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Improving media richness theory: A study of interaction goals, message valence, and task complexity in manager-subordinate communication

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Citation

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Abstract

Media richness theory (Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986) predicts that managers, driven by the

instrumental goal of task efficiency, choose media based on the match-up of message equivocality and

media richness. This study proposes that relational and self-presentational goals are also relevant in

manager-subordinate interactions, particularly when messages differ in valence. The sample consists of

one hundred and seven managers from various organizations in Hong Kong. Findings with respect to

traditional media show (1) media richness theory holds when messages are positive, (2) self-

presentational goals are the most powerful predictor of media choice when messages are negative, (3)

relational goals have some impact on managers' media choice, and (4) complexity is a sensitive predictor

of media choice. Thus, media richness theory can be improved by incorporating a broader consideration

of relevant interaction goals and the constructs of message valence and complexity.

Media richness theory is one of the most widely studied models of media choice in management communication and has received mixed results over the years (e.g., Mennecke, Valacich, & Wheeler, 2000). In an attempt to improve this theory, the current study suggests and tests a conceptual expansion by replacing the original instrumental goal with multiple goals as the base of managers' media choice for task accomplishment.

Media Richness Theory and Managerial Communicative Goals

Assuming the rationality of human behavior as striving for efficiency and effectiveness, media richness theory (MRT) focuses on media richness as the basis for managers' choice of media for communicative tasks. The richness of a medium depends on, (1) the availability of instant feedback; (2) the use of multiple cues, such as physical presence, voice inflection, body gestures, and graphic symbols, etc.; (3) the use of natural language, which can be used to convey an understanding of a broad set of concepts and ideas; and (4) the personal focus of the medium. The more a medium displays these attributes, the richer it is. Otherwise, it is leaner. Face-to-face is the "richest" medium because it has the capacity for immediate feedback, carries multiple cues, and uses natural language. The rank order of a few common media from the richest to the leanest is face-to-face, telephone, personal written text (letters, notes, memos), formal written text (documents, bulletins), and formal numeric text (computer output, statistical reports)(Daft & Lengel, 1986). Later, researchers added electronic messaging between the telephone and personal written text (e.g., Trevino, Lengel et al. 1990).

The original MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986) predicts that managers' choice of medium depends upon the richness of the medium and the equivocality of the task, defined as the existence of multiple interpretations about an organizational situation. Efficient and effective managers will select media with information richness matching the level of equivocality of the

communication task. For an equivocal task managers are likely to resort to a richer

communication medium; while for a clearly defined task, they will use a leaner communication

medium. New media have highlighted a challenge to the MRT for its unidimensionality (e.g.,

Carlson & Zmud, 1999; Rice, D'Ambra, & More, 1998), which is also seen in its focus on

instrumental goal in communication tasks. The match-up of message equivocality and media

richness assumes that managers are motivated by task efficiency (i.e., the instrumental goal)

alone. Such a single-minded goal orientation is rarely the case in social interactions, for there are

always competing demands and considerations. To improve media richness theory and better

explain managers' media choice, we believe, the inclusion of multiple goals offers an alternative.

Human communication is presumably purposeful or goal-oriented, and generally involves

three types of goal: instrumental, relational, and self-presentational goals (Canary & Cody,

1993). Communicators strive to simultaneously achieve multiple goals, which are often

hierarchically ordered and vary in salience due to perceived demands or constraints (e.g.,

Bavelas, 1990; Dillard, 1997; Dillard & Solomon, 2000). Such is the case for managers minding

the interrelated aspects of productivity and people management in any given organization. The

manager's responsibilities include such things as giving directions, providing/seeking feedback

and assigning jobs etc. to subordinates, where the focus is primarily on the task (i.e., instrumental

goals). Not to be neglected is the important role of relational and self-presentational goals in the

tasking setting. The supervisor and the subordinate are interdependent by the definition of their

jobs: success of one ultimately depends on the other. Inevitably, managers are motivated to

maintain a good relationship with and to present a positive or desirable image in front of

subordinates so as to secure their cooperation if not respect. Good relations and good self-image

tend to be rewarding and would also be preferred over poor relations and poor self-image, hence

the motivation for good relationship and self-presentation. Thus, manager-subordinate communication and media choice should involve instrumental, relational, and self-presentational goals for both parties.

