



ASHESI UNIVERSITY

Leveraging Communication to Improve Communication Across
Pharma George Chemist Limited

Applied Project by

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Systems

Supervised by: Dr Sena Agbodjah & Esther Laryea

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Declaration

We hereby declare that this is our original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the applied project was supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of applied project laid down by Ashesi University.

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Executive Summary

The PharmaGeorge pharmacy chain started operations in June 2009 with one (1) retail pharmacy situated at Kwabenya in Accra, Ghana. The wholesale pharmacy was established in 2014 to procure stocks and supplies for the Pharma George retail outlets and other retail facilities in Accra. The business has grown in numbers over the decade since its inception. The retail outlets have increased from one to seven, with the new retail outlets in hotspots like Dome, Osu and Achimota. Though the business has experienced a healthy growth period in operations, recent events like covid 19 have made traditional areas like inventory management, conducting of meetings and information transmission (calls and WhatsApp) of the business quite ineffective because of the safety protocols for travelling to and from places and the failure to represent the issues accurately. A thorough needs assessment revealed that the problem the company faced was not with the lack of technology in communicating but with the attitude of the employees and the lapses of information flow in the organization. This project aims to design a comprehensive I.T and communication policy guideline that will provide guidelines to improve and manage the flow of communication and eradicate the lapses of information flow within Pharma George.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Project

Effective communication is essential for a business to thrive. Communication acts as a link between a company's decision-makers and its employees. When communication in a firm is ineffective, it may lead to dissatisfaction, uncertainty, and apprehension, leading to a decrease in the firm's productivity. In most firms, the managers put more effort into meeting targets than communicating effectively, and this causes a strain on the free flow of information. (Musheke & Phiri, 2021) Therefore, this project aims to provide Pharma George with a communication policy guideline that will enhance effective communication in the organization.

1.2 The Task

Pharma George faces an issue with communication across the branches. The task is to deliver an economically feasible yet effective methodology for improving Pharma George Company Limited's internal and external communication channels to improve customer acquisition and streamline corporate practices.

2.0 ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

According to Pharmaexcil, Ghana's pharmaceutical market is projected to grow in the coming years, supported by government plans to roll out universal health care (2020). In 2019, pharmaceutical sales in Ghana reached a staggering USD589mn and continued to grow in 2020 to USD620mn. The rise in pharmaceutical sales is slowing down as, according to Pharmexcil, by 2024, it is expected to achieve a compound annual growth of 9.8% to USD941mn. Also, as in the case of other African countries, Ghana has a negative trade balance. According to the Ghana health service, only 30% of the national requirement of pharmaceutical products are produced in Ghana, while the remaining 70% are imported. But this is looking to change as the government has made provisions to encourage local pharmaceutical industries to produce and manufacture their own drugs.

2.1 Company Profile

Pharma George Company Limited is a wholly-owned limited liability Ghanaian company engaged in pharmaceutical wholesaling, retailing, and manufacturing. It is registered and incorporated under the laws of Ghana and was issued with a certificate to commence business on November 26 2008. The pharmacy chain started operations in June 2009 with one (1) retail pharmacy situated at Kwabenya in Accra, Ghana. The chemist company is also registered to engage in pharmacy practice by the pharmacy council of Ghana. The wholesale pharmacy was established in 2014 to procure stocks and supplies for the Pharma George retail outlets and other retail facilities in Accra. The central warehouse was carved out of the wholesale facility with the initial purpose to receive boxed supplies from the wholesale for onward delivery to the retail chain. The small manufacturing unit covers the production of extemporaneous preparations and other allied

pharmaceutical products for Pharma George retail and other retail pharmacies in Accra. Pharma George Company Limited has over 80 employees and practises a top-down management approach. They have seven (7) retail outlets and a small-scale manufacturing unit. The firm is located near prime areas and hospitals. Pharma George's vision is to be a leading global player in the pharmaceutical industry. The mission statement is to promote good health by providing safe and efficacious medicines. The core values that bind the company and its staff and employees are urgency, excellent customer service, accountability, and stretchable goals.

2.2 Internal Analysis

With regards to the strengths of the organization, we discovered that; Pharma George has seven retail outlets with an impressive outlook and a great interior. These outlets are located near prime areas like Osu, Kwabenya and near hospitals. Some of these pharmacies operate 24/7, with a dedicated stock procurement and supply unit. Pharma George as a company has a good reputation.

Weaknesses

- There is inadequate capital.
- There are intermittent low stocks at the retail level. The wholesale facility can sometimes not meet the demands of the retail units, causing there to be low stocks at the retail units.
- There is uncoordinated procurement of stocks. Procurement at Pharma George Company Limited is done on an ad hoc basis; they are done based on the demand of that drug. Sometimes, the paymaster accounts are not involved in the stock

planning. In those cases, when there is an order, since they are not involved, the order is not factored into Pharma George's cash flow.

- Pharma George Company Limited has a weak customer base.
- There is weak networking and communication among the outlets. The primary means of communication at Pharma George Company Limited are WhatsApp and phone calls. If there is a shortage of drugs at one retail unit and they need to find out if the other retail units have the drug available, it sometimes takes time because of the delayed responses.
- Good organizational management is absent. Pharma George Company Limited lacks a board of directors, a general manager, a Human Resource team, and a finance team. They have a financial manager, but they do not have a team to support the manager.
- There is little to no standardization and uniformity of policies and operating procedures. Standardization establishes a clear set of well-defined instructions for carrying out each operational process. This means that there is no consistent way of working that is understood by all Pharma George employees. There is also no way to measure results and determine Pharma George's efficiency and productivity.

Opportunities

- Increase in Technological competence in the Ghana Pharmaceutical industry.
- The government's economic policy to support pharmaceutical companies in Ghana
- Increase in urbanized population, indicating a greater household purchasing power

- Ghana's attempt to fulfil its ambition of being the E.C.O.W.A.S. hub for pharmaceutical investment

Threats

- Competition from new pharmacies with better service attractions: Pharma George Company Limited may only have a small market share due to competition from larger retailers and manufacturers. If Pharma George fails to differentiate its products and services well, it risks being wiped out by market or industry giants.
- There is a high cost of credit and an adverse supply of credit terms.
- Unstable and adverse microeconomic conditions like inflation, externalities, and recession can threaten Pharma George. Price increases in the general market may have an impact on drug pricing. Lower-income people's purchasing power may be impacted, reducing the firm's customer base. Also, in the event of an economic downturn, the firm's ability to purchase goods in bulk and on credit may be adversely affected. The firm's operations and activities would also be impacted because the firm's financial base could become unstable.

