

**Coorientation Through Written Communication:
A case study from the print industry**

Major Research Paper

Submitted by: Christina Musca, 2317406
Submitted: May 7, 2014

Supervisor: Jenepher Lennox Terrion, PhD
Department of Communication
University of Ottawa

© Christina Musca, Ottawa, Canada, 2014

Abstract

The print industry in Canada has experienced great change over the last decade with continual adjustment necessary to accommodate changing client needs and demands. In order for organizations to survive they must adapt their internal organizational structure to provide more for less. Email communication has become a significant and important tool in the print industry allowing employees to reach multiple stakeholders at once; however it can also lead to detrimental breakdowns in communication. This study reviews James R. Taylor's model of coorientation and how it can be applied to the print industry to both identify communication breakdowns and provide a framework to improve efficiencies. A case study of one print industry company, and specifically one completed print project, was performed through a document analysis and found that Taylor's model provides a structured and pragmatic means of identifying the interaction between stakeholders involved in each project on both departmental and individual levels.

Keywords: interdepartmental communication, coorientation, case study, document analysis, print industry, information overload

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	4
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	7
James R. Taylor’s Coorientation	7
Coorientation Models and Applications	16
CHAPTER 3: THE CASE	22
The Company.....	25
The Project.....	28
Method	31
CHAPTER 4: CASE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	33
Work Orders	34
Email Correspondence	36
Taylor’s Coorientation and the Print industry	42
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	49
REFERENCES	53
APPENDIX A: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDELINES	
APPENDIX B: EMAIL DATA SUMMARY	

Coorientation Through Written Communication:

A case study from the print industry

Interdepartmental communication plays a significant role in the success of any organization and is “an important factor in the understanding of the value of intangible organisational assets” (Ritter, 2003, p. 50, as cited in Ruck & Welch, 2012, p. 294). These assets might include “the company's reputation, image, future capability of generating business or intellectual property” (Ritter, 2003, p. 50). If there are breakdowns in communication internally, the external reputation and business operations of the organization could suffer. In manufacturing organizations, departments with vastly different responsibilities, skill sets, and workflows must collaborate to produce one physical product. For example, customer service and sales teams are responsible for bringing in the clients’ orders and providing work instructions to the production team working on the plant floor to produce the product. For this process to function efficiently there must be a mutual understanding of the project’s requirements by all parties involved.

The print industry by definition is considered a type of manufacturing. Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary defines the term “manufacture” as “a productive industry using mechanical power and machinery” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manufacture>, accessed July 31, 2013). A print organization that uses printing press equipment and other finishing and production machinery fits this definition. It is a very fast paced and dynamic industry, requiring the daily, if not hourly, interaction of administrative employees (such as customer service and sales) and production employees (including prepress operators and plant floor managers), sometimes operating from different physical locations. To facilitate the timely transfer of information between departments, email communication can be an effective tool;

however it can also have a negative impact on an employee: “The increasing level of information via electronic media is often a source of stress, confusion, pressure, anxiety, and even reduced motivation, as one becomes increasingly overwhelmed” (Eppler & Mengis, 2004, as cited in Flanagan, Pearce, & Bondad-Brown, 2009, p. 240). In the print industry, interdepartmental communication efficiencies are crucial to the successful execution of each project being processed through the organization due to fast turnaround times and complex specifications for most printed pieces.

There seems to be limited academic research in the field of print with respect to the organizational and communication aspects of the industry. There is a great deal of literature focusing on technical developments and advances in print; however, academic literature focusing on business research specific to this industry is lacking. The objectives of this study are to develop an understanding of the principles of James R. Taylor’s coorientation model and to apply these principles to a case extracted from the print industry. The results of this study aim to determine why communication breakdowns within a print organization occur through the lens of Taylor’s coorientation model and to generate recommendations for strengthening the effectiveness of a print manufacturing organization through interdepartmental communication practices. This study attempts to answer the following questions:

RQ 1: How can James R. Taylor’s coorientation model help to identify existing communication breakdowns in a print industry organization?

RQ 2: How can James R. Taylor’s coorientation model contribute to increased efficiencies in workflow and interdepartmental communication in a print industry organization?

To answer these questions, a case study was performed examining the internal communication from one completed print project within a specific organization. In particular, the use of email communication and written work instructions transferred between multiple departments was reviewed to identify how breakdowns in communication affecting the outcome of the print project can occur through the lens of Taylor's coorientation model. A document analysis was used to identify areas of concern within the emails and written work instructions collected.

The literature review for this study has been broken down into two sections. The first section reviews the work of James R. Taylor with respect to his understanding of organizational communication and his model of coorientation. The second section reviews a number of academic works that have expanded on and applied the principles of Taylor's (among others) coorientation model in various fields of study. This collection of research helps to contextualize this model and its practical applications.

Following the literature review, a description of the print industry aims to build an understanding of the challenges faced by the organization chosen for this study. This chapter then presents an overview of the case company and the project chosen for study. It discusses the roles, responsibilities, and workflow of the different departments in the organization and describes in detail their specific roles in the project chosen.

In the final section of this study, the author reviews how the principles of Taylor's coorientation model learned through the study of his work can be applied to the case project and organization. The outcome of the study offers suggestions for how the application of Taylor's coorientation model can help improve the efficiencies of a printing organization.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The work of James R. Taylor and his colleagues on the subject of organizational communication, and coorientation in particular, is wide ranging; its entirety is far beyond the scope of this study. For the purpose of this research, the literature reviewed focuses first on Taylor's definition of coorientation and the core elements that can lead to the achievement of organization, followed by an expansion and application of coorientation as demonstrated through its use as a model for research in various industries. Coorientation is a complex concept that has been studied by many scholars. The purpose of this literature review is to highlight particular characteristics applicable to the study of written communication in a print industry organization.

James R. Taylor's Coorientation

James R. Taylor (2009) states, "coorientation implies a simultaneous relationship to something to be done, and to others with whom one is doing it. The unit of communication thus takes the form of a triad that links, at a minimum, two communicators to a common object or objects" (p. 155). He goes on further to state that this model "also explains more complex associational configurations and how they tend to become structured over time as people repeatedly interact with each other in regular ways, in dealing with their joint environment" (Taylor, 2009, p. 155). This statement expresses the nature of internal workplace interactions where individuals or groups of individuals (Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004) work together on a daily basis to achieve organizational goals, including meeting customer needs.

An important concept to consider in studying how different individuals or groups of individuals work together on a daily basis is that of worldview. Taylor (2005) states, "because an organization is a complex mix of differentiated communities of practice, it is also a mosaic of worldviews. That diversity poses a challenge of integration" (p. 215). By Taylor's (2005)

definition, a worldview can be considered a perspective (p. 214) and thus different communities of practice (or departments) within one organization may have vastly different worldviews depending on their role in the workflow or process. In the printing industry in particular the challenge of achieving coorientation between all departments involved in one project can become more complex as more departments with differing worldviews come together and must align their actions toward completing the common goal. Each department is responsible for a different part of the process and so each individual could be influenced by a different worldview or perspective when approaching a new project. This is an ongoing challenge encountered with each new print project as it travels through the production process.

To better understand Taylor's interpretation of coorientation as it applies to internal communication within an organization, we must first understand his definition of that which constitutes an organization and how communication and organization relate to each other. Taylor indicates that he agrees with McPhee and Zaugg (2000) that communication theory needs to explain "how communication activities interface with practical problems of dealing with a material world in the usual contexts of work, how members relate to each other and to their organization" (as cited in Taylor, 2009, p. 154). Taylor (2009) states, "I believe that the constitution of organization is a *self*-organizing process, grounded in practical activities that have definable (and often quite concrete) outcomes and that are mediated by language" (p. 155, emphasis in original). He supposes that individuals constitute organization by creating dialogue with others, in essence, having conversations (Taylor, 2009, p. 169).

Taylor's approach to defining organization stems from the line of thought initiated by James Taylor that has come to be known as "The Montreal School" of organizational communication, sometimes referred to as TMS. The TMS, under Taylor's leadership, introduced

the *communicative constitution of organization* (or CCO) perspective. The CCO perspective views organizations as being made up of a network of interactions, where interactions are based on agents participating in situated activities and ongoing conversations with other agents as they simultaneously make sense of their surroundings. Communication, by this perspective, becomes an organizing process bringing together two or more agents as they work together to understand a common object.

Looking deeper at the connection between language and organization, Taylor (2009) indicates that language mediates communication (p. 156), and as such communication can establish an interaction between people and allow for the expression of their individual thoughts (p. 157). He states, “language is fundamental to the sustaining of cooperative interaction: to the extent that social entities or organizations persist and evolve, they do so through the mediation of language” (Taylor & Giroux, 2004, as cited in Robichaud et al., 2004, p. 619). The notion of collaborative activity is very much in line with Taylor’s definition of coorientation. The need for two parties to work together to accomplish one common goal requires those two parties to organize themselves through conversation (to be discussed further on) and align their activities and attitudes towards the object or goal: “Organization is the struggle to attain co-orientation, not merely a by-product of it” (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 403). Linking communication to the act of organizing, “[Taylor] claim[s] that organization emerges in communication as the consequence of a mapping of the interactive, or ‘conversational,’ dimension onto the textual in order to produce organization as (1) knowledge shared by its members and (2) activity in which they are engaged” (Taylor, 1999, p. 24). For Taylor (2009), simultaneously working with objects and relating to others working to do the same, in other words coorientation, is the essence of organizational communication (p. 155).

Taylor stresses through different bodies of work that conversation and text play crucial roles in the formation of organization through communication (Cooren & Taylor, 1997; Heaton & Taylor, 2002; Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004; Taylor, 1999, 2006, 2009; Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). Organization is the coming together of a “network of conversations” and the symbolic mediation provided through the use of text (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux & Robichaud, 1996, p. 7). To define this further, “in a conversation, the text is what is said. It is the content of the conversation” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 7). Also, “a text, no matter how meticulously legitimated, is not yet an action until it has been translated into a conversation” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 28). To understand how text is translated into conversation, it is important to consider the way in which text is manifested. For Taylor and Robichaud (2004),

a text may...be spoken as well as written. Its meaning is contingent on the circumstances of its production and reception, whether immediately accessible in a conversational exchange or mediated by some kind of support system (written, recorded on tape or film, transmitted electronically, for example).

What counts is that a text is part of a process in which people are coordinating their actions and emotions through communication (p. 401).

As such, text “is essentially a medium for the maintenance of interaction” (Heaton & Taylor, 2002, p. 222), where interaction is facilitated by conversation and conversation is made up by the exchange of texts between participants.

Further developing the idea of coorientation as an outcome of communication, Taylor states that, “it is in the flow of conversation that people coordinate their activities” (2009, p. 158). According to Taylor (2006), conversation has three constraints: (1) someone has to talk, (2) someone has to listen, and (3) there must be something to talk about (pp. 147-148).

Conversation, as opposed to text, must include “markers of situation” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 10) or context. Furthermore, conversation is associated with “specific circumstances of time, place, occasion, identity of the participants, history and purpose” (Taylor, 1999, p. 25). In fact, he argues that, “conversation is not, in essence, text at all: It is action (or more accurately, interaction, or transaction)” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 8). As previously indicated, organization formed through conversation, or communication between members, is an interaction between the members mediated by text. “It is in this dialectic of conversation and text that the organizing occurs” (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 4). It is through conversation that “organization is literally talked out into existence...and only in this way made recognizable to those who identify with it as its members, or who have to deal with it” (Taylor, 1999, p. 26). Conversation, mediated by text, plays a crucial role in the formation of organization through communication.

Taylor discusses in depth the role of language in organizing communicators, as well as aligning both parties with the object of their attention (Taylor, 2006, 2009; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004). Through the use of language, conversation is made possible and, as Taylor and Robichaud (2004) point out, “the practical outcome of conversation is the achievement of co-orientation” (p. 401), thus making language an essential element in the process of coorienting: “Because language is simultaneously an interactive medium of organizing, and of individual expression, it is also the means by which people become, at one and the same time, participants in organization and observers of it” (Taylor, 2009, p. 176). Language is the most flexible and most important means of communication that we possess (Taylor 2009, p. 157). “It builds a framework for subsequent interaction, and stabilizes it” (Taylor, 2009, p. 166). Taylor (2009) observed that language facilitates the expression of individual thought (p. 157) and so conversation could therefore provide a platform for the exchange of individual thought between two or more parties

and in turn provide an opportunity for those parties to align their attitudes with one another. “The aligning of attitude to attitude and both to object is the essence of coorientation” (Taylor, 2006, p. 151). The alignment of attitudes among coworkers from different departments within an organization can play a key role in the success of the organization by maintaining a consistent understanding of client needs between all departments. Failure to align attitudes could result in breakdowns that could be detrimental to the organization’s success on various levels.