Communicative Goals, Complexity and Equivocality

Task equivocality is a major factor affecting task performance. It is conceptualized as the ambiguity given rise by multiple interpretations of information available or the situation that is ill defined and with no quick answers (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Task messages that are routine, regular, simple and/or precise are unequivocal. Equivocality is a key to understanding the amount and type of information, the kind of interaction, and the communication media that are most effective for delivering the message (Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987). In comparison, task complexity involves unpredictable human dimensions and emotional aspects of organizations, such that organizational tasks confronting managers vary from being simple to complex (Daft & Lengel, 1984).

Complex tasks are neither objective nor computational procedures that clearly instruct managers what to do. Managers must exercise their own analysis and judgment to handle difficult and unpredictable, hence complex, tasks. The relationship between media richness and complexity is comparable to that between media richness and equivocality: managers use rich media for complex topics and lean media for simple topics. Even though complexity seems to be more subjective or perception-dependent than does equivocality, Daft and Lengel, as has been noted (e.g., Dennis & Kinney, 1998), do not clearly differentiate between eqivocality and complexity but often use the two concepts interchangeably.

If the manager's only goal is task-efficiency (i.e., the instrumental goal), it is no problem operationally equating complexity with equivocality because the manager can process and assess

information in terms of either or both to best accomplish the task. If the manager does, as a matter of fact, have simultaneous relational and self-presentational goals, a question arises as to whether messages with the same equivocality would be perceived as having the same difficulty and predictability, i.e., same complexity. Valence, the positivity or negativity of a message, for example, presents just such a problem. Take as an example supervisor feedback giving, a positive message creates an opportunity for the manager to enhance the relationship with the subordinate and project a good guy image. Numerous studies (e.g., Sheer & Weigold, 1995; Wayne & Kacmar, 1991) found that when the feedback was positive, supervisors perceived that they delivered the message more effectively, enjoyed giving the feedback, and communicated a higher degree of trust than when the feedback was negative. In contrast, when the manager is to bear bad news, he/she encounters a dilemma involving self-presentation and human relations: transmit the news and risk being blamed for the bad news and possible damages to the relationship as well as self-image. As a result, supervisors giving negative performance ratings tend to experience anxiety (Tetlock, 1985).

Existence of multiple communicative goals as well as their possible interaction adds unpredictable human dimensions and emotional aspects to a task and increases task complexity. When relational and self-presentational goals are present alongside with task goals, task complexity differentiates itself from equivocality. Although equivocality and complexity are sometimes positively correlated, some tasks are likely to be perceived as less complex than others independent of the equivoclaity level. For example, informing a subordinate of the approval of a proposal by the subordinate is likely to be less complex than informing a rejection even though the equivocality levels of both messages are the same. The factor of message

valence, however, has not been noted in past MRT studies (e.g., Daft & Lengel, 1984, 1986; Trevino, Daft, & Lengel, 2000), which tested only positive or neutral messages.

Communicative Goals, Message Valence, and Choice of Media

As multiple goals rather than the instrumental goal of task efficiency alone impact managers' communication activities, their choice of media is likely to be affected by task complexity as well as equivocality. The link between goals and media choice becomes clear with a careful examination of the mediating variables, media richness and message valence. Media richness varies with the presence and strength of nonverbal and verbal cues such as voice inflection, body gestures, clarity, directness, and instant feedback. These cues communicate personal involvement or a small interpersonal distance and promote personal attachment and responsibility (Burgoon & Hale, 1993). Rich media are capable of a personal focus and allow a closer relationship or involvement between a manager and a subordinate.

When a message is positive or neutral, a manager is unlikely to face a threat to his/her image or the relationship with the subordinate and may more easily focus on the task. In this context, the goal of task efficiency probably is not in conflict with self-presentational or relational goals, and subsequently the manager would choose a medium whose richness matches the task equivocality.