3.0 INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

3.1 A Scan of the Industry

Pharma George is a member of Ghana's pharmaceutical industry, which includes over 100 registered pharmacies and several businesses. As a result, Ghana's pharmaceutical industry is one of the largest in West Africa (piplinepharma, n.d.). With the rapid growth of the general population and the spread of the Coronavirus in recent months and years, there has been a significant increase in foreign investment in small and large pharmaceutical companies. Most of Ghana's most prominent and top players are located near the country's largest cities, including Obuasi, Cape Coast, Tamale, Sunyani, and the multimillion-metropolis of Accra and Kumasi. According to a Ghana Healthcare (2019) study, "Ghana's pharmaceutical industry is dependent on foreign inputs and finished pharmaceutical products." Approximately 70% of Imports meet pharmaceutical demand, with local production accounting for only 30%." In 2019, the government aided the industry to encourage domestic production. Trade and tax structures have been put in place to assist them in increasing local development. In addition, as of 2017, many pharmaceutical inputs were subject to a zero value-added tax rate. The pharmaceutical industry comprises local, international, and multinational companies. The market is supplied by a combination of locally manufactured drugs and imported inputs primarily from Asia and Europe. Ghana Healthcare (2019) states that "the industry is largely saturated and concentrated in Accra." As such, the capital is home to 76 percent of the world's leading companies, owing to the city's enormous population.

Porter's 5 Forces

Porter's Five forces' is another tool that helped us understand the forces affecting the pharmaceutical industry regarding its competition.

Suppliers' power

According to Lutterodt and Seiter, the Ghanaian market is becoming more appealing to suppliers due to the country's overall economic growth and increased availability of financing through the N.H.I.S. (2010). There are currently about thirty-eight (38) pharmaceutical manufacturing units in Ghana, with approximately 20 actively involved in formulation manufacturing. The country is still heavily reliant on imports, with foreign manufacturers supplying roughly 70% of the market. Tobinco Pharmaceuticals Limited, Ayrton Drug, and Ernest Chemists Limited, to name a few, have significant bargaining power with Pharma George. This is because they are well-known drug manufacturing companies.

Furthermore, Pharma George does not represent a significant portion of the supplier's scale because they supply other top pharmaceutical companies. Pharma George's suppliers are also dominated by a small number of companies to which it sells and, as such, have a significant say in determining prices. Finally, Pharma George's reliance on these suppliers is essential to the company's survival. Without the suppliers, Pharma George would struggle to stay in business or thrive. However, the pharmaceutical company has done too much over the years to establish long-term relationships with its suppliers, which has positively impacted the company's operations.

Substitute Products

The availability of substitute pharmaceutical products in Ghana is known to be high. The pharmaceutical industry faces heavy competition in terms of substitute products as generic products are cheap. With increased and advanced technologies, consumers can find substitute medicine from other sources, and this affects many pharmacies, including

Pharma George Company Limited. There is also the growth in Herbal drugs use and the increased perception that those medicines work better and faster than the drugs sold in pharmacies.

New Entrants

The strict regulations and rules of the Ghanaian government on the approval of new drugs have led to the creation of a barrier in terms of high capital investment. This limits entry into the pharmaceutical industry, aside from the high costs required to enter the industry. Some patents serve as barriers to new entry since established Ghanaian pharmaceutical firms have differentiated themselves from one another and have built strong brand names with loyal customers. This has led to the difficulty for new companies entering the market.

Buyers' Power

Buyers are the key subjects when it comes to who has the greater power in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical industry. Buyers include patients and family members, and the leading influencers are the doctors. Influencers play a huge role since they influence buyers to purchase the drugs. But buyers, on the other hand, pose a strong bargaining power or hold on the pricing. Since Pharma George has a relatively small customer base, buyers can exercise power by seeking price reductions and threatening to move to other firms.

Rivalry

The pharmaceutical industry is one of the most competitive industries in Ghana. Most of the players in this industry are well-established companies with many years of experience with a large customer base. Many of which are Add Pharma, Crystal Tabs Pharmacy, NEB Pharmacy, Ernest Chemists Limited, Ruandy Pharmacy retail, etc. Profit

margins are high, and strict government regulations make it an extremely competitive industry. The rivalry between these various top pharmaceutical companies is because many of these companies want to improve their position in the market. Rivalry in Ghana in this sector is mostly in price competition, product introduction, etc.

PESTLE Analysis

To better understand the scope of Pharma George Company Limited in its industry, we undertook a P.E.S.T.E.L. analysis to study various economic, political, and social factors of possible stakeholders in that space and how they might retard or promote future interventions to the business strategy of Pharma George Company Limited.

Political

All industries operate within a political space. For a business to thrive, there should be the presence of an excellent political climate that enables all the entities' core competencies. Pharma George operates in Ghana, a politically conducive ground for most businesses in this modern-day. The political climate of Ghana is prescribed by a rule of law and heightened effects of democracy. In this light, Pharma George can operate without the threat of any disruptive political phenomenon like the coup d'état in 1966. Also, Ghana houses a government geared towards revamping the private sector. As Pharma George operates in this space, it can benefit from the periodic subsidies offered by the government on consumer goods such as everyday pharmaceutical products like paracetamol. These subsidies would reduce the cost of goods paid by Pharma George to its suppliers, increasing its ability to earn higher profits from the sale of these medications.

Economic

All institutions require favourable macro and microeconomic conditions to improve their chances of success. The steady growth in the disposable incomes of many Ghanaians

opens a new possibility for spending (Annim, 2017). With this extra cash on hand, most Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians tend to stock up on necessities that they may not have gotten in an earlier period. In most cases, they prioritize their health, accounting for the spike in healthcare expenditure, according to Martin, Hartman, Lassman & Catlin (2020). However, in most developing countries, this similar increase in household incomes ultimately contributes to increased inflation in the prices of goods and services. This inflation effect is often driven by rises in national taxation by the government, primarily to service the foreign debts accrued and for revenue generation purposes. As a result of the financial cycle, there is a spike in interest rates on credit facilities for pharmaceutical products needed by pharmacies, hospitals, and other healthcare providers.