Simply put, Taylor (2006) views coorientation as a minimum of two people participating in an ongoing interaction, communicating (pp. 149-150). His definition of coorientation highlights the importance of collaborative communication between two or more parties working together to achieve a common goal. In an effort to define a theory of imbrication for use in the study of organizational communication, Taylor critiques and builds upon the “A-B-X” model of coorientation defined by Newcomb (1953) as two subjects or agents (A and B) linked to each other by a common object (X) (Taylor, 2001, Section 1, para 2; 2009, p. 159). Taylor indicates that he has focused on this model because he is intrigued by the truly triadic nature it represents (Taylor, 2009, p. 159). An important reason for Taylor’s (2001) reformulation of this system of coorientation is that he feels “it claims to open the door to the linking of micro communicational process and macro organizational structure” (Section 1, para 5). It is this transition from the micro level to the macro that is of substantial value in the application of Taylor’s (2001) model of coorientation to the study of internal communication within a large organization; his model transcends the individual level to include communication between groups, or communities.

In 2001, Taylor offered a reformulation of Newcomb’s coorientation model stating, “an A-B-X system has three parts: (1) an X-ness, (2) a B-X-ness, and (3) an A-B-X-ness” (Section 3.2, para 1). In this reformulation, X-ness represents dynamic objects, or “happenings” rather

than just “existings,” B-X-ness describes a change of state of the objects (X) in reference to the state of mind of the speaker (B), and A-B-X-ness is “where one person attempts to influence the attitudes or behaviour of another” (Taylor, 2001, Section 3.2). Communication, then, can be defined as the exchange of B-X units (Greimas, 1987, as cited in Taylor, 2001, Section 3.2). For Taylor (2001), there are no rules about who can be A or B, they can consist of either individuals or groups (Section 3.3, para 1). Allowing for the potentiality of entire groups to be in communication with each other gives Taylor’s (2001) model a robustness that increases its value in the study of whole organizations. It is elevated to a level of meta analysis which, from a pragmatic point of view, allows it to become a valuable tool for leaders in organizations to evaluate and improve their business operations as a whole.

One of Taylor’s criticism’s of Newcomb’s A-B-X model states that it “effectively de-situates communication” (Taylor, 2001, Section 2.1, para 3) which he indicates trivializes the communication and hides the significant value of interaction (para 4): “The study of communication demands contextualization—taking into account the history of the exchange” (Taylor, 2001, Section 2.1, para 4). Taylor (2001) criticizes Newcomb’s model for not taking into account people’s dependency on the environment in which they exist. Specifically, he states that Newcomb’s model is “abstracted from the everyday world of practical involvement in activity” (Section 2.3, para 2). According to Taylor (2001), Newcomb’s focus on two-person communication (Newcomb, 1953, as cited in Section 2.4, para 1) ignores the existence of corporate actors and their involvement in communicative acts (Section 2.4, para 2). However, despite his criticism, he acknowledges that the value in Newcomb’s approach is its recognition that communication maintains a social link between actors and can accommodate a differentiation of roles and interests, in essence it provides a means of understanding

organizational stability and change (Taylor, 2001, Section 2.5, para 3). For Taylor (2009), Newcomb's model acts as a building block, or starting point, for analysts to look deeper at more complex levels of organization and the role that communication plays in organizing.

Another area of Taylor's research, the metaconversation, allows an evaluation of the concept of coorientation through a holistic view of the organization. To begin, Taylor and his colleagues "make the assumption that organization emerges in the interactive exchanges of its members (Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996; Taylor & Van Every, 2000) and is reflected in the texts—spoken and written—they generate" (Robichaud et al., 2004, p. 618). By way of definition, Robichaud, Giroux, and Taylor (2004) state,

The constitution of organization occurs in metaconversation, where (1)

"organization" refers to a language-based social entity composed of multiple communities of practice or cognitive domains and (2) "occurs in a metaconversation" means emerging from the recursive processes of the conversations of the members, where each conversation narratively frames, implicitly or explicitly, the previous one (p. 624, emphasis in original).

The metaconversation is essentially a conversation involving reference to, or embedding, another conversation or conversations (Robichaud et al., p. 621). In practical terms, metaconversation could be considered the framework used by a member of one department as a means of representing their department's needs when in conversation with a member of another department. In essence, the member representing their department is referencing previous conversation that was internal to their department when participating in a new conversation. In this scenario, when members from two different departments, or communities of practice, engage in a metaconversation, "the metaconversation, by allowing actors to 'blackbox' previous

interactions in speaking about things such as an A-B relationship, is doing just that—creating new entities, which, in turn, will constitute the communities composing an organization” (Robichaud et al., p. 623). Thus, the metaconversation plays a significant role in the process of organizing and in turn the coorientation of different departments within an organization.

In summary, Taylor’s view of coorientation, expanded from the A-B-X model presented by Newcomb in 1953, allows us to analyze organizational communication from a macro level perspective: “The concept of coorientation must be broadened to include not just inter-individual coordination, but the negotiation of working relations involving many communities of practice, each having its own character and interests” (Taylor, 2009, p. 167). Unlike Newcomb, Taylor takes into account the important roles that intention, historical context, and environment (situation) have in shaping communication (Taylor, 1999, 2001).

For Cooren and Taylor (1997), “the modality of an utterance is that which links it to the attitudes and intentions of the speaker” (p. 228) and modality is “a feature of language that allows communicators to negotiate coorientation by establishing a common perception of the situation and what is to be done about it” (Taylor, 2009, p. 165). Essentially, it is the modality of language that works to align the attitudes of the members involved in the conversation to achieve coorientation. “Coorientation is thus not a phenomenon restricted to the negotiation of member roles and responsibilities; it also applies to the bridging of inter-related communities of activity and sensemaking. The bridging is itself a crucial activity” (Taylor, 2009, p. 156). In the context of an organization, the term “bridging” implies closing a distance between different members or groups to bring together, or align, their understanding of each other.

Another crucial element to consider is that coorientation, as per Taylor and Robichaud (2004), “is not merely the immediate focus of situated interaction, occurring in a particular time

and place, but also the manifestation of an ongoing relationship” (p. 403). The ongoing relationship is a reality of the functionality of any organization; it is fostered through daily business activities, and as such has the potential to foster continued growth and improvement for the organization as a whole. It is for this reason that Taylor’s macro level model of coorientation has such value in the study of organizational communication.

Coorientation Models and Applications

Coorientation is not a new concept. Newcomb described this method in 1953 (Taylor, 2001) and many researchers have since expanded and developed his ideas further, much as Taylor and his colleagues have done. In turn, the work of James R. Taylor and his colleagues has been examined, discussed, and expanded as well.

Groleau (2006), for example, compared Taylor’s coorientation with Engeström’s activity theory. Groleau indicated that two of the major commonalities between the frameworks are (1) their mutual “claim that language bridges the gap between situated practice and wider historical and spatial frames” (p. 166), and (2) that they define human activity as “object-oriented practices involving language and material entities” (p. 165). The first of the two commonalities indicates that both frameworks posit the ability of language to bring context from past experience or knowledge to current activity and interactions. The second develops this idea further by suggesting that both frameworks view text-based material entities, such as established tools or written documents, as media for guiding human action, linking past experience to current action.

Among the differences Groleau (2006) identified between the theories was *how* material entities, such as technology based tools and written documents, could influence actions and communication. Activity theory would seem to look at how the present use of material entities could predict or shape future models of action (Groleau, 2006, p. 169). Coorientation theory, on

the other hand, focuses more on context drawn from past experience as preserved in the form of written documents to affect current activity or interaction (Groleau, 2006, p. 169). Despite referencing a study performed by Cooren (2004, as cited in Groleau, 2006, p.171), which looked at what different written documents do in organizational settings, Groleau critiques coorientation theory indicating that the connection between discourse and materiality is largely underexplored by researchers working within this theory (Groleau, 2006, p. 175).

In an effort to establish a communicative theory of what he refers to as the firm—or a corporate organization—Kuhn (2008) expands on the theories of coorientation developed by Taylor and his colleagues. Kuhn takes one step further with the concepts of conversation and text and discusses the existence of authoritative texts, roles of power, and identification of a firm (Kuhn, 2008). For Kuhn (2008), the work of Taylor and his colleagues was a starting point, but it did not discuss the existence of firms in particular (pp. 1240-1241). He states, “conversations in firms are mediated by, and construct, an authoritative text that shapes action in a way that promises to serve the interests of capital attraction” (2008, p. 1241), in doing so Kuhn defines the difference between general organizational studies and the specific study of firms.

Fairhurst and Putnam (1999) offer a view of the challenges that the work of Taylor and his colleagues should address in future development of their model of coorientation. Similarly to Groleau’s (2006) critique, they note one challenge will be to “clarify how individual actors become collective actors, how individual actors are kept individual, how non-social actors are deemed non-social, and how all actors are hybrids or networks melding the human and non-human” (Michael, 1996, as cited on pp. 13-14). In essence, Fairhurst and Putnam (1999) are suggesting that Taylor and his colleagues should expand their model further to include the interaction and influence of material entities on human action.

Also referencing the work of Taylor and his colleagues, Stohl and Stohl (2011) performed a study of the legitimacy and voice of clandestine organizations, which they define as organizations that maintain a level of secrecy or concealment, such as terrorist groups (Horgan & Taylor, 1997, as cited on p. 1199) or organized crime syndicates (Kumar & Skaperdas, 2009, as cited on p. 1198), that is not present in other types of organizations (p. 1199). These authors questioned Taylor and his colleagues' emphasis on conversation and text as the foundation for organizing, stating that for clandestine organizations "the limits imposed by the adoption of concealment, silence, and secret agency...create greater ambiguity in conversations, texts, and metatexts within and outside the organizational membership" (Stohl & Stohl, 2011, p. 1201). On a broader level the authors did discover, however, that even in clandestine organizations, "organizing is achieved through co-orientation, as organizational members simultaneously orient themselves to shared objects of concern and to each other" (Stohl & Stohl, 2011, p. 1202). This study exemplifies how coorientation theory can apply to organizations on both micro and macro levels. In the case of clandestine organizations, the members still coorient themselves with each other and the goals of the organization, despite their secrecy and concealment from the outside world.

Despite the criticisms of the coorientation model, it has been applied in past studies as a means of evaluating different types of relationships among people striving to accomplish a common goal, or working with a common object. Different fields of study have used the model in varying levels of complexity. For example, Leong, McComas, and Decker (2008) "explored the use of coorientation research for small groups of decision makers and large groups of stakeholders as a means to improve the effectiveness of communication strategies that decision makers may employ as part of a wildlife management program" (p. 259). This study followed a

model of coorientation presented by McLeod and Chaffee (1973), arguing “coorientation seeks to understand and measure the differences in viewpoints and assumptions of both decision makers of an organization and members of the public” (Leong, et al., 2008, p. 259). In contrast to Taylor’s (2006, 2009; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004) work focusing on the roles of conversation and language in coorientation, McLeod and Chaffee’s model (1973, as cited in Leong, et al., 2008) focuses on the impact of one’s assumptions and perceptions of the other. The results of this study did find “differences of opinion within the decision-making team. These differences have potential to affect communication among team members and between individuals representing the team and community residents” (Leong, et al., 2008, pp. 267-268). A point of interest in the discussion of this study was the observation that the size of the group studied may have an impact on the coorientation of its members. The authors suggest that coorientation may be easier to achieve in smaller groups where discussion of each party’s perceptions is easier to facilitate (Leong, et al., 2008, p. 270). Although the approach framed by McLeod and Chaffee focuses on perceptions rather than conversation and language, this observation by Leong, et al. has value on a broader level when studying the coorientation of different sized groups within an organization.

Other studies that reference McLeod and Chaffee’s model include one performed by Connelly and Knuth (2002) in their examination of the Hudson River Ecosystem Restoration. Connelly and Knuth state, “the coorientation model measures the degree of ‘agreement,’ ‘accuracy,’ and ‘congruency’ between two groups”(McLeod & Chaffee, 1973, as cited on p. 934). This study focused on the perceptions of each group of the other, as well as each group’s perception of how the other group perceived it. The results showed that the “community leaders were not in complete ‘agreement’ with local residents” over the importance of certain issues

(Connelly & Knuth, 2002, p. 944). In another study, Rogers and Andrews (2013) discovered a discrepancy in the expectations of students and clients, who had been paired up in a learning opportunity, through the use of the coorientation theory which helped “examine expectations rather than perceptions, specifically the degree of agreement, accuracy, and congruency between client expectations and student expectations” (pp. 243-244). The results of this study indicated multiple differences between the expectations of the students towards the clients, and of the clients towards the students (p. 251).

