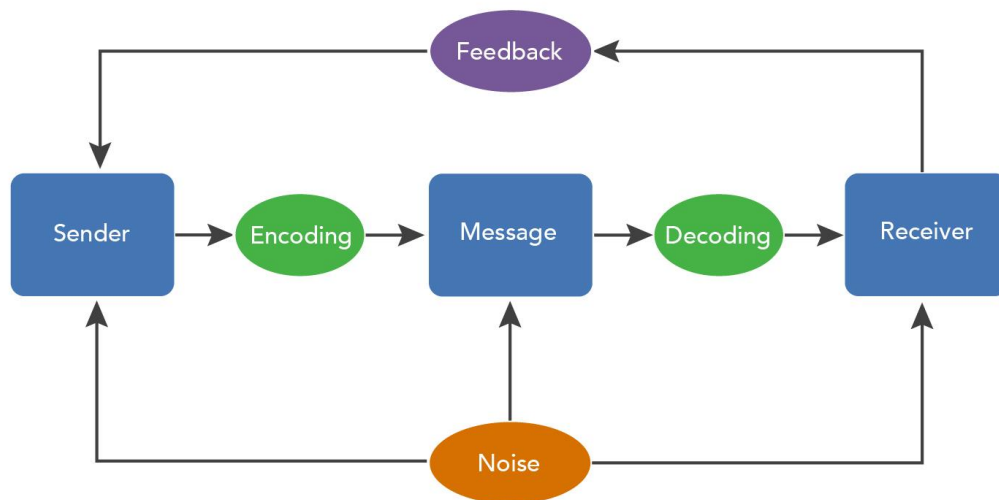


COMMUNICATION

The term “communication” is freely used by everyone. It is one of the most frequently discussed subjects in the field of organizational behavior. According to Louis Allen, Communication is the sum of all things, a person does when he wants to create an understanding in the mind of another. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening and understanding.

According to Keith Davis, “It is the process of passing information and understanding from one person to another. It is essentially a bridge of meaning between people. By using this bridge of meaning, a person can safely cross the river of misunderstanding that separates all people”.

The Communication Process



The Communicator

Communication commences with the communicator. He is the sender of the message. He realizes the need for conveying something to someone else. A communicator or the sender is the source of communication. He has a purpose of communicating some information to one or more persons.

Encoding

Encoding means putting message into code. A message is initiated by encoding a thought. The communicator encodes the information to be transmitted. It is done by translating into a series of symbols or gestures. Encoding is essential because information can be conveyed only through representations or symbols. The

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sender of the message should establish mutuality of meaning with the receiver. Coded messages may be oral or written words or gestures.

The message

A message is the output of encoding process. It is the physical form of the encoded message. The message may be in any form- oral, written or gesture. But it must be unambiguously understood by the receiver. Speech may be heard. Written words may be read. Gestures may be seen or felt. Message must be clear and precise.

The Medium

The communicator can communicate the message through a medium. The medium is the carrier of communication. The communication channel is the mode of transmission. Air is the medium for oral message. The medium is inseparable from the message. It links the sender with the receiver. The message may be conveyed through a memorandum, letter, telegram, the telephone, a computer or T.V., but the channel or the medium must be appropriate for the message. At times, multiple media are used for effective communication. A telephone talk may be confirmed by a letter later. Since the choices of channels are many, proper choice of the channel is vital for effective communication.

Decoding

Decoding refers to the finding of the meaning of something conveyed in code. It is the process by which the receiver interprets the message. It means translating the message that is significant and meaningful to the receiver. The recipient has to be ready for the message. Then only the message can be decoded into thought. In decoding, the receiver converts the message into thoughts. Decoding is affected by several factors such as the recipient's knowledge, past experience, personal interpretations of the symbols and gestures used expectations and mutuality of meaning. Thus, decoding is very important for understanding the message.

The Receiver

Communication requires at least a couple of people, the sender and the receiver. One "encodes" and the other "decodes" the message. It will be complete only when the receiver perceives the message intact. The receiver must decode the message without distortion. If the message does not reach a receiver, communication cannot be said to have taken place.

Feed Back

Feedback refers to the reaction of the receiver. It is a reversal of the communication process. Feedback enables the communicator to know whether his

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message is received and interpreted correctly or not. Further, Feedback enables the communicator to know the reaction of the receiver so that future communication can be modified, if necessary. The importance of Feedback is incalculable. It helps to check the effectiveness of communication. It makes communication a two-way process.

Noise

“Noise” is the enemy of Feedback. It refers to any factor that interferes with communication. Interference may occur in all the above stages of the communication process. It hinders or blocks communication.

Types of Communication

We spend a great deal of our time in communication. No one can afford to waste time by indulging in unnecessary communication. It is often very difficult to determine which communication is necessary and which is not necessary. Again it is difficult to determine the extent of information to be passed on. The method of presentation is also to be decided - narrative, statistical or graphical form. The following are some of the types of communication.

