

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

“Communication (from Latin *communicare*, meaning “to share”) is a process of exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions through speech, signals, writing or behavior. In communication process, a sender (encoder) encodes a message and then using a medium/channel sends it to the receiver (decoder) who decodes the message and after processing information, sends back appropriate feedback/ reply using a medium/ channel.”

The main steps inherent to all communication are:

1. The purpose or reason for the communication.
2. The contents of the message.
3. The medium used for conveying the message (For example, internet, written text, speech, pictures, gestures and so on).
4. Transmitting the message.
5. Messages are often misinterpreted due to external disturbances such as noise created by humans, traffic and natural forces. These factors can result in miscommunication.
6. Receiving the message.
7. Deciphering and making sense of the message. Decode.
8. Interpreting and figuring out what the receiver thinks is the real message.

DEFINITION

Communication is one of the most basic functions of management. It refers to the sharing of ideas, facts, opinions, information, and understanding. It is an event or happening which takes place. When it is perceived, it influences and changes the information and behavior of an individual. It may be taken to mean the transferring of a mental concept, from one individual to another.

OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNICATION

An organization depends on communication to achieve organizational objective. Since managers work through others, all their acts, policies, rules, orders and procedures must pass through some sort of communication channel. The purposes of communication are:

1. To provide information and understanding which are necessary for group efforts.
2. To foster an attitude this is necessary for motivation, cooperation and job satisfaction.
3. To discourage the spread of mis-information, rumours, gossip and release the emotional tensions of workers.
4. To prepare workers for a change by giving them the necessary information in advance.
5. To encourage ideas, suggestions from subordinates for an improvement in the product and work conditions for reduction in the time or cost involved and for the avoidance of the waste of raw material.
6. To improve labour-management relations by keeping both in contact with each other.
7. To ensure such free exchange of information and ideas as well assisting all the employees in understanding and accepting the reasonableness of the status and authority of everyone in the organization.
8. To satisfy basic human needs as the neesa for recognition, self improvement and a sense of belonging.

IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is vital for efficient management and to improve industrial relations. In modern world the growth of telecommunication information technology and the growing competition and complexity in production have increased importance of communication in organizations large and small irrespective of their type and kind. A corporate executive must be in a position to communicate effectively with his superiors, colleagues in other departments and subordinates. This will make him perform well and enable him to give his hundred percent to the organization.

The following points can illustrate the importance of communication in human resource management:

1. **Base for Action:** Communication acts as a base for any action. Starting of any activity begins with communication which brings information necessary to begin with.
2. **Planning becomes easy:** Communication facilitates planning. Planning is made easy by communication. Any type of information regarding the human resource requirement of each department of the organization with their qualifications, the type and kinds of job etc. can be collected through communication which helps in human resource planning. Policies and programmes for their acquisition can be prepared and implemented. In the entire process communication plays a vital role, it also facilitates managerial planning of the organization.
3. **Means of Coordination:** Communication is an important tool for coordinating the efforts of various people at work in the organization.
4. **Aids in Decision making:** The information collected through communication aids in decision making. Communication facilitates access to the vital information required to take decisions.
5. **Provides Effective Leadership:** A communication skill bring manager near to his subordinates and exchange ideas and submits appropriate proposals, knows their opinions, seeks advices and make decisions. This enables a manager to win confidence of his subordinates through constantly communicating with them and removing probable misunderstandings. In this way he leads his people to accomplish the organizational goal.
6. **Boosts Morale and Motivation:** An effective communication system instills confidence among subordinates and workers ensuring change in their attitude and behavior. The main cause of conflict and dissatisfaction is misunderstanding which can be removed through communication skills. The removal of misunderstanding makes manager and his subordinates understand each other and create good industrial relations. This boosts up the morale of the people and motivates them to work harder.

ELEMENTS OF COMMUNICATION

Various elements of communication are sender, message, encoding, channel, receiver, decoding and feedback. Let us have a brief look at these elements:

1. **SENDER:** Sender of the message is the person who intends to make contact with the objective of passing the message to other persons. In organizational context, sender may be a superior, a subordinate, a peer or any other person.
2. **MESSAGE:** This is the subject matter of the communication which is intended to be passed to the receiver from the sender. The message may be in the form of ideas, opinions, feelings, views, suggestions, orders, etc.
3. **ENCODING:** Since the subject matter of communication is abstract and intangible, its transmission requires the use of certain symbols such as words, pictures, gestures,

transmission requires the use of certain symbols such as words, pictures, gestures, etc. The process of converting the message into communication symbols is known as encoding.