Lubbers (2005) studied the relationship between public relations professionals and journalists, specifically in the travel and tourism business. Similarly to Connelly and Knuth (2002), Lubbers (2005) states, “the [coorientation] model assesses the accuracy, agreement and congruency of a problem” (p. 48). However, he goes on to state, “agreement must be reached about what the problem is before being able to plan a solution” (Lubbers, 2005, p. 49). The results of this study showed that a level of agreement between the public relations professionals and the journalists helped these two groups work together successfully (Lubbers, 2005, p. 52).

Lubbers’ (2005) statement that an agreement must be reached about what the problem is relates to Taylor’s (2009, in reference to Weick 1979) description of the interdependence between the each point of the coorientation triad (p. 159) and subtly demonstrates a link between the coorientation model according to McLeod and Chaffee and that developed by Taylor. The major difference between the two models, however, is the focal point of each framework. McLeod and Chaffee (1973) “based their model on the basic assumption that people’s behavior results from more than their internal thinking: it also is affected by their orientation to other people and perceptions of the views others hold” (Kelly, Thompson, & Waters, 2006, p. 611), essentially the attitudes and perceptions of the agents. For Taylor (Cooren & Taylor, 1997;

Heaton & Taylor, 2002; Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004; Taylor, 1999, 2006, 2009; Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004), a main focus of the coorientation framework is on the influence of conversation in the process of organizing, demonstrating a move away from subjective elements such as attitude and perception to more objective, measurable forms of communication.

The organizational structure of the company to be examined in this case study fits Taylor's coorientation model well. In a print environment multiple departments must work together daily to complete any one project. This entails each department achieving individual goals within their part of the process, while at the same time working toward the shared goal of meeting the client's specifications. As noted above, Taylor (2009) defined coorientation as "a simultaneous relationship to something to be done, and to others with whom one is doing it" (p. 155). In this study, the "something to be done" (Taylor, 2009, p. 155) will be defined as a client's print request, and the "others with whom one is doing it" (Taylor, 2009, p. 155) will be represented by the different departments involved in the project. In contrast to some other definitions of coorientation, which emphasize the perceptions or assumptions of each of the parties involved (such as that of McLeod & Chaffee, 1973 as cited in Connelly & Knuth, 2002, p. 934), a major asset of Taylor's model is that it focuses on the communication between, and interaction of, communicators with each other as well as with the object on both an individual level and a broader departmental level. His focus on conversation and text allows us to break down communication based on spoken or written texts and provides a pragmatic and measurable means of evaluating the interactions of the different departments and the efficiency of the workflow between them.

Chapter 3: The Case

The print industry in Canada has experienced significant change over the last decade and continues to develop and adjust to the changing priorities and demands of the client base. Traditional commercial offset printing has experienced a decrease in demand in recent years due in part to the improvements made in digital print technologies that can accommodate current trends of shorter, more personalized press runs (Industry Canada, 2013b, para 3). Despite growing trends towards electronic copy, the print industry remains the “most widely dispersed information technology-based manufacturing industry” in Canada (CPIA, 2011, para 4). Printing accounts for 8.11% of all manufacturing industries in Canada and employed close to 60,000 people in 2011 (CPIA, 2011, para 4). In order to thrive among all of the changes in the industry many organizations have had to reevaluate and adjust their business structure. This includes the expansion of products and services offered to the client, in essence becoming a “one-stop shop” for print related services. Some of the leading organizations in the industry have started to offer services related to print—such as marketing and communication—in addition to traditional printed products to offer their clients a value-added experience (Industry Canada, 2013b, para 4).

In addition to the challenges faced by organizations due to increased competition from digital media developments, the commercial print industry also faces challenges related to declines in printing prices along with increasing costs for both materials and labor (Industry Canada, 2013a, para 1). Print buyers may have limited budgets for printed material which are decreasing as more green initiatives, such as distributing electronic copy in place of consumable products like hard copy print, are put in place. Decreased budgets require buyers to seek out the lowest price and in turn put pressure on printing organizations to lower prices, regardless of the actual costs of production, in order to be competitive in the market. The internal impact of

reduced prices can affect individual employees of print organizations through decreased staffing and resources in order to sustain the organization. While staffing numbers and resources are reduced, the increase in services and products offered requires more frequent communication between multiple departments and attention to detail; each department serving a unique role in satisfying the client's needs.

The pressure felt internally within a print organization to meet the demands of clients (print buyers) can be the result of individual staff members taking on more work in an average day, pushing to work faster and more efficiently with multiple departments and individuals all at once. One tool used to facilitate the speed and efficiency of internal communications is the contemporary, computer-mediated resource—email, “compared to more traditional means, contemporary technologies can carry more information, faster, at a lower cost, to more people” (Beniger, 1996; Fulk & DeSanctis, 1995, as cited in Flanagin, Pearce, & Bondad-Brown, 2009, p. 229). The ability of email to carry more information, faster, and to multiple parties at once makes it an essential resource in meeting the demands within a print organization.

While email has become an essential tool for print industry employees, it may also be the source of communication challenges, as “technologies both help and hinder organizational members' efforts to reduce equivocality and achieve shared understanding” (Flanagin, Pearce, & Bondad-Brown, 2009, p. 237). Shared understanding can be achieved through the alignment of the attitudes of two different parties, which is at the heart of Taylor's (2006) coorientation model. This leads to the assumption that email, as a technology used to communicate, would both help and hinder the achievement of coorientation in the workplace.

One of the ways in which email helps communication in a print organization is through its ability to reach multiple parties at once. This allows an individual employee to multitask by

communicating information to many departments at once, saving time by eliminating the need for multiple individual conversations. While this practice is a significant benefit, it can also lead to information overload for some employees, causing them increased stress (Farhoomand & Drury, 2002, as cited in Flanagin, Pearce, & Bondad-Brown, 2009, p. 229). Information overload is defined by Flanagin, Pearce, and Bondad-Brown (2009) as simply receiving too much information (p 240), which can hinder an employee's understanding of a particular sender's requirements due to a lack of time or commitment to go through all of the information received in detail. This practice can lead to misunderstanding and miscommunication, and thus may hinder the ability of the employees or departments involved to achieve coorientation with the project at hand.

Another challenge with the reliance on email communication in the workplace is the ability, or lack of ability, to communicate tone and other non-verbal cues through the written word. "The content, tone, and form of communication have serious consequences for organizations and organizational life. When civility prevails, possibilities present themselves and potential increases. When incivility is the norm, we harm ourselves, those with whom we work, and the organizations that employ us" (Gill & Sypher, 2009, p. 69). Incivility is defined as "communication behaviors that demean, demoralize, and degrade others" (Gill & Sypher, 2009, p. 55). Without the ability to communicate tone or non-verbal cues, email communication leaves room for misinterpretation and misunderstanding and this can potentially convey incivility where it was not intended.

Furthermore, in addition to unintended incivility, there is much opportunity for genuine incivility as a result of "longer work weeks, constant change, increased technology, escalating demands, less sleep, expressed psychological disorders including depression and anger, work-

home tensions, and the mental and physical problems associated with sustained stress” (Sypher, 2004, as cited in Gill & Sypher, 2009, p. 53). The changes experienced by the commercial print industry in Canada over the last decade demand more for less from organizations competing to survive, leading to increased stress and work hours for the individual employees, thus creating an environment for incivility to prevail.

Email communication technology can mediate an exchange of texts, in turn facilitating conversational interaction. By Taylor’s (2009) definition, language facilitates conversation (or interaction), which in turn leads to coorientation by allowing the exchange of individual thoughts toward a common object or goal, presenting an opportunity for two parties to align their actions with respect to that object or goal through the alignment of their attitudes towards it. For a print organization, where email communication has become an essential tool in sustaining the speed and limited resources required to survive, it is crucial that the parties using the tool do so effectively. The potential to create tension (incivility) is high with this medium of communication, therefore an understanding of how the principles of coorientation play a role in how email is used may be critical in the effective use of this tool.

The Company

The company to be examined in this case study is currently one of the largest print companies in Canada. For the purpose of anonymity, it will be referred to as Company X in this study. The researcher in this study is currently an employee of Company X and thus draws from personal experience to describe the nature of the organization and the print project chosen for study. The documents collected for review include the researcher’s archived email communication with respect to the completed print project and the printed documents, such as

work orders, which passed through multiple departments throughout the duration of the project serving to communicate the client's requirements to all internal stakeholders.

Company X employs approximately 500 people across three different locations and is comprised of eight distinct lines of business (services offered). Clients from across the country, and selected areas in the United States, are able to, and often do, employ more than one service or line of business per project. The potential for communication breakdowns within this organization is increased by the number of departments involved in providing eight lines of business and the complex nature of projects employing more than one of these services. Figure 1 illustrates the corporate structure of Company X, demonstrating the interconnection between the departments at the managerial level. The diversity of products offered by Company X includes commercially printed products such as magazines, books, and stationary; wide format applications such as backlit signage and vinyl banners; postage stamp and secure printing; digital print applications for short run and personalized pieces; web-based print-on-demand storefronts; mailing and distribution services; and warehousing. They have established themselves as one of the most environmentally friendly print companies in the country winning multiple industry awards for their achievements. They maintain high quality print standards and use their multiple locations to achieve timely results for their clients.

The workflow of a basic printed project at Company X begins with the Sales Representative. When an opportunity for a sale presents itself, the Sales Representative will work with the Estimating department to determine a sale price for the product. That price is then presented to the client to accept or reject. Once a price has been agreed upon with the client, the artwork for the project, along with the approved quote, is then sent to the Customer Service Representative (CSR). The CSR will work closely with the client and the internal Scheduling

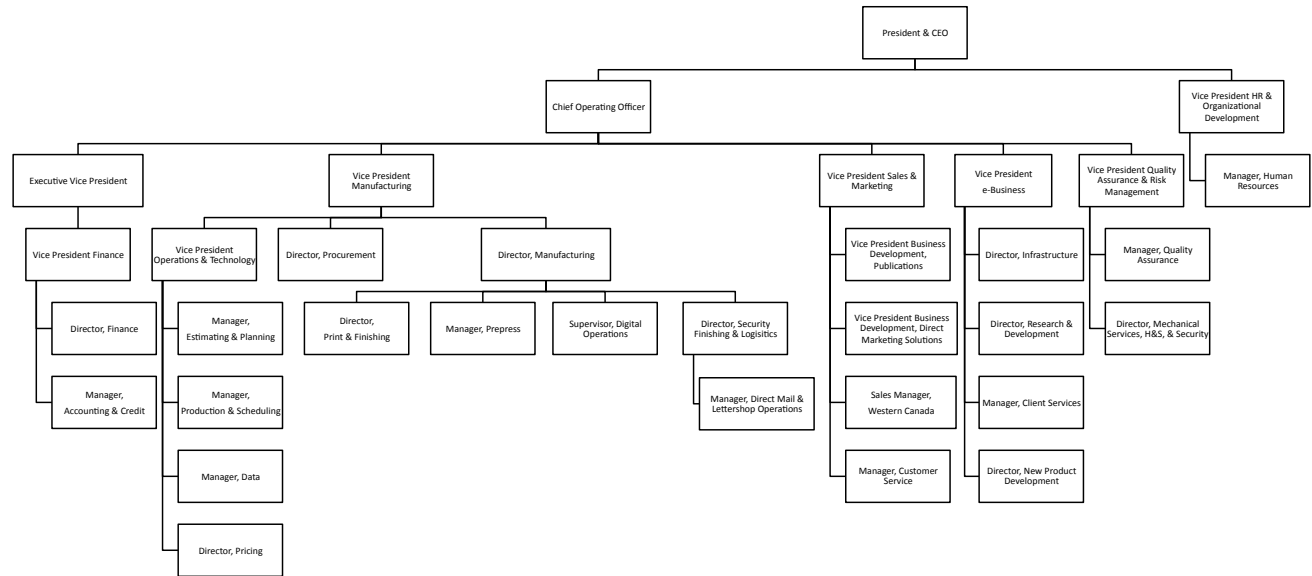


Figure 1. Basic organizational structure of the head office location of Company X

department to ensure that the client's expectations can be met. The CSR then translates the client's print request into an internal work order for the plant to follow. The CSR is responsible for coordinating a meeting with all internal stakeholders for complex projects and projects with high dollar value to ensure all parties are aware of the requirements. From there, the project is passed on to the Preflight and Planning departments to ensure the files received are usable and to create a production plan that is as efficient and as profitable as possible. Once planned, the Prepress department will output proofs of the artwork for the client to approve before proceeding to create the printing plates required to produce the final product. When the proofs have been approved, the project is then taken through the production process moving from the printing press, to the folding, trimming and binding equipment, then to hand finishing as required. Once complete, the project is passed to either the Mailing and Distribution department or directly to the Shipping department. Finally, after the project has been shipped, the work order and all pertinent documents are passed to the Accounting department to be invoiced.

