

Essentials of Communication

Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to understand

- ◆ Formal and Informal Communication
- ◆ Interdepartmental
- ◆ Verbal, Nonverbal and Written
- ◆ Communication Channels
- ◆ Barriers to Effective Communication
- ◆ Planning and composing Business messages

"Worthless words are doubly unprofitable: the listeners' enjoyment is lost, and the speaker's own virtues vanish".

Kural (Verse 194)

13.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that Communication is so fundamental that without it no organisation can exist and function effectively towards achieving its objectives. Communication is the principal means by which members of an organisation work together. It helps to bind them together, enabling them to react to and influence each other. It flows in different directions within the organisation : downward, upward, horizontally and diagonally. No manager can be effective in his job unless he is able to communicate. It is, therefore, apt to call communication the "life-blood" of an organization. As Sir John Harvey-Jones says, "*communication is the single most essential skill.*" Professional and result-oriented organisations are always looking for managers who can communicate persuasively and competently. It has been pointed out that about nine tenths of a manager's time is spent in communicating, one way or the other. It lies at the very heart of management. Powerful concepts in management such as participation, empowerment and involvement revolve around communication.

Given below are some of the factors responsible for the growing importance of communication:

(a) Growth in the size and multiple locations of organisation: Most of the organisations are growing larger and larger in size. The people working in these organisations may be

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spread over different states of a country or over different countries. Keeping in touch, sending directions across and getting feedback is possible only when communication lines are kept working effectively.

(b) Growth of trade unions: Over the last so many decades trade unions have been growing strong. No management can be successful without taking the trade unions into confidence. Only through effective communication can a meaningful relationship be built between the management and the workers.

(c) Growing importance of human relations: Workers in an organisation are not like machines. They have their own hopes and aspirations. Management has to recognise them above all as sensitive human beings and work towards a spirit of integration with them which effective communication helps to achieve.

(d) Public relations: Every organisation has a social responsibility, towards customers, government, suppliers and the public at large. Communication with them is the only way an organisation can project a positive image of itself.

(e) Advances in Behavioural Sciences: Modern management is deeply influenced by exciting discoveries made in behavioural sciences like psychology, sociology, transactional analysis etc. All of them throw light on subtle aspects of human nature and help in developing a positive attitude towards life and building up meaningful relationships. And this is possible only through communication.

(f) Technological advancement: The world is changing very fast, owing to scientific and technological advancements. These advancements deeply affect not only methods of work but also the composition of groups. In such a situation proper communication between superiors and subordinates becomes very necessary.

13.2 The Process of Communication

Communication is a dynamic, transactional (two-way process) in which there is an exchange of ideas linking the sender and receiver towards a mutually accepted direction or goal consisting of seven elements:

1. Sender (Source): The process of communication begins with a sender, the person who has an idea and wants to share it. A computer programmer explaining a new program to a co-worker, accountant giving financial report to the superior are all examples of sender of communication.

2. Encoding: The sender must choose certain words or non-verbal methods to translate the idea into a message. This activity is called encoding. While encoding a message, one needs to consider what contents to include, how the receiver will interpret it and how it may affect one's relationship. A simple "thank-you" message will be relatively easy. In contrast, to inform 200 employees of a bad news about salary cut requiring carefully planned messages.

3. Message: For communication to occur your receiver should first get the message. A message is any signal that triggers the response of a receiver. Messages could be verbal (written or spoken) or nonverbal (such as appearance, body language, silence, sounds, yawns, sighs etc.)

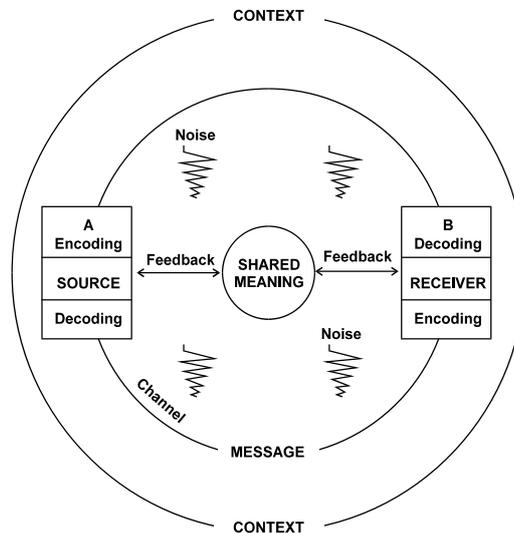
4. Channel: How will you send your message? Should it be sent via an electronic word processing system or through the printed word or through graphic symbol on paper, or via the medium of sound.

The choice of channel or medium (written or oral) is influenced by the inter relationships between the sender and the receiver. It also depends upon the urgency of the message being sent.

5. Receiver: A receiver is any person who notices and attaches some meaning to a message. In the confusing and imperfect world of business, however, several problems can occur. The message may never get to the receiver. It might be sent but lie buried under a mountain of files on the recipient's desk. If the message is oral, the listener might forget it.

6. Decoding: Even if the message reaches intact to its intended receiver, there is no guarantee that it will be understood as the sender intended it to be. The receiver must still decode it - Attaching meaning to the words or symbols. It may be noted that decoding is not always accurate.

7. Feedback: Ultimately the receiver reacts or responds to the communication sent by the sender. The response could be based on clear interpretation of the symbols sent or it could be based on misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the symbols sent. Whatever the response of a receiver to a sender is, it is known as feedback. Feedback is an important component of the communication process, because ultimately the success or failure of the communication is decided by the feedback we get.



