



**MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY**

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCE**

(MAIN CAMPUS)

COURSE OUTLINE

Programme: Bachelor of Commerce

Academic Year: 2025/2026- First Year 1st Semester

Course code & Title: - BCB 115: Business Communication

Course Lecturer: *CHRP (K), FIHRM, Dr. Mutinda J.M.A. (PhD)*

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Course Objectives:

The overall objective of this course is to equip the learner with the knowledge, skills and attitude that will enable him/her to communicate effectively in a business setting. By the end of this course, learners should be able to: Develop strategies for effective communication in an organization, Demonstrate skills in preparing and presenting skills, Demonstrate effective

communication skills, Apply information technology in communication.

Teaching / Learning Methodology:

Lectures (face to face and online), Group/Class presentations/ discussions and assignments

Evaluation:

Cats – sit- in and take away 30%

End Semester exam 70%

Attendance:

Students should attend all classes, exams and submit all assignments within the stipulated time.

Course Contents:

WEEK	TOPIC/ SUBTOPIC
1	Introduction to Communication Definition of communication; Objectives/ importance of communication; Barriers to effective communication
2	Methods of communication; Formal and informal communication systems and devices
3	Written Communication Effective writing skills; Business transaction documents: catalogue, purchase orders etc
4	Memorandum, Form design and questionnaires Circulars and newsletters; Notices and advertisements

5	Publicity materials; Graphic communication Business Correspondence Handling mail- incoming and outgoing mail; Sorting and Storage and retrieval, retention of records Filing systems; Postal and Courier services; Mail handling
6	Cat 1
7	Oral Communication Meaning of oral communication; Effective listening Interviews; Persuasion process; assertiveness
8	Non-Verbal Communication Meaning and importance of non-verbal communication Forms of non-verbal communication, Effective non-verbal communication Public Speaking and Presentations Effective presentation skills; presentation aids; selection of topics; Language and style; Context in public speaking; Writing speeches; Public discussion format: public discussion and group discussion Group/team Communication Group communication skills; Communication networks; Interpersonal relationship; Principles of interpersonal communication Meetings
9	
10	Cat II
11	Reporting Writing Types of reports; Effective report writing Uses of reports; Preparation of formal reports Proposal Writing Types of proposals; uses of proposals Contents of proposals; Preparation of formal proposals Information Communication and Technology Communication networks-internet, intranet and extranet videoconferencing
12	Wireless technologies; Social media Ethics in Communication Ethical issues in communication; Significance of ethical communication

	Factors influencing ethical communication; Ethical dilemmas in communication Guidelines to handle ethical dilemmas in communication
13 & 14	End of Semester Exams

REFERENCES

- Blundel R. & Ippolito K. (2008), *Effective Organizational Communication: Perspectives, Principles & Practices*, Prentice Hall, 3rd Ed.
- Taylor S. (2005), *Communication for Business: A Practical Approach*, Pearson Longman, 4th Ed.
- Locker K. O, Kaczmarek S. & Braun K. (2001) *Business Communication: Building Critical Skills*, McGraw Hill.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

The word "communication" means speaking or writing or sending a message to another person. It involves ensuring that your message has reached the target audience (that is, the persons to whom it is sent) and that the receiver understands and responds as you want them to.

It also involves ensuring that you yourself take care to receive, understand, interpret, and respond to messages that are sent to you. Communication is an important aspect of behaviour- human communication is affected by all factors that influence human behaviour.

Definitions of Communication

There are many definitions of Communication given by many theorists:

- ❖ *Communication is a process of passing information and understanding from one person to another- Keith Davis*

- ❖ *Communication is any behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning- The American Management Association*
- ❖ *Communication may be broadly defined as the process of meaningful interaction among human beings. More specifically, it is the process by which meanings are perceived and understandings are reached among human beings - D.E. McFarland*
- ❖ *Communication is the process by which information is passed between individuals and/ or organizations by means of previously agreed symbols-Peter Little*
- ❖ *A wider and more comprehensive definition is given by National Joint Committee for the Communicative Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities as: Any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person, information about that person's needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states.*
- ❖ *Communication may be intentional or unintentional, may involve conventional or unconventional signals, may take linguistic or non-linguistic forms, and may occur through spoken or other modes - Julia Scherba de Valenzuela*

These definitions show that communication involves exchange of thoughts between two parties. It is the transmission of information and meaning from one individual or group to another. The crucial element is meaning.

Communication is successful only when the receiver understands an idea as the sender intended it. Both parties must agree not only on the information transmitted but also on the meaning of that information. In order to transfer an idea, we must use symbols (words, signs, pictures, sounds) which stand for the idea.

The symbols must be understood by the person or persons with whom we intend to communicate. Both must assign the same meaning to the symbols used; otherwise, there is miscommunication. Unless there is a common understanding of the symbols, it is not possible to communicate.

Business Communication

The term business communication is used for all messages that we send and receive for official purposes like running a business, managing an organization, conducting the formal affairs of a voluntary organization and so on.

Business communication is marked by formality as against personal and social communication. It includes both written and oral communication. Letters, reports, memos, notices are all formal and part of commercial and business activity; so are interviews, meetings, conferences, presentations, negotiations.

Some of these are more formal than others; a group discussion would be less formal than a company meeting; a letter is less formal than a report. Friendly chatting, letters between friends and family, reciting poetry for one's own pleasure or telling stories to entertain friends, are not included in business communication.

The study of communication and efforts to develop skills of communication are needed because communication is absolutely necessary for business and there is no one who does not have to engage in some kind of business activity. Persons in all professions need to cultivate skills as needed for their work.

Objectives of Communication

The main objectives of communication are information and persuasion. Other objectives are aspects of these two objectives.

Information: Messages which give information contain data on which the conduct of business is based. Information reduces our uncertainty about the situation or environment in which we find ourselves. It moves in all directions in an organization: Downward, Upward, Horizontal/sideways and outside the organization.

Persuasion: It means making efforts to change or influence the attitudes and behaviour of others. A great deal of communication in an organization

is persuasive. It means using the best arguments to win over and convince others.

Objectives of downward communication

Communication which moves from superiors to subordinates is known as downward communication. It has the following objectives:

Instructions and orders: instruction is information about processes and procedures. Supervisors instruct their staff on tasks that are to be performed from time to time. In most cases, this can be done orally, individually or in groups.

Orders are formal. An order is the assignment of a task. It is in written form and generally means that the matter mentioned in it is formally and finally accepted.

Education and training: Both imply discipline and development by means of study and learning. Education is the development of general and special abilities. Training is practical education or practice, usually under supervision in some skill. Oral communication in the form of lectures and discussions is commonly used for this purpose. Handouts and notes are used for most kinds of training.