Verbal or Oral Communication

In this method of communication, the two parties exchange their ideas or the message with the help of word of mouth. The message, instruction, order, directive etc., is conveyed through spoken words. Examples of verbal communications are – telephone talk, oral orders, face to face talks, counseling etc. Some of the advantages of verbal communication are as follows:

- ✓ It saves time and money. No other device is so short, simple and quick
- ✓ Because of the face contact or personal touch, it is effective.
- ✓ Oral communication is easily understood. Even when there are doubts they can be cleared on the spot.
- ✓ The effect of the communication or response to the communication can be easily measured. Suitable changes can also be done immediately
- ✓ During periods of emergency, oral communication is the best method.

However, oral communication is not suitable in the following cases:

- ✓ When the communicator and the recipient are far off, (beyond the telephone range) oral communication will not serve the purpose.
- ✓ If the message to be transmitted is lengthy and requires a thorough clarification, oral communication will not be suitable.
- ✓ Oral communication does not serve as a record or as evidence. It cannot be made use of in future.
- ✓ There are chances of misunderstanding and mis-interpreting the communication.

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Written Communication

A written communication is conveyed through a letter, report, circular notes, memoranda, notice and communiqué. It is a very common form of communication in most of the organizations and is suitable for many situations.

The usual forms of written communication are:

Orders – given by the superiors to the sub-ordinates. These can be of three types.

- ✓ General
- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Definite

General orders are given by the top management, specific orders by the middle level management to lower level managers and definite orders by the supervisor to workers.

- ✓ Instructions given by the departmental heads to supervisors and by the supervisors to their sub-ordinates.
- ✓ Reports submitted by the authorized persons. These are of three types.

Routine reports- which are prepared periodically and are a regular feature.

Commission reports- which are of a non-routine nature and are prepared under special orders.

Special circumstances reports.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

It is not possible that every time an order, instruction, guideline, direction, programme, information etc, transmitted by the superior is properly understood and assimilated by those for whom it is intended. Similarly, suggestions, reports, advice, recommendations, complaints, etc., transmitted by the sub-ordinates to their superiors may be misunderstood or mis-interpreted. In any case, the objectives of communication are defeated.

As such, the process of communication is not always smooth. It is obstructed by many obstacles. These are referred to as barriers of communication. It refers to those factors which cause disturbance either in the mind of the communicator or the communicatee or in the process, which will create distortion of the message, leading to lack of the response, ignoring or mis-understanding. The important barriers to effective communication are:

Ineffective Expression

The first and the most common barrier in the process of communication is bad

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expression. This means that the messages suffer from omissions, uncertainty, inaccuracies, verbosity, repetitions, ambiguity, lack of clarity and precision. In order to remove this, the staff should be trained to draft various kinds of effective communication. This will save time because otherwise much time has to be devoted in giving subsequent clarifications.

Inaccurate Translation

Decisions are generally conveyed from the top to the lower level. The superiors are known for their specialized knowledge. They generally draft messages in a technical language which may not be clearly understood by those who have to implement the decisions. Even if they are able to understand, they may not be able to convey it further down the line in simple words.

In many such cases, it becomes necessary to translate the subject matter or the message into a simpler language, i.e., the language which the Communicatee can understand easily. But the translation may be done inaccurately. Sometimes the translator is not in a position to find out the equivalent of many terms. With the result, the translation leads to further confusion. It becomes necessary that competent persons are appointed for the job and are provided the necessary equipment for the execution of the entrusted tasks.

Inattention

Inattention is a very common and chronic human failing. This barrier generally arises in case of oral communication. It can be illustrated with the help of the following example: a superior is giving a message on the telephone. The subordinate is busy reading a magazine or looking through the window or his mind is occupied with some family problem. Superiors have to face this problem of inattention quite frequently. Efforts to communicate fails. The communicator should choose the appropriate time for communicating. Thus, for example, communicating at lunch hour or while at rest will not invite due attention. Holding a meeting at an odd time or calling the worker over for a talk on a holiday are some other examples.

Loss in Transmission

Loss in transmission is another barrier of communication which arises in oral communication. When messages are conveyed from the higher to the lower-level step by step, much of it is likely to be lost in transit. This problem may arise in case of written communication as well. At every level the superior will interpret the message which is likely to be distorted. Further, the meaning will change if some words are dropped, changed or misspelt. Harold Koontz and Cyril O'Donnell estimate that about 30% of the information is lost in each transmission. Written communications too are subject to loss in transmission. It is no wonder that enterprises often operate in a cloud of ignorance.