Communication Process

Forms of Communication: All communication passes through some well-defined stages or positions in the organisation. Everybody is familiar with the phrase 'through proper channel'

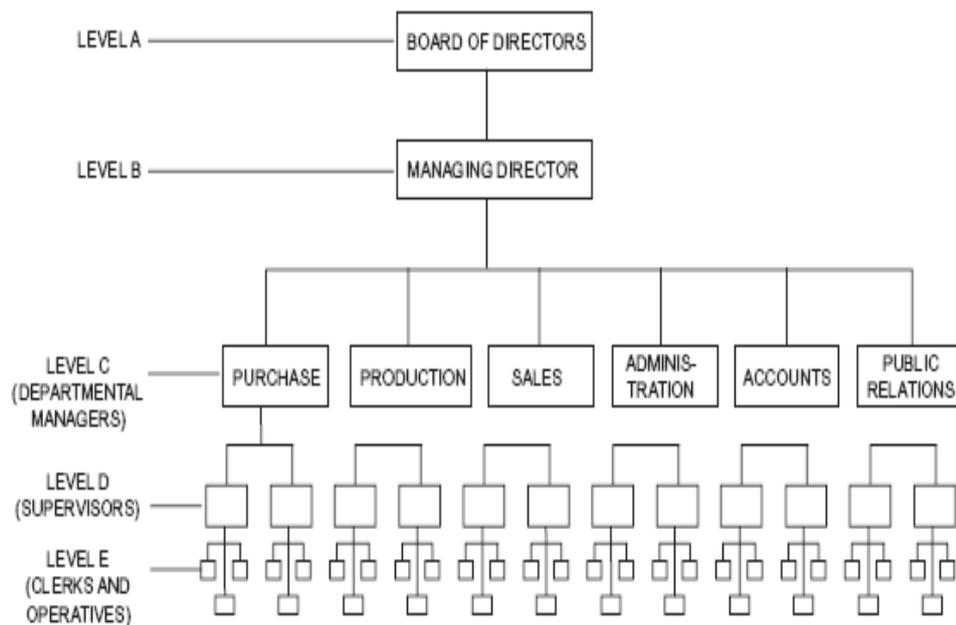
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which means that the sender of a written communication means to pass it on to the addressee through someone occupying an important position in the hierarchical system of the organisation. In this way the word 'channel' means the position or point through which the communication passes So, we can divide the channels of communication into two categories:

- (a) Formal
- (b) Informal

13.3 Formal Communication

A formal communication flows along prescribed channels which all organizational members desirous of communicating with one another are obliged to follow. Every organisation has a built-in hierarchical system that can be compared to a pyramid. It can, therefore, be understood that communication normally flows from top downwards. But it is not always so. Communication in an organisation is multidimensional or multidirectional.



(An average organisational structure)

Given below are the directions in which communications are sent:

- (a) Downward
- (b) Upward
- (c) Horizontal or Lateral
- (d) Diagonal or Crosswise

Formally a clerk working in any section cannot directly communicate with a Managing Director but has to follow the reporting hierarchy. It has been called "the main line of the organisation's operational communication". In this are included the reports, records and other forms that supply working information to the various parts of the organisation, orders, instructions and messages that flow up and down in the hierarchical system and the letters, sales presentations, advertising and publicity material that go out to the public. These forms of communication just do not happen by themselves.

They are carefully thought out and well designed. Great care is taken in their design and movement.

Advantages of formal communication:

- The formal channels account for most of the effectiveness of communication. As has been said earlier great care has to be taken in sending across any letter or report through the 'proper' formal channel.
- Formal channels cover an ever – widening distance as organizations grow. Through them it is easier to reach out to the branches of an organisation spread far and wide.
- The formal channels, because of their tendency to filter information, keep the higher level managers from getting bogged down.
- Formal channels of communication consolidate the organisation and satisfy the people in managerial position.

	Downward Communication	Upward Communication	Horizontal (Lateral) Communication
<i>Definition</i>	Superior to subordinate	Subordinate to superior	Between co-worker with different areas of responsibility
<i>Potential Benefits</i>	Prevention/correction of employee errors Greater job satisfaction Improved morale	Prevention of new problems and solution of old ones Increased acceptance of management decisions	Increased co-operation among employees with different duties Greater understanding of organisation's mission
<i>Potential Problems</i>	Insufficient or unclear messages Message overload Message distorted as it passes through one or more intermediaries	Superiors may discourage, disregard, or downplay importance of subordinates' messages Supervisors may unfairly blame subordinates for unpleasant news	Rivalry may occur between employees from different areas Specialisation makes understanding difficult Information overload discourages contacts Physical barriers discourage contact Lack of motivation

Formal Communication in Organisations-Benefits & Problems

13.4 Informal Communication

Side by side with the formal communication there exists on a much larger scale, an informal channel of communication or a secondary network of information. Its source lies in man's compulsive instinct to communicate or talk out whatever he feels and thinks with his fellow beings and throw all norms to the winds. The rumour mill is always working in any organisation. The larger the organization, the more active the rumour mill. It has come to be called the 'grapevine' in management literature. Quite often, it also contains some useful information. That is why, it cannot be altogether ignored.

Factors leading to the grapevine phenomenon:

The grapevine becomes active when the following factors are present:

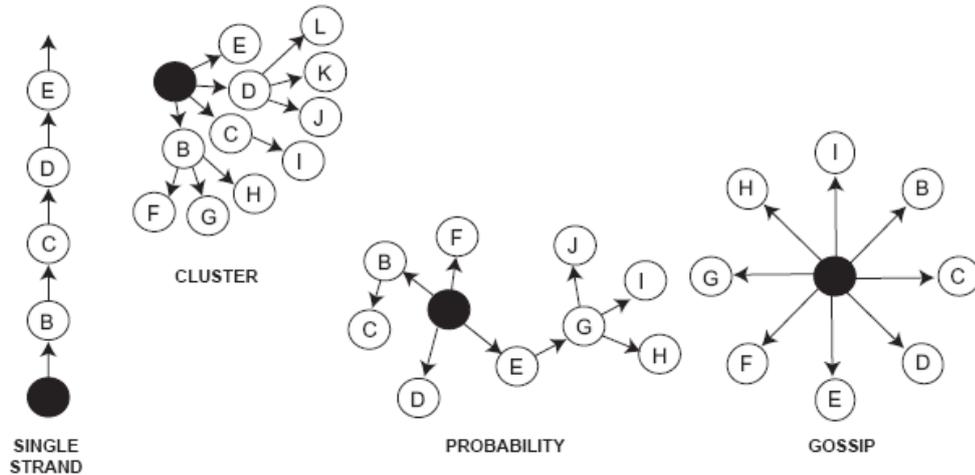
- (a) Feeling of uncertainty or lack of sense of direction when the organisation is passing through a difficult period.
- (b) Feeling of inadequacy or lack of self confidence on the part of the employee, leading to the formation of groups.
- (c) Formation of a coterie or favoured group by the manager, giving other employees a feeling of insecurity or isolation. People operating in such circumstances will be filled with all sorts of ideas and will share them with like minded companions, at whatever level they may be. Mostly they find them at their own level, but other levels are not barred. This type of communication is being seriously studied by psychologists and management experts.