On-the-job –training: when new employees take up a job, they need some instruction and training. The supervisor or another employee whose work is closely related watches, supervises, helps and corrects them till they learn their job. A good deal of this is informal. Most on-the- job communication is oral and is supplemented by instruction booklets, policy statements, pamphlets and employee manuals.

Motivation: it means providing people with a motive, an incentive, an inner urge to make effort to do their best. Managers constantly try to improve performance in the workplace by motivating staff. Communication is a critical element in motivation. Managers use communication to improve employees' sense of self-worth by showing recognition, prestige, esteem, status etc.

Subordinates and team mates can be motivated if managers, supervisors and leaders communicate in a way that makes them feel that they belong to the organization and fulfill their need for recognition. This can be done through:

- Listening to them and respecting their views
- Ensuring that credit is given where it is due; expressing appreciation for achievement
- Avoiding criticism of persons even when opposing their ideas

Maintaining an open communication climate is very useful for motivation. Motivation requires regular and careful communication which managers and supervisors need to do skillfully.

Raising morale: morale is the individual and collective spirit and moral condition of employees with regard to discipline and confidence. Confidence in oneself and in the organization's management is an important factor which affects morale. Morale is affected by all communication and by the manner and style of communications.

Morale can be maintained with an open communication climate. Information about programs, plans, policies and progress must be circulated; details of welfare schemes and facilities must be publicized. Upward communication must be cultivated and encouraged. The special morale-boosting communications must be well-coordinated and carefully planned.

Advice: may be given on matters related to work or on personal matters if the relationship permits. Advice is most effective if it is oral, face to face, informal and confidential.

Counseling: this is organized and specialized form of advice. Communication for counseling is mostly orally done. Counseling can be successful only if there is a proper two- way communication.

Warning: means urging or advising someone to be careful. It is intended to caution someone of possible danger. A warning is also an authoritative or

formal notice of something unfavourable. It may be given orally or in writing and should be confidential.

Objectives of upward communication

Appeal: an appeal is an earnest request for help or support or for something that does not fall within one's privileges. It may be written or oral.

Demand: it is put through an employee union and it has to be supported by good arguments. Demands are usually collective and in writing.

Representation: it is always in writing.

Complaint: it is made when there are faults or defects in the system. It may be oral or written.

Suggestion: can be made by employees or customers-through suggestion schemes. A well operated suggestion scheme is an effective morale builder.

Objectives of horizontal communication

Communication between persons of the same status is mainly for exchange of information. Requests, suggestions and advice may be exchanged informally. The main purpose of horizontal communication is coordination. It is usually in the form of conferences and meetings facilitate review and discussion of plans and problems.

Role of Communication in Business

The primary element in the skills of management is competence in communication. It is the tool with which we exercise influence on others, bring about changes in the attitudes and views of our associates, motivate them, and establish and maintain relations with them.

Communication is central to everything that we do. We live in organizations; our activities in our family etc, succeed or fail, and our goals are achieved or not achieved, according to our ability to communicate effectively with other members.

Communication is the mortar that holds an organization together, whatever its business or its size. Without communication an organization cannot function at all. Without effective communication, information cannot be collected, processed, or exchanged; words and data would remain isolated facts.

With effective communication, multinational organizations that are spread all over the world can function as a single unit.

Employers have always emphasized the importance of communication skills, and the current trends in the business environment make these skills even more critical. Work is increasingly carried out by teams. Team members must be able to work together to identify problems, analyze alternatives, and recommend solutions.

They must be able to communicate their ideas persuasively to others. Ability to work well in teams, to manage your subordinates and your relationships with seniors, customers and colleagues, depends on your communication skill.

Advancement in information technology has led to great speed in communication, and owing to globalization, an organization may be spread in many locations in the world.

Techniques of communication have to keep up with the increased speed and the need to communicate with people of different cultures.

With growing competition, producers and service providers need to find more and more innovative methods to reach out to potential buyers. Communicating to the public about one's products is the essence of business.

A large amount of communication in the form of advertisement and public relations is needed in order to inform the public and to persuade potential customers to buy the products.

Characteristics of Communication

Understanding the characteristics of communication helps us to improve our competence and skills in communication. Communication is unintentional as well as intentional.

Communication takes place even when we do not plan it and when we are not conscious of it; Our non-verbal behaviour, which is always present in oral communication, conveys something about us.

In written communication, the appearance and layout of the document, the style and the choice of words convey a great deal about the sender. We do not always succeed in conveying exactly what we want to; the target receiver may receive less or more or even something different from what we intended to convey.

In fact, communication does not happen exactly as the sender wishes. It often fails.

Communication is a dynamic process: A process is an ongoing activity. Communication is a process and is always changing, always in motion; it grows and develops.

Even if the same two persons exchange the same ideas again, the communication will not be exactly the same as it was the first time, because the two persons have grown and developed and changed since then.

Every time we engage in an act of communication, we bring to it all our previous experience, feelings, thoughts, attitudes which have been formed by other communication events.

Communication is systemic: Every component of the process is affected by every other component. The source, the environment, the goal, the medium, the nature of the message, the receiver, the feedback, all affect one another.

If the audience is inattentive or uninterested, the source is not able to communicate effectively. If a wrong medium is chosen, the message may fail to have the intended result; if the sender's goal is not clear, the message will be confused.

Disturbance at any stage in the communication process affects the entire process. On the other hand, improvement in anyone of the components can improve the whole process.

If the receiver is attentive and interested, the sender is better able to convey the message; if the sender's goal is clear, the message is better encoded; in a comfortable environment, the sender and the receiver are both better able to attend to the communication.

Communication is both interaction and transaction: The two participants, the source and the receiver, exchange ideas and information and influence each other during the process of communication. They also come to a shared and common meaning as a result of the communication. They share as well as exchange thoughts and meanings.

Elements of Communication

There are seven elements or factors which make up the process of communication:

- *Source/Sender:* is the one who initiates the action of communicating
- *Audience/Receiver:* is the person(s) for whom the communication is intended
- *Goal/Purpose:* is the sender's reason for communicating, the desired result of the communication
- *Context/Environment:* is the background in which the communication takes place
- *Message/Content:* is the information conveyed
- *Medium/Channel:* is the means or method used for conveying the message
- *Feedback:* is the receiver's response to the communication as observed by the sender.

Process of Communication

The process of communication involves decisions and activities by the two persons involved, the sender and the receiver. The *sender* begins the process of communication.

The sender has to be clear about the purpose (or goal or objective), of the communication and about the target audience (or receiver) of the communication; that is, the sender decides why and to whom to send a message. Conscious or intended communication has a *purpose*.

We communicate because we want to make someone do something or think or feel in a certain way, that is, to influence the person. The source has to decide what information to convey, and create the message (or content) to be conveyed by using words or other symbols which can be understood by the intended receiver.