When a message is negative, reactions from the subordinate make the communication undesirable, thus complicating the task. The manager's concerns for self-presentation and the relationship with the subordinate thus become more important and more prominent. These present a conflict to the instrumental goal of task efficiency, and the latter may be compromised. In order to weaken the blame for the negative message, the manager may be motivated to choose a leaner medium that communicates a personal detachment from the message. That way, the

chosen medium would still help to get the task accomplished and, at the same time, might somewhat mitigate the relational damage and assist in maintaining a positive image of the manager.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

On the basis of the above arguments, four hypotheses were posed in the context of a manager giving a message to his/her subordinate.

H1:   Equivocality being constant, managers perceive a negative message as more complex than a positive message.

H2:   Equivocality being constant, managers are more likely to choose richer media for conveying a positive message than for conveying a negative message.

H3:   Equivocality being constant, managers conveying a negative message perceive less anticipated communication effectiveness, less ability to maintain a good relationship with the subordinate, and less ability to project a good image, and experience a higher degree of anxiety than when they are communicating a positive message.

H4:   Message valence being constant, complexity would be a better predictor of manager's choice of media than would equivocality.

Although our literature review suggests that for a positive message, managers' choice of media may be driven by instrumental goal, we do not know whether relational and self-presentational goals contribute to managers' decision. Thus we pose a research question.

RQ1: When a message is positive, is managers' choice of media primarily driven by instrumental goal relative to relational and self-presentational goals?

Also, it is not clear whether the instrumental goal will be regarded as less important than relational and self-presentational goals in a task situation with a negative message. Thus RQ2.

RQ2: When a message is negative, what goals predict managers' choice of media?

Method

Sample and Procedures

Organizational managers were recruited through a snowball sampling method. Snowball methods are especially effective in collective cultures (e.g., Hong Kong) where people get things done through interwoven interpersonal networks. All respondents were instructed to complete the questionnaire independently. One hundred fifty questionnaires were sent out and 110 returned. All respondents were of the Chinese ethnicity, 70.4% male and 29.6% female managers, and employed in government (51%), trading (18%), financial (13%), manufacturing (9%), and retail (9%) organizations, with a minimum of one year and maximum of 30 years ($\underline{M} = 8.01$) of managerial experience. The span of control ranged from 2 to 60 ($\underline{M} = 12.2$) subordinates.

For the media listed here, respondents were most familiar with face-to-face and telephone, then fax and written documents, least familiar with email. Respondents generally were familiar with all the five media, as the lowest mean (3.43) approximated the median (3.5) on a scale of 1 (unfamiliar) to 6 (familiar). The same pattern emerged for the frequency of media use.

Instruments and Message Manipulation

Five pairs of tasks were created each with opposite valence for the paired messages and increasing equivocality from Task Pair 1 to Task Pair 5 (Figure 1). Equivocality increases with decreased task/message routine-ness, regularity, precision, and/or increased scope of issues involved. On a scale of 1 (untrue) to 6 (true), respondents rated each of the ten tasks in terms of equivocality, complexity, communication effectiveness, relationship management, and self-presentation, as well as anxiety. The tasks were randomly ordered to increase rating validity. Immediately following these items, respondents were asked to choose only one from the five media for each task.

Data Analysis and Results

Manipulation Checks

Two-tailed t-tests indicated no difference in equivocality between negative and positive messages for bonus distribution, salary adjustment, promotion/demotion, or expansion/ downsizing, $p > .10$ for all. Significant difference ($p = .011$) was found between positive versus negative performance evaluation. Four out of five paired messages were successfully manipulated regarding message valence. Performance evaluation was dropped from further analysis. Results of repeated measure of analysis of variance conducted for equivocality levels of the four remaining task pairs produced a significant overall difference, $F(3, 103) = 8.29, p < .001$, eta$^2 = .073$.

