has all the information I need, and so I don't feel like I'm second guessing myself for the most part. The information is there and it's clearly stated so I know what I'm doing and I can go to work with the confidence that I'm doing it and I'm doing it the way

that they would like me to do it and I agree with a lot of the things that Starbucks has asked us to do and the way that they ask us to do it. So I don't have to feel like I'm pushing something that I don't believe in and I really appreciate that and I can enjoy what I'm doing because I can back it up and I can stand behind it.

**Interviewer:** OK, you had mentioned one of the types of information you get is the customer voice. So like feedback from the customer about your store. So how does that impact your job and how you enjoy your work?

**MP:** It's really really nice to see the positive feedback that we get. And we, in our location we do get a lot of positive feedback, sometimes it can be a little biased because we tend to give customer voice some days to our regular customers and we know that our regular customers are happy because they're coming back 2 or 3 times a day sometimes. And when I, when I can see on paper that people are really happy with how we're doing and they leave comments about how they really enjoy the energy in our Starbucks and they enjoy all the partners that are standing behind the counter and how they have been able to connect and how they can see that we do care about them as people and more than just a customer, we care about our regulars. It's nice to see it and it gives you that little boost that you need to, when you're having a bad day you can go in and you get excited because you know you're going to see some of these people you really enjoy. And then you can enjoy work and when you see some of the negative comments, it kind of sucks in the moment because you're just for myself anyways, I go in and I know that I do a good job. Well the best job that I can. And it sucks when you see that somebody doesn't think the store was clean or the service was really slow. I get frustrated because I'm like, they don't understand what's going on behind the counter sometimes. But it also gives me an opportunity to know that they don't know what's going on behind the counter and regardless of what is happening, it shouldn't affect their visit. So I'm able to then figure out how I can make it not affect their visit the next time, so I can grow as supervisor, I can grow as a person, so that these negative comments don't keep coming.

**MP:** And quite often they're left in the dark. There's little things that really don't effect them but then there's bigger things like upcoming sales, events, things like that that are really important. You know it's always exciting when you see there's this new buy one get one half off, or you know there's this new coffee coming out, you know, you're pumped, you're excited to promote whatever's coming out, you're excited to experience it for yourself. So it makes the job a lot funner and keeps it interesting.

**Interviewer:** OK. Is there anything else that has an impact on your job and how you do your work and how it makes you feel about work?

**MP:** Also just general feedback from other partners and managers or the manager I should say. When you receive positive feedback you know it's always great, it makes you feel good, you're just ready to put in that effort and keep it up. When you receive negative feedback, sometimes it's a little bit of a downer but it helps you recognize what it is you need to improve on and what you need to put more focus into in the workplace, so it's all good in the long run.

**Interviewer:** How often do you receive feedback?



**MP:** Just about on a daily basis.

**Interviewer:** We're almost at the end. So do you feel that the communication methods Starbucks uses has an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work? So you'd mentioned verbal communications, the store portal, binder.

**MP:** Yah, I definitely would say so. How things are communicated can make all the difference, you know. It's the same as when someone's talking to you depending what tone they're using, you either want to smack 'em or give them a hug. And it's kind of the same in the business world, the different methods of communication, like how things are being told to staff, that can make all the difference. Sometimes they'll feel like they're being attacked if it's done improperly or they'll feel like they're being, you know, oh what's the word.... I lost it. Taught? Assisted? Like they're being helped, not brought down? But, there's a word and I have it but it's just not coming...

**Interviewer:** Supported?

**MP:** Something like that.

**Interviewer:** So do you feel that the communication methods that Starbucks currently uses has an impact on your job and how much you enjoy your work?

**MP:** I feel like you just asked me that question.

**Interviewer:** Not the type of information, but how they communicate. So like, if they communicate verbally or through writing, like, does it impact how you're doing your job and whether or not you enjoy doing it?