Vague and Unclarified Assumptions

The object of a communication is to distinctly tell the communicatee what is

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desired of him. If the message is not clear in meaning, assumptions are not clear to the personnel; communication will lose its purpose. If the personnel are not able to know what they are supposed to do even after receiving the message, the communication will be no more than a waste paper.

Inadequate Adjustment Period

Certain messages affect a large number of people in their personal life. For example, a notice is issued informing change in the timings of the shift in a factory. This requires sufficient lead time for the workers to make an adjustment. In case sufficient time is not granted there will be a communication barrier.

Similarly, communications regarding changes in the rules about bonus, over time should allow an adjustment period. Sufficient time should be allowed to the employees to adjust their schedule or get themselves mentally prepared.

Distrust

It arises if the superior is known for making frequent changes in the communication, quite often even reversing the original message. It is due to ill-conceived adjustment, improper technology, etc. Repeated experience of this type will damage employee's interest in the communication.

Fear

This indicates anxiety, awe, alarm or apprehension. This arises in upward communication and creates a barrier in communication. It may be illustrated as below. A subordinate is not sure if the information conveyed by him to the superior will be useful or not. He thinks if it is not liked, boss will be annoyed and might take action against him. He requests another sub-ordinate to transmit the information on his behalf.

Noise, Distance and Time

The world will not be worth living in, if it is quiet everywhere. But at the same time noise is a big menace. In modern factories the constant rattling of the machines and tools, the squeaking of the wheels constantly creates a lot of noise. And noise proves a great barrier to communication. It is a very common experience that noise proves a big hindering factor if two persons are talking. If somehow the noise is not controlled, it may not be possible for communicatee to listen anything or make out the sense. He will properly feel strained.

Let us consider the following example:

- ✓ An executive is giving a message on the telephone. But the sub-ordinate is not able to get it properly because of the noise of the traffic.
- ✓ There is a strike in a factory. Workers are not coming to their jobs. The factory

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manager calls a meeting of their representatives and wants to tell them certain things. But he is not in a position to do so because the workers are shouting very loudly. Distances act as barriers in the process of communication. If the two parties are very far from each other there will be difficulty in communication. Telephone solves this difficulty in many cases. But bad weather, technical defects, break down and rain may render the telephone useless. Thus because of these two barriers the message is not communicated properly at the right time. Failure to do so, results in dislocation of managerial plans rendering the attainment of the objectives in doubt.

Impression

Sometimes in an effort to impress others, the communicator starts talking in a confused manner or speaks with a changed pronunciation. These actions hinder communication. It leads to wastage of time, resources and energy and causes misunderstanding.

MAKING COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE

Clarity of Thoughts

The idea to be transmitted must be absolutely clear in the mind of the communicator. Just as it is not possible to have a clear print from a blurred negative, similarly one can never make his views intelligible to others, if he himself is confusing at certain points. Hence the process of communication to be complete must spring out from a clear head. Further, the academic level of the workers, their power of grasping things etc., should also be taken into account. Even when the language spoken by the workers, superiors and the management is the same, words often mean different things to people with a different experimental background.

Attach Importance to Actions Rather Than Words

In all communications, actions are more significant than words. A manager who invariably says that he trusts subordinates and then proceeds to make too many checks on the subordinate's work, usually fails to make himself understood. A boss who is not punctual cannot succeed in enforcing the timing-rules on the subordinates.

Participation

The next most important essential point is that both the parties (communicator and the recipient) should participate in the communication process. It is a common complaint of the workers that proper and patient hearing is not given to their voice. Listening plays a very fundamental part in oral communication because it is listening only which leads to sharing, participation and understanding in oral communication. But this listening is not merely passive hearing. It is an art which is to be perfected with practice based on sound knowledge of the principles of

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human nature.

- a. Some of such important principles are;
- b. Respect the personality of employees.
- c. Recognize both subjective and objective facts.
 - ✓ Avoid moralizing. For example, telling an emotionally upset worker that he should be clam and talk reasonably and logically may only succeed in erecting a barrier against further expression of his difficulties.
 - ✓ Hasty generalizations are dangerous; e.g., union stewards cannot be trusted, all workers are dishonest.
 - ✓ Knowledge of one's own prejudices will help proper listening.

Transmission

The communicator must plan carefully what to communicate, whom to communicate and how to communicate. Further, delegation of authority without responsibility breaks down the spirit of communication.

Keep the channel Always Alive

The channel of communication should be kept open and alive. It is only by honest attempts that good communication relations can be developed.

Cordial Superior-Subordinate Relationship

Effective communication requires good quality of relationship between people immediately connected with each other. It requires sound industrial relations, policies and practices, an all-round atmosphere of friendly co- operation and a feeling of trust and confidence throughout the organization right from the top management down to the humblest worker. Under such conditions only, the meaning of communication is grasped quickly and correctly. On the other hand, if the relations are not satisfactory, much of the information may be suppressed or misunderstood.