Follow-up paired t-tests between each two adjacent task pairs (in the order of bonus distribution, salary adjustment, promotion/demotion, and expansion/downsizing) yielded no significant difference among bonus distribution, salary adjustment, and promotion/demotion in terms of their equivocality levels. Significant difference in equivocality was, however, found between promotion/demotion and expansion/downsizing ($t = -4.49, df = 103, p < .001$), indicating that the expansion/downsizing message was more equivocal (M = 2.67, SD = 1.04) than the other three-message pairs with a mean(SD) of 2.41(1.22), 2.37(1.26), and 2.34(1.17) respectively. Thus, the gradual increase in equivocality from bonus distribution to expansion/downsizing was only partially successful. The equivocality strength manipulation would not affect hypothesis testing. Media richness theory predicts the match-up of task equivocality and likelihood of choosing a rich medium, so media choice for messages with similar equivocality levels should also be similar.

Main Analyses

Frequencies were calculated to discover patterns of managers' preferred media choice for different messages. Results showed that, across all messages, the majority of the respondents preferred either the very rich medium, face-to-face (from 33.6% to 83% for various tasks), or the lean medium, written document (14% to 60%), with less than 10% (mostly below 3%) choosing other media. Other media were thus discarded from hypothesis testing.

One-tailed paired t-tests were computed for the complexity level between the positive and negative messages of the same content. As expected, a negative message was perceived to be more complex than a corresponding positive message, $p < .05$ for bonus and expansion/ downsizing and $p < .001$ for salary and pro-/demotion (see Table 1). H1 received statistical support.

Chi-square analysis of choice of media (i.e., face-to-face vs. written) was conducted for each paired tasks contrasting the positive with the negative message. A significant p-value was yielded for each chi-square test. A higher percentage of the respondents preferred the face-to-face medium when the message was positive than when the message was negative for the same task content (Table 2). H2 was supported.

Paired-tests of anticipated communication effectiveness, relationship management, self-presentation, and anxiety yielded significant difference between the positive message and the negative message, $p < .001$ (one-tailed) for all tests. Respondents ranked higher on all the tested dependent variables when the message was positive than when the message was negative. H3 was supported (see Table 3).

To test that complexity is a better predictor of media choice than equivocality (H4), we must first prove that both equivocality and complexity would predict choosing a medium on the basis of richness, which is face-to-face in this study. McNemar's chi square test, for binomial

distribution, was run for all task pairs, for positive and negative messages respectively. Tests of

positive messages yielded no significant difference in choosing face-to-face for early bonus

distribution, salary increase, and promotion pairs. However, choice of face-to-face for expansion

significantly outnumbered that for promotion, salary increase, or early bonus, $p < .001$ for all

three tests. For negative messages, results showed that there was no significant difference in

media preference between late bonus and salary decrease. However, choice of face-to-face for

demotion (50.5%) was significantly higher than for salary decrease(34.5%) , $p = .013$ and higher

for downsize (74.7%) than for demotion, salary decrease, and late bonus(37.8%) respectively, p

$< .001$ for all three tests and eta ranged from .115 To .191. These tests showed that higher

equivocality did predict a greater preference of a rich medium in most cases. The difference

between demotion and salary decrease in preferred media choice was unexpected on the basis of

equivocality.

Regarding complexity, the test of H1 had showed that, equivocality being equal, negative

messages were perceived as more complex than positive messages. Thus, complexity was able to

distinguish the preference of face-to-face for a positive message from that for a negative message

of the same equivocality level. The remaining task was to prove that face-to-face was the

medium of choice for tasks of higher complexity, for positive and negative respectively. Results

of repeated measures of analysis of variance for complexity of positive messages suggested an

overall significant difference, $F(3, 102) = 23.46$, $p < .001$, $eta^2 = .184$. Follow-up paired t-tests for

complexity of all two positive tasks revealed that there was no significant difference in

complexity for early bonus distribution, salary increase, and promotion, M = 2.30 to 2.38, SD =

1.29 to1.40. However, the complexity of expansion, M = 3.07, SD = 1.22, was higher than that of

promotion, salary increase, or bonus early, $t = -7.32$, $df = 105$, $p < .001$. The same statistical

procedures were conducted for all negative messages and yielded an overall significant

difference among the messages, $F(3, 103) = 14.26$, $p < .001$, eta^2 =.120. Follow-up paired t-tests

for complexity of all adjacent negative tasks revealed that there was no significant difference in

complexity for late bonus distribution and salary decrease. However, the complexity of

demotion, M = 3.06, SD = 1.33, was higher than salary decrease, M = 2.75, SD = 1.39, t = -2.85,

df = 105, $p < .001$ and that of downsizing, M = 3.27, SD = 1.29, was higher than demotion, M=

3.06, SD= 1.33, t = -2.13, df = 105, $p < .01$. The results of preferred media choice showed that

higher complexity predicted preference for a rich medium as our hypothesis suggested.