13.5 Grapevine Chains

Specialists in this field have identified four types of grapevine chains:

- (a) **Single Strand Chain:** In this type of chain, 'A' tells something to 'B' who tells it to 'C' and so on. This type of chain is the least accurate in passing on the information or message.
- (b) **Gossip Chain:** In it, a person seeks out and tells everyone the information he has obtained. This chain is often used when information or a message regarding a 'not-on-job' nature is being conveyed.
- (c) **Probability Chain:** In it, individuals are indifferent to the persons to whom they are passing some information. This chain is found when the information is somewhat interesting but not really significant.
- (d) **Cluster Chain:** In this type of chain, 'A' tells something to a few selected individuals and then some of these individuals inform a few other selected individuals.

It has been found out that the cluster chain is the dominant grapevine pattern in an organisation. Generally only a few individuals, called 'Liaison individuals' pass on the information they have obtained and then they are likely to share it with the people they trust. Most informal communication flows through this chain.



Transmission Of Information Along Grapevine

Merits of the grapevine phenomenon

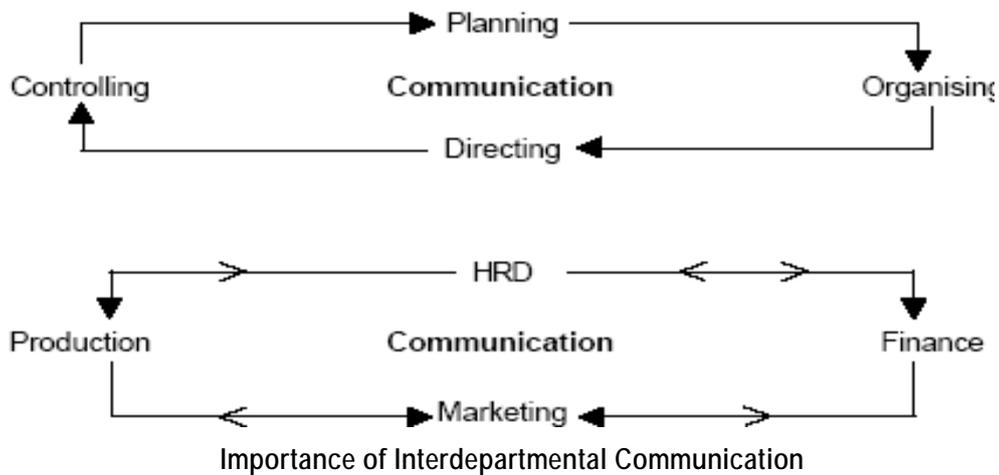
- Speedy transmission:** The greatest merit of this phenomenon is that it transmits information very speedily. The very moment a worker comes to know that something is 'top secret' or 'confidential' he tries to look into it or have some idea of it and pass it on to others. Thus it spreads within minutes.
- Feedback value:** It is primarily through the grapevine that the managers or top bosses of an organisation get the feedback regarding their policies, decisions, memos etc. The feedback reaches them much faster through the informal channel than through the formal channel.
- Support to other channels:** The grapevine or informal channel functions as a supplementary or parallel channel of communication. The formal channels not only take more time but also impose certain constraints on the process of communication.
- Psychological satisfaction:** The grapevine gives immense psychological satisfaction to the workers and strengthens their solidarity. It draws them nearer to each other and thus keeps the organisation intact as a social entity.

Demerits of the grapevine phenomenon

- The information spread through the grapevine is less credible than the one given by the formal channel. Since the grapevine spreads information through the word of mouth it cannot always be taken seriously.
- The grapevine does not always carry the complete information. Thus one may not get the complete picture on its basis.
- The grapevine often distorts the picture or often misinforms. As its origin lies in the rumour mill it may spread any kind of stories about responsible people. In this way it may spoil the image of the organisation.

13.6 Interdepartmental Communication

The word department comes from the French word *departir*, which means "to Separate." Communication between departments is essential to collaborate and achieve the objectives of the organisation. Departments in an organization are like rooms in a house. Departments divide and create barriers; but Without their cooperation it would be virtually impossible for an organisation to function.



Most organizations, to some degree, have difficulties with interdepartmental communication. Unfortunately, the problem is frequently overlooked and, even when recognized, often the symptoms are treated instead of the causes.

Avoiding unnecessary conflict, poor performance, time delays, and decisions that work at cross purposes are compelling reasons for taking active measures to improve interdepartmental communication. Major causes of interdepartmental communication problems are:

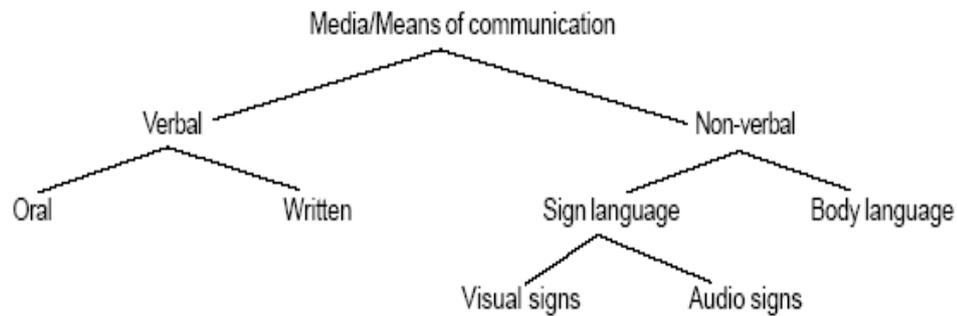
Departments Are Physically Separated: Office design may create barriers to effective interdepartmental relationships, because it subconsciously restricts natural communication impulses. To a great extent, office design determines who has access to whom by creating barriers to some departments and bridges to others. Because each office is unique, special factors have to be considered in each organization to make changes that will facilitate more effective communication between departments.