Social

A study conducted by the World Health Organisation (2020) indicates that global obesity levels have had astoundingly high points in Africa since the period of famine and mass hunger decades ago. Medical professionals expressed concerns about the potential health risks that accompany the conditions of such individuals. In an interview under the U.W. Health Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Program, Dr Michael Garren (2019) lists severe ailments that arise from the global eating affliction dubbed obesity. These consequent diseases are sleep apnea, some variations of cancer, female infertility, heart disease and many others. Thus, there is a clear indication of the pharmaceutical industry's role in decreasing the number of obesity-caused deaths in Ghana and on the global platform through more innovative breakthroughs in medicinal treatments and some unconventional practices that source raw materials that are rich in naturally citric acid (N.D.T.V. Food, 2020).

Technology

Improvements significantly influence modern-day medicine in technology. In this era, technology has been the bedrock for many breakthroughs in research and development (R&Ds) across industries around the globe. It is no surprise that with the advancement in technologies, especially those in areas of biotech, many novel treatments for challenging medical conditions are deployed, and significant progress is being recorded. An article published by P.R. Newswire (2021) shows the progress being made by a biotech company with the new stage of clinical trials in treating mitochondria dysfunction diseases. This reveals the impact that technology has on the space and its ability to help pharmaceutical companies to achieve new ways of growing revenue for the sale of such proprietary solutions.

Legal

Pharmacies get the sick workforce well and active in their workplace again. Thus, the countries' pharmacies directly relate to the office and national productivity. Therefore, the pharmaceutical industry is strictly regulated across countries due to the sensitivity of its practices to the sustained growth of these countries. In Ghana, Pharma George's operations fall under the Pharmacy Council of Ghana (Ghana Legal, 2016). This body sees to the enforcement of regulations that prevent fraudulent and life-threatening acts in producing and selling pharmaceutical products.

Also, this body ensures that there is no abuse of consumer data by key pharmaceutical players. To this end, they monitor any tendencies of pharmaceutical agents to sell information or use the information to unduly extort consumers' monies through addictive manipulations of medications. The Pharmacy Council of Ghana employs the

functions of the Food and Drugs Authority to ensure that all agents in the industry behave up to the desired standards and to meter out sanctions for all lawbreakers. Some of the sanctions include but are not limited to fines and temporary suspension of license or a permanent ban on operations of agents.

Environmental

With more eco-friendly initiatives in force at the global and local levels throughout the world, pharmaceutical companies are changing ways of drug production that previously caused a great deal of harm to the environment. Now, the focus is to produce drugs to reduce their carbon footprint and minimize biotechnological pollutants in water and land areas (Shlah, Ogawa & Nicholson, 2017). Also, many companies like Ernest Chemist and Aryton Drugs focus more on Corporate Social Responsibility by helping charities and promoting environmental causes in line with the S.D.Gs.

3.2 Organizational SWOT

Table 1: SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weakness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good company reputation. • Dedicated stock procurement and supply unit for retail outlets. • Some Pharma George pharmacies operate 24/7 • Seven retail outlets which are located near hospitals and in prime areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate capital • Intermittent low stocks at the retail level. • Uncoordinated procurement of stocks. • Weak customer base • Ineffective communication and networking across the retail branches.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pharmacies have a great interior and an impressive outlook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of good organizational management. • Little to no standardization and uniformity of policies and operating procedures.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the technological competence in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical market. • Support of pharmaceutical companies in Ghana by the government. • Increase in the urbanized population. • Ghana's plan on becoming the E.C.O.W.A.S. hub for pharmaceutical investment. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition from new pharmacies with better service attractions. • High cost of credit and an adverse supply of credit terms. • Unstable and adverse microeconomic conditions

4.0 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS & NEEDS ASSESSMENT

4.1 Methodology

The work package we received demanded of us the need and urgency to identify the right tools to guide how we probed for deeper organizational and industry insight on the issue of communication being boosted by technology. The research participants were selected with the aid of a snowball sampling approach. This sampling technique meant that participants were selected mainly on a referral basis. The team agreed to use a qualitative approach to understand the problem better; its causes, personalities involved, personalities affected and the interconnectedness of retail pharmacies, their supply chains, and the market that these pharmacies serve. Thus, we identified these qualitative research techniques of data collection. These were interviews, literature reviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions.

First, we began our assessment of the work package by conducting literature reviews on existing works that spoke to the work package and its importance. The team gathered information from current works on communication benefits to employees or workers in corporations (Duncan, 2021). The team also assessed the role technology plays in improving organizational communication among workers (Prajapati, 2021). These articles show the relevance of the work package to stimulate the operations of Pharma George Company Limited and give relevance to the next research tool used in the stakeholder engagements.

Interviews were also selected as the primary data collection tool because they had the ability to probe the most in-depth response from the research participants. The participants who graciously gave us information during the interview sessions were the

Pharma George retail pharmacy heads and other employees of Pharma George, the head pharmacist of Oaklex Pharmacy and the private information technology officer of Pharma George. It is worth noting that the other research tools listed above were deployed in all stakeholder engagements.

4.2 Situational Analysis

The team used the selected research tools on the research participants within five (5) weeks to better understand the business and the kind of market that Pharma George Company Limited found itself. The insights were quite revealing and were grouped into three (3) main categories. These were “internal practices of Pharma George”, “The environment of operation”, and “Competition in the space”. The first group dealt with insights of the internal practices, people, working atmospheres and culture of the Pharma George company Limited. The second group focused on the big picture. Here, the team identified some significant suppliers in the Ghanaian pharmaceutical space and their various functions, supply chains and close relations. We also assessed the regulatory bodies of the Ghanaian pharmaceutical space.

For the Pharma George categories, we assessed the inner working of Pharma George Company Limited. Here, we interviewed retail heads of the retail chain to get a sense of what had in the organization and the possible differences in the corporate practices across the business. From interactions with the branch head of Pharma, George Kwabenya, we were informed that there was a void in the company’s upper management. The gap was due to the absence of a board of directors. However, he mentioned that some other long-serving branch managers of the seven retail outlets have taken on more administrative roles that aid the flow of information from general meetings down to the lower employees of the

company. Also, we interviewed an additional branch manager of the company, and the inter-branch differences were as clear as day. The Kwabenya branch has a yearning for new communication technologies, as indicated by Mr Isaac Mensah, the branch manager.