The process of putting the idea into symbols is called encoding; in order to encode, the sender has to select suitable symbols which can represent the idea, and can be understood by the receiver. The sender also chooses a suitable channel or medium (e-mail, telephone, face-to-face talk) by which to send the message.

The choice of the medium depends on several factors such as urgency of the message, availability and effectiveness of a medium, and the relationship between the two communicants. Note that the choice of the medium/channel also influences the shape of the message.

Finally, the sender tries to note the effect of the message on the receiver; he checks whether the receiver has got the message, how the receiver has responded to the message and whether he has taken the required action; this information about the receiver's response is called feedback.

Sender's functions make up half the process of communication. The functions of the sender are:

- Being clear about the goal/purpose of the communication
- Finding out about the understanding and the needs of the target audience

- Encoding the required information and ideas with symbols to create the message to suit the receiver/audience
- Selecting the medium to send the message
- Making efforts to get feedback.

The *receiver* becomes aware that a message has arrived when he perceives it with his senses (he may see, hear, feel, etc). The receiver attends to the message and interprets it. The process of translating the symbols into ideas and interpreting the message is called decoding. Interpreting is a complex activity; it involves using knowledge of the symbols and drawing upon previous knowledge of the subject matter. The receiver's ability to understand, level of intelligence, values and attitudes, and relation with the sender influence his creation of meaning.

If the sender and the receiver have a common field of experience, the receiver's understanding of the message will be closer to what the sender intended.

The receiver also feels a reaction to the message; this reaction may be conscious or unconscious; it may cause some change in the receiver's facial expression. The message definitely leads the receiver to think. The receiver may take some action, if required. He may also reply to the message. The reaction, the response and the reply together form the feedback.

Receiver's functions complete one cycle of the process of communication. The functions of the receiver are:

- Attending to the received message, that is, listening, reading or observing
- Decoding the received message
- Interpreting and understanding the meaning of the message
- Responding to the message
- Giving feedback to the sender of the message

This is a simplified description of a single cycle in the process of communication. Communication really takes place in several cycles and the

two persons take turns and alternately carry out functions of sender and receiver.

Both, the sender and the receiver have important functions in the communication process; it can be successful only if both are efficient and attentive.

Context and Environment: Context is the set of circumstances that surround an event and influence its significance. It is the background of events which lead to the message being sent. A message may acquire a different meaning in a changed context. If both have the same amount of background information about the situation and the issue, it is easier to communicate on the topic.

The context influences the sender's encoding and the receiver's decoding, and also each one's interpretation. The circumstances of each communicant, each one's position in the organization, the usual work that each one does, and the present state of mind of each one, can all influence the communication process. The present relationship between the two is a part of the context; the receiver tends to interpret messages in the context of the relationship.

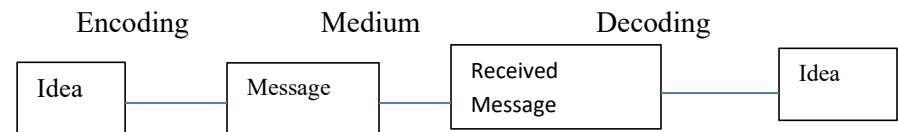
Communication takes place in an environment which includes several things. The most obvious is the place in which the communication takes place; if it is pleasant and comfortable, the communication is better.

Noise or disturbance in the environment usually hinders the flow of communication. The political, cultural, legal, technological environment influences communication as these factors may affect each one's situation and attitude to the content of a message. Time is also as an element of the environment; it has three aspects:

- ✓ The time of the communication (first thing in the morning, just before or just after lunch, when it is almost closing time) affects the communication.

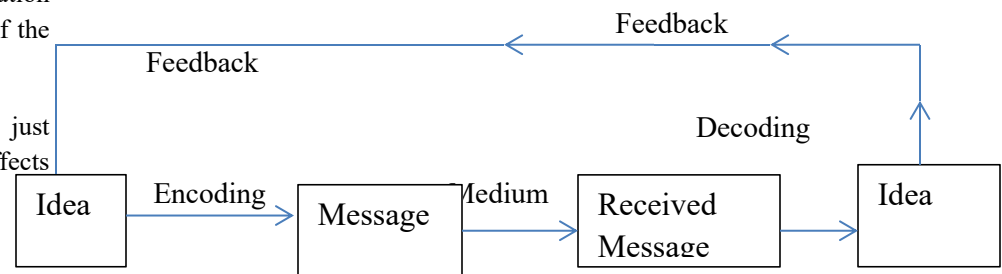
- ✓ The length of time taken by a communication event (how long the presentation or the meeting or the conversation goes on) influences the quality of the communication. Too long can be tiring and boring; too short may be inadequate and one may feel that insufficient attention was given by the other.
- ✓ There is a right time for giving some information. If it is given too late, it may be useless; if it is too early, receivers may not be ready for it and may not understand it.

The following figure shows the steps in the one-way process of communication in a linear form.



This one way routine is only a part of the communication process. For the communication to be complete, the sender must know whether the receiver has got the message, understood it in the way it was intended, and has received it well. The sender can find out this only on getting a chance to note the reaction and response of the receiver.

The response may be in words (spoken or written), signs, or behaviour, both conscious and unconscious. When sender gets the feedback, one cycle of communication is complete. This may be represented roughly by the following diagram:



Types of Communication

Communication takes many forms according to the style of expression, the occasion and situation, the symbols and medium used, the relationship between the persons involved and such other factors. Each form has its uses and functions.

Any particular message or communication event may fall into more than one category. The classification is only for the purpose of understanding how communication takes on different styles and has different impact on the situation.

One-way and Two-way

In one-way communication information is transferred in only one direction from the source to the target audience. With one-way communication there is no direct interaction between the persons involved.

The receiver has no chance to get clarification or to question the information received. One-way communication follows the linear Source-Message-Channel-Receiver (S-M-C-R) model of communication.

Since there is no feedback, the source cannot find out whether the receiver has understood the message. Examples of one-way communications systems are:

- Radio and television broadcasts
- Newspapers
- Advertisements and other mass media.

Within an organization, the notice board and public address system are one-way systems.

Two-way communication is interactive. It involves both persons fully. In a normal two-way conversation, the persons constantly alternate between being source and receiver.

The receiver can ask for clarification or challenge the source or add one's own ideas and views to the conversation. At the end of such a conversation, both gain information on the issue talked about as well as about each other.

Communication is much more complex than the simple model of source sending a message over a channel to a receiver. The sender and the receiver both actively play a role. They function within their respective frames of reference, their social situations, and their relationship to one another. What the receiver brings to the communication situation is as important as (perhaps even more important than) what the sender brings. It is a reciprocal process of exchanging signals to inform, instruct, or persuade.

Two-way communication requires interpersonal skills. It takes more time than one-way communication, but it is more satisfying and brings about a better understanding and agreement between the parties involved.

In a large symposium or lecture meeting, much of the flow is one-way, from the speaker(s) to the audience, but the audience has the opportunity to ask questions.