Departments Perform Separate Functions: Barriers are also caused by different priorities. What may be the first priority for department X may be the last priority for department Y. Ordinarily this may not be a problem, except when department X is dependent on department Y, a destructive sequence of impatience, tension, and distrust may prevail. Territory battles usually occur because departments fight over scarce resources, prestige, or such other factors. But who really wins? Who loses? Even though a particular department may "win," the

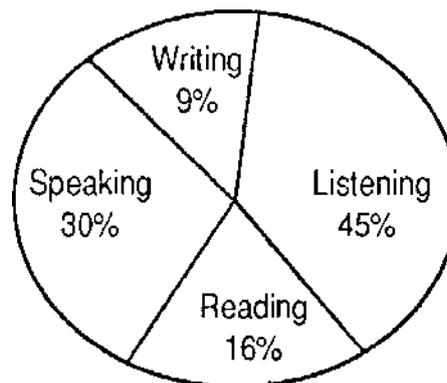
customer usually loses. The competitor may even win. Customer service or a competitive threat should inspire and bridge the gaps between departments.

13.7 Communication Media

After the discussion of the meaning and importance, and dimensions of communication it is worthwhile to have a look at the means/media of communication. Specially after considering the directions/dimensions of communication we can understand that there may be various occasions requiring different types of communication. All communication cannot be of the same type and cannot flow through the same means. Much depends on who sends a message to whom and for what purpose. It must also be understood that a human being has at his command a number of means of communication.



Oral Communication: According to a research, an average manager in general spends only 9% of his/her time in writing, 16% in reading, 30% in speaking and 45% in listening, as shown in the following figure



Oral communication, which is face-to-face communication with others, has its own benefits. When people communicate orally they are able to interact, they can ask questions and even test their understanding of the message. In addition people can also relate and comprehend the non-verbal, which serves far more than words. By observing facial expressions, eye

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contact, tone of voice, gestures, postures, etc., one can understand the message better.

The only shortcoming of oral communication is that more often than not it is spontaneous and if one communicates incorrectly the message will not get understood. It is primarily due to this reason one needs to develop effective oral communication skills as a message, if not understood at appropriate time, can lead to disaster.

It is said that it does not matter what you say, what matters is how you say it. Your way of saying includes your choice of words, and your confidence and sincerity.

Oral communication is characterized by seven Cs – Candidness, Clarity, Completeness, Conciseness, Concreteness, Correctness, and Courtesy. These act as principles for choosing the form (style) and content (matter) of oral communication. Oral communication should provide a platform for fair and candid exchange of ideas.

In simple terms, the communicator should follow the following –

- Consider the objective.
- Think about the interest level of the receiver.
- Be sincere.
- Use simple language, familiar words.
- Be brief and precise.
- Avoid vagueness and generalities.
- Give full facts.
- Assume nothing.
- Use polite words and tone.
- Cut out insulting message.
- Say something interesting and pleasing to the recipient.
- Allow time to respond.

Unlike the printed word (of the written message), the spoken word (in oral communication) is ephemeral (short-lived). The listener cannot turn back to the spoken word as the reader can, in case he misses its meaning, while reading it. This is an inherent limitation of speech. To overcome this limitation, the listener has to listen closely and attentively. And the speaker should converse slowly, with proper semantic pauses, to enable the listener receive and register in the mind whatever is heard. There should be a due correlation between the pace of speaking and the rate of listening. Research has established that an individual speaks nearly 125 words a minute, and the brain of the listener processes nearly 4-5 times more rapidly. If the natural gap between the processes of receiving and registering is widened or too narrowly shortened by the speaker's pace of speaking, the act of comprehension will tend to be adversely affected.

Oral Communication	Written Communication
More personal and informal	Better for complex and difficult subjects, facts and opinions
Makes immediate impact	Better for keeping records of messages exchanged
Provides opportunity for interaction and feedback	Provides opportunity to refer back
Helps us to correct ourselves (our messages according to the feedback and non-verbal cues received from the listener)	Can be read at receiver's convenience or pleasure
Better for conveying feelings and emotions	Can be revised before transmitting
	Can be circulated
Limitations	
Demands ability to think coherently as you speak	Never know if the message is ever read
A word once uttered cannot be taken back	Impersonal and remote
Hard to control voice pitch and tone, especially under stress, excitement or anger	Immediate feedback is not available for correction on the spot
Very difficult to be conscious of our body language	Reader is not helped by non-verbal cues that contribute to the total message
	Many people do not like reading especially if it is an official or business message
	Time consuming

Comparative Advantages of Oral and Written Communications

13.8 Non-Verbal Communication

Words are not the only way we communicate. While we use language to communicate explicit information and message content, we use Non-verbal Communication to convey relational messages, our feelings about another person as well as status and power. While one can refuse to speak or write it is impossible to avoid behaving nonverbally.

One may continue to communicate nonverbally through:

Kinesics or Body language: It must be noted, though it is known to almost all, that all our bodily movements, gestures, postures etc., are guided by our feelings and thought processes. The nodding of our head, blinking of our eyes, waving of our hands, shrugging of our shoulders etc., are expressions of our thought and feelings. All these movements are the signals that our body sends out to communicate. That is why this area of study has been called 'body language'. Just as language uses sets of symbols to convey meaning, our body, consciously as well as unconsciously, conveys messages, attitudes, moods, status relationships etc. Nervousness, anger, fear, scorn, determination, horror, sympathy, pity, lack of understanding, disinterestedness, resentment can be much better expressed through the body language than through words.

Paralanguage: The term paralanguage is used to describe a wide range of vocal characteristics like tone, pitch, and speed etc – vocal cues that accompany spoken language which help to express and reflect the speaker's attitude. Paralanguage describes a wide range of vocal characteristics, which help to express and reflect the speaker's attitude.. On careful observation, we find that a speaker uses a vast range of vocal cues like:

(a) **Pitch Variation:** Most of us introduce wide variations in pitch while speaking. These variations are necessary to catch the listener's attention and to keep him interested in us.

(b) **Speaking speed:** One should not, always speak at a high speed. Speaking fast or at a high speed is not fluency. We speak at different speeds on different occasions and while conveying different parts of a message.