On the other hand, the Osu Branch was reluctant to try newer communication technologies as they prefer to use WhatsApp messages and phone calls for daily interactions across the organization. Also, we interviewed independent but closely affiliated parties to the Pharma George company. The individual was the founder of K.R. Concepts; Mr Richmond Abiwu had been operating in this capacity for the past seven years (by reference basis). He was selected because he was ideal to shed more light on the nature of the Pharma George company's relationship to technology adoption. Also, he is an I.T. person, so he could better explain what current technologies their clients use in their daily operations. He indicated that Pharma George has a proprietary software, Trade Master, used for inventory management. He said, "The software has been relatively new in the organization". However, the two branch managers who were asked questions about the existence of this software appeared uninformed. This was a clear indication of the heightened communications gaps within the organization. Mr Abiwu noted that the unwillingness of the Pharma George's staff to adapt to newer company technologies remained a concern for a business of such nature that has been in operations for some time. He pointed out that the Chief Executive Officer had a role to play in this issue of communication lapses as he heavily resorted to phone calls to communicate with employees on sensitive company issues like inventory checks or employee management.

Concerning Pharma George's operations environment, we interviewed the retail head of Oaklex Pharmacy situated at Lakeside. A liaison contacted the interviewee to the

group in the person of Naana Sarkodie. The meeting occurred on the third Monday of the five-week stakeholder engagement. In the interview with the head pharmacist of Oaklex Pharmacy Limited, the team asked questions based on the interview guide (in the appendix), and some interesting insights were discovered. She mentioned that her business was a multi-branch pharmacy (two closely situated branches) that was faced with the problem of uneven information due to the use of older technologies of inter-company communication like WhatsApp messages and phone calls. She also highlighted that the sales representatives hired then were to be individuals with intermediate educational qualifications like diplomas or, in rare cases, individuals with a bachelor's degree in Pharmacy.

She noted that the previous batch of employees were unwilling to adopt modern technologies like company integration software because they complained it was too complex. However, she pointed out that the adoption of newer and unique technologies like company software, a potential mobile application saw positive feedback when suggested in a meeting with staff in recent times. It was interesting to note that Pharma George was a supplier of medical products to Oaklex Pharmacy Limited through its wholesale unit. Both pharmaceutical companies shared similar suppliers like Tobinco, Aryton Drugs and Ernest Chemist for products such as aspirins, amino acids, and detergents.

The last class looked at the plays in Ghana's pharmaceutical industry. The industry is highly regulated by bodies like the National Chamber of Pharmacy and Food and Drugs Authority. The agents function as the supervisory body of the industry because the products sold by the players in this space can be highly detrimental to society if they are expired,

fake and illegally manufactured. Currently, the influence of covid-19 has made the pharmaceutical industry a hotspot for malicious business operations. Some bad nuts have set up all manner of businesses that sell generic healthcare products like detergents and acetaminophen-based drugs. Hardworking but ignorant Ghanaians highly patronize these uncertified drugs like acetaminophen-based drugs to protect themselves against the virus.

4.3 Needs Assessment/Analysis

The team channelled its manpower and resources into identifying the gap. The gap is defined as the root cause of the problem. For Pharma George, the gaps were spread across the organization. The need assessment was done with the guide of the need assessment plan. The plan shows the tools used, the stakeholder engaged, and the timetable for executing all the problem-discovery journeys. The team implemented the first phase of the needs assessment, some unique discoveries were made, and the scope became clearer. The objectives of the needs assessment were to identify the barriers hindering effective communication across the Pharma George company and to understand the current communication system at Pharma George. The feedback we got was grouped into two categories. These are “lower management bottlenecks” and “upper management”.

The first group of the categorization revealed the insights to the work package. The reason is that it was the heart of the business. Individuals about whom questions were asked were sales personnel, employees in charge of inventory and retail heads. In interactions with the retail heads, they noted that the educational level of lower staff presented a management challenge. The challenge was the difficulty in getting these employees to transition from the “pen-to-book” style of operations to the “computer-based” approach of doing business. The upper management complained that these hard-to-teach employees

often shunned the computers for communication and resorted to phone calls whenever they encountered a roadblock. Mr Mensah said, “It could take hours to get a mail on an enquiry made early in the morning”. Also, interactions conveyed the presence of slight nepotism at play. An interviewee noted that the somewhat questionable employee hiring practices gave rise to tricky situations if employees severely hampered productivity by putting themselves before the work.

The second group featured the role that the upper management played in stimulating the vices of the low-level employees. Here, it was discovered that the flexibility of high-profile individuals like the Chief Executive Officer hindered the business’ communication practices from evolving. Also, the vacancy of a key person like a Human Resource manager who would outlay the employees’ grievances to upper management gravely affected their productivity.

The conduction of the needs assessment led to the formulation of a comprehensive problem statement that encapsulated the current challenges faced by Pharma George Company Limited as the basis for drawing up a business case for the work package. The problem statement read, “Pharma George is a pharmaceutical company in Ghana facing the challenge of an ineffective internal and external communication system that affects optimum company efficiency, customer acquisition and uniformity of corporate practices across the organization.”

The team then reported its findings on technology’s role in a possible solution to the clients. The results pleased the clients, who were represented by Mr Isaac Mensah. He is head of the retail outlet in the Kwabenya branch of the Pharma George company retail chain. Mr Mensah lauded the team for its progress but critiqued the mannerism with which

the team approached the work package. He commented that the existing communication structures of the company were only as effective as the personnel operating them. Therefore, the team went back to the drawing board to analyze this new theme of “personnel”, its connection to the business, the current working conditions and employment contract particulars that shape their attitude toward work and productivity levels. The revised focus for the research was swiftly followed by some interviews of the employees at some Pharma George retail outlets who were asked probing questions with the aid of the revised interview guide displayed in the appendix.