Through the entire production cycle of a project, many conversations and interactions take place between departments, both face-to-face and mediated by email communication. It is crucial for all departments to align their actions and attitudes towards the print project in order for all of the client's expectations to be met. The need to align the attitudes and actions of so many different departments demonstrates the value of Taylor's coorientation model in studying efficiencies in the print industry at both macro and micro levels, as well as his focus on the role of conversation and text in achieving coorientation.

The Project

The project chosen for this study involved the collaboration of multiple departments within one location of Company X. Email was a significant method of communication used in order to communicate with the client, as well as coordinate the workflow among different internal stakeholders. Printed work orders were also used to communicate client and internal requirements consistently to all departments; electronically generated by the Customer Service department, updated by the Planning and Purchasing departments, and then passed along in hard copy format from one production department to the next executing the physical work required. Only one physical copy of each work order, attached to an internal docket, should exist throughout the duration of the project.

The product ordered by the client was a promotional kit for retailers, produced in five different languages, totaling 3790 kits. Each kit was comprised of nine different items, each with unique production requirements and print specifications. The life cycle of this project within Company X involved 13 different departments from the initial quoting stage, through production, to the final invoice sent to the client. Table 1 provides a description of each department's specific involvement in the execution of this project.

Table 1

Departmental Roles in Project Execution

Department	Role
Sales	identify opportunity, present quote to client, confirm project details once project is won, pass information to CSR
Estimating	assign price estimate to project based on specifications from Sales Representative
Customer Service	translate client order into internal work instructions, identify and co-ordinate with all internal departments required for execution of project, maintain communication between Company X and client
Planning	select most appropriate equipment and materials to complete order, indicate on internal work order, provide required layout and information to Prepress, Scheduling, and Purchasing
Purchasing	order materials required, issue purchase orders, indicate purchase order numbers and detail on internal work order
Scheduling	schedule time required on each piece of production equipment to ensure client requirement is met
Data Team	process shipping and distribution list provided by client, convert into format for internal use, supply files to Distribution
Prepress	insert client supplied files into internal layout, produce proofs for client review and approval, once approved produce plates for printing press
Commercial Print and Finishing	print, trim, die cut, finish each of 20 different items (7 different products, some in multiple languages or versions)
Digital Print and Finishing	print, trim, finish 1 product in 5 different languages
Distribution	collate 8 printed items and 1 purchased piece into each kit, apply cardboard and shrink-wrap, label each kit, pack in cartons and label with shipping address as per list provided by Data Team
Shipping	ship as per carton labels using most economical method
Accounting	review costs incurred on project, work with Sales Representative to determine final sell price, send invoice to client

Note. CSR = Customer Service Representative

The complexity of coordinating 13 different departments to complete this project included the simultaneous physical production of eight different items (some in five different languages), the purchase of one additional item, and the processing and conversion of shipping and distribution information. Prior to the simultaneous actions listed above, the project required diligent price estimation and quotation, extensive communication with the client through different media (telephone, face-to-face, email), logistical planning and scheduling, and internal communication between departments. Post-production activities involved the accurate and cost efficient shipping of the product to multiple locations and a comparison of the actual costs to the original estimated costs to send an accurate and profitable invoice to the client.

As with many print projects produced by Company X, this project required constant and accurate communication of the client's requirements throughout the duration of the project. One of the many roles of the Customer Service Representative is to ensure that all parties involved in the production of the product understand and work towards effectively and accurately meeting the client's expectations. Essentially, the role of the Customer Service Representative is to encourage coorientation between the client's expectations and the production departments involved with respect to the completion of a placed order with Company X. Reviewing Taylor's (2001) expansion of Newcomb's (1953) model of coorientation, one could equate the client's expectations (as represented by the Customer Service and Sales Representatives) with "A", the collection of internal departments executing the physical production of the product with "B", and the project to be worked on with "X". Viewing the process in this manner allows for the application of the principles of Taylor's coorientation model to understand where communication breakdowns may occur and how they could be avoided.

Method

To understand the requirements of the project and the interaction between departments, all internal dockets from the execution of this project—which include work instructions and various other documents and samples—were obtained by the researcher from the archives at Company X in accordance with the ethics approval received from the University of Ottawa. In addition, the researcher collected all email communication that pertained to this project from her company issued email account. The researcher acted as the Customer Service Representative in the execution of this project, and as such the data collected via email communication is limited to that perspective. As described in Table 1 (above), the role of the Customer Service Representative involves the identification and coordination of all internal departments required for the successful completion of the project, providing a wide range of interactions for the purpose of this study.

In order to analyze the data for this study, the researcher performed a document analysis of the written work instructions and email communication collected. Each item was reviewed to determine its relevance for inclusion in the analysis. The main factor used to determine the relevancy of each document was whether it represented a conversation between internal stakeholders or between Company X and the client. For the purpose of this study, only the internal communications were deemed relevant. From there, emails representing a response to a calendar/meeting event were removed from the relevant emails. Once the relevant documents were collected, they were analyzed using a series of seven questions developed by the researcher based on a collection of document analysis guidelines from multiple academic institutions including Carleton College, University of Connecticut, The Australian National University, and Marianopolis College (See appendix A for copies of these guidelines). The researcher's

questions are listed in Table 2. After each relevant document was analyzed using the questions in Table 2, the resulting data was then reviewed through the lens of Taylor's coorientation model to attempt to answer the central research questions of this study. This process, and the results from it, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 2

Document Analysis Questions

Documents Reviewed	Questions
Email Communication	What type of document is being reviewed?
Internal Work Orders	Who wrote this document? Who is the document directed at? What is the document's purpose? What unwritten themes can be identified in this document? Does this document achieve its purpose? How or does this document contribute to the coorientation of the author and the receiver?

Chapter 4: Case Analysis and Discussion

Taylor (2006) states that for a conversation to occur, three things need to happen: (1) someone has to talk, (2) someone has to listen, and (3) there needs to be something to talk about (p. 148). The document analysis questions established for this study, as listed in Table 2 (see p. 32), identified conversations taking place through email communication in agreement with these criteria. The person speaking (the author) sent a message to the person (or people) listening (the receiver[s]) about a particular topic (the purpose). To review the effectiveness of these conversations in contributing to the coorientation of the stakeholders involved in the project, the researcher evaluated whether the purpose was achieved by the author through assessing the content of the email against the perceived purpose of the message, and also how each message individually contributed to aligning the actions and attitudes of all parties to the common goal of completing the print project and meeting the client's expectations.

A total of 98 email messages, sent or received between December 11, 2012 and March 14, 2013, and seven internal work orders were collected for this study. Of the 98 emails collected, 60 were deemed relevant based on the above criteria and 38 were not. The 60 emails deemed relevant were reviewed using the questions indicated in Table 2 and were then evaluated with respect to Taylor's model of coorientation to answer the central research questions. The work orders collected were all deemed relevant as they function as the main information transfer medium between all departments of Company X required for the execution of the project. The document analysis questions listed in Table 2 were used to evaluate the purpose and effectiveness of each work order.

Work Orders

The project involved the culmination of seven different internal work orders; all linked together to complete one full request from the client for seasonal promotional kits for retailers. The first work order reviewed was the kitting and distribution order, which represents the final actions required to complete the project. The Customer Service Representative (CSR) created this work order for the purpose of communicating to the Distribution, Shipping, Purchasing, and Accounting departments all materials and actions required to complete the kits. The material and actions required included eight items printed by Company X, one item purchased by the Purchasing department at Company X, instructions for what materials required ordering, details regarding the client's specific shipping and labeling requirements, the total quantity of kits required, the client's expected delivery date, the department responsible for providing each printed item, and the required contents of each kit.

In addition to being a tool for the communication of the client's requirements to the rest of the organization, this work order also acted as an umbrella for the overall requirements of the project, providing clarity and an opportunity for the coorientation of multiple departments to the CSR, and to the common goal of completing the client's order. The CSR was able to attach meeting minutes taken during the contract review meeting held at the beginning of the project allowing all stakeholders an opportunity to review what was discussed. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this work order allowed the Accounting department to review the scope of the project, indicating all other work orders linked to the project, and any purchases made for the completion of the order. The Accounting department could use this information to accurately prepare the client's invoice ensuring that Company X would be properly compensated for the work completed.

The balance of the seven work orders all pertained to the print production of individual pieces required for the kits. They were all created by the CSR and were directed at the Commercial Print Department (work orders two through six) and the Digital Print Department (work order seven). The purpose of these documents was to organize the client's request into manageable and structured instructions for the completion of all printed pieces required for the assembly of the full kits. The CSR determined how to organize the information provided by the client into a format that would be most effective for the stakeholders within Company X. The practical outcome of the successful organization of these work orders was the coorientation of all departments' actions to the CSR's understanding of the client's requirements with respect to the project. In order for coorientation to occur through the use of internal work orders, the CSR must also align their actions, or written instructions, with their understanding of the capabilities and requirements of the other departments within Company X. The work orders created serve to transfer information to all departments, such as the stock, inks, and finishing requirements for each piece, client file location, quantity, and the due date required to meet the client's overall request for kits. They also indicated the Distribution work order to which they were all linked and which served as the final destination for the printed pieces produced under these work orders.

The use of work order instructions represents a practical form of conversation by Taylor and Robichaud's (2004) definition (p. 401): The CSR creates a written text which is transmitted by means of hard copy and electronic format work orders to various departments in the organization, translating the written text into conversation. The work order can be edited and updated at any time by other departments involved in the project, allowing for the conversation to continue throughout the lifespan of the project. For example, the Purchasing department may

add a purchase order number and details regarding the vendor supplying material that the print and finishing departments need to complete their portion of the order. This information allows the production team to schedule their time appropriately or alert purchasing to their requirements in order to best meet the client's expectations. The CSR may also update the due date, quantity or specifications at any time based on client changes, or feedback from production. The work order is a tool that may be used not only to communicate the client needs, but to facilitate an ongoing conversation between departments in a consistent format as well. One of the elements of Taylor's model of coorientation is his focus on the importance of ongoing interaction and continuous relationships in maintaining organization through coorientation (Taylor & Robichaud, 2004, p. 403). The work order certainly provides opportunity for ongoing interaction between departments if completed and updated regularly with detailed information.

Email Correspondence

The use of email correspondence in the context of the project is much more complex in terms of establishing coorientation than the work order instructions. The work orders, generated by Company X's job management system, provide a consistent format for organizing information and follow an established procedure through the organization. Email communication, however, is open to interpretation by each individual employee in terms of how to use it, what to include, and to whom it is sent. The lack of structure or consistent format for organizing information in email communication leaves room for misinterpretation, lack of pertinent detail, or extraneous information.

In addition to the variation in quality and content that these individual decisions can create, email communication can lead to information overload causing stress and misinformation (Farhoomand & Drury, 2002, as cited in Flanagin, Pearce, & Bondad-Brown, 2009, p. 229),

which in turn can detract from the achievement of coorientation among different departments within the organization. Based on Taylor's (2006) definition above, email communication can be considered a form of conversation due to its ability to facilitate an ongoing interaction between two or more agents. As conversation plays a critical role in the achievement of coorientation, it is important to consider the impact of choosing email communication as the medium to facilitate the conversation. While it meets the definition, it also presents unique challenges in fostering the alignment of attitudes and actions required to achieve coorientation. Specifically, there is an increased potential for the receiving agent to misinterpret the author's intended purpose or message due not only to information overload, but also to the lack of non-verbal cues available through email, such as vocal tone and body language.