Audience response is not easy when the audience is large and the distance between the speaker(s) and listeners is much. In a smaller meeting, the chairperson can conduct the meeting so as to allow members to respond and participate. It is easier when the number is small and the distance between the participants is less.

Formal and Informal

The difference between "formal" and "informal" is in the "register" which includes tone of voice, vocabulary and syntax. In writing as well as speaking, we use a variety of registers. We use different registers for writing an assignment, for writing to a friend, for writing to a prospective

employer, for conversation with a friend, and for making a presentation. Writing is usually more formal than speaking.

Formal register follows certain conventions:

Conservative language: In formal style, we are careful about noun-pronoun agreement as in "Everyone has his or her weakness" but in an informal situation we may say, "Everyone has their weakness." (Note that the requirements of gender-free language and the need of not being pompously correct, has modified the language and "everyone has their weakness" is getting accepted as formal.)

No contractions: In instruction manuals, "You don't want to offend your reader," sounds more comfortable than the formal "You do not want to offend your reader." But in formal prose, contractions can give the impression that the writer is being casual.

Restrained style: Slang and colloquial terms suggest a casual rather than a serious approach. They are not used in formal communication. Gestures and movements are also restrained in a formal speech. Formal communication is usually scheduled in advance and has pre-arranged participants and pre-set agenda like a meeting, an interview, a conference, a presentation.

Highly formal communication is likely to be one-way and may not be an enriching experience. The language used is formal.

Formal communication moves along the established "channels" of communication within the organization. It is impersonal, official, and, in most cases, written. Formal meetings are documented by writing summaries and minutes.

The purposes of formal communication are to command, to instruct, and to finalize matters through the application of regulations.

Informal communication may be unscheduled, with random participants, no pre-set agenda. It is likely to be interactive and richer than formal communication. The style is informal and may be conversational. As the

newer, faster, more efficient technology replaces traditional methods of communication, the distinction between formal and informal communication is diminished.

Politeness is reduced in electronic messages; there is informality and experimentation. It is not advisable to use these abbreviations in formal, official e-mails. In an organization, formal communication is a means of controlling activities through circulation of authoritative policies and procedures stating what is to be done when, where, how, and by whom.

Informal communication is personal, unofficial, and mostly oral. It is based on the realization that personal interaction among employees is healthy for an organization.

The purposes of informal communication are to educate through information sharing, to motivate through personal contacts, and to resolve conflicts through participation and friendship. It maintains enthusiasm, loyalty, and commitment by involving employees in organizational matters.

Advantages of formal communication

- ✓ Since it is official, it is binding and more likely to be obeyed. It establishes responsibility of the sender and receiver.
- ✓ Since it is written, it is more precise and less likely to be misunderstood. It can be preserved and traced at any time. Copies can be made for distribution.
- ✓ It saves time and effort that would be spent in informal talks and discussions.
- ✓ It avoids the embarrassment of face-to-face contact when the subject of communication is sensitive or painful.

Disadvantages of formal communication

- ✓ It is too rigid; it limits information within the department to what is sanctioned by the head.
- ✓ If it is worded in bureaucratic jargon, with excessively cautious phraseology, it obscures the meaning.

- ✓ It often does not give reasons for the message; this can be very frustrating to the recipient.
- ✓ It takes time, effort and money to produce.
- ✓ It tends to be authoritarian since orders and instructions come down more often than reports and feedback go up and since social matters are seldom mentioned.
- ✓ It is usually impersonal and final and fails to motivate employees.

Channels of Communication

Channel of communication refers to the way by which a message flows from the sender to the recipient. An organization has well-ordered network of channels along which communication flows. Formal communications move along the established lines or channels. The direction of the flow of communication is described in terms of formal power and authority relationships among the members of the organization.

Communication from manager to subordinate is called **downward**; communication from subordinate to manager is called **upward**; and communication between persons at the same level is called **horizontal or lateral** communication. In addition to the formal channels of communication, an organization develops informal channels which satisfy various human needs of the members of the organization.

An organization has internal and external communication. Communication within the organization, among its members, is internal; communication with those outside the organization is external.

External

Messages that go out of the organization are outward and those that are received from outside are inward communication. Organizations have office procedures for handling external communication; both, the incoming and the outgoing messages are recorded and filed. Outward Messages go out of an organization to suppliers, customers, banks, insurance companies, government departments, the mass media and the general public.

They may be in the form of letters, faxes, telephone calls, telegrams, reports, advertisements, press handouts, speeches, visits and so on. The style, format and tone of the outward communication affect the organization's public image and public relations.

An organization receives letters, telegrams, fax messages, telex messages, reports and brochures, circulars, journals and magazines, telephone calls, and personal visits, from customers, other organizations, government departments and so on. These are inward communication.

Internal

The flow of communication within an organization forms a complicated pattern. The flow and the directions are usually determined by the pattern of hierarchy and levels of authority as well as by the requirements of tasks.

Formal Channels

The efficiency of an organization depends on a regular flow of messages. The flow of messages needs to be organized into a well-ordered network, to ensure that communication flows easily and that executives are kept informed of what is going on. Messages within an organization, between managers, supervisors and workers, are varied and numerous.

They move up and down the chain of authority as well as sideways between persons at the same level of authority, and among teams. Messages which move up and down the authority line are called vertical communication and those which move among persons of the same level are called horizontal or lateral communication.

Vertical Communication

This includes all the messages that move between subordinates and their supervisors.

Downward

Messages which go from the higher authority levels to the lower levels are downward communication. They may be written in the form of letters, notes, circulars, notices; or they may be oral, face-to-face in meetings, announcements over the public address system, and so on.

The common purposes of downward communication are to give:

- ❖ instructions about a specific task;
- ❖ information about the practices and procedures followed by the organization;
- ❖ information which creates understanding of the task in relation to other tasks of the organization;
- ❖ feedback about subordinates' performance;
- ❖ Information about the ideology and the goals of the organization which would help them to develop a sense of belonging to the organization.

Earlier, when business companies were authoritarian, employees were only told about their task, and how to do it. Now, many organizations realize the importance of giving employees a general understanding of their task's relevance to the organization's work; employees are also given feedback about how they are doing. Such communication makes them feel a sense of identification with the organization's goals. .

Downward communication must be simple and carefully explained; persons at the lower levels of the hierarchy may not have sufficient knowledge or overall view of the organization's work; hence they need explanation. Long circulars, written in an official and legal style are not easy to follow. Instruction sheets and employee manuals should be written in a simple style.

Distortion of Downward communication

A great deal of loss of information occurs as messages move downward. When a message is passed from a senior to a subordinate down the line of command in a chain, it passes through many levels of authority. There is delay as well as distortion of the message. Each person through whom it

passes edits it, filters it, and simplifies it for the understanding and needs of the next person who is to receive it.