4.4 Business Case

In the business case, we looked at the reasoning and justification for undertaking the project by simply evaluating the benefits and cost to seek validation. While creating our business case, we noticed several benefits for undertaking this project, and they are:

Benefits

- Higher business productivity due to less lapses in communication across the organization.
- More comprehensive employee hiring practices that account for employee agility.
- Improved and more formal adoption of information systems across the organization.
- Transparency within the business due to electronic or digital trails.
- Easier to break in new hires over time.

Cost

- High cost of employee training and re-training.

- Break in current business climate due to business processes (employee restructuring).
- Possibility of losing attached customers due to badmouthing by aggrieved ex-employees.

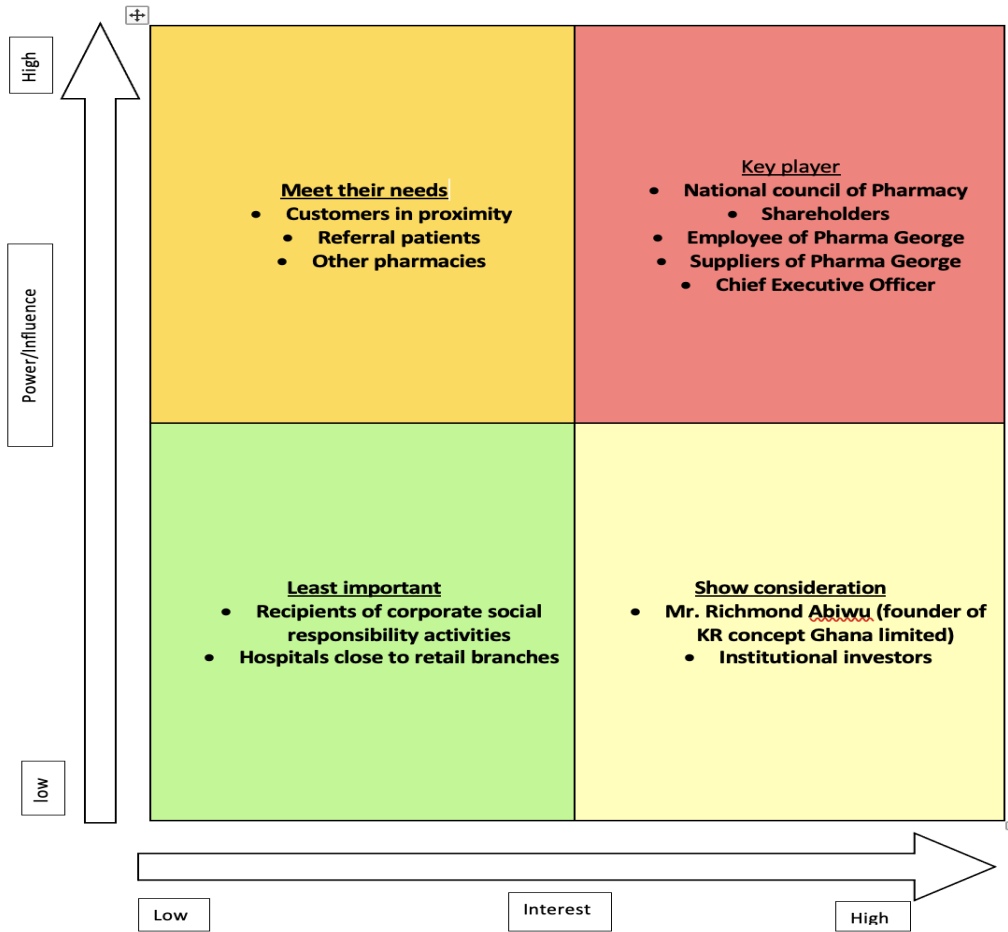
With the benefits of this project outweighing its cost, it was only suitable to go on undertaking the project.

4.5 Stakeholder Map

The stakeholder map was utilized to determine which group of Pharma George stakeholders had the most influence on the project. We realized as a group that we needed to apply this approach to avoid missing out on crucial stakeholders that could either favorably or adversely affect our project. According to our findings, consumers, referral patients, and other pharmacies come under the "Meet their requirements" category, indicating that they have strong impact but low interest. We had the National Council of Pharmacy, shareholders, employees, suppliers, and the Chief Executive Officer as major participants. These prominent actors are in the map's high impact and high interest area. Moving on, the "least important" stakeholders are represented by the bottom left corner, which includes recipients of corporate social responsibility efforts and hospitals near retail outlets. The last portion refers to the "show consideration" stakeholders, which includes high-interest but low-influence individuals such as Mr. Richmond Abiwu (Founder of K.R. Concept Ghana Limited) and institutional investors.

Figure 1: Stakeholder Map of Pharma George

Stakeholder Map Of Pharma George



5.0 SOLUTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

5.1 Solution

The task of this work package was to improve the communication of Pharma George. This task required the team to take a critical look at the business to establish a clear problem that could be solved to improve company-wide communication. The team had interactions with some employees of the inventory management department, the accounts officer and some retail heads across the business. The discussion results pointed to a general problem of a lapse in information flow on a department level to the branch to the company stage. The team further assessed the key players of the problem and identified that the attitude of the employees was one leading factor that accounted for the general break in the information chain of the business.

Further studies were done on the nature of this attitudinal problem. The insight revealed that the present company culture took on an informal outlook that hampers any formal communication systems that had been previously initiated in the business. The rationale for the informal nature of the business was speed and convenience. Although the team agreed that speed was essential to the company's competitiveness in the pharmaceutical industry, the team discovered from literary insights that a methodical communication approach was vital to give the best its cutting edge due to the structure, evaluation, effectiveness, and future improvements that it brought.

Therefore, the team composed a cocktail of solutions to inspire structure, re-assessment, collaboration, and being fast-paced and human-focused.

PHARMA GEORGE'S IT AND COMMUNICATION POLICY GUIDELINE

This document entails various policies that will shape expectations and provide guidelines that will improve and manage the flow of communication and eradicate the lapses of information flow within Pharma George. The policy document would include a chain communication brief, an information flow infographic, a 2-month communication training outline, intra branch and town hall meeting schedule, and structured policy of the use of the company intranet (Trade Master).