In this study each relevant email was assessed in order to estimate the intended purpose of the message (see Email Data Summary in Appendix B for reference). For example, one message sent from a member of the Data Team to the Customer Service Representative (CSR) reads, "attached is V2 of the [live data samples] with the Quantity number removed and replaced by underscores (in the carton labels)." This message was sent in response to an earlier email from the CSR asking to have the quantity removed from the carton labels. The assumed purpose of this message was to confirm that the requested action had been completed and to acknowledge understanding of what was required. In this example, the researcher deemed the purpose to have been achieved by the message from the Data Team because it clearly indicated that the changes requested had been made. Another example of an email demonstrating that the purpose had been achieved was an email from the CSR to the Data Team indicating, "I have attached the package label spreadsheet as requested" showing that the request was understood and the task was completed. In this email, previous communication pertaining to this particular subject was left in

a chain of older messages effectively providing context and history, which helped to make the current response clear.

In some cases, although the purpose was achieved, the email message may have still contributed to information overload leading to misunderstanding and frustration, hindering the achievement of coorientation. The practice of copying a full department of people when only one member is involved in the project may lead to information overload, as it is defined by Flanagin, Pearce, and Bondad-Brown (2009), for the extraneous members copied on the message due to the receipt of too much information. Information overload can lead to mistakes and misunderstandings that can affect other projects active in the organization as well. To illustrate, an email was sent by the CSR to the attention of one member of the Data Team in response to a question from this member. Both the question and the response messages were sent by carbon copy to the rest of the Data Team as well. While the response email achieved its purpose by answering clearly the question asked, it may have led to information overload for the other members of the Data Team who were not involved in the project. If this practice is followed by all CSRs, on all projects, the number of unnecessary emails received by each member of the Data Team each day could become overwhelming and could lead to important information pertaining to projects that they are working on to be missed.

Another example of an email message achieving its purpose but potentially hindering coorientation achieved between departments through an influx of unnecessary information is demonstrated by an email from the CSR to the Distribution Team. Again, the email is addressed to one member of the team, but all members have been carbon copied. The body of the email from the CSR reads,

“please see the client’s email below. We have received a PO # for the following shipment, please hand write it on the labels:...Also, as per her email below, we are ok to ship any shipments that have PO #s or are marked with N/A. Any that have a blank where the PO # should be on the label, please HOLD until we get the #s to hand write in.”

The information presented in this message from the CSR is redundant as she has also forwarded the client’s original email, which indicates,

“here is [client]’s PO for the [seasonal] Kit...Unfortunately I haven’t received any of the other PO’s that were required (labelled as TBD on the spreadsheet). The TDB’s [*sic*] will have to wait until I return on Jan 3rd. The others that have PO’s or NA’s can be shipped when they’re complete.”

The CSR has effectively retyped the same message sent by the client and in doing so has created an opportunity for error, or discrepancy, between the CSR’s message and the client’s original message. The CSR has also indicated to the Distribution Team that they should read the client’s email in addition to her own, using the phrase, “please see the client’s email below:” the content of each message is essentially the same making the effort to read both redundant. While this message’s intended purpose may have been to provide complete instruction to the Distribution Team on how to proceed with shipping this project, the redundancy of repeating the client’s email in different words may have hindered the coorientation of the Distribution Team (B) with the CSR (A) with respect to the client’s requirement (X) by contributing to information overload and misunderstanding on the part of the Distribution Team, who may be looking to find additional information in the email from the client.

In four particular cases, the email did not achieve its intended purpose. The main reason for not achieving the intended purpose was the transfer of vague information from the author to the receiver. The first and second occurrences of vague information being transferred by email were in messages from one member of the Data Team to the CSR. The entire message content of the first occurrence consisted of, “counts are attached.” This brief message does not indicate to the CSR what action is required, nor is it a response to a formal request for the “counts.” There is an inherent assumption in this message that the CSR will know what action is required with respect to the attached file.

The message content of the second occurrence was more detailed in the sense that it confirmed the changes requested by the CSR had been understood and completed. Again though, there was a file attached and a message reading, “lives are attached” with no indication of the required action on the part of the CSR. Based on the researcher’s experience with the organization, the attached “counts” and “lives” files are an integral part of the project completion requiring client approval in order for the project to proceed to the next stage of production. If these files had been sent to an inexperienced CSR, coorientation between the departments to the client’s project may not have occurred due to a lack of understanding by the CSR regarding what action was required to meet the Data Team’s needs in order for them to be able complete their part of the client’s project.

The third incident occurred in an email from one member of the Purchasing Team to another member of the same team, with the CSR and Sales Representatives carbon copied. This message read, “they may be available through one of our paper suppliers if they have stock,” in response to the CSR’s request to order the label stock with a same day delivery in order to complete the client’s project. The purpose of this email message would seem to be to provide

information to the receiving Purchaser to enable him to complete the request. However, the message does not suggest which paper suppliers to check with specifically, nor does it make reference to the request from the CSR, other than forwarding it along below the author's message. Perhaps more importantly, the author does not formally request that the receiver proceed to check with the suppliers and attempt to complete the CSR's request. Within the Purchasing department, the coorientation between team members on an individual level would be hard to achieve through the exchange of vague messages such as this. It could lead to duplicated effort and frustration for all parties involved. On a macro level, it could even hinder the completion of the client's overall project in a timely manner and in line with the client's expectations: breaking the coorientation between the client, the company, and the client's print project.

The final example of a message that did not achieve its purpose was sent by the Logistics Specialist to the Sales Representative, with the CSR carbon copied. The message read, "here are the shipping options. Ground: \$200.00 – 5-6 days transit; Express: \$370.00 – overnight." While this message does include the two different options for shipping based on price and lead-time, there is no indication that the Sales Representative will need to choose the option with which to proceed. As with the messages from the Data Team, this message makes an assumption that the Sales Representative will understand what action is required. While it may be obvious to the Sales Representative involved in this project, it detracts from the ability of the departments to coorient themselves to the client's project when assumptions of any kind are made. One of the strengths of email communication is its potential to facilitate conversations between individuals or groups in an efficient manner when used appropriately, with complete, concise information. At the same time, one of its major downfalls is the potential to make assumptions about how the

receiver will interpret the message, which can lead to breakdowns in productivity and could potentially negatively affect relationships among coworkers through the creation of tension and incivility.

Taylor's Coorientation and the Print Industry

The first research question in this study asked how James R. Taylor's coorientation model could help to identify existing communication breakdowns in a print industry organization. Taylor's model could contribute to identifying breakdowns in the print industry in two major ways: his expansion of Newcomb's (1953) A-B-X model making it applicable on a macro level, and his focus on the role of conversation in achieving coorientation and, in turn, organizing.

Taylor's (2001) A-B-X model in the context of a print organization can be applied at both macro and micro levels helping to visualize the relationships between departments or individuals working together to complete one common client print request. Figure 2 illustrates how the model can be applied to Company X on a macro level. It links together the Sales and Customer Service departments who represent the client internally, and the numerous departments within the organization that play a role in completing the project. As illustrated in Figure 2, the CSR plays a major role in communicating and coordinating their actions with multiple departments in the organization. This case study indicated that the CSR is an important component in achieving coorientation between the departments involved in the completion of the project. Through activities such as planning and leading contract review meetings, preparing the work orders, and representing the client internally in the organization, the CSR plays an integral part in reaching coorientation by identifying and bringing together all internal stakeholders and communicating

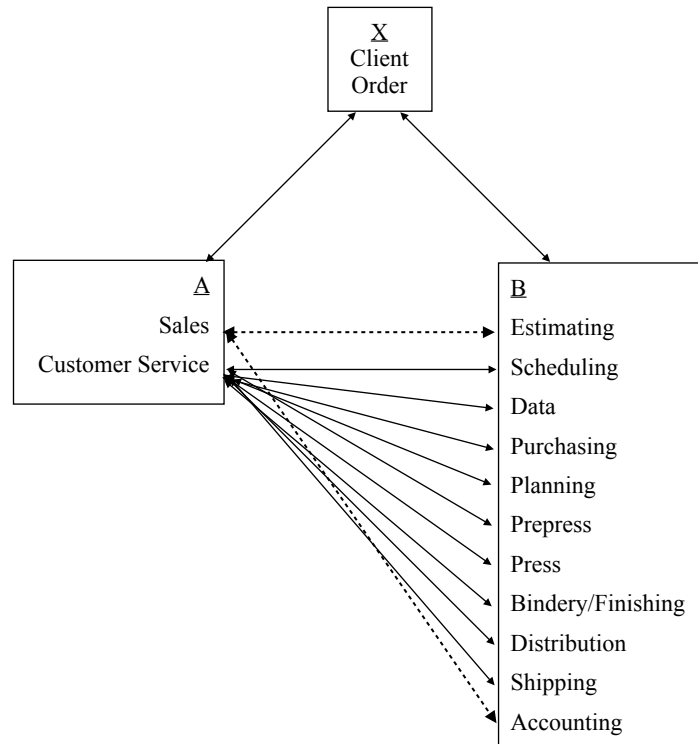


Figure 2. Taylor's (2001) A-B-X Model applied to Company X on a macro, interdepartmental level.

to them the client's needs and expectations thus providing an opportunity for mutual understanding.

On a micro scale, Taylor's (2001) reformulation of Newcomb's (1953) A-B-X model can indicate the relationships between individuals involved in the project, either within the same department, or between two different ones. Each of the relationships indicated in Figure 2 can be broken down to an individual level to show the connection between two different departments. For example, considering the email exchange above between one Purchaser and another, with the CSR carbon copied, Figure 3 shows the relationship between the Customer Service and Purchasing departments with respect to the label stock required. Figure 4, however, demonstrates

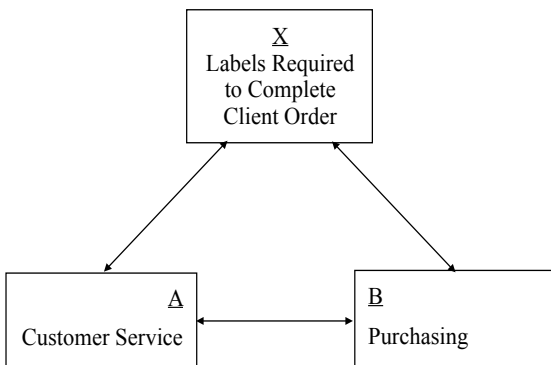


Figure 3. Taylor's (2001) A-B-X model

applied to micro level interaction between two departments.

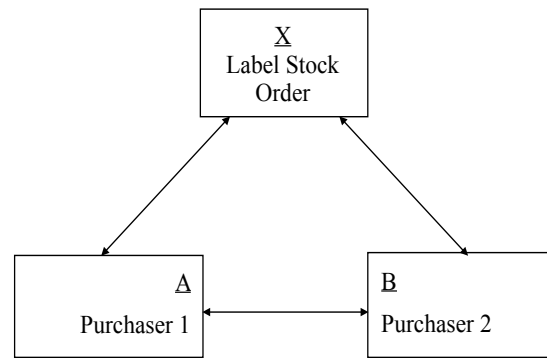


Figure 4. Taylor's (2001) A-B-X model applied

to micro level interaction between two members of one department.

the relationship between the two Purchasers involved in the exchange in relation to the task of ordering the label stock. The two figures demonstrate different levels of relationships and different levels of coorientation, all required to complete this one aspect of the client's overall project.

One approach to identifying communication breakdowns in a print industry organization using Taylor's (2001) A-B-X model would be to start with a macro level analysis such as presented in Figure 2 to identify all departments required to complete one common project. The next steps would involve breaking down the relationships first into interdepartmental groups, and then further into intradepartmental individual interactions, finally reviewing the communication at each level of relationship. This approach would lead to identifying the level where deficiencies in communication are occurring, and where to effectively focus any corrective actions required.

Taylor's focus on text and conversation (Cooren & Taylor, 1997; Heaton & Taylor, 2002; Robichaud, Giroux, & Taylor, 2004; Taylor, 1999, 2006, 2009; Taylor, Cooren, Giroux, & Robichaud, 1996; Taylor & Robichaud, 2004) can also help to identify communication

breakdowns in the print industry through his definition of these concepts and their relationship to each other: looking at how text is being translated into conversation to help identify whether the medium used is the most effective choice. By definition, text is the content of a conversation (Taylor et al., 1996, p. 7); conversation is established through an exchange of texts. The medium used to exchange the texts could impact the effectiveness of how the text is received and thus the ability to achieve coorientation between the author and the receiver. For Taylor (2009), people co-ordinate their activities through the flow of conversation and coordinating activities is one step toward achieving coorientation. If the medium chosen for facilitating the conversation is one that hinders the ability of the participants in the conversation to coordinate their activities, achieving coorientation may be difficult, if not impossible.