If the chain of communication is very long, there may be much change and distortion in the message. Loss of information as it moves downward is often caused by misinterpretation, lack of understanding, and neglect of messages by many of the members of the organization. Even if there is very active downward flow of communication, it does not mean that the information is accurate, or that it is received and understood and accepted by subordinates.

Other distortions include:

- ✓ Reliance upon written diffusion method-instead of contact and face –to- face communication
- ✓ Message overload-employees may not therefore read or listen
- ✓ Timing-messages being received at different times
- ✓ Filtering-changing, shortening or lengthening of messages

Improving downward communication

Many organizations avoid long channels to ensure that information moves directly and fast. In a rapidly changing work environment, communication must move fast to keep up the efficiency of the organization. Communication can be passed downward in a cluster as in a meeting, so that everyone receives it at the same time in the same environment. The recipients of the information are of different levels of hierarchy. There is some opportunity to seek clarification; loss of information is avoided. With the setting up of computer networks in organizations the flow of information will be easier. Additionally,

- ✓ Specify an objective for communicating
- ✓ Communication should contain accuracy, specificity and no hidden meanings
- ✓ Best communication techniques should be employed to get the message across to the receiver

Upward

Messages which go from subordinates to supervisors and to higher levels are upward communication. The purpose is usually to:

- ❖ give information and submit reports
- ❖ understand the concerns of the subordinates
- ❖ encourage them to contribute ideas, and to make them feel a part of the organization.

Problems with upward communication

- ✓ Communication does not move upward easily. Fear and shyness often prevents subordinates from conveying messages to higher authorities.
- ✓ Impatience or arrogance may prevent superiors from listening to their subordinates. The resulting gap in communication can be harmful to the organization.
- ✓ When messages pass upward through official channels, there is usually loss of information.
- ✓ At every level there is some filtering of information-subordinates may provide information that superiors do not want to hear.
- ✓ Besides, there may be a deliberate suppression of information out of self-interest and jealousy; a supervisor may not pass upward, a good suggestion from a subordinate, or may change it so as to get the credit for himself; a senior officer may prevent information about discontent in the department from reaching the manager because it reflects on his/her human relations skills. The resulting information gap can be harmful because the upper level of management may not find out the true state of affairs until it is too late.
- ✓ The nature of hierarchical organization- the traditional role of managers to direct and the subordinate to listen to their bosses rather than be listened to
- ✓ Little/rare opportunity for employees to send communication upward

- ✓ The typical reliance on lower level members to initiate it instead of actively soliciting for information and providing channels for receiving it by managers. Open door policy should be adopted.

Therefore, cutting across the official chains of communication is sometimes necessary for the sake of speed and efficiency and for employee morale.

Good staff relations are an important asset of an organization; and one of the best aids to good relations is free upward communication. Employees who are listened to are happy and work better.

Secondly, persons at any level in an organization may have good ideas and suggestions for the improvement of the organization; these ideas should be encouraged.

Organizations set up special formal and informal channels to encourage and ensure upward movement of communication. Most organizations have these channels:

- ❖ Regular reporting systems exist in all organizations. There are forms for periodical reports and progress reports of different activities in the organization. These reports convey factual information to the management.
- ❖ Periodical review meetings with individuals and groups are arranged systematically, and conducted in an informal style. Such meetings provide an opportunity for review of work, problems, solutions, ideas, budget allocations, etc. They give an opportunity to subordinates to talk to the superiors. Opinions, views and attitudes are conveyed upwards by this channel.
- ❖ Suggestion scheme is a formal and well-organized system for making ideas move up from the lower level employees to the management and decision makers. A suggestion scheme requires elaborate set-up, committee meetings, a well-planned award system, and a good deal of time and energy. The company benefits from the ideas of people who are actually on the job, and the employees feel happy when their ideas are respected and valued.

- ❖ "Open door" policy provides an informal upward channel. It gives every employee an access to higher authority. It is carried out by managers allowing free access to anyone, without prior appointment, during a fixed hour every day, or on a fixed day of the week, and allowing any employee to approach directly. This system prevents distortion by avoiding the chain of authority. Feelings and attitudes of the staff are observed this way.
- ❖ Informal gatherings, picnics or weekly tea meetings bring together all members of the organization. Some organizations call it the "Happy Hour". There is an opportunity for socializing and getting to know one another more closely. Such occasions encourage employees to overcome their shyness and talk freely about their work and their ideas and their life. Closer relationships are built up and there is better interaction among all levels.
- ❖ Standing Committees (like grievance committee, welfare committee, counseling committee) provide a channel for problems, unhappy feelings, troubles, complaints and grievances to be made known to the upper level of the organization where they can be given serious attention.
- ❖ Exit interviews with employees who are leaving the organization can provide much useful information about attitudes and views of the employees. Upward communication provides two main types of information:
 - personal information about performance, views, ideas, which is vital for employee relations and morale;
 - technical feedback which is necessary for the working of the organization.

Horizontal or Lateral Channel

A large amount of communication flows between persons of equal status in an organization. Horizontal communication can be oral or written. The quantity of horizontal communication is larger at higher levels of authority; the clerks in one department may have no direct contact with the clerks in another department, but section managers and heads of departments have

closer contacts, and the higher level managers have to be in constant consultation and communication with one another.

Horizontal communication is more interactive than vertical communication. Horizontal communication has several objectives:

- ✓ Exchange of information about activities, processes and progress among heads of departments or other peer groups is essential for the organization's work. Some information is conveyed formally by sending copies of relevant documents like letters and reports; a good deal of information is exchanged by informal and formal meetings.
- ✓ Discussion of plans and problems, reviews of projects, and decisions require formal lateral communication in meetings. Daily routine matters may be settled by informal discussion.
- ✓ Coordination is the most important objective of horizontal communication. Department heads may meet periodically to discuss each department's contribution to the organization's goals.
- ✓ Conflict resolution is an important function of lateral communication. Members of a department or department heads meet to sort out existing or potential conflict by discussion.
- ✓ Problem solving usually requires horizontal communication among all those who are concerned with the problem and affected by it. Brainstorming is often used for finding solutions.
- ✓ Advice may be asked for and given in a friendly informal way between persons of equal status.
- ✓ Social and emotional support among peers is provided through lateral communication.

Conference is a form of organized horizontal communication. At a conference, common problems are discussed, and the ideas, information, knowledge and experience of several persons are pooled for common benefit.