The above results indicated that complexity was a more sensitive predictor than

equivocality. This is true not only in differentiating media choice for the same message content

of opposite valence but also in the accuracy of correlations to media choice. The same was

reflected in the eta^2 of the two variables, which reached .120 and .184 for complexity in

respective positive and negative messages, in contrast to .073 for equivocality; complexity

accounted for about twice as much variance as did equivocality across message pairs. This

indicated that complexity distinguished different task types better than did equivocality. H4 was

confirmed.

The dependent variable media choice here being virtually binary, logistic regression, a

multivariate statistical model for interval independent variables and a categorical dependent

variable, was used to answer RQ1. For each positive message, equivocality, complexity,

communication effectiveness, relationship management, anxiety, and self-presentation were

entered as independent variables with the Wald forward stepwise method (Table 1). First, for all

positive tasks, respondents' choice of media was predicted by task related (i.e., instrumental goal-

oriented) variables such as equivocality and/or anticipated communication effectiveness. The

highest partial correlation was a moderate R = .36 between face-to-face as the medium of choice

and the perceived equivocality in communication about expansion, a task reportedly more

equivocal than all others in this study. Second, unexpectedly, perceived good relationship also

predicted respondents' media choice for early bonus, salary increase, and expansion. The only

task with a single significant predictor in the model was promotion, which was predicted by

communication effectiveness and held a small partial correlation of .15 with the latter.

For RQ2, results of logistical regression procedures for negative messages did not show

the task variables (anticipated communication effectiveness, equivocality, or complexity) in any

of the models (Table 4). Instead, perceived self-presentation effectiveness and/or its related

variable, anxiety, appeared to be the primary predictors of respondents' choice of media.

Relationship management only occurred as a predictor of media choice for the salary decrease

task.

Discussion

The present findings have loaned strong support to our argument that all instrumental,

relational, and self-presentational goals rather than instrumental goals alone drive manager's

choice of media. Media richness theory thus can be improved with a broader consideration of

these three types of communicative goals. Specifically, instrumental (i.e., task efficiency) goals

necessitate the concern of task equivocality, whereas relational and self-presentational goals

bring forth the issues of task complexity and possible conflicts among goals. When goals were

compatible, complexity may be low and affect managers' media choice in much the same way as

(does) equivocality. However, when goals are not compatible, task complexity increases to affect

media choice in ways euqivocality cannot. Specifying message valence, a source of potential

goal conflict, allows for differentiation of complexity and equivocality. Complexity is sensitive

to potential goal conflicts because of relational and self-presentational implications and proves to be a better predictor of likelihood of choosing a richer medium than is equivocality. With the multiple-goals approach, MRT can be improved to account for the impact of message valence and clarify the constructs of equivocality and complexity. The expanded MRT may prove capable of covering aspects the original theory does not and may even predict media choice for organization tasks involving heavy social influences.

Two findings did not go well with the conceptual framework: a) A high percentage of the respondents chose the written channel rather than almost equally familiar telephone or fax, and b) relational goals appeared to be almost as important as task efficiency in media choice for positive messages. For a), Hong Kong's hierarchical or bureaucratic organizational structure may be an explanation. Particularly, fifty-one percent of the respondents were employed in government organizations, in which, written documents were the bureaucratic communication norm. For b), a Chinese society's relational orientation could be a factor as guanxi (i.e., interpersonal networks) exerts an utmost importance in people's daily life including the workplace. Managers in the sample might have had this guanxi mentality in choosing media for positive messages and regarded such as an opportunity to strengthen the interpersonal relationship with the subordinate. The possible cultural influence not only highlights an important aspect, but points to a direction for further investigations as well. We probably would not doubt the universal presence of multiple communicative goals, but have yet to learn about the relative importance of each in different cultures. Cross-cultural comparisons are needed for viability and generality of MRT.