In a print industry organization, the use of email communication can both help and hinder the effective communication between departments. Taylor's (2009) model of coorientation, as well as his work with Robichaud (2004), can help identify breakdowns in communication between departments through focusing on how texts are being translated into conversation. The use of email as the medium for translating texts can lead to information overload and breakdowns such as misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Many different departments in Company X need to coorient themselves toward multiple projects on a daily basis and so require a reliable means of facilitating conversation. Figure 5 illustrates a framework based on Taylor's (2009) model of coorientation combined with his work with Robichaud (2004). This model could help to localize breakdowns and identify how participants are moving from one stage to the next in the coorientation model. For example, using email to translate text into conversation, if used well, allows the movement from conversation into coorientation, leading to organization, and finally to a successful business

transaction. Conversely, if the email communication hinders the flow of conversation, the participants will not be able to move through to the next stage, coorientation. The cycle would end at conversation until the author and receiver have reached a mutual understanding of the needs and aligned their actions to accomplish them.

An example of an email communication that could have prevented the members from moving through the conversation stage to the coorientation stage was the message sent by one member of the Data Team to the CSR simply indicating, “counts are attached.” No indication of the action required by the receiver was made and thus the cycle between text and conversation

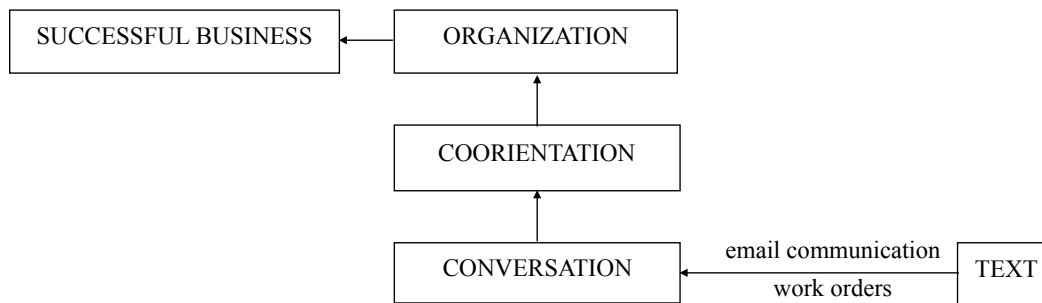


Figure 5. Coorientation framework for a print industry organization combining Taylor’s (2009) model with his work with Robichaud (2004).

could potentially need to continue until the receiver and the author share an understanding of what is needed and align their actions to accomplish it. Depending on the context within which the message was sent, however, the receiver may have already had an understanding of what action was required; there may have been a telephone or face-to-face conversation preceding this message, for example. The model shown in Figure 5 could be used as a tool, based on the principles of Taylor’s (2009) model of coorientation, to visualize where deficiencies are occurring within an organization.

The second research question in this study asked how Taylor's coorientation model could contribute to increased efficiencies in workflow and interdepartmental communication in a print industry organization. Taylor's model can lead to identifying corrective action steps that can be taken to improve efficiencies and interdepartmental communication. This model provides a practical means of identifying the stakeholders involved in trying to achieve a common goal. The use of the A-B-X model (Taylor, 2001) can help to identify who is participating and what the goal is in an organized and logical chart, and thus encourage macro level analysis of an organization: reviewing how different departments interact as a whole, rather than how individual employees behave. For print specifically, it provides a means of defining the groups of stakeholders in each project and a structured approach to looking at how they interact with respect to meeting a client's needs. This approach could be used on both micro and macro levels in the print industry and can be applied to any print project received from the client, no matter how big or small. Taylor's (2009) model also provides insight into how conversation leads to coorientation which then leads, in turn, to organization and successful business, again making it a robust tool for identifying where deficiencies are occurring and thus allowing for targeted corrective actions to increase efficiencies where needed most.

Choosing an appropriate medium for translating text into conversation can help to maintain the ongoing interaction required to achieve coorientation. Further, as Taylor and Robichaud (2004) identified, the creation of an ongoing relationship is a crucial element. Establishing an ongoing relationship could essentially smooth the flow of information between stakeholders, creating efficiencies in each department by allowing the members to focus on the physical tasks required to complete a project, rather than struggling to understand the needs of others and increasing stress by feeling concerned that others may not understand their

requirements. Particularly with email communication, authors could apply Taylor's model to each message they send to help increase efficiencies in all departments. For example, the author could ask him or herself the following questions before clicking send:

- To whom is the message being sent?
- Does it contribute to aligning actions, or does it make aligning actions more challenging?
- Do all parties copied need to receive this message, or will it contribute to information overload for those who don't?
- Does it contain all of the detail required to complete the task or understand the requirements?
- Does the receiver need the historical context (i.e.: forwarded email conversations), or do these details contribute to confusion and information overload?

Taking the time to review each message before sending it is one major way that Taylor's model of coorientation can help increase efficiencies in a print industry organization.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Through the execution of this case study, it has become clear that there is a need for concentrated focus on communication between departments in the print industry. As a manufacturing organization, Company X consists of multiple, varied departments that must work together quickly and efficiently on an ongoing basis to meet client expectations. Each department plays a critical role in the execution of the project and so all departments must align, or coorient, their understanding of the client's needs and their actions in order to meet them. Taylor's model of coorientation proves to be a valuable tool in evaluating the efficiency of written communication between departments, mediated either by email or written work instruction, providing a practical means of identifying the stakeholders involved in each project, and how they must interact in order to satisfy the customer's needs.

There seems to be a lack of academic literature about the business side of the print industry; this study provides a stepping stone to future research on the administrative and business functions of print organizations in the current climate of a rapidly changing industry. Some areas where future research should be conducted include the communication strictly between the Customer Service Representatives and Sales Representatives, all of whom must work together to represent the client and their needs to the internal stakeholders; and a more in-depth review of information overload from the customer service perspective, in particular as it is caused by electronic communication and the Customer Service Representative's interaction with all stakeholders involved in each project. The ongoing relationships between Customer Service Representatives and production team members, and how they impact organizational efficiencies and productivity, is also a rich area for future research. The interaction of these broadly defined groups is essential to the completion of all client orders within the organization.

Another topic for future research in the print industry would be an examination of how McLeod and Chafee's model of coorientation (1973 as cited in Connelly & Knuth, 2002; Kelly, Thompson, & Waters, 2006; Leong, McComas, & Decker, 2008), focusing on perceptions and assumptions, could help to identify potential and existing sources of incivility between departments operating with employees with vastly different skill sets, training, and education. This research could also have a valuable application in manufacturing organizations of different types. For example, organizations that manufacture products other than print, such as cars or electronics, may have similar organizational structures to that of print organizations in that administrative groups of employees and production employees must work closely together to produce the end product, therefore requiring a mutual understanding and respect for the other's role in the process.

Finally, the impact of metaconversations in forming individual relationships between departments within a print organization, when one member represents the whole, could lead to important discoveries in personal identification and knowledge sharing within teams. The value of this research would be in finding areas for improvement within organizational teams through investigating how members identify with their department and its role in the organization and the overall efficiency of the department as an independent unit, in terms of knowledge sharing between members.

The main objectives of this study were to develop an understanding of James R. Taylor's model of coorientation and apply it to a case from the print industry. The case selected for this study demonstrated how various principles of Taylor's coorientation could be applied. Specifically, his reformulation of Newcomb's (1953) A-B-X model provided a structured approach to reviewing the dynamics not only between individual members of the organization,

but between different levels of departmental interactions as well. Taylor's focus on how text is translated into conversation also provided a method of reviewing the effectiveness of email communication and how it both helps and hinders the coorientation of different members of the organization.

One of the strengths of this study was the researcher's knowledge of the organization and the print industry. Her experience working as a Customer Service Representative for Company X provided insight into the purpose and effectiveness of the email communication and written work instructions collected for review, as well as the needs of different departments within the organization. Another strength of this study is its potential to develop further a practical framework that can be used to identify different steps to get from written text to successful business. The findings in this study can contribute to the review and implementation of methods for better communicating between departments.

This study was restricted to the collection of emails from the Customer Service Representative only, providing a limited view of the scope of email communication with respect to the project. In addition, the researcher acted as the Customer Service Representative for the Project studied and so may have been influenced by researcher bias. To minimize this, the study did not evaluate the ability of individual departments or employees to communicate, but rather the content of each message and if, or how, it achieved its intended purpose.

The full range of James R. Taylor's work on organizational communication, and coorientation in particular, is well beyond the scope of this study. Focusing on the A-B-X model and the roles of conversation and text allowed an in-depth review of a pertinent issue affecting organizations in the print industry. Bringing together departments comprised of employees with vastly different skill sets and requiring them to work closely together in a fast paced and

challenging environment is a reality of the industry. Communication plays a crucial role in meeting client expectations; Taylor's coorientation provides a practical medium for evaluating the challenges faced by these departments and where corrective actions will be most effective.

References

- Canadian Printing Industries Association (CPIA) (2011). *Industry Information*. Retrieved from <http://www.cpia-aci.ca/en/industry-information>
- Connelly, N. A. & Knuth, B. A. (2002). Insights and applications: Using the coorientation model to compare community leaders' and local residents' views about Hudson River ecosystem restoration. *Society and Natural Resources*, 15, 933-948. doi:10.1080/08941920290107666
- Cooren, F. & Taylor, J. R. (1997). Organization as an effect of mediation: Redefining the link between organization and communication. *Communication Theory*, 7(3), 219-260.
- Fairhurst, G. T., & Putnam, L. L. (1999). Reflections on the organization-communication equivalency question: The contributions of James Taylor and his colleagues. *The Communication Review*, 3(1-2), 1-19.
- Flanagin, A. J., Pearce, K., & Bondad-Brown, B. A. (2009). The destructive potential of electronic communication technologies in organizations. In P. Lutgen-Sandvik & B. D. Sypher (Eds.), *Destructive organizational communication: Processes, consequences, and constructive ways of organizing* (pp. 229-251). New York, NY: Routledge
- Gill, M. J. & Sypher, B. D. (2009). Workplace incivility and organizational trust. In P. Lutgen-Sandvik & B. D. Sypher (Eds.), *Destructive organizational communication: Processes, consequences, and constructive ways of organizing* (pp. 53-73). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Groleau, C. (2006). One phenomenon, two lenses: Understanding collective action from the perspectives of coorientation and activity theories. In F. Cooren, J. R. Taylor, & E. J. Van Every (Eds.), *Communication as organizing: Empirical and theoretical explorations in the dynamic of text and conversation* (pp. 157-177). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Heaton, L., & Taylor, J. R. (2002). Knowledge management and professional work: A communication perspective on the knowledge-based organization. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *16*, 210-236. doi:10.1177/089331802237235
- Industry Canada, Consumer Products, Printing and Related Support Activities Industry Profile (2013a). *Economic overview*. Retrieved from http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/026.nsf/eng/h_00077.html
- Industry Canada, Consumer Products, Printing and Related Support Activities Industry Profile (2013b). *Major trends and issues facing the industry*. Retrieved from http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/026.nsf/eng/h_00077.html
- Kelly, K. S., Thompson, M. F., & Waters, R. D. (2006). Improving the way we die: A coorientation study assessing agreement/disagreement in the organization–public relationship of hospices and physicians. *Journal of Health Communication*, *11*, 607-627. doi:10.1080/10810730600830047
- Kuhn, T. (2008). A communicative theory of the firm: Developing an alternative perspective on intra-organizational power and stakeholder relationships. *Organization Studies*, *29*(8-9), 1227-1254. doi:10.1177/0170840608094778
- Leong, K. M., McComas, K. A., & Decker, D. J. (2008). Formative coorientation research: A tool to assist with environmental decision making. *Environmental Communication*, *2*(3), 257-273. doi:10.1080/17524030802389922

- Lubbers, C. A. (2005). Media relations in the travel and tourism industry: A coorientation analysis. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 12(1-2), 41-55.
doi:10.1300/J150v12n01_04
- Manufacture. (n.d.). In *Merriam-Webster's online dictionary*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manufacture>
- Ritter, M. (2003). The use of balanced scorecards in the strategic management of corporate communication. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 8(1), 44-59.
doi:10.1108/13563280310458911
- Robichaud, D., Giroux, H., & Taylor, J. R. (2004). The metaconversation: The recursive property of language as a key to organizing. *Academy of Management Review*, 29(4), 617-634. doi:10.2307/20159074
- Rogers, C., & Andrews, V. (2013). Coorientation theory and assessment of the RFP solution to client/service learner matchmaking. *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator*, 68(3), 242-254. doi:10.1177/1077695813493784
- Ruck, K., & Welch, M. (2012). Valuing internal communication; management and employee perspectives. *Public Relations Review* 38, 294-302. doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2011.12.016
- Stohl, C., & Stohl, M. (2011). Secret agencies: The communicative constitution of a clandestine organization. *Organization Studies*, 32(9), 1197-1215. doi:10.1177/0170840611410839
- Taylor, J. R. (1999). What is "organizational communication"? Communication as a dialogic of text and conversation. *The Communication Review*, 3(1-2), 21-63.
doi:10.1080/10714429909368573

