

## COMMUNICATION

Communication is the exchange of messages between people for the purpose of achieving common meanings. Unless common meanings are shared, managers find it extremely difficult to influence others. Whenever group of people interact, communication takes place. Communication is the exchange of information using a shared set of symbols. It is the process that links group members and enables them to coordinate their activities. Therefore, when managers foster effective communication, they strengthen the connections between employees and build cooperation. Communication also functions to build and reinforce interdependence between various parts of the organization. As a linking mechanism among the different organizational subsystems, communication is a central feature of the structure of groups and organizations. It helps to coordinate tasks and activities within and between organizations.

## DEFINITION

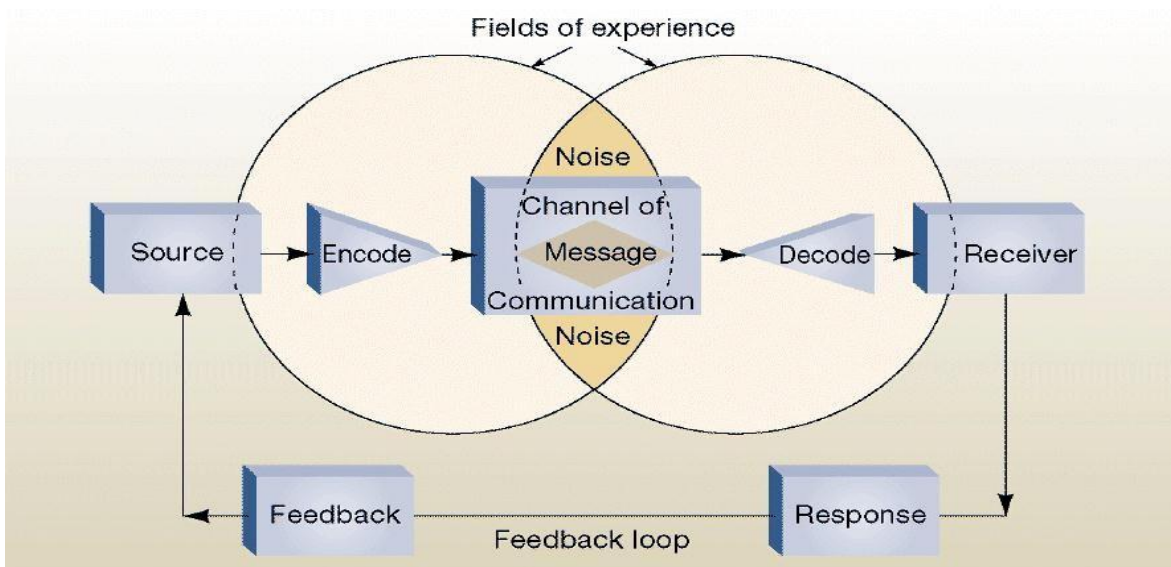
According to Koontz and O'Donnell, "Communication, is an intercourse by words, letters symbols or messages, and is a way that the organization members shares meaning and understanding with another".

## THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication is important in building and sustaining human relationships at work. Communication can be thought of as a process or flow. Before communication can take place, a purpose, expressed as a message to be conveyed is needed. It passes between the sender and the receiver. The result is transference of meaning from one person to another. The figure below depicts the communication process.

This model is made up of seven parts:

- (1) Source, (2) Encoding, (3) Message, (4) Channel, (5) Decoding, (6) Receiver, and (7)



Feedback.

**a) Source:**

The source initiates a message. This is the origin of the communication and can be an individual, group or inanimate object. The effectiveness of a communication depends to a considerable degree on the characteristics of the source. The person who initiates the communication process is known as sender, source or communicator. In an organization, the sender will be a person who has a need or desire to send a message to others. The sender has some information which he wants to communicate to some other person to achieve some purpose.

**b) Encoding:**

Once the source has decided what message to communicate, the content of the message must be put in a form the receiver can understand. As the background for encoding information, the sender uses his or her own frame of reference. It includes the individual's view of the organization or situation as a function of personal education, interpersonal relationships, attitudes, knowledge and experience. Three conditions are necessary for successful encoding the message.

- **Skill:** Successful communicating depends on the skill you possess. Without the requisite skills, the message of the communicator will not reach the receiver in the desired form. One's total communicative success includes speaking, reading, listening and reasoning skills.
- **Attitudes:** Our attitudes influence our behaviour. We hold predisposed ideas on a number of topics and our communications are affected by these attitudes.
- **Knowledge:** We cannot communicate what we don't know. The amount of knowledge the source holds about his or her subject will affect the message he or she seeks to transfer.

**c) The Message:**

The message is the actual physical product from the source encoding. The message contains the thoughts and feelings that the communicator intends to evoke in the receiver. The message has two primary components:-

- **The Content:** The thought or conceptual component of the message is contained in the words, ideas, symbols and concepts chosen to relay the message.
- **The Affect:** The feeling or emotional component of the message is contained in the intensity, force, demeanour (conduct or behaviour), and sometimes the gestures of the communicator.

**d) The Channel:**

The actual means by which the message is transmitted to the receiver (Visual, auditory, written or some combination of these three) is called the channel. The channel is the medium through which the message travels. The channel is the observable carrier of the message. Communication in which the sender's voice is used as the channel is called oral

communication. When the channel involves written language, the sender is using written communication. The sender's choice of a channel conveys additional information beyond that contained in the message itself. For example, documenting an employee's poor performance in writing conveys that the manager has taken the problem seriously.

**f) Decoding:**

Decoding means interpreting what the message means. The extent to which the decoding by the receiver depends heavily on the individual characteristics of the sender and receiver. The greater the similarity in the background or status factors of the communicators, the greater the probability that a message will be perceived accurately. Most messages can be decoded in more than one way. Receiving and decoding a message are a type of perception. The decoding process is therefore subject to the perception biases.

**g) The Receiver:**

The receiver is the object to whom the message is directed. Receiving the message means one or more of the receiver's senses register the message - for example, hearing the sound of a supplier's voice over the telephone or seeing the boss give a thumbs-up signal. Like the sender, the receiver is subject to many influences that can affect the understanding of the message. Most important, the receiver will perceive a communication in a manner that is consistent with previous experiences. Communications that are not consistent with expectations is likely to be rejected.

**h) Feedback:**

The final link in the communication process is a feedback loop. Feedback, in effect, is communication travelling in the opposite direction. If the sender pays attention to the feedback and interprets it accurately, the feedback can help the sender learn whether the original communication was decoded accurately. Without feedback, one-way communication occurs between managers and their employees. Faced with differences in their power, lack of time, and a desire to save face by not passing on negative information, employees may be discouraged from providing the necessary feedback to their managers.

**Guidelines for effective Communication**

- Senders of message must clarify in their minds what they want to communicate. Purpose of the message and making a plan to achieve the intended end must be clarified.
- Encoding and decoding be done with symbols that are familiar to the sender and the receiver of the message.
- For the planning of the communication, other people should be consulted and encouraged to participate.
- It is important to consider the needs of the receivers of the information. Whenever appropriate, one should communicate something that is of value to them, in the short run as well as in the more distant future.
- In communication, tone of voice, the choice of language and the congruency between

what is said and how it is said influence the reactions of the receiver of the message.

- Communication is complete only when the message is understood by the receiver. And one never knows whether communication is understood unless the sender gets a feedback.
- The function of communication is more than transmitting the information. It also deals with emotions that are very important in interpersonal relationships between superiors, subordinates and colleagues in an organization.