**MP:** I guess it kind of does. I don't really know.

**Interviewer:** Like for example if your manager told you about a promotion and his emotion behind, you know...

**MP:** OK, I get it now. I think when you do hear stuff from people verbally you can tell that you're excited about it. So if they're really excited about a promotion then you have more of an opportunity to be excited about it, because you feed off of that person. So I could, I could and likely would have read about the promotion previous on the Siren's Eye or the portal, wherever it was that I found it and you read and you're just like, OK, that might be kind of neat. But then when you hear your manager or a fellow shift supervisor talking about it and they're like This is going to be freaking sweet! Like it's going to be delicious, like people are going to be really excited about it, we can't wait to get this new drink or this new sandwich in, then you kind of tend to get more excited just because you see that they're super stoked about it. While I may not necessarily be as excited about it because it contains meat or you know the syrup is one of the condensed milk syrups and I may never drink it, but you can tell that they're excited and they're really going to enjoy this, you can be happy for them and then you end up enjoying what's

happening more because even though you may not necessarily benefit from it because I'm not ever going to try these things, you're still excited, because somebody else cares as opposed to a black and white piece of paper being like, We have new sandwiches and I still can't pronounce the name without looking the word, kind of thing. It just can be kind of boring, so you just don't care, it's just words.

**Interviewer:** So when you have to pass this information onto your baristas, do you try to emulate how you've heard it verbally or?

**MP:** Absolutely, yah. I regardless of my excitement, or lack there of of excitement, I will pass this information on to the best of my abilities with as much as much exuberance as I can. And I, I have been known and I will mention that some of these things I likely won't try because of what they contain, but I'll find other reasons to be excited about it. It's something different, it's something new, it's something that they've decided to bring to Canada because it worked well in the States or it worked well in the UK, something, anything. Or it's just this new fad that's happening in the world and Starbucks wants to be on board with that, I can be excited about that kind of thing, regardless of whether or not I'm going to be eating it every day or drinking it every day. So yah, I think I do, if somebody's not, has not been very excited about it, I will attempt to get them excited, and probably sometimes go a little overboard just so they can see that, while they may not care, somebody else does and hopefully I will pass on that level of excitement to them, because they didn't have it before. And personal feelings aside, I want everything that happens to succeed in Starbucks, so I'm going to be excited about it. I'm going to pretend to be excited about it if I have to, but there will be excitement. So.

**Interviewer:** So how do you feel about the amount of information that Starbucks communicates to you?

**MP1:** I'd say it's sufficient. They don't like overdo it and tell you a bunch of stuff that you don't need to know or you know already. They keep you updated and knowledgeable but they don't overdo it. And they definitely don't leave you in the dark, unless you're a barista and have poor communication with the store manager and the supervisors in your store. I can't say that's a problem at mine but I'm sure it's come up at others.

**MP:** At moments, it can be a lot. It's, for certain things, it can be overwhelming. Like for the, all the information that I'm learning for assistant right now, because I'm just reading books, it's a lot, it's, I feel like I'm not retaining any of it. But I know in practice, and when I get the verbal communication and I get the verbal coaching on it, it will stick better. But I do think that for some of the baristas and for some people who don't have as much of a knowledge on Starbucks, it is too much, cause they're thick booklets and it's a lot of just, it can be a lot of repetition, it can be a lot of, not necessarily useless information but not super prevalent, not super exciting, not just, very basic, this is what it is and this is why it is, there can be a lot added to it. So at times there is some stuff overwhelming, but there are some emails that we'll get or some notifications, like portal messages that are just very straight to the point. Like Auburn is out of lime wedges, you won't get them until April 28<sup>th</sup>, if you need them, borrow them, and that's it and that's the perfect amount of information for that specific situation. So I think there's, it can go either way, depending on what it is.

**MP:** I will take the time to go through these booklets not with a barista by my side so that I'm not going through it and pointing out all of these things that might just be completely unnecessary. So I don't, I don't relay a lot of the United States information to them. I don't relay some of the, the Siren's Eye stuff to them, in regards to the way that we're setting up our merchandise shelves, unless they're the ones setting them up with me, kind of thing. I will just, I'll go through it, I'll find the things that are very relevant to them and then I'll tell them that instead of being like well The States is getting this and we're not. And the States are getting this but we're not, because then they'll be really clouded as well and I don't want them to have all this extra information that they don't need and I realize that as a shift I have a little bit more of a responsibility to go through that stuff, so it just takes me a little bit longer to be like This is for us, this is not for us, and so I take that time before I tell everybody else. Just so they're not clouded.

**Interviewer:** OK, so how do you think that that affects your work? If you feel like you're getting too much information?

**MP:** Well if you're overloaded on information, you can sometimes just almost throw it all away and be like I'm not going to remember any of it anyways, so why even try? So I think if you don't have the right mindset for it, it can negatively, negatively, negatively, Jesus, it can, it can have a negative effect on how you do your work because you're so overwhelmed with all of this information that you just give up on all of it. So you have to really focus on just retaining what you can and if you don't remember it all, then you don't, you can't force yourself to. So I think it's just a matter of staying in the right mind frame and trying to pick out the things that are most important to you and that you can, you can build from those few things that you are able to remember at that point and the rest of it will come with time.