- Taylor, J. R. (2001). Toward a theory of imbrication and organizational communication. *The American Journal of Semiotics*, 17(2), 269. Retrieved from <http://lion.chadwyck.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca>
- Taylor, J. R. (2005). Engaging organization through worldview. In S. May & D. K. Mumby (Eds.), *Engaging organizational communication theory & research: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 197-221). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Taylor, J. R. (2006). Coorientation: A conceptual framework. In F. Cooren, J. R. Taylor, & E. J. Van Every (Eds.), *Communication as organizing: Empirical and theoretical explorations in the dynamic of text and conversation* (pp. 141-156). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Taylor, J. R., (2009). Organizing from the bottom up? Reflections on the constitution of organization in communication. In L. L. Putman & A. M. Nicotera (Eds.), *Building theories of organization: The constitutive role of communication* (pp. 153-186). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Taylor, J. R., Cooren, F., Giroux, N., & Robichaud, D. (1996). The communicational basis of organization: Between the conversation and the text. *Communication Theory*, 6(1), 1-39. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.1996.tb00118.x
- Taylor, J. R., & Robichaud, D. (2004). Finding the organization in the communication: Discourse as action and sensemaking. *Organization*, 11(3), 395-413. doi:10.1177/1350508404041999

APPENDIX A: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDELINES

Carleton College: History: How to Analyze a Primary Source

2/1/2014, 4:19 PM

Home Academics Campus Life | Prospective Students Alumni Faculty & Staff Students Families **People & Pages**

Search
go

A-Z Guide
Directory

History

- History Home
- Overview
- News & Events
- Guide for New Students
- Faculty & Staff
- Courses
- The Major
- Off-Campus Studies
- History Awards
- Alumni
- Resources
 - History Study Guides
 - How to Write a Critical Book Review
 - How to Write a History Research Paper
 - How to Analyze a Primary Source**
 - How to Give a Twenty Minute Oral Presentation
 - How to Read History
 - How to Read Fiction for History
 - How to Take Good Notes
 - How to Write a Book Review
 - The Mechanics of Citation
 - Plagiarism
 - AHA Ethical Practices
 - How to Lead a Class Discussion
 - How to Read a Book
 - How to Write a Comparative Analysis
 - Bridge2
 - The Parks Film Collection
 - The Esternay Project
 - History Research Resource Index

How to Analyze a Primary Source

When you analyze a primary source, you are undertaking the most important job of the historian. There is no better way to understand events in the past than by examining the sources--whether journals, newspaper articles, letters, court case records, novels, artworks, music or autobiographies--that people from that period left behind.

Each historian, including you, will approach a source with a different set of experiences and skills, and will therefore interpret the document differently. Remember that there is no one right interpretation. However, if you do not do a careful and thorough job, you might arrive at a wrong interpretation.

In order to analyze a primary source you need information about two things: the document itself, and the era from which it comes. You can base your information about the time period on the readings you do in class and on lectures. On your own you need to think about the document itself. The following questions may be helpful to you as you begin to analyze the sources:

1. Look at the physical nature of your source. This is particularly important and powerful if you are dealing with an original source (i.e., an actual old letter, rather than a transcribed and published version of the same letter). What can you learn from the form of the source? (Was it written on fancy paper in elegant handwriting, or on scrap-paper, scribbled in pencil?) What does this tell you?
2. Think about the purpose of the source. What was the author's message or argument? What was he/she trying to get across? Is the message explicit, or are there implicit messages as well?
3. How does the author try to get the message across? What methods does he/she use?
4. What do you know about the author? Race, sex, class, occupation, religion, age, region, political beliefs? Does any of this matter? How?
5. Who constituted the intended audience? Was this source meant for one person's eyes, or for the public? How does that affect the source?
6. What can a careful reading of the text (even if it is an object) tell you? How does the language work? What are the important metaphors or symbols? What can the author's choice of words tell you? What about the silences--what does the author choose NOT to talk about?

Now you can evaluate the source as historical evidence.

1. Is it prescriptive--telling you what people thought should happen--or descriptive--telling you what people thought did happen?
2. Does it describe ideology and/or behavior?
3. Does it tell you about the beliefs/actions of the elite, or of "ordinary" people? From whose

Careers, Internships and
Grad School

perspective?

4. What historical questions can you answer using this source? What are the benefits of using this kind of source?

5. What questions can this source NOT help you answer? What are the limitations of this type of source?

6. If we have read other historians' interpretations of this source or sources like this one, how does your analysis fit with theirs? In your opinion, does this source support or challenge their argument?

Remember, you cannot address each and every one of these questions in your presentation or in your paper, and I wouldn't want you to. You need to be selective.

--Molly Ladd-Taylor, Annette Igra, Rachel Seidman, and others

[Home](#)

History pages maintained by [Nikki Lamberty](#)

This page was last updated on 16 September 2013

[Login](#)

Powered by [Reason CMS](#)

University of Connecticut

<http://classguides.lib.uconn.edu/content.php?pid=210386&sid=3169074> (Feb 1)

“Document analysis allows for active learning of the documents. Examining the documents and making inquiries allows for deeper revelations about them. Each document holds a lot more information than is assumed at first glance – by looking deeply at a document, asking questions, making observations, you can mine an enormous amount of information to make historical discoveries” (Why bother doing a document analysis?, para 4)

“Don’t approach a document asking “What am I looking for?” Approach it asking “what are you telling me?”

Primary sources don’t “tell you who they are.” Books do – the title page tells you its title, who wrote the book, and when and where it was published. With primary sources it’s more of a conjecture/discovery process and far more of a challenge.

Realize that you know more about history than you think you do, and that knowledge informs the analysis process.

You are looking for evidence to solve a historical mystery. Sometimes the clues are small and you have to put the pieces together. Does your document contribute something to this mystery?

What is the value of this primary source to history? Is it an appropriate representation of a historical moment?

Create a narrative. Tell a story with the documents. What part of the story is your document? What hasn’t been said in these documents? What are the “silences”?” (Some tips to keep in mind when doing a Document Analysis)

“To determine how important a document or source is to your research you should ask yourself several questions: Begin with an observation of the document in terms of it as an object: What type of document am I looking at? A letter, a financial form, a newspaper clipping, etc.? Is it typed or handwritten? Does that matter to your understanding of the document? What are its dimensions? What is its size? Does the document have a color, or scent? Who created this source, and why? Who was the audience for this source? What was this document's original purpose? What was happening when this source was made? Why is this source important? If this source shows a specific point of view about a historical event, is it possible to find an alternate point of view? What did you find that surprised you about this source? What can I learn from this source that is new to my research? What are some things about the time period of this document that I already know that can help me make sense of this document? Could this same document have been created today? If you have more than one document, how are seemingly dissimilar documents related? What are the assumptions in the documents? Are they stated or unstated? What is the chronology among the documents in the set? What is the timeline of the historical moment evident in the documents?” (Questions to ask when using Primary Sources)

Writing a document analysis



Document analysis is a key skill in historical interpretation. It is not a mere summary or description of what happened, but rather an analysis of the motivation, intent and purpose of a document within a particular historical context.

The key initial questions you need to consider are:

- What type of document is it?
- Does it have any particularly unique characteristics?
- When was it written?
- Who was the author and what was his/her position?
- For whom (what audience) was the document written?
- What is the purpose of the document?
- Why was the document written?
- What evidence is there within the document that indicates why it was written?

Sample extract

... Newspapers reporting the events are at first notable for their restraint, but in May 1851 *The Sydney Morning Herald* declared 'the gold fever has fairly set in' and predicted 'a most lawless state of society ... up there' (ref). The impact of the discovery was immediate and widespread, and brought mixed blessings. One significant early effect was the visible diminution of the populations of Sydney and Paramatta (ref). In the city, goods on sale consisted mainly of clothing and tools for the diggings (ref). A report in *The Times of London* described Sydney as 'becoming deserted' with 'auction prices ... very low' (ref).



What can you learn about document analysis from what markers say?

- Your use of evidence – your discerning comments about what it provided and not, and its consequences upon one's understanding of the period – was well done.
- It is thoroughly and correctly documented, although I think you could have quoted somewhat more from the sources to convey a better idea of what kinds of documents they were.
- Avoid slotting in quotations without telling your reader who the speaker is. It is not enough to name the speaker in the footnotes. Nevertheless, you are acutely aware of the historical debate – a strong point in favour of this analysis.
- Your synopsis is crisp and to the point, and establishes clearly the general parameters of your argument.

Similarly, your introduction deals with both the context of the period, and the documents you use to explore that context. Well done.

- This essay tackles with vigor a complex period. But it seems to get carried away by its critique of the Scullin Government – to the point where it fails to distinguish between the federal and state governments, and the documents and their origins are lost to view [for the reader]. But for your excellent documentation, one could mistake this for a general essay on the Depression, rather than an examination of primary sources.

So in reviewing your draft document analysis, ask yourself:

- In the introduction have I placed the document in its historical context and identified the kind of document it is?
- Where I use quotes, do I identify the writer and his/her position to the reader?
- Throughout, are my documents lost to view to the reader?
- Have I thoroughly analysed both what the evidence says – and what it does not say?
- Have I discussed how reliable the document is as a source of evidence and understanding?
- Have I identified to the reader how the evidence develops – or doesn't develop – a better understanding of the historical period?
- Have I thoroughly and correctly documented my sources of information?

ANU CRICOS Provider Number 00120C © 2009 Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC), The Australian National University.
Excepting the © Horacek cartoon, this handout may be used and changed for educational purposes, so long as ASLC is appropriately acknowledged.



Home
Site Search

L'Encyclopédie de l'histoire du Québec / The Quebec History Encyclopedia

Readings
Documents
Statistics
Chronologies
Biographies
Bibliographies
Quebec History Encyclopedia
Maps
Events, Issues, and Concepts
Picture Gallery
Internet Resources
Constitution / Federalism
Franco-American History
Mémoires/Theses
About this Site

[College Library](#)
[Course Outline](#)
[Essay Guide](#)
[Style Guide](#)
[Newfoundland History](#)
[Cours de civilisation occidentale](#)
[Social Science Program](#)
[Marianopolis College](#)

Date Published:
November 2006

Analyzing an Historical Document

A document may be of [various types](#): a written document, a painting, a monument, a map, a photograph, a statistical table, a film or video, etc. Anything from the past that helps us learn what happened, and why, is a document. The technique of document analysis outlined below is generally applicable to all types of documents. However, it is especially appropriate for the written documents.

Analyzing a document (external analysis)

The **introduction** of the document : You do not have to follow exactly the sequence of issues given below. The first purpose of this section is to introduce your document and its subject (briefly) as well as to clarify the following :

a. **The author:** Who is the author? What do we know about the author? What motive (purpose) might the author have had in writing this document? What biases or assumptions might colour the views of the author? What is the degree of familiarity of the author with the subject discussed in the document? Was the author a direct observer of the event/issue [if this is pertinent] or was the information obtained second-hand? Had the author any personal involvement in the events/issues described [if pertinent]? Do we have any reason to think that the author does not describe what he/she believes to be true?

b. **The time frame:** When was this document produced? Is it contemporary to the events/issues it describes? In what [context](#) was it produced? How has it come down to us? Could it have been tampered with?

c. **Place:** Where was this document produced? Does

the geographical location influence the content? Was this document meant to be public or private?

d. **Category of document:** What is the category in which this document falls (memoirs, poem, novel, speech, law, study, sermon, Church document, song, letter, etc.)? How would the type of writing affect the content and believability of the document? Is the document in the original language in which it was produced? Is the translation authoritative?

e. **Audience:** What is the intended audience of this document? Was the author representing a specific group? Or addressing the document to a specific group (or speaking to a specific group)?

