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ZIMCO INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT

INFORMATION

Information is the out put element of a data processing and usually it has got a purpose.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN DATA AND INFORMATION

The main similarities between data and information are in how the two are described and stored.

a. FIELD

This is the smallest sensible unit of both data and information.

b. RECORDS

Data field are gathered **into** records of data and information

c. FILES

These records of data and information are grouped into files

d. KEY FIELDS

The key fields are used in both data and information records for the same purpose of identification.

The set up of these may not be the same, but they exist in both.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF INFORMATION

Before any information is processed, seven points must be cared for:

A. PURPOSE

To arrive at what type of information you will need to know the purpose of it. Therefore the question to ask, is, What is the proposed information for?

In this way you will be able to know, if it is for immediate use or not.

B. USER

Since information has got a purpose, it should be made clear to the user, this brings you to things like who wants it? His level of education, his back ground etc.

C. VOLUME

The information a user requires, is that which can be used to solve what ever is at hand. Therefore the volume and scope should be determined by the need of the user. This will only be achieved when the question; How much information should be produced, is answered.

D. TIMELINESS

Information can be useful when it is received, when it is most needed. It can be too late to be of any use. Some information may be needed at once whereas other items of information may be needed later.

E. CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION

Information can be communicated in a number of different ways. A path or medium by which information is transmitted is known as a communication channel.

Examples are:

1. written reports
2. graphs or visual displays
3. sheets of figures
4. telephones
5. meetings
6. informal discussions
7. by computer
8. using ones eyes
9. TV
10. Radio
11. magazines
12. notice board

When we answer the question, In what form should the information be produced.

F. DIRECTION OF INFORMATION FLOW

The direction of the information flow matters very much. eg Superior to subordinate or vis versa or people on the same level.

G. COST

The cost of collecting and processing and communicating should not be greater than its worth.

QUALITIES OF GOOD INFORMATION:

1. PURPOSE

Information should fulfil its purpose that is it should make the user do his job or make a decision. Such information must be:

1. Relevant to the situation at hand
- ii. Complete
- iii. Accurate
- iv. Clear to the user
- v. Trusted by the information user.

2. USER

Good information must always reach the person who needs it.

3. DIRECTION OF FLOW

Depending on the direction, a proper way must be found.

4. VOLUME

The volume should not exceed the capacity of the to take it all in. Only the information required must be sent or given.

5. TIMELINES

Good information is the one that is communicated at the most appropriate time, not too late to be of any use.

6. CHANNEL

The type of channel chosen, can make an information good or bad.

7. COST

Good information should be less in cost compared to the benefits

8. RELEVANCE

It must be relevant to the purpose it is required for. Far too many reports fail to keep to the point.

9. COMPLETENESS

A user must have all the information he needs to do his job properly. Otherwise he will always do bad job.

What is the result of this, if you told somebody to collect K4,000 but instead you wrote K400 loss of K3,600

10. ACCURACY

It must be always accurate in order to produce accurate results.

11. CLARITY

Information must be clear to the user. If the user does not understand it properly he cannot use it properly

12. CONFIDENCE IN THE INFORMATION

Who ever receives the information should be confident that it is accurate. The confidence should be built up amongst the individuals.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN

The following points may cause full or partial breakdown in communication and they are known as 'NOISE'

1. Excessive volumes of information at collection points
2. Errors or Omissions during communication
3. Misinterpretation and misunderstanding at the receiving and therefore noise can take many forms but most in brief are, excessive volumes, irrelevance, incompleteness and lack of clarity.

PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION

Information should be communicated to the right people, but there may be a breakdown in the flow that prevents it.

DIRECTION OF FLOW

Information flow may be:

i. DOWNWARDS

In this direction is usually from superiors to subordinates and information is about:

- a. Delegation of work
- b. Information about procedures etc
- c. about roles one must play
- d. Information about how one is doing his work

2. UPWARDS

Information that goes upwards usually is for reporting purposes

3. HORIZONTALLY

Information is passed around to people at the same level.
Can lead to awkward situations

REPORTING BY EXCEPTION

This principle works like this: Only information Do something different or unusual is produced or reported. As an example if a company has got a maximum and minimum production range then the only report can be done on what is below the minimum.

Eg: Target Production Figures are between 100 - 120

1	-	110
2	-	105
3	-	119
4	-	120
5	-	75

In the example the only department that needs attention is 5 and so it is the one we report on.