Problems in horizontal communication

- ✓ Too much horizontal communication may weaken the organizational structure
- ✓ Departments do not generally like to share information with other departments because of rivalry
- ✓ Too much specialization results in each department becoming an island by itself having little in common to share with other departments
- ✓ Management may not have encouraged frequent horizontal communication

Improving horizontal communication

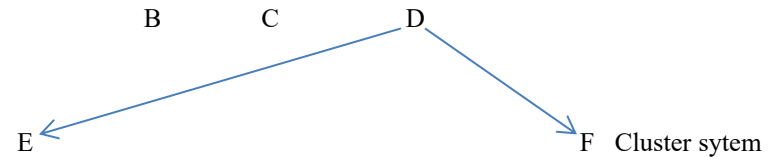
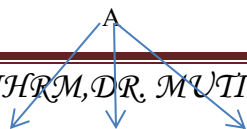
- ✓ Flexible procedures that provide guidelines about when and how employees should use horizontal communication should be put in place.
- ✓ The use of task forces and committees composed of employees from different departments working on common problems are viable.

Informal Channel

Grapevine

Grapevine is a secondary channel of personal, informal communication which exists in every organization in addition to the formal organized channels. It has no definite pattern or direction though it is largely horizontal. It is a complex web of oral communication flow, linking all the members of the organization in one way or the other. It may sometimes move along in a chain, passing information from person to person; and sometimes information may be passed in clusters, that is, in groups, at meal-times or just before or after working hours.

A → B → C → D Chain system



There may be more than one grapevine channel in an organization, and individuals may be on more than one grapevine. People whose places of work are close together, people who come into contact with one another in official work, people who travel to work together, or people with similar temperaments are likely to be on the same grapevine.

This informal channel carries unofficial information about the management's policies and plans, individual managers, work programs, the company's performance, and such matters related to the company. Naturally, the talk is coloured by the ideas, prejudices and feelings of the persons engaged in it.

Though the stories and information circulating in the grapevine are not fully correct, and often carry added colour, it can become quite powerful and influential.

Characteristics of grapevine

- ✓ They are found in every organization and they are virtually impossible to eliminate
- ✓ Information usually travels more rapidly than through official communication channels
- ✓ It is a more spontaneous form of expression and hence intrinsically more gratifying and credible than formal communication
- ✓ In situations where official censorship and filtering occur, grapevine information is more informative
- ✓ On non-controversial topics related to the organization, most of the information communicated through the grapevine (about 75%) is

accurate. Emotionally charged information however is more likely to be distorted

- ✓ The number of people who serve as actual links in the grapevine is generally small (estimated to be less than 10% of the group).

Advantages of Grapevine

- ✓ Research has shown that grapevine is not just a zigzagging, unreliable channel. It often carries more information than the formal official system of communication does;
- ✓ it moves much faster because it is not hindered by the delays of the official channel.
- ✓ Grapevine can affect an organization's working by its influence on the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of its members. Attitudes have a direct bearing on people's willingness to work on their assigned tasks. The nature of the talk among the employees also affects their attitudes and efficiency. Excited talking and bad tempers lead to poor performance; so does excessive fun.
- ✓ What employees hear and say affects their relationship with the management, and this has a direct effect on productivity.
- ✓ The presence of the grapevine is recognized and accepted as a part of an organization. It needs to be skillfully controlled because it can influence the efficiency of the organization. A manager who learns to listen to it can find out who are the talk-leaders and give them desirable information; this can have a beneficial effect.
- ✓ There is a close relationship between the grapevine and the morale of employees; when the morale is high and employees are well-motivated, the grapevine is usually thin and slow; when the morale drops, it becomes thick and fast.
- ✓ It is an effective tool for developing corporate identity, building team work and motivating people.
- ✓ It supplements formal communication channels to make the total communication system more effective.
- ✓ In a sense, the degree of grapevine activity is a measure of a firm's spirit and vitality. A lively grapevine reflects the deep psychological need of people to talk about their jobs and their

company as a central life of interest. Without it the company would literally be sick.

- ✓ It contributes to the speed of spreading the message to an organization's communication system.

Criticisms

It tends to be accurate when the information is non-controversial. As noted, 75% of grapevine information is accurate. The remaining 25% constitutes rumours- which is the injudicious and untrue information that is communicated with factual evidence to back it up.

Rumours serve at least four *purposes*:

- ✓ To structure and reduce anxiety
- ✓ To make sense of limited or fragmented information
- ✓ To serve as a vehicle to organize group members and possibly outsiders into a coalition
- ✓ To signal a sender's status or power that he/she is the only person possessing the information

Reasons why rumours exist

- ✓ Rumours flourish in organizations as a response to situations that are important
- ✓ Where there is ambiguity
- ✓ Where conditions that arouse anxiety exist.

A rumour will persist either until the wants and expectations creating the uncertainty underlying the rumour are fulfilled or until the anxiety is reduced.

Rumours also arise out of wishful dreams of people and out of sheer maliciousness

Rumours cannot be eliminated and therefore management must learn to live with them and try to minimize the negative consequences by:

- ✓ Announcing timetables for making important decisions
- ✓ Explaining decisions and behaviour that may appear inconsistent or secretive
- ✓ Getting at the root of the rumour and confronting it with facts.

Managing informal communication

Bad news and unpleasant stories cause excitement; they travel faster and are discussed more extensively than good news. A manager has to keep eyes and ears open, and encourage upward communication, to find out what the employees talk about and how they feel.

Grapevine cannot be crushed entirely; The management has to watch it. If a harmful half-truth begins to travel around, the management has to take quick action to convey correct information. This can be done by giving the information to talk-leaders, mentioning it at briefing and routine meetings, putting up notices on notice boards, and by distributing bulletins and circulars. If the matter is serious, a meeting may be called.

Sometimes a bit of information may be planted in the grapevine in order to test the possible reaction to a proposed decision or plan. It can be used constructively because of its speed in moving.

Barriers to Communication

Communication is not always successful. Several things can prevent the message from reaching the intended recipient or from having the desired effect on the recipient. Barriers can be divided into three broad groups: Physical and External barriers, Semantic and Language barriers, and Socio-Psychological barriers.

Physical, External or Mechanical Barriers

These are obstacles that prevent a message from reaching the intended recipient. Some cannot be controlled because they are in the environment; some can be controlled by the management.

Defects in the medium: Defects in the devices used for transmitting communication are external and usually not within the control of the parties engaged in communication. The telephone, the postal system, the courier service, or even electronic media may fail or break down. A partial failure of the mechanical equipment is more dangerous than a complete failure, because a partial failure carries an incomplete or distorted message, which might cause a wrong action to be taken. The only way to overcome this barrier is to postpone the communication or use an alternative medium.

Noise: Noise is any disturbance which occurs in the transmission process. In face to-face communication without a microphone, the air may be disturbed by noise in the environment such as traffic, factory work, or people talking. Organizations which can afford sound-proof rooms can overcome this barrier. In a factory, oral communication is very difficult because of the noise of the machines.

Defects in the Organization's Communication System: Within the organization, the movement of papers and of information may be held up by the system itself. Oral messages and information which have to pass through too many levels of authority are often delayed. They are also likely to be distorted, because, at each level, they are edited and interpreted before being passed on.