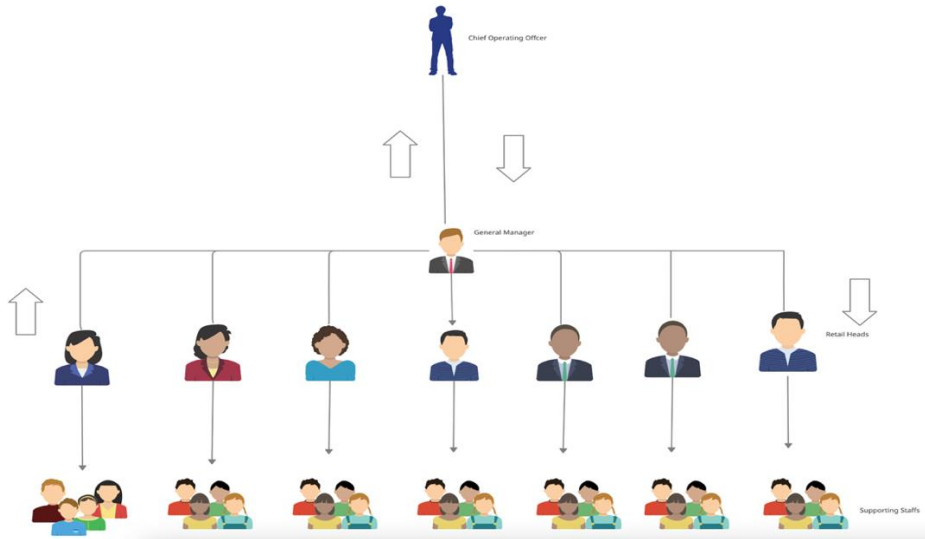
Workplace Communication/Employee Internal Communication

Workplace communication is the sharing and exchange of information within an organization. Employees at Pharma George are encouraged to communicate with their heads, peers, and subordinates productively and contribute to achieving company goals.

Chain Communication brief

Chain communication refers to the hierarchical order of activities in a setting concerning information flow and communication. Below is an infographic of how the flow of information at Pharma George is to be carried out in a chain communication. Employees should report to their immediate head, who will act as the direct representative of the General manager and Chief Operating Officer.

Figure 2: Information flow in a chain communication



Mandatory 2-month communication training.

Contractual employment of a communication trainer will be arranged to handle a 2-month training programme. This will also be done as part of the orientation session for new hires and for incumbent staff.

The areas to be covered in the programme will be.

- How to use the Trade Master software
- What is Emotional intelligence: Developing self-motivation, developing an effective relationship
- Chain line of communication briefing.
- Active listening Skills
- Healthy communication: how to and not to communicate in the workplace
- Barriers to effective communication
- Proper communication etiquette
- Types of communication tools and benefits.
- Body language reading and understanding
- How to fully utilize Company Intranet

- Pros and Cons of using WhatsApp at workplaces.

Meetings

Meetings will be a formal method of internal communication that will occur regularly throughout all retail outlets, the central warehouse, and the manufacturing unit. Each branch must meet once every month on the last Friday to discuss goals, assign and track tasks, and give feedback and essential updates. Retail heads of all branches should lead meetings, and minutes should be forwarded to the general manager, who then hands them over to C.E.O. if need be.

Townhall Meetings

We at Pharma George Chemist Limited believe in open communication throughout the organization and in giving all employees access to the company's management. This meeting will allow lower or upper staff employees to come together to share concerns, find a way to manage problems, and improve on tasks and objectives set out. This town hall meeting is held on the first Monday of each month.

Company Intranet

All-important communication from the company to the employees will be done through Pharma George's intranet system – Trade Master software. Every employee will be signed on to the system. Company-wide information, new hires, C.E.O. messages, events line-ups such as meetings, training programmes and a suggestion section will be found on our intranet. Employees will only have access when they are logged onto the interface and will need to log off when out of work.

Communication tools

Aside from in-person meetings, video chat tools such as zoom, and Microsoft Teams will be used frequently for meetings.

Also, WhatsApp will be limited to only employees and retail heads of a particular branch and should only be used for informal interactions, whilst Trade Master software will be used for all business-related interactions.

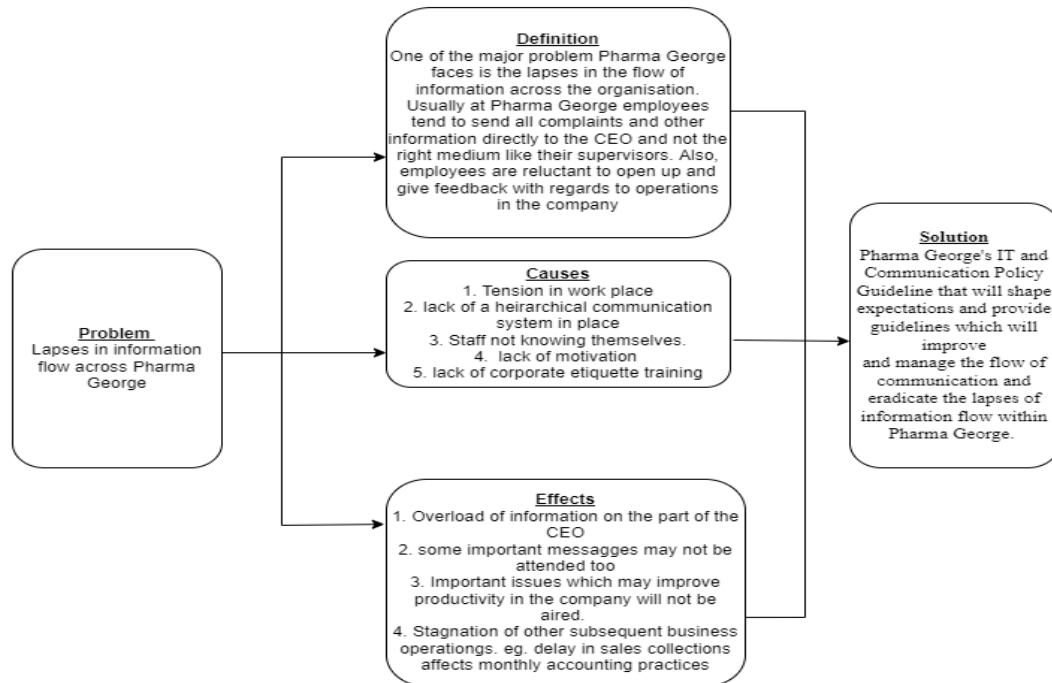
Phone calls will mostly be made if there is a need to communicate with people from other branches.