Finally to note are validity and reliability of our study. Media choice in the current study was not directly measured but rather inferred from managers' report of would-be-choice on

specific tasks. Although we may reasonably expect managers to respond on the basis of their own day-to-day experience with specified tasks at work, the lack of context certainly limits the generalizability of the related findings. Further, several single-item measures may be less reliable than multiple-item counterparts. These must be taken into account for a more accurate interpretation of the findings here. On the other hand, unlike previous studies (e.g., Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987), equivocality was measured from subjects rather than ranked by judges, which should add to the validity.

In the end, we believe that the multiple-goals approach holds a good promise and is coherent with the main claim of the original MRT. The modified approach brings to the foreground the assumption of multiple goals in communication and fits MRT better into the development of general thinking in communication studies today. With consideration of multiple goals in managers' communication activity and message characteristics (e.g., the issue of message valence), managers' choice of media may be better explained.

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Table 1. Paired T-Tests of Complexity by Message Valence

Message Complexity		M (SD)	t	df	p
1. "Bonus Distribution"	(+) (-)	2.38 (1.40) 2.57 (1.35)	-1.78	105	.042
2. "Salary Adjustment"	(+) (-)	2.38 (1.34) 2.74 (1.39)	-3.35	104	.000
3. "Promotion/Demotion"	(+) (-)	2.33 (1.31) 3.06 (1.33)	-5.63	105	.000
4. "Expansion/Downsizing"	(+) (-)	3.05 (1.22) 3.28 (1.29)	-1.67	105	.048

Table 2. Chi-square Analyses of Choice of the Face-to -Face Medium Contrasting Positive vs. Negative
Message

Messages		Choice of the Face-to-Face Medium			
		%	2	(df1, df2)	p
1. "Bonus Distribution"	(+)	48.9%	12.56	(1, 92)	.000
	(-)	37.8%			
2. "Salary Adjustment"	(+)	50.5%	16.86	(1, 92)	.000
	(-)	35.4%			
3. "Promotion/Demotion"	(+)	57.0%	22.07	(1, 92)	.000
	(-)	50.5%			
4. "Expansion/Downsizing"	(+)	82.4%	32.21	(1, 90)	.000
	(-)	74.7%			

Table 3. One-Tailed Paired T-Tests of Anticipated Communication Effectiveness, Relationship Management, Anxiety, and Self-Presentation by contrasting Message Valence

Message Valence		Dependent Variable			
		M (SD)	t	df	p
		Anticipated communication effectiveness			
1. "Bonus Distribution"	(+)	4.76 (1.24)	2.39	105	.010
	(-)	4.43 (1.00)			
2. "Salary Adjustment"	(+)	4.92 (.92)	6.49	105	.000
	(-)	4.19 (.96)			
3. "Promotion/Demotion"	(+)	4.84 (.92)	6.56	105	.000
	(-)	4.23 (.89)			
4. "Expansion/Downsizing"	(+)	4.47 (.92)	6.02	105	.000
	(-)	4.00 (.91)			
		Relationship Management			
1. "Bonus Distribution"	(+)	4.60 (1.10)	9.51	105	.000
	(-)	3.49 (1.11)			
2. "Salary Adjustment"	(+)	4.46 (1.03)	10.66	105	.000
	(-)	3.19 (1.10)			
3. "Promotion/Demotion"	(+)	4.62 (1.11)	10.60	105	.000
	(-)	3.00 (1.26)			
4. "Expansion/Downsizing"	(+)	4.20 (1.09)	8.91	105	.000
	(-)	3.19 (1.21)			
		Anxiety			
1. "Bonus Distribution"	(+)	2.34 (1.62)	-7.44	105	.000
	(-)	3.55 (1.41)			
2. "Salary Adjustment"	(+)	2.53 (1.54)	-8.54	105	.000
	(-)	3.84 (1.37)			
3. "Promotion/Demotion"	(+)	2.09 (1.50)	-10.35	105	.000
	(-)	3.99 (1.28)			
4. "Expansion/Downsizing"	(+)	2.55 (1.42)	-7.59	105	.000
	(-)	3.81 (1.21)			
		Self-Presentation			
1. "Bonus Distribution"	(+)	4.57 (1.08)	9.69	104	.000
	(-)	3.30 (1.11)			
2. "Salary Adjustment"	(+)	4.44 (.97)	11.07	104	.000
	(-)	3.01 (1.15)			
3. "Promotion/Demotion"	(+)	4.61 (1.07)	11.63	105	.000
	(-)	2.91 (1.38)			