As a result, some persons in the organization may not get some information which they need for their work. This is known as a communication gap. Many gaps are created in upward communication because subordinates do not send all information upward; they tend to send up only such information as will show them in a favourable light, and hide such information as may not be favourable to themselves.

The system of routine reports and the system of sending copies of documents for information, is meant to ensure that information is conveyed to the concerned persons, but some information may still not reach some persons. In downward communication, the loss of information is said to be so great that many employees at the lowest level receive only 20 per cent of what they should get. Too much dependence on written communication is

one of the reasons for this. Circulars, bulletins, notices and even letters are not read carefully.

Many employees are unable to read and understand long messages. Even better educated employees at higher levels do not always give proper attention to all written communication. Oral communication has to be used to supplement written communication when the message is important. The system of internal communication has to be checked constantly to make sure that there are no undue delays in conveying information.

Semantic and Language Barriers

Language is our most important and powerful tool of communication; and yet it is a tricky tool which needs skill in handling. First of all, words have multiple meanings. Sentences can convey entirely different meanings depending on how they are spoken.

In oral communication, the speaker can signify the meaning by emphasizing particular words; but in written communication, the reader is in control and may read with different emphasis. More importantly, semantic barriers arise because words mean different things to different persons. It is said, "meaning is in people, not in words." Age, education, cultural background and many other factors influence the meaning we give to words.

Technical terms can be a barrier to communication. Such terms are limited to the group of persons who work together, or work in the same kind of occupation; they need to use technical terms in their work. Often, these words have other meanings in ordinary language, and are differently understood by people who do not belong to that occupational group. Technical terms must be avoided or explained while communicating with persons from a different occupation.

Socio-Psychological Barriers

People have personal feelings, desires, fears and hopes, likes and dislikes, attitudes, views and opinions. Some of these are formed by family background and social environment; some are formed by the individual's

own intelligence, inherited qualities, education, and personal experiences. They form a sort of emotional filter around the mind, and influence the way we respond to messages that we receive and to new experiences.

Factors like the time, the place and the circumstances of a particular communication also influence our understanding and response. Problems of understanding, interpretation and response to communication arise partly from our socially-learned attributes and partly from our personal attributes. These are called socio-psychological barriers. To some extent, these barriers may be overcome by an effort of the will. Persons in responsible positions need to overcome their barriers in order to be able to manage their work.

In order to overcome these barriers, you must know how we deal with a received message. We receive a message at three levels:

- Noticing is at the physical level. We notice the message with our senses; when we become aware that a message is addressed to us, we focus attention on it. It is quite possible that our eyes or ears miss it on account of other competing messages which claim our attention. Sometimes we may not notice a message addressed to us.
- Understanding is at the level of intelligence. We must be able to understand the language or any other symbols used in the message. Also, the ideas and concepts in the message must be within our understanding and knowledge.
- Acceptance is at the emotional level. There is usually an emotional response of pleasure, dislike or indifference to every message that we receive. If the message arouses an unpleasant feeling, we may reject it, resent it or forget it. Emotional blocks may even make us fail to understand the message correctly.

Most of the socio-psychological barriers discussed below operate at the emotional level.

Self-centred Attitudes: We tend to see and hear everything in the light of our own interests and needs and desires. We pay attention to messages which are useful to us, and often do not pay enough attention to those messages which do not interest us. Self-interest may prevent us from seeing

the point of view of others. If we look at everything from the point of view of our own interests and desires, we miss some useful information and develop narrow ideas.

A person who is highly self-centred also fails to build up good relationships with other people. In order to win the goodwill of others with whom we work, we must be able to understand how other people feel and think.

Group Identification: Our values and opinions are influenced, in some matters, by the group to which we belong. All persons have a sense of belonging to a group, like family, the larger family of relatives, people of our locality or city, our religion or language group, age group, nationality, economic group and so on. Many of our ideas, attitudes and values are picked up from the group. We tend to reject an idea which goes against the interests of the group.

This becomes a barrier to communication. With emphasis on good relationships in business today, most people make efforts to see others' point of view; members of organizations are given training to make them sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others.

Self-Image: We have a certain idea of our self; some persons even take care to project an image of themselves. Self-image is our idea about what we are, what we look like and what impression we make. It is usually based on some truth and some exaggeration of our good points. A self-image is built up over the years, and it is quite difficult to accept any idea which goes against it. This makes it particularly difficult for us to give and take feedback. A systematic self-assessment gives you a balanced self-image.

Selective Perception: Sometimes, we fail to get the complete message which is sent to us. We see, read or hear selectively according to our own needs, interests and experience. We project our expectations into the communication as we interpret the message. Some of the aspects and information content of the message may not be perceived by us.

Defensiveness: If we feel threatened by a message, we become defensive and respond in such ways that reduce understanding. We may question the motives of others or become sarcastic or judgmental. Such defensive behaviour prevents understanding.

Filtering: Filtering is the process of reducing the details or aspects of a message. Each person who passes on a message reduces or colours a message according to his/her understanding of the situation. In the role of sender, we tend to edit information so that it will appear favourable to ourselves; some information is changed and lost in this way. Information which has to be sent up the levels of hierarchy has to be condensed and integrated so that the senior managers at the top are not overloaded with information.

At each level, the information gets edited according to what the person thinks is important for the boss. The more the levels of hierarchy in an organization, the greater is the filtering and loss of information. A common barrier to horizontal communication is organizational politics; one manager may withhold information from another since possession of information usually has benefits and advantages.

Status Block: A "boss" who is conscious of status finds it difficult to receive favourably, any suggestions from subordinates. People in senior positions often develop the feeling that they know everything about how to run the business. They do not agree that a junior may have some good ideas. Many good ideas are wasted only because they come from junior employees who are considered to be too young and inexperienced.

The ideas of workers are most likely to go unheard because of the social distance between them and the managers. A subordinate may be too nervous to speak to a very senior manager. Social distance sometimes makes workers too shy or frightened to speak to their senior bosses. Social and official status distance can raise a difficult barrier which both may be unable to overcome. Suggestion schemes are meant to overcome this status block.

Good managers personally try to overcome it by developing friendly contact with their subordinates or by maintaining an office which does not frighten them by its status symbols of expensive decor and furnishing, or by following an "open door" policy.

Resistance to Change: This is a serious psychological barrier. Some people strongly resist new ideas which are against their established opinions or traditions or social customs. They may avoid new ideas because they feel insecure or afraid of changes in methods or situations. People bound by traditions have their own emotions, attitudes, standards and convictions and do not accept anything that goes against their cherished ideas.

Closed Mind: Limited intellectual background, limited reading and narrow interests can cause a person's mind to be narrow. This limits the ability to take in new ideas. Persons with closed mind do not take any suggestions for change. Young employees with bright ideas and fresh approach feel frustrated by the closed mind of the senior people in an organization. This becomes a serious barrier to receiving grievances and appeals. These barriers can be overcome to some extent by organizational procedures like grievance committees, counseling and suggestion schemes.