(c) **Pause:** The speaking speed is also accompanied by pauses, at the right moments. Incorrect use of pauses can create problems. A pause can be highly effective in emphasising the upcoming subject and in gaining the listener's attention. Too frequent pauses will, however, spoil the speech.

(d) **Volume variation:** Our speech should be loud enough to be audible to the audience, not too loud to put them off. The larger the audience, the higher the volume. But depending upon the different parts of the message we should monitor the volume of our speech so as to bring about a sense of contrast to generate interest of the audience

(e) **Non - fluencies:** Utterances like 'oh', 'ah', 'um', 'you know', 'ok' etc. are known as non-fluencies. Frequent non-fluencies irritate the listener.

(f) **Word Stress:** Proper word stress is of crucial importance in communication. By putting stress or emphasis on a word here or a word there in the same sentence we can change the meaning.

Artificial Communication: It is well known that we react to people on the basis of their appearance. The use of personal adornment like clothing, accessories, makeup, hairstyle etc. provides important non verbal cues about one's age, social and economic status, educational level, personality etc.

Proxemics: refers to the space that exists between us when we talk or relate to each other as well the way we organize space around us. We can also call it 'space language' as the following four space zones indicate the type of communication and the relationship of the source and receiver:

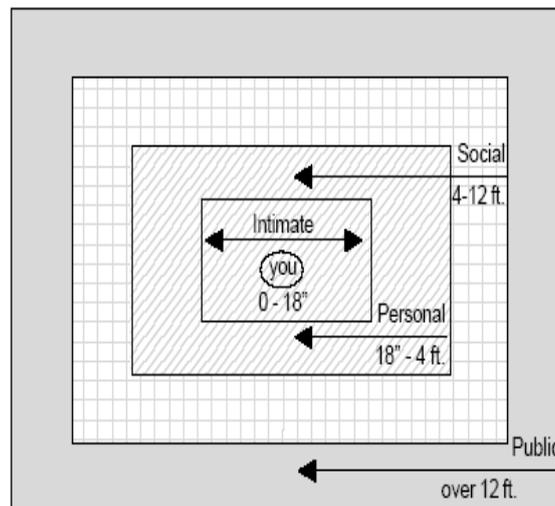
Intimate – Physical contact to 18 inches.

Personal – 18 inches to 4 feet.

Social – 4 to 12 feet

Public -12 feet to as far as we can see or hear.

Non-Verbal Communicati



Zones of Space Language

Chronemics or Time language: is the study of how we use time to communicate. The meaning of time differs around the world. While some are preoccupied with time, others waste it regularly. While some people function better in the morning (early birds), others perform best at night. Punctuality is an important factor in time communication. Misunderstandings or disagreements involving time can create communication and relationship problems.

Haptics: is communication through touch. How we use touch sends important messages about us. It reveals our perceptions of status, our attitudes and even our needs. The amount of touching we do or find acceptable is at least in part culturally conditioned.

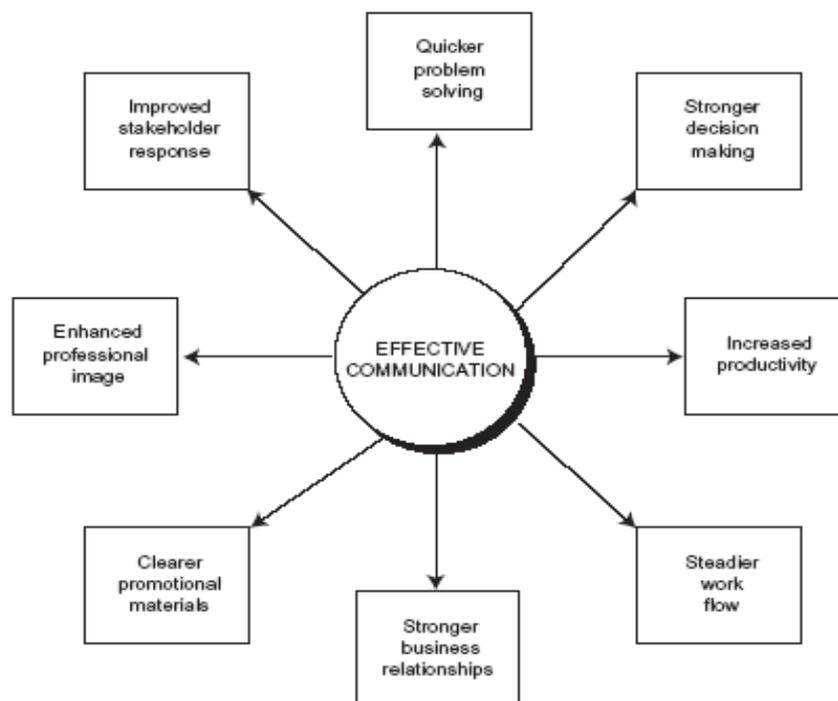
Silence: The absence of paralinguistic and verbal cues also serves important communicative functions. 'Silence is more eloquent than words' is not a meaningless adage, it contains in it the essence of generations of experience. Silence for example, can allow one to organize one's thoughts. It is not unusual to come across a situation in which nothing can express one's response so effectively as silence. Silence can effectively communicate a number of responses.

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- respect, fear, resentment, lack of interest are some responses that can be effectively communicated through silence. The most effective use of silence can be made by giving a slight pause before or after making an important point during a speech. This is what the most successful orators usually do. A slight pause before an important point creates suspense, it raises a sense of anticipation and the audience listens to the next point more attentively. And a slight pause afterwards suggests that something very important has been said and the speaker desires his audience to assimilate it.

13.9 Benefits of Effective Communication

Only through effective communication both inside and outside, an organisation, becomes an open system interacting with its environment. Effective internal communication works towards establishing and disseminating of the goals of an enterprise, evolving plans for their achievement, organizing human and other resources in an efficient way, selecting, developing and appraising members of the organisation, leading, motivating and encouraging people to put in their best and controlling performance.



The Benefits of Effective Communication

13.10 Barriers to Effective Communication

The purpose of communication is to get your message across to others successfully. This is a process that involves both the sender of the message and the receiver. A message is successful only when both the sender and the receiver perceive it in the same way. This process leaves room for error, with messages often misinterpreted by one or more of the parties involved. This causes unnecessary confusion and counter productivity.