Organization Goals and how solution Meets them

Like every reputable company, Pharma George has a set of goals that drives its business operations. The goals are driven by some fundamental company values like urgency, excellent customer service and accountability. For the company, it seeks to deliver quality, fast and comprehensive customer service that ensures customers get their pharmaceutical needs met. The solution of chain communication would deliver quality customer service through regular workshops sessions that seek to improve the business's human capital. Also, when introduced, the effective feedback session would create an enabling environment that stimulates heightened employee initiative. It is expected that with the employees realizing their value to the firm and constantly showing them this reality, they would offer higher and more immersive customer service to potential customers. From the sales clerk to the retail heads, they would deliver their service in a manner that gives off the sentiment that the company values the customer as a member of the Pharma George family.

5.2 Problem-Solution fit

Figure 3: Problem-Solution fit



5.3 Implementation Plan

Project Goals/ Objectives

For this project, our main objective is that the employees of Pharma George will be able to communicate effectively using a chained communication system within the next six months. Also, the way employees communicate within the next five months will be professional. Our goal as a team is to bridge communication gaps in Pharma George Company Limited.

Success Criteria

From our conversations with our client, Pharma George company limited, what they deem a success regarding our project is that the solution should be clear and easily understood. It should also provide ways in which the top management and employees can easily

communicate amongst themselves and, in the long run, help in increasing efficiency and productivity in the organization.

Scope Statement

<p>Project title: Leveraging technology to improve communication</p> <p>Date: 22/03/2022 Prepared by: Naana Sarkodie</p>
<p>Project Justification: Pharma's communication and policy guidelines. This guideline manages the flow of information within and outside the organization. It facilitates meaningful and essential communication for the productivity of employees. It outlines the chain Communication System. This system allows for information flow from top management to employees and vice versa. It also outlines the meeting times amongst the different branches in the organization and the use of Trade Master across branches. These policies will improve and manage the flow of communication within Pharma George and eliminate information flow lapses. This project will last for five months.</p>
<p>Product Characteristics and Requirements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The guidelines will be clear and concise.2. The guideline will contain information on how and when meetings should be held.3. The Trade Master software will be user friendly.4. The Trade Master software will provide several levels of security. When Pharma George employees enter their security information to access the main corporate intranet, they will gain access to the entire software.5. The Trade Master software must be accessible through an Internet browser approved by the company.

6. The Trade Master software must be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with one hour per week dedicated to system maintenance and other periodic maintenance as needed.

Human and Other resources

Table 2: Human and other resources

Activity	Human resources	Technology resource/ other resources
Chain communication system	Heads of retail outlets, Chief Operating Officer, Employees	Organogram
Pharma George's I.T. and Communication plan	C.E.O. of Pharma George, employees of Pharma George	Microsoft Word
Training program on communication and the use of trade master software	Pharma George Employee, Head of K.R. concepts(Mr. Abiwu), employees of Pharma George	Microsoft word, communication training courses, Trade master software
Inter-branch meetings	Employees of Pharma George	Zoom, Microsoft Teams
Communication on Trade master software	Head of K.R. concepts(Mr. Abiwu), Heads of retail outlets, Chief Operating Officer, Employees	Trade master software

Risk Analysis

The team would use the brainstorming technique to identify and assess risks that could positively or negatively impact the project. The team will attempt to generate ideas for project risks during brainstorming by amassing ideas randomly and without judgment. This will assist the team in compiling a comprehensive list of risks to be used in quantitative and qualitative risk analysis. To encourage team members to contribute ideas, the team leader will introduce new ideas for potential risks that the project may face. After the ideas have been gathered, the team leader will group and categorize them to make them more understandable.

To monitor risk activities, we will also use a risk score register. The risks would be recorded in the register component. The risk's likelihood and effect would be represented visually, compared to other risks, and prioritized in a logical order by the score. A risk score matrix template is provided below. The value ranges from 1 to 50, with 1 indicating low risk and 50 indicating an extremely high risk.

- Low risk has little to no potential to increase costs, does not disrupt schedules, or degrade performance. Low risks are defined as having an exposure value of less than 20.
- A moderate risk could result in increased costs, a disruption in schedule, or a loss of performance. Risk exposures ranging from 20 to 39 are considered moderate.
- High risk is likely to result in a significant increase in expense, a disruption in schedule, or a deterioration in performance. High risk is defined as risks ranging from 40 to 50.

Table 3: Risk score matrix

		IMPACT				
PROBABILITY		Negligible	Minor	Moderate	Serious	Critical
“Very unlikely” to occur.	1	3	5	8	10	
“Unlikely” to occur.	2	6	10	16	20	
“May occur” about half of the time.	3	9	15	24	30	
“Probably” will occur.	4	12	20	32	40	
“Very likely” to occur.	5	15	25	40	50	

The team will record the outcomes of risk responses and evaluate them like the picture shown below.

Figure 44: Risk score register

Risk Register					
ID	Description of risk	Impact	Risk response	Risk level	Risk owner
1	reluctance of employees to attend training sessions	employees will still have a bad tonation when communicating with other employees or customers	orientation of employees to know the consequences that arise when they are rude when communicating	high	Julian Sapara-Grant
2	reluctance of employees to attend branch meetings	employees will not know the progress of other employees in other branches	encouraging employees to attend meeting and also offering them items like free breakfast or lunch when they attend meetings to encourage them to attend	moderate	Naana Sarkodie
3	tight work schedules	this will prevent employees from attending communication training sessions and inter-branch meetings	work around the schedules of the employees to come up with a favourable meeting time for all employees	high	Michael Enyan
4	fear on the part of employees in giving accurate and honest feedbacks	CEO, heads and employees would not know which aspect of the organisation they should work on to increase productivity and	use anonymous forms to collect feedback so employees would not be scared to air their views	high	Naana Sarkodie
5	inability of employees to use Trademaster software	employees would not have a secured way of sharing information amongst themselves	using a user friendly interface that allows employees with little or no educational background to utilise	moderate	Michael Enyan