4. "Expansion/Downsizing"	(+)	4.26 (1.09)	12.46	105	.000
	(-)	2.91 (1.21)			

Table 4.
Binary Logistic Regression Analysis Of Significant Predictors Of Choosing The Face-To-Face Medium

	B	S.E.	Wald	R*	Sig
Positive Messages					
1. Bonus Early (^{2} = 9. 11, df1= 7, df2 = 86, p = .2448**; Classification Accuracy = 8.82%)					
Equivocality	.35	.17	4.04	.13	.045
Relationship	.52	.23	5.38	.16	.020
2. Salary Increase (^{2} = 15.97, df1= 8, df2 = 86, p = .0428; Classification Accuracy = 70.21%)					
Equivocality	.58	.25	5.33	.16	.021
Anxiety	.50	.22	5.38	.16	.020
Relationship	1.07	.31	11.52	.27	.001
3. Promotion (^{2} = 5.39, df1=2, df2 = 96, p = .0676; Classification Accuracy = 59.18%)					
Comm. Effectiveness	.57	.25	5.24	.15	.022
4. Expansion (^{2} = 7.84, df1= 8, df2 = 90, p = .4489; Classification Accuracy = 84.69%)					
Equivocality	-1.02	.26	15.05	.36	.000
Relationship	-.89	.33	7.47	.23	.006
Negative Messages					
1. Bonus Late (^{2} = 4.23, df1= 4, df2 = 96, p = .3754; Classification Accuracy = 72.00%)					
Self Presentation	.76	.22	12.04	.28	.001
2. Salary Decrease (^{2} = 7. 11, df1= 7, df2 = 92, p = .4171; Classification Accuracy = 75.76%)					
Anxiety	.68	.20	11.10	.27	.001
Relationship	.94	.26	13.16	.296	.000
3. Demotion (^{2} = 4.18, df1= 4, df2 = 95, p = .3827; Classification Accuracy = 60.61%)					
Self-Presentation	.52	.20	7.05	.19	.008
4. Downsizing (^{2} = 7.42, df1= 7, df2 = 88, p = .3866; Classification Accuracy = 75.79%)					
Anxiety	-.56	.21	7.45	.22	.006
Self-Presentation	-.59	.21	7.72	.23	.006

*   Partial correlation between the predictor and the dependent variable controlling for other variables.
** No significance indicates "no difference from the perfect model," that is, the model fits.

Figure 1. <u>Task Pairs in the Order of Increasing Equivocality</u>
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Task Pair 1. Bonus Distribution
  a. Positive: Let your subordinate know that this/her bonus will be distributed two weeks earlier.
  b. Negative: Let your subordinate know that his/her bonus distribution will be postponed by two weeks.

Task Pair 2. Salary Adjustment
  a. Positive: Let your subordinate know that the exact amount of his/her salary to be increased.
  b. Negative: Let your subordinate know that the exact amount of his/her salary to be decreased.

Task Pair 3. Performance Evaluation
  a. Positive: Let your subordinate know that he/she is doing an excellent job and that you are pleased.
  b. Negative: Let your subordinate know that he/she is doing a poor job and that you are unhappy.

Task Pair 4. Promotion and Demotion
  a. Positive: Let your subordinate know that he/she has gotten a promotion.
  b. Negative: Let your subordinate know that he/she has gotten a demotion.

Task Pair 5. Expansion and Downsizing
  a. Positive: Let your subordinate know how his/her division will be challenge of the market demand.
  b. Negative: Let your subordinate know how his/her division will be cut to expanded to meet the meet the downsizing requirement of the company.
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