It is important to understand the causes of communication breakdown.

Noise: Noise is the first and foremost barrier to communication. It means “interference that occurs in a signal and prevents you from hearing sounds properly.” In a factory, for example, the continuous noise made by machines makes oral communication difficult. In the same way some technical problem in a public address system or a static in a telephone or television cable will distort the sound signal and affect communication. Adverse weather conditions or some fault in the ultramodern telecommunication systems may also spoil the effect.

Noise does not mean only this. It also encompasses many other factors that may exist at the end of sender as well as that of the receiver. The sender may resort to ambiguous or confusing signals. The receiver may mess up the message owing to inattention or may spoil decoding because of wrong or unexpected interpretation. The receiver's prejudices may also come in the way of his understanding the message in the right spirit. We must therefore keep in mind that communication is always likely to be spoiled by ‘noise’ that stands for so many things.

Some of the sources contributing towards noise factors are as follows:

Poor Timing - A last moment communication with deadline may put too much pressure on the receiver and may result in resentment.

Inappropriate Channel - Poor choice of channel of communication can also be contributory to them is understanding of the message.

Network Breakdown - Sometime staff may forget to forward a letter or there may be professional jealousy resulting in closed channel.

Lack of Planning: Communication is not a casual affair. Unfortunately many people take it lightly. The result is that the message to be sent across may not be carefully planned. There are innumerable examples of people who would give an ill-planned, long-winding lecture while a short presentation with tables or graphs would be sufficient. Such an event would turn into one of miscommunication. In the same way some people may not care to choose a suitable time and place that are so very necessary for effective communication.

Managers have to communicate individually with people at different levels – superiors, subordinates, peers, customers and public figures. The oral mode, of communication is easy, time saving, and of functionally helpful in resolving issues. But oral communication demands great control and communicative competence to be successful.

Semantic Problems: Semantics is the systematic study of meaning. That is why the problems arising from expression or transmission of meaning in communication are called semantic problems. Oral or written communication is based on words. And words, limited in number, may be used in unlimited ways. The meaning is in the mind of the sender and also in that of the receiver. But it is not always necessary for the meaning in the mind of the sender to be the same as in the mind of receiver. Much, therefore, depends on how the sender encodes his message.

The sender has to take care that the receiver does not misconstrue his message, and gets the intended meaning. Quite often it does not happen in this way. That leads to semantic problems. It can be ensured only if we aim at clarity, simplicity and brevity so that the receiver gets the intended meaning.

Cultural Barriers: We live in a culturally diverse world, and so could encounter individuals from different races, religions, and nationalities. We have to be specially careful in this regard as we have to operate in international environment. The same category of words, phrases, symbols, actions, colours mean different things to people of different countries or different cultural backgrounds. For example, in the United States people love to be called by their first names while in Britain, and to a large extent also in India, people like to be addressed by their last name. In the North American States a sign of 'O' made with the forefinger and thumb stands for 'OK' while in the Southern States it is construed as obscenity.

The desire to communicate is the first step in being effective. The desire to connect with another human being is the bond that will express itself clearly. A genuine effort to understand another person goes a long way in the path to communication. Knowing about other cultures and being proactive will help to develop these skills.

Wrong Assumptions: Quite often we act on assumptions, without caring to seek clarification for them. We should make all possible efforts to maintain our goodwill and not act impulsively on assumptions. If, for example, a customer writes to us that he would like to visit our office or factory without telling us that he would like to be picked up and we assume that he will manage to come on his own it may lead to loss of goodwill. So it is necessary to be circumspect in such matters.

Socio-Psychological Barriers: The attitudes and opinions, place in society and status-consciousness arising from one's position in the hierarchical structure of the organization, one's relations with peers, seniors, juniors and family background -all these deeply affect one's ability to communicate both as a sender and receiver. Status consciousness is widely known to be a serious communication barrier in organisations. It leads to psychological distancing which further leads to breakdown of communication or miscommunication. Often it is seen that a man high up in an organisation builds up a wall around himself. This restricts participation of the less powerful in decision making. In the same way one's family background formulates one's attitude and communication skills.

Frame of Reference is another barrier to clear communication. Every individual has a unique frame of reference formed by a combination of his experiences, education, culture, attitude

and many other elements, resulting in biases and different experiences in a communication situation.

Emotions: Emotions play a very important role in our life. Both encoding and decoding of messages are influenced by our emotions. A message received when we are emotionally worked up will have a different meaning for us than when we are calm and composed. Anger is the worst emotion and enemy of communication.

Selective Perception: Perception provides each of us with a unique view of the world – a view sometimes related to, but not necessarily identical with that held by others. Selective perception means that the receivers selectively see and hear depending upon their needs, background, motivations, experience and other personal characteristics.

While decoding the messages, most protect their own interests and expectations into process of communication leading to a particular kind of feedback that may become a communication problem.

Filtering: Filtering means that the sender of a message manipulates information in such a way that it will be seen more favourably by the receiver. A manager, for example, likes to tell his boss what he feels his boss wants to hear. In this process he is filtering information. The net result is that the man at the top never gets objective information. In the same way, the people at the lower levels condense and synthesise information so as to get maximum benefits for themselves. They hold back or ignore some important part of information. The more vertical levels in the organisation, the more chances there are for filtering. This is a very frequently occurring communication problem.

Information Overload: Unchecked inflow of information, very often becomes another barrier to communication. It may stifle the senior executive or bore and frustrate him. When people are bogged down with too much information they are likely to make errors, They may also delay processing or responding to information/message at least for sometime.

Poor Retention: As a corollary to the problem mentioned above, it is worth noting that people are also likely to forget messages reaching them. There from arises the necessity to repeat the message and use more than one medium to communicate the same message.

Poor Listening: Poor listening may lead to serious communication problems. Everybody knows about the importance of listening, but very few actually practice patient, active and empathic listening. That I why, so many communication problems crop up. Poor listening accounts for incomplete information and also poor retention.

Goal Conflicts: Very often clashes of the goals of various units and sub-units of an organisation lead to communication breakdowns. But the goal conflicts act as communication reduction mechanisms. Different units internalise their own goals, and that leads to the splitting or bifurcation of interests in the organisation.