Implementation timeline

Figure 55: Implementation plan timeline

Implementation Plan Timeline						
No.	Milestone	Activity	Duration	Party Responsible	Venue	Team Member in charge
1	Company guidelines and policies					
2		Distribution of company guideline and policies to employees	3 weeks	CEO of Pharma George, Heads of retail outlets, warehouse and manufacturing unit	In-person	Julian Sapara-Grant
3	Chain communication system					
4		Introduce the chain communication system to retail heads, manager, warehouse and manufacturing heads	1 week	CEO of Pharma George	Online / In-person	Julian Sapara-Grant
5		Introduce the chain communication system to all other employees	1 week	Heads of retail outlets, warehouse and manufacturing unit	In-person (All retail outlets) / Online	Michael Enyan
6		Implement chain communication system across the organisation	3 months	CEO of Pharma George, Heads of retail, manufacturing outlet and warehouse	In-person (All retail outlets)	Naana Sarkodie
7	Training sessions					
8		Introducing the communications training outline to employee in charge of training program in each branch	3 weeks	Retail heads of each branch	In-person (All retail outlets)	Michael Enyan
9		Communications training program for employees	2 months	Employee in charge of training, heads of retail outlets	In-person (All retail outlets) / Zoom	Julian Sapara-Grant
10		Training program on the use of the TradeMaster Software	1 month	KR Concepts	In-person (All retail outlets) / Zoom	Naana Sarkodie
11	Monthly meetings					
12		Meeting with employees to discuss goals, feedback and any important update in each branch	last Friday of every month for 3 months	Heads of retail outlets, warehouse and manufacturing unit	Zoom calls / In-person	Naana Sarkodie
13		Meeting with employees and top management across the organisation to discuss goals, feedback and any important update	1st Monday of every month for 3 months	CEO, Manager, Heads of retail outlets, warehouse and manufacturing unit	Zoom calls	Michael Enyan

Implementation plan metrics

Key performance indicators that show progress towards our project's goals are:

- Growth in sales per retail outlet by 10% monthly.
- Increase in the number of new customers by 5% monthly at all retail outlets.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This section of the report seeks to deliver a concise overview of the project. The chapter will also highlight some challenges experienced in the data collection process of the project. The chapter will end with some insights learnt from the project's execution.

The team successfully implemented the project's core features, from the problem assessment through a rigorous needs assessment program to ideation for a potential solution, and finally, the detailed execution or implementation plan. The needs assessment and problem analysis results were followed by an extensive solution ideation phase where all key stakeholder inputs were drawn on to create the ideal solution to the work package at hand, the **PHARMA GEORGE'S IT AND COMMUNICATION POLICY GUIDELINE**. The proposed solution was a framework that sought to structure, formalize, and re-vitalize existing and new business communication channels, focusing on the training and re-training of the business's existing and future staff. Some structures needed for the solution to work include an open channel for communication. Ideally, this should be a friendly space that allows for critique and meaningful contribution to business operations. Also, there needs to be a thorough financial appraisal of current business assets accounting for any relevant financial systems that can accommodate rigorous training sessions. If there is a situation where the financial muscle is absent, there needs to be an allocation of funds, preferably from profits, to fund this proposed solution.

A potential threat to the solution that the company needs to look out for is the employee attitude towards change. This should be assessed critically as the employees are an essential factor in the proposed solution's smooth running. Thus, the landscape should be constantly monitored as a drop-in work attitude or resistance in ineffective engagement in training sessions could directly impact the solution's effectiveness. Additionally, the current team

chemistry should be monitored closely as the solution requires a conscious team effort to excel. Therefore, some obstructions in the form of some bad blood among work colleagues or department members not being on the same page could pose a dire challenge to any attempts at reviving the business' weakened communication channels. In future, the company needs to sell the bigger picture to current and incoming employees to promote the longevity of improvement structures to be undertaken now and in the future. This can be done by consciously making efforts to establish a company culture that applauds the progression of business operation and despises regression of the business system. This could be done in frequent progress reports that depict positive business gains since the inception of the proposed and periods without the proposed solution.

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Appendix

Interview Guide for Top Management

This document serves as a guide to the researchers. The interview may not follow in exactly the same flow; or questions may be asked in a different way during the actual interview. The researchers may paraphrase and / or change the flow of the interview to suit the respondent and / or the context / culture where the interview is held if it better addresses the research objectives.

Part 1: Introductions and Purpose of Research

- Researchers would begin by introducing themselves, Ashesi University and the current applied project being worked on.
- The researchers would also explain the need for a voice/video recorder and address the issue of confidentiality.
- Researchers would also make it clear that there are no wrong answers, and all opinions are welcome.

Part 2: Interviewee Introductions

- Could you please introduce yourselves? (Name, Age etc.)
- What work do you do? How long have you been working there?
- How has work been for you throughout the pandemic

Part 3: Pharma George's communication structure

- What is the organizational structure of Pharma George?
- How many employees and staff make up Pharma George?
- What are the means of communication amongst the various branches and organizational heads of Pharma George? How regular is it?

- Have there been any challenges in communicating with the various branches?
- How often does top management embark on feedback meetings?
- How important will it be to leverage technology in order to improve communication?
- What current communication structures exist between each retail outlet?

Interview Guide for Employees

This document serves as a guide to the researchers. The interview may not follow in the same flow; or questions may be asked in a different way during the actual interview. The researchers may paraphrase and / or change the flow of the interview to suit the respondent and / or the context / culture where the interview is held if it better addresses the research objectives.

Part 1: Introductions and Purpose of Research

- Researchers would begin by introducing themselves, Ashesi University and the current applied project being worked on.
- The researchers would also explain the need for a voice/video recorder and address the issue of confidentiality.
- Researchers would also make it clear that there are no wrong answers, and all opinions are welcome.

Part 2: Interviewee Introductions

- Could you please introduce yourselves? (Name, Age etc.)
- What work do you do? How long have you been working there?
- How has work been for you throughout the pandemic

Pharma George's communication structure

- How many employees make up the department in which you work in?
- How long have you been at Pharma George?
- What is your most preferred means of communication across the various departments as well as branches?
- How often do you communicate with top management?
- Have there been any challenges in communicating with the various branches?
- How important will it be for you to leverage technology in order to improve communication?
- What current communication structures exist amongst employees in your retail outlet?