4. **CHANNEL:** Message encoded into symbols is transmitted by the sender through a channel like written form, personal contact, phone call, etc. depending on the situation of two parties – sender and receiver.
5. **RECEIVER:** Receiver is the person to whom the symbols are transmitted. Like sender, he may be a superior, subordinate, peer, or any other person in the organization.
6. **DECODING:** Decoding is the reverse of encoding. The receiver receives the subject matter of communication in the form of communication symbols in which the sender has encoded his message. The receiver decodes these symbols into message.
7. **FEEDBACK:** Feedback is necessary to ensure that the receiver has received the message and understood it in the same sense as the sender intended. Further, it acts as an energizing factor, thereby changing the course of action in the communication.

TYPES OF COMMUNICATION – FORMAL AND INFORMAL, LEVEL OF ANALYSIS OF BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

A good understanding of the different types and styles of communication can enhance your personal and professional relationships, resolve any misunderstandings and misconceptions, and contribute to a successful business venture and a joyful personal life.

Every person has his/her personal style of interacting with others. In the process of communication, an individual uses manifold channels to convey the message. However, the effectiveness of the communication style depends upon whether the receiver has accurately interpreted the intended idea thought, feelings etc. Sometimes, the speaker reveals more than he/she wished to convey through tone, gestures etcetera. Therefore, it is important to understand the different modes of communication.

The broad categories of communication are

Based on purpose and style – 1. Formal and 2. Informal

Based on communication channels – 1. Verbal, 2. Non verbal and 3. Visual

FORMAL AND INFORMAL COMMUNICATION

Effective communication and free flow of information within a company is crucial for its success. Thus, well structured formal communication channels need to be established in every organization.

Informal channels of communication are equally important for the health of the company. Most verbal communications between friends, family and community are informal and casual in nature.

1. **Formal communication:** Formal communication, both oral and written, follows certain rules, principles and conventions in conveying the message. The hierarchy in the organization has to be followed. Formal format, style and language have to be used. The communication pattern can be vertical, horizontal or diagonal.
 - **Vertical:** Information can flow upwards or downwards in the organization. Data that is collected flows up to the top levels of management for review and decision making, while instructions and orders are passed down from the management/seniors to the subordinates for implementation.

- **Horizontal:** Horizontal communication that involves communication between two parts of the organization at the same level. For example, the managers of a project in a company may hold a regular daily, weekly or monthly meeting to discuss the progress of the project.
 - **Diagonal:** Cross-functional communication between employees at different levels of the organizational hierarchy is described as diagonal communication. Diagonal communication is increasingly common in larger organizations. It reduces the chances of distortion or misinterpretation by encouraging direct communication between the relevant parties. For example, a junior engineer reports directly to the General Manager regarding the progress on the project.
2. **Informal communication:** Informal communication is the casual, friendly and unofficial. It is spontaneous conversation and exchange of information between two or more persons without conforming to the prescribed official rules, process, systems, formalities and chain of command.

Informal communication is between family, friends, neighbours, members of the community and other social relations that are based on common interests, tastes and dispositions. Information can flow from any source in any direction.

Employees in an organization interact with each other outside the formal domain. Such communication is called 'grapevine' – gossip in the office. Employees of different departments and varied levels meet and discuss matters casually and informally. The grapevine satisfies the social needs of the people and helps in building relationships. It is also useful in addressing certain needs and grievances of employees.