Offensive Style of Communication: It is quite obvious that offensive style of communication leads to communication breakdown. If a manager sends a message in such a way that the workers/juniors become defensive their relations get strained and communication suffers.

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Hence it is absolutely necessary for the management to adopt a persuasive style of communication.

Insufficient Period for Adjustment: It is a fact well known to all that people respond to change in different ways. They take their own time to adjust to any news or proposal for change. Only then the communication will be effective.

Loss by Transmission: Communication often suffers or gets diluted when messages pass on from person to person in a series of transmissions. They get diluted on the way. Special care has to be taken that the intended message reaches the person concerned.

Frame of Reference: Frame of reference is another barrier to clear communication. Every individual has a unique frame of reference formed by a combination of his experiences, education, culture, attitude and many other elements, resulting in biases and different experiences in a communication situation.

13.11 Written Communication

Planning and Composing Business Messages: Effective writing in the workplace is an essential skill. The rules are basically the same for any type of writing, however, there are some special issues which arise in the business context.

Some of these basic elements are:

Know Your Audience: The key to effective business writing is knowing your audience. Outlines are an invaluable aid to writing a lengthy report or memo. Remember, time is in short supply for most business professionals. Decide what details must be included in the report or memo. Look for graphic elements to add to your presentation, especially if your report contains many boring statistics. Statistics and research bolster your conclusions, especially if they are presented in a visually appealing manner. With the advent of modern word processing programs such as Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect, it is easy to include spread sheets, graphs and colorful clip art to your report, thereby making your work memorable and convincing.

After you have decided what the message is that you are trying to convey, work on saying it in concise language. Be brief, whenever possible. Avoid using vague words when a more precise word will do. Avoid wordiness and unnecessary jargon. Strive for clarity in your writing and avoid vagueness (unless there is good reason to be vague).

Punctuation and Grammatical Errors: Many grammatical and/or punctuation errors are due simply to insufficient proofreading of the document.

Some errors stem not from lack of proofreading, but from simple grammatical mistakes. The most common mistakes include misuse of apostrophes, misuse of commas, incomplete sentences, ending a sentence with a preposition and so on.

13.12 Parts of a Business Letter

Listed below are the parts of a business letter :

1. Heading: The heading, also called 'letterhead', contains the name of the organization and its address. It is usually given at the top centre or top right side of the paper. It is also usual to give the telephone, fax and telegraphic address in the heading as shown below :

MEHTA CHEMICALS LIMITED

Regd. Office : 15, Okhla Estate, New Delhi - 110016

Phone : 6132757, Fax : 6132767

E-mail: mehtachem@rediffmail.com , website: www.mehtachem.org

2. Reference Number: Every business letters usually carries a reference number to which the receiver may refer in all future correspondence. It serves the purpose of quick reference and linking up the chain of letters going out of the organization or identifying the memos issued by a department within the organization.

The reference number may be like this : Ref. No: 24/FD/65

3. Date: The date of the letter is of crucial importance. It is usually written on the right hand side, parallel to the reference number as shown below :

Ref. No : 24/FD/65

December 16, 2005

When the address of the organisation is combined with the date, the following format should be used :

15, Okhla Estate, New Delhi

December 16, 2005

4. Inside Address: It contains the name and address of the organisation or the individual to whom the letter is being sent. It should be written as below:

Mehta Chemicals Limited,
15, Okhla Estate,
New Delhi.

5. Mode of Address

(a) *Addressing individuals*

If the letter is being sent to an individual we have to be sure about the prefixing of the addressee.

- (i) 'Mr' or 'Shri' is used for addressing a man.
- (ii) 'Miss/' Mrs' /'Shrimati' is used for an unmarried woman or married woman..
- (iii) 'Messrs' is a plural for 'Mr' and is used while addressing a partnership firm. It can best be used when the name of the firm contains personal name or names as, for *example*.

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Messrs Lal Bros.

- (iv) Titles/ranks such as Colonel', Professor', 'Doctor', 'Reverend' etc., are used as follows.

Prof. B. L. Arora

Dr. (Miss) S. Gupta

- (b) *Addressing by designation*

When a particular person is addressed by designation, 'Mr.' or 'Messrs.' (in case of a limited company) is not used:

The Secretary,

Youth Sports club.

- 6. Attention Line:** When the writer sends his letter to a particular official in an organisation, he may use the phrase 'For the attention of' below the inside address and above the Salutation and underlines it. For example,

Mehta Chemicals Limited,

15, Okhla Estate,

New Delhi.

For the attention of Shri D. K. Singh

Other typical forms of this reference are as follows :

Attn. of D. K. Singh, General Manager

For Ms. R. Desai, Public Relations Officer

Attention : K. P. Verma, Vice President

Attention : B. K. Sood, Sales Manager

- 7. Salutation:** Salutation is the greeting of the addressee. We may choose the salutation on the basis of our familiarity with the reader and the formality of the situation. The commonly used salutations are given below :

(i) Sir

(ii) Madam

(iii) Your Excellency (while addressing the Ambassador or High Commissioner of a foreign country)

(iv) Gentlemen - used when a circular is sent to many addresses including an individual, firm, society, company etc. Now-a-days 'Dear Sir/Madam' is also freely used in circulars.

- 8. Subject line:** Many writers use subject lines to enable the reader to quickly identify the subject of correspondence. It tells what the correspondence is about. It is placed just below

the line of salutation. It usually begins at the left margin, although it may be placed in the centre or indented (if the paragraphs are indented).

The subject line may be worded in a number of ways. Given below are a representative samples :

Sub : Loan facilities for

Ref : Your enquiry of December 16

9. Body of the letter: The body of the letter carries its message or content. It is generally divided into three or four paragraphs, each having its own function. The first paragraph links up the correspondence and establishes rapport with the reader. The second paragraph may be called the main paragraph that contains the subject proper. If need be, the point of the second or main paragraph is elaborated or further developed upon in the third paragraph. The fourth or final paragraph brings the letter to a goodwill ending, leaving the door open for further business. It is generally followed by phrases like, 'with regards', 'with best wishes', 'with warm regards', 'Thanking you', etc.