**Interviewer:** OK, so in your opinion, is there a way that Starbucks could improve that and how might that look in your mind?

**MP:** I think that, they could potentially improve on some of it. I mean I know what they're trying to do with these packages of information is just get it all out to us and then, we'll have all of our questions answered all at one time as opposed to getting this little tiny packet of information about the new summer promotion and it having the bare minimum of information, you're just not really understanding what's going on. I think, and I guess what they've kind of done is broken up everything into summer 1 and summer 2 and instead of getting everything at one time they break it up into 2. So I don't necessarily know how to make it better, easier. I don't really know. I think they're doing the best that they can, because it is a lot and by breaking it up they're not giving you everything you need to know for the 5 months of summer promotions. But I think some of it could be simplified sometimes because going through those booklet there's a lot of repetitive information. There's a lot of information that's irrelevant to us because it's just for the States or just for the UK and I understand that they just make a booklet for the Western Hemisphere, whatever it may be. But I think seeing all that extra stuff in there sometimes is a little overwhelming because we don't need it. So it would be nice if they made a Canadian booklet or a US booklet or anything and just omitting that, that we can sometimes read and sometimes think that that's really neat and then get really excited about that and then forget that it's just for the

States, and then we get caught up in something that's totally irrelevant and we forget about the Canadian stuff that we should be knowing about.

**Interviewer:** OK. Do you find that with the communications binder sort of being in the sometimes good and sometimes not so good that that has an impact on it's ability to communicate with other people in your store who may not have direct one on one contact with your manager?

**MP:** I find the communication binder can be a little obsolete at times. Something big will be coming up and everyone will know about it and everyone will check but then there will be things like lean thinking or a new schematic for the milk fridges, something like that and people will check it once and then forget about it. Or they'll remember for a couple of weeks and they'll slowly just start to fade off and they'll never flip back to that page in the book, they'll just keep checking the new stuff that's coming in. So there's some things that really need to be pressed on the staff and constantly updated. Just throwing them in a book, it's not the most effective method.

**Interviewer:** So verbal is the preferred method at your store and probably the most effective?

**MP:** Definitely. Like when there's a new safety standard sheet that comes out everyone will read it, sign it and we're good. But like I said, like with the new milk schematic or this is the new way we're supposed to make whipping creams, some people didn't even know about that and then two months later It's like why are you doing like that? Didn't you know we changed it months ago? So you know there's a couple of things that the communications binder doesn't effectively portray as much as constantly being told or reminded that a new standard has changed or something like that.

**Interviewer:** So you obviously prefer verbal over written.

**MP:** Definitely yah. And it's a lot more effective in our store just for keeping everyone knowledgeable and on the same page.

**Interviewer:** So in that vein, is the store portal not as desirable a method as just getting the information directly from your manager?

**MP:** I'd say it works well. When I get it from my manager I get to see just how passionate or how they feel about what's coming up as well. You get to pick up those cues from them and that can make all the difference as well. Just their general attitude towards whatever promotion is coming up or something like that. So verbal communication is just a lot more personal, easier to understand, easier to remember and then you can keep updating, it's not like a page in the book that gets forgotten.

**Interviewer:** So you mentioned the excitement of your manager when she speaks about communications she's received and passes the information onto you. Do you think that that has an effect on when you receive that information, how you feel about your work?

**MP:** Definitely. The manager is like the, she's the face of our store, she's the manager, everybody looks up to her. So how she feels about a promotion regardless of how exciting it could be for us, it's always going to play a little role in how we feel about it.

**Interviewer:** So when you pass that information onto other people, do you try to pass it on in the same way then?

**MP:** Fairly yah, I'll of course put my little twist on it. Like we'll have a new coffee coming out, our seasonal Casi Cielo and I'll be like Oh my goodness guys the best coffee evers coming out! You're going to be like, with the new staff, you're going to be so excited to try it and blah blah blah. So you just get them pumped and of course, it's one of my favorite coffees, so I get extra excited when it comes out. And then it's the same with other promotions and stuff too, you put your enthusiasm into what you care about the most and the other staff pick up on that. So as a supervisor I always try and stay positive and enthusiastic about everything even if it's kind of more boring. But I get a lot of that from my manager, as well seeing her passion for the company and whatevers happening. So it's just kind of spreading that on which is harder to do in paper.