Analyzing the document (internal analysis)

Main body of the document :

a. **Content of the document:** What does the author argue (main theme; secondary themes: summarize them briefly but thoroughly. You might need to regroup ideas under some themes)? What specific information of importance is provided? What light does it shed on the society/events/issues described? Do not only summarize but analyze the document as well: What does the author really mean? Does the source tell a consistent story? Are there contradictions? Evident errors [why would this be]? Does the source provide us unwittingly with information (what can be read between the lines)? Are there allusions made by the author that need to be explained?

b. **Believability of the document:** Given the external analysis and the content of the document, how credible is the information? Is it corroborated by other sources? Are important facts ignored? Why would such facts be omitted? Using other credible evidence, can you confirm or contradict the thesis of the document? Is the testimony sincere, exact? What makes you think so? Are there assertions made that are incorrect?

Evaluating the evidence (conclusion) :

Reaffirm the core thesis of the document/author; present your personal evaluation of it. Comment on the influence/impact the document might have had and the reason(s) for it. Distinguish between the short and the long term. If possible, situate this document in a wider context. If it is a document produced by a specific group, or written from a clearly identifiable point of view, discuss to what extent it is typical of that point of view. It is in the conclusion that you really show that you have mastered the art of document analysis

Some rules to follow:

- Avoid excesses of language and judgement, as well as meaningless comments (this is a "most interesting document" - outline instead what makes it interesting).
- Never use the personal form (I, me, my)
- Your analysis must be typed, space 1.5, Times New Roman, font 12. Margins must be the default margins of the Microsoft Word program.
- Cite the document parenthetically [...] giving the # of the paragraph. Cite every time you raise specific information, or make deductions based on one or more of the paragraphs, as well as when quotations are provided.
- If you have consulted any source or web site, put it on a separate bibliographical page.
- Make a cover page with your name, date submitted, title (Document analysis: Your Title, Course title).

APPENDIX B: EMAIL DATA SUMMARY

Page 1

Date Created		Type of Document	Author	Receiver[s]	Purpose	Unwritten Themes	Purpose Achieved	Coordination Notes	General Notes
11-Dec-12	Email	Sales Rep	CSR		forward client ok to start job and SKU #s required	information sharing	yes	coorient sales and csr RE: client order details	collect all pertinent information into one email to avoid information overload
11-Dec-12	Email	Sales Rep	CSR		forward attachment with distribution and quantity breakdown	information sharing	yes	coorient sales and csr RE: client order details	see above
12-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Distribution Manager		forward invite to contract review meeting	proactive, organization	yes	set up meeting to attempt coordination between departments	add invite to actual meeting, rather than forwarding as an email
13-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Prepress Department (all), Planners (all), Prepress (all), Scheduling (all), Distribution Manager, Purchaser (1), Shipping (1), Sales (cc'd)		forward client instructions and PDFs for reference RE: 2 items	information sharing	yes	coorient Prepress and CSR RE: 2 kit items	remove unnecessary details from client - sum up in own words to avoid information overload
14-Dec-12	Email	CSR			provide list of dockets opened for full project to all parties at once	information sharing	yes	provide concise list of dockets for another project (email forwarded to same group as previous)	separate from list of dockets for another project (email forwarded to same group as previous)
14-Dec-12	Email	CSR			Distribute meeting minutes from Contract Review and indicate that they have been attached to the docket	information sharing	yes	ensure all stakeholders have access/awareness RE: meeting minutes	"reply-all" to list of dockets emails - help to connect this information as pertaining to these dockets - organize information into categories
19-Dec-12	Email	Data Team (1-D)	CSR		provide preliminary data sort for approval by client	request action	no	assumption that CSR will know what to do with file	no instruction given to Receiver RE: what action is required
19-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Data Team (all)		provide information for Data Team to produce labels required for the kits	request action	yes	explaination in email body attempts to explain required actions further than in the supplied data brief attached to the email, ensure mutual understanding of the requirements	explaination - work instructions (data brief) could lead to information overload, keep email body simple - list what each attachment is for?
19-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Purchaser (1), Sales (cc'd)		notify purchaser of update to docket & rush same day request	request action	yes	request that purchaser align actions to meet internal needs to satisfy client overall request for kits	what action is required
19-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Data Team (all)		re-supply client information in format requested by Data Team (one member C)	respond to request	yes	demonstrate mutual agreement/align actions to achieve client request	replied to original email to Data Team to keep information RE: same subject all together
20-Dec-12	Email	Purchaser	CSR, Purchaser (1), CSR (cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		advise colleague RE: where to source product required	information sharing	no	vague note (no vendor actually mentioned), but intention to share knowledge is indicative of attempt to achieve coordination	no question actually asked, assume CSR will know what to do with the files
20-Dec-12	Email	Auto Message from Data Team	CSR, Data Team (all - cc'd)		Provide live proofs for client approval	request action	no	align understanding - explanation provide RE: the files attached to the email, confirmation of requested formatting completed	chain of email here provides context RE: what change was requested to what files
20-Dec-12	Email	Data Team (1-D)	CSR, Data Team (all - cc'd)		Revised lives supplied	complete requested action	yes	action aligned with needs of other department	does the full team need to be cc'd or just the rep working on the project - contributes to information overload - also full chain of emails forwarded again, too much unnecessary info?
20-Dec-12	Email	Shipping (1)	CSR, Purchaser (1 - cc'd), Sales (cc'd), Shipping (all - cc'd)		acknowledge understanding of request for action	confirm understanding	yes	align actions of shipping department with requirements for client expectations to be met	
20-Dec-12	Email	Purchaser	CSR, Sales		indicate one vendor's availability for both sets of labels (projects a and b), still waiting to hear from 2nd vendor	information sharing	yes	vague message, combining information for multiple projects into one message - could hinder coordination through information overload and lack of clarity - forwarded multiple messages not relevant to CSR/Sales also contributing to information overload	
20-Dec-12	Email	Data Team (1-C)	CSR, Purchaser (1 - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		confirm template is the same	information sharing	yes	help coorient Data Team and Purchasing RE: labels required to satisfy client request	
20-Dec-12	Email	Shipping (1)	Purchaser (1), CSR (cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		confirmation that material is in	information sharing	yes	coorient actions of purchasing and shipping to satisfy client need	contribute to information overload for CSR and Sales - do they need to be copied on this request?
20-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Data Team (1), Data Team (all - cc'd)		respond to question, provide clarity	information sharing	yes	coorient Data Team and CSR/Sales toward client project requirements	does the full team need to be cc'd or just the rep working on the project - contributes to information overload
20-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Purchaser (1), Purchaser (1 - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		indicate different/similar labels will be required by another project as well	request action	yes	intention to combine order to maximize efficiency - result could be confusion between what is required for each project individually - ie hinder coordination over project A	
20-Dec-12	Email	Purchaser	CSR, Purchaser (1 - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		request confirmation of product selection	request action	yes	ask CSR (client representative) to confirm that labels will satisfy need for project - contribute to coordination over client needs	
20-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Data Team (1), Data Team (all - cc'd)		communicate client requested change to data	request action	yes	clear request, help coordination to client needs	
20-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Data Team (1), Purchaser (1 - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		request confirmation RE: label template used by data team	request action	yes	help coorient Data Team and Purchasing RE: labels required to satisfy client request	
20-Dec-12	Email	Purchaser	Shipping (all), CSR (cc'd), Sales (cc'd)		pick up request for label stock	request action	yes	coorient actions of purchasing and shipping to satisfy client need	contribute to information overload for CSR and Sales - do they need to be copied on this request?

Date	Channel	Sender	Recipient	Request	Action	Response	Outcome
20-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Shipper (1), Purchaser (1 - cc'd), Shipping (all - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)	instruct shipping to pass material to Distribution dept	request action	yes	align actions of shipping department with requirements for client expectations to be met
20-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Data Team (1), Data Team (all - cc'd)	Request change to live proofs clarification requested related to client requested change to data, confirmation that counts will remain the same (response to CSR questions)	request action	yes	align needs of client with action that will be executed in Distribution department and supported by action in Data department
20-Dec-12	Email	Data Team (1-D)	CSR, Data Team (all - cc'd)	request clarification, respond to question	request clarification, respond to question	yes	question and answers help coordination through exchange of individual thought and requesting clarification to align attitudes and understanding
21-Dec-12	Email	Auto Message from Data Team	CSR, Sales, Distribution (all - cc'd), Data Team (all - cc'd)	provide final label files to Distribution to be able to complete job	complete requested action	yes	Data Team involvement complete; client needs met in combination with providing tool internally required to complete project
21-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Sales	Request approval of label files from Data Team	request action	yes	request confirmation that client need is being met - are Company actions (A and B) achieving coordination with client's expectations with the files
27-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Distribution (1), Distribution (all)	Provide shipping/release instructions	request action	yes	redundant information provide - ask dist to see email below, but re-type relevant info again, does this contribute to information overload
31-Dec-12	Email	CSR	Sales	Provide update RE: project overall status	information sharing	yes	share information to coordinate Sales understanding with actions of Distribution department
02-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Distribution Manager	Reminder RE: shipping/release instructions sent 12/27/12	reminder	yes	request confirmation that client need is being met - are Company actions (A and B) achieving coordination with client's expectations that instructions were understood
03-Jan-13	Email	Data Team (1-D)	CSR, Data Team (all - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)	Revised label files supplied	complete requested action	yes	Data Team involvement complete, client needs met in combination with providing tool internally required to complete project
03-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Data Team (all - cc'd), Sales (cc'd), Logistics (1), Data Team (all - cc'd), Sales (cc'd)	Think Data for completion of request in timely fashion, provide up-to-date shipping list for Dist /Logistics	information sharing	yes	build relationship through "banks", ensure all stakeholders have up-to-date information
03-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Data Team (1), Data Team (all - cc'd), Sales (cc'd), Distribution (all - cc'd)	Request correction to label files provided	request action	yes	clarification RE: client requirement that was not included on previous set of labels - circle back to ensure coordination reached before project leaves plant
07-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Logistics (1), Sales	Provide ship instructions & confirm if PO needs to be sent with shipment	request clarification and action	yes	attempt to coordinate Sales/client needs and Logistics through one combined email
09-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Supervisor (cc'd)	Request inventory count	request action	yes	combined with information for 2 other projects correct inaccurate previous email - ensure clarity/coordination shared understanding
14-Jan-13	Email	Logistics	CSR, Sales (cc'd)	correction to previous email (8 minutes later)	clarification	yes	ensure accurate information (address) supplied from client to Logistics through forwarding email - align client need (A) with Logistics action (B) with respect to project (X)
14-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Logistics (1), Sales (cc'd)	forward client instructions for shipping material AND request inventory count	request action	yes	Align internal A and B with respect to X
14-Jan-13	Email	Logistics	CSR, Sales (cc'd)	Provide inventory counts	respond to request	yes	attempt to align client request/requirement with action of shipments request information to ensure CSR/Sales (A) and Logistics (B) are aligned
18-Jan-13	Email	Sales Rep	Logistics (1), CSR (cc'd)	Request a shipment	request action	yes	forward client email, no address, minimal detail, could lead to misinterpretation/misunderstanding
18-Jan-13	Email	Logistics	CSR, Sales	Request outstanding order/shipping info	request information	yes	no question asked, options just presented. Unclear what sales rep needs to do, assumption that they will just know
21-Jan-13	Email	Logistics	Sales, CSR (cc'd)	provide shipping options for Sales to confirm which to choose	confirm how to proceed	no	clear instructions provided to receiver RE: which shipping option to use
21-Jan-13	Email	Sales Rep	Logistics (1), CSR (cc'd)	confirm which option to proceed with	confirm how to proceed	yes	clear instruction provided, including address and ship method
21-Jan-13	Email	Sales Rep	Logistics (1), CSR (cc'd)	Request a shipment	request action	yes	attempt to align client request/requirement with action of shipments
21-Jan-13	Email	Logistics	CSR, Sales (cc'd)	Request clarification of details	request clarification, respond to question	yes	avoid misinterpretation /misunderstanding RE: asking for clarifying before acting
21-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Logistics (1), Sales (cc'd)	Request a tracking number	request information	yes	incomplete information provided, can lead to misinterpretation /misunderstanding
22-Jan-13	Email	CSR	Logistics (1), Sales (cc'd)	Request a shipment increase qty	request action	yes	satisfy client need (coordination on small scale, relates to this one request, but not really to the project overall)
28-Jan-13	Email	Logistics	CSR, Sales, Distribution (1 - cc'd)	Request information - can we close this docket	request information	yes	response to question asking clarification of address, not answered explicitly, but implicitly through request to add more product coordinate actions of shipping & client needs, to supply docket to finance for billing purposes