10. Formal close: The formal close of the letter must 'match' the salutation as shown below :

Dear Sir

Dear Madam

Yours faithfully

Sir

If the salutation does not name the recipient, formal close is 'Yours faithfully'. If the salutation names the recipient the formal close is 'Yours sincerely'. 'Yours' begins with a capital 'Y', but 'faithfully' and 'sincerely' begin with small letters.

11. Signature block/slot: There is a fixed space for the signature of the writer. Conventionally the signature, that is handwritten and contains the writer's name, status, department, company etc., appears just below the complementary close. As far as possible it should be legible.

Given below are examples of the format :

(i) when the individual signs in his own right.

(P. C. Verma)

.....

(ii) when the individual signs in his capacity as

(P. C. Verma)

Sales Manager.

Sales Manager

12. Enclosures (Encl): Very often a letter carries along with it some important papers such as proof of date of death, copies of certificates and testimonials. Price list, invoice, receipts, Cheque/Draft bill/cash memo, copies of required pages of passport, photo identity card etc. The writer is well advised to make mention of these papers at

the bottom left margin as shown below :

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(i) Encl : (i).....

(ii).....

(iii).....

13. Postscript: Postscript or P.S. is written if the writer has forgotten to mention something important in the letter.

In such a case the writer is supposed to write the postscript very carefully and precisely or, in other words, to give the additional information in as few words as possible.

14. 'CC' or Carbon copy Notation: Often copies of a letter are supposed to be sent to some other people directly or indirectly concerned with the matter/subject. In such cases the names of the persons to whom copies are sent should be written/typed adjacent to the left margin like this :

CC: Mr. P.K. Nangia

Copy to Mr. P. K. Nangia

15. Reference initials: Many organisations continue to follow the practice of putting typed initials of the person who dictates the letter and those of the one who types it. They can be typed adjacent to the left margin in the end like this:

PKS/CB

PKS are the initials of the person who has dictated the letter and CB of the person who typed it.

13.13 Layouts of Letters

A letter is the most important form of written communication. It is, therefore, supposed to have an attractive or impressive layout. As has been well said, a letter's appearance is the part of its message.

Standard formats for business letter are Full-Block, Modified block, and Semi-block. You can use whichever your company or audience prefers.

1. Full-Block: Each line begins flush with left margin.

Company letterhead (Printed Name, address, telephones, fax etc.)
Ref. No.
Date
Name
Inside Address
Attention line
Salutation:
Subjectline _____

Encl
P.S.
C.C.
Ref. Initials

3. Semi-block or Indented Form: Each paragraph is indented five spaces as an added signal for a new paragraph.

Company letterhead (Printed Name, address, telephones, fax etc.)
Ref. No.
Date
Name and address of Receiver
Attention line
Salutation
Subject heading-not obligatory, but often used
XX XX
XX XX.
XX XX
Closing/Subscription
Signature
Signatory's typed name
Signatory's position in the Company
Company name
Encl
P.S.
C.C.
Ref. Initials

13.14 Planning Business Messages

A. Purpose

- ❑ Determine whether the purpose of your message is to inform, persuade, or collaborate.
- ❑ Identify the specific behavior you hope to induce in the audience.
- ❑ Make sure that your purpose is worthwhile and realistic.

B. Audience

- ❑ Determine whether the purpose of your message is to inform, persuade, or collaborate.
- ❑ Identify the specific behavior you hope to induce in the audience.
- ❑ Make sure that your purpose is worthwhile and realistic.

C. Main Idea

- ❑ Stimulate your creativity with brainstorming techniques.
- ❑ Identify a "hook" that will motivate the audience to respond to your message in the way you intend.
- ❑ Evaluate whether the main idea is realistic given the length limitations imposed on the message.
- ❑ Collect any necessary information

D. Channel and Medium

1. If your purpose is to collaborate, give an informal, relatively unstructured oral presentation to a small group.
2. If you are celebrating an important public occasion, give a prepared speech to a large audience.
3. If you need a permanent record, prepare a written message.
 - a. Send a letter if your message is relatively simple and the audience is outside the company.
 - b. Send a memo if your message is relatively simple and the audience is inside the company.
 - c. Write a report if your message is objective and complex.
4. If you need to communicate quickly, choose electronic communication.
 - a. Use voice mail if your message is short and clear.
 - b. Use teleconferencing for informational meetings.
 - c. Use videotape for sending motivational messages to a large number of people.
 - d. Use fax machines to overcome time-zone barriers.
 - e. Use E-mail for speed, lower cost, and increased access to other employees.
 - f. Use computer conferencing to focus attention on ideas instead of status.

13.15 Checklist for Composing Business Messages

A. Organization

1. **Recognize good organization.**
 - a. Subject and purpose are clear.
 - b. Information is directly related to subject and purpose.
 - c. Ideas are grouped and presented logically.
 - d. All necessary information is included.
2. **Achieve good organization through outlining.**
 - a. Decide what to say.
 - i. Main idea
 - ii. Major points
 - iii. Evidence
 - b. Organize the message to respond to the audience's probable reaction.
 - i. Use the direct approach when your audience will be neutral, pleased, interested, or eager.
 - ii. Use the indirect approach when your audience will be displeased, uninterested, or unwilling.
3. **Choose the appropriate organization plan.**
 - a. Short messages
 - i. Direct request
 - ii. Routine, good-news, and goodwill message
 - iii. Bad-news message
 - iv. Persuasive message
 - b. Longer messages
 - i. Informational pattern
 - ii. Analytical pattern

B. Formulation

1. **Compose your first draft.**
 - a. Get ideas down as quickly as you can.
 - b. Rearrange, delete, and add ideas without losing sight of your purpose.
2. **Vary the style to create a tone that suits the occasion.**
 - a. Establish your relationship with your audience.
 - i. Use the appropriate level of formality.

- ii. Avoid being overly familiar, using inappropriate humor, including obvious flattery, sounding preachy, bragging, and trying to be something you're not.
- b. Extend your audience-centered approach by using the "you" attitude.
- c. Emphasize the positive aspects of your message.
- d. Establish your credibility to gain the audience's confidences.
- e. Make your tone a polite one.
- f. Use the style that your company prefers.