Poor Communication Skills: Lack of skill in writing and speaking prevents a person from framing a message properly. Oral communication can be handicapped by a number of problems; nervousness in facing an audience may affect a person's clarity in speaking. Even excitement about an achievement or a new idea may make a person's speech incoherent. Written communication can be handicapped by poor skills in using the language. Writing and speaking skills can be developed by training and practice. To be successful you will need to master the art of speaking to big and small audiences and on the telephone.

You must also be able to write or dictate a message clearly and quickly. The other two communication skills, reading and listening, are really the more important skills. Unfortunately, these two skills do not receive enough attention in business training schools. Poor reading habits and faulty

listening are both psychological short-comings, and need careful training to overcome. Training workshops are organized for these skills.

State of health: If the state of health is poor, communicating ability is reduced because the mind is not sufficiently alert, there may be gaps in attention while reading or listening, there may be lack of energy to think clearly and to find the right words. Perception is low when the state of health is poor. Emotions, which play an important part in successful communication are easily disturbed.

Cross-cultural barriers: Cross cultural factors naturally increase the possible problems of communication. If for historical or political reasons the relationship between two countries is not friendly, there can be even greater problems of communication.

Culture is a shared set of values and attributes of a group; it is the sum total of the ways of living built up by a group and transmitted from one generation to another. Culture is so much a part of an individual's manner of talking, behaving and thinking, that communication style and competence are influenced by it.

In a world that is becoming global in its business, skill in communicating with people of other cultures is vital to success. Many international business training firms give courses in cross-cultural communication to company executives. Some of the most significant differences between cultures are

- National character/basic personality
- Language
- Values and norms of behaviour
- Social relationships
- Concepts of time
- Concepts of space
- Thinking processes
- Non-verbal communication
- Perception

Barriers to communication

- ❖ Problems caused by the sender
- ❖ Problems in message transmission
- ❖ Problems in reception
- ❖ Problems in receiver comprehension and perception

Problems caused by the sender

A number of barriers can prevent the sender from properly handling a communication task e.g the amount of information he/she has about the subject of message-sufficient or insufficient.

- ❖ Too much knowledge can lead to over –explanation and hence confusion
- ❖ Decision regarding selection of information-what should be included and what should be left out
- ❖ Order of presentation-what should be presented first etc
- ❖ Lack of familiarity with the audience
- ❖ Lack of experience in speaking or writing

Problems in message transmission

- ❖ Number of transmission links e.g. 3-4 people, high levels of distortion
- ❖ Transmission of unclear/conflicting messages

Problems in reception

The term ‘noise’ has been used to refer to factors that interfere with the exchange of messages.

Physical noise - external sounds that distract communication. Other types of external noise that do not involve sound are for example overcrowded rooms or smelly cigar that can disrupt concentration.

Physiological noise – hearing disorders, illnesses and disabilities that make it difficult to receive messages.

Psychological noise - forces within the receiver that interfere with understanding e.g. egotism, defensiveness, hostility, fear, pre-occupation etc

Problems in receiver comprehension

- ❖ Lack of understanding the words used e.g technical terms
- ❖ Involvement of personal interests

Overcoming Barriers

Constant organizational effort is needed to overcome the barriers which are unconsciously built up by different people in the organization.

- ❖ Persons in positions of authority, as well as subordinates, can be helped to overcome these barriers by training in effective communication.
- ❖ Periodical review and reorganization of communication networks is also needed to ensure that information reaches people in time.
- ❖ The responsibility for overcoming barriers to personal communication and ensuring the success of every communication activity falls upon the senior and the better trained person. The higher your position, the greater is your need for effective communication. You have to cultivate all the communication skills including getting feedback and non-verbal communication.
- ❖ The external barriers of defective channels and faulty organizational systems are the Management's responsibility within the organization. The channels must be kept in good working condition. Many companies which can afford it maintain soundproof rooms for meetings and take steps to reduce the noise level in the office.
- ❖ Semantic and language barriers can- be overcome only by being 'careful with the use of language, and by using words which have clear meaning, by using short and simple sentences, and also by using visual aid whenever possible, feedback must be got and given to ensure that there is common understanding of a message.

- ❖ Personal barriers can be overcome only by making a conscious effort, and by training for better communication. Persons in responsible positions are expected to improve their communication skills and overcome their particular blocks. Many companies organize training sessions for their staff for better communication skills.

Barriers can develop unexpectedly since emotions play a large part in communication. It is not easy to overcome all barriers; everyone has to make efforts to be aware of them and take care to avoid them.

To reduce misunderstanding when communicating with people from different cultures, these rules may be useful:

- ✓ Don't assume similarity until you are sure. We tend to think others are similar to us and are often surprised to find they are quite different in their thinking. It is safer to assume difference till you are sure of similarity.
- ✓ Depend on description rather than evaluation or interpretation; persons from different cultures evaluate and interpret differently. Before communicating, try to feel yourself in the other's role, values and frame of reference.

Barriers can be overcome if conscious efforts are made by both the sender and the receiver.

Sender's responsibility

Setting communication goals- the sender must set clear communication goals depending on the purpose so as to apply various modes of communication. If for example the purpose is to disseminate information, then a well-organized task or written communication shall serve the purpose. If the purpose is to change the attitude or opinion of the receiver, a more skillful and emphatic communication is needed.

Using appropriate language- since language can be a barrier, the sender should structure messages in ways that will make them clear and understandable to the receiver- make use of appropriate and simple words.

Practicing emphatic communication- the sender must understand the receiver's frame of reference (assumptions, attitude and beliefs) to understand how the message will be received and interpreted.

Improving communication credibility- the sender's credibility can be increased by mastering the subject of communication and building up trustworthiness.

Encouraging feedback-it enables the sender to know whether the receiver has understood the message or not, i.e two-way communication promotes effective communication

Using face-to- face communication -it is more effective since people are accustomed to expressing themselves more freely and with fewer reservations when talking rather than writing.

Using a correct amount of redundancy- if the message is important or complicated, it is often necessary to repeat it in several different ways so that the receiver will understand it.

Developing trusting climate- it is imperative that an environment of trust is created before any genuine communication is attempted. Effective communication cannot take place if a climate of trust does not exist between the sender and the receiver.

Using picture- the sender must make use of illustrations and charts to put across the message clearly- the picture should fit the message.

Receiver's responsibility

Effective listening- listening is an essential requirement of effective communication. Active listening is an important way to bring about changes in people. It brings about changes in peoples' attitude towards themselves and others and also brings about changes in the basic values and personality philosophy. People who have been listened to become more emotionally mature, more open to their experiences, less defensive, more democratic and less authoritarian.