VERBAL, NONVERBAL AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION

1. **VERBAL:** Verbal communication involves the use of words and language in delivering the intended message. Though 'verbal' primarily refers to communication through the spoken medium, while categorizing 'types' of verbal communication the written and oral form of communication are included:
- **Written communication** includes letters and documents, e-mails, reports, handbooks, brochures, various chat platforms, SMS, and any form of written interaction between people. The written form of communication is essential and indispensable for formal business interactions (contracts, memos, press releases, formal business proposals etc.) and legal instructions and documentation. The effectiveness of written communication depends on the writing style, grammar, vocabulary and clarity.
 - **Oral communication** refers to communication through the spoken word, either face-to-face, telephonically, via voice chat, video conferencing or any other medium. Formal medium like lectures, conferences, seminars, meetings and informal conversations, chit-chat, gossip etc. are part of oral communications. Effectiveness of oral communication depends on clear speech and the tone used by the speaker. Speaking in too high/low volume or too fast/slow can also impair communication between people. Even non-verbal communications such as body language and visual cues effect the quality of interaction among individuals or group.

Verbal communication is the easiest, fastest, and the most successful form of communication. Yet, surprisingly according to research, it comprises of only seven percent of all human communication!

2. **NONVERBAL:** Nonverbal communication is the process of communicating by sending and receiving wordless messages. These messages can aid verbal communication, convey thoughts and feelings contrary to the spoken words or express ideas and emotions on their own. Some of the functions of nonverbal communication in humans are to complement and illustrate, to reinforce and emphasize, to replace and substitute, to control and regulate and to contradict the denoted message.

- **Physical nonverbal communication: An individual's body language that is,** facial expressions, stance, gestures, tone of voice, touch, and other physical signals constitute this type of communication. For example, leaning forward may mean friendliness, acceptance and interest, while crossing arms can be interpreted as antagonistic or defensive posture.

Research estimates that physical, non-verbal communication accounts for 55% of all communication. Smiles, frowns, pursing of lips, clenching of hands etc. transmit emotions which are not expressed through verbal communication.

- **Paralanguage:** The way you say something, more than the actual words used, reveal the intent of the message. The voice quality, intonation, pitch, stress, emotion, tone and style of speaking, communicates approval, interest or the lack of it. Research estimates that tone of the voice accounts for 38% of all communications.
- **Aesthetic communication:** Art forms such as dancing, painting. Sculptor, music are also means of communication. They distinctly convey the ideas and thoughts of the artist.
- **Appearance:** Appearance is usually the first thing noticed about a person. A well dressed and groomed person is presumed to be organized and methodical, whereas a sloppy or shabby person fails to make a favourable impression. Therefore, dressing appropriately in all formal interactions is emphasized.

The dress code in office is generally formal. It constitutes of formal suits, trousers with plain white or light coloured shirts and leather shoes. Bright colours, jeans, T-shirts, especially with slogans and other informal wear are frowned upon. For women formal two-piece trouser or skirt sets or formal ethnic wear like sarees, is permissible.

- **Symbols** such as religious, status, or ego-building symbols.
3. **Visual communication:** Visual communication through visual aids such as signs, typography, drawing, graphic design, illustration, color and other electronic resources usually reinforces written communication. Sometimes, it may replace written communication altogether. Visual communication is powerful medium. It is the reason that the print and audio-visual media makes effective use of visuals to convey their message. Visuals like graphs, pie charts and other diagrammatic presentations convey clearly and concisely a great deal of information. They are essential part of official presentations these days.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Principles of Communication:

Lack of effective communication renders an organisation handicapped. So to have effective communication certain principles are to be followed. They are as follows:

1. Clarity:

The principle of clarity means the communicator should use such a language which is easy to understand. The message must be understood by the receiver. The words used should be simple and

unambiguous. The language should not create any confusion or misunderstanding. Language is the medium of communication; hence it should be clear and understandable.

2. Adequacy and Consistency:

The communicator must carefully take into account that the information to be communicated should be complete and adequate in all respect. Inadequate and incomplete message creates confusion and delays the action to be taken. The adequate information must be consistent with the organizational objectives, plans, policies and procedures. The message which is inconsistent may play havoc and distort the corporate interests.

3. Integration:

The principle of integration portrays that through communication the efforts of human resources of the organisation should be integrated towards achievement of corporate objectives. The very aim of communication is to achieve the set target. The communication should aim at coordinating the activities of the people at work to attain the corporate goals.

4. Economy:

The unnecessary use of communication system will add to cost. The system of communication must be used efficiently, timely i.e. at the appropriate time and when it is necessary. The economy in use of communication system can be achieved in this way.

5. Feedback:

The purpose of communication will be defeated if feedback is not taken from the receiver. The confirmation of the receipt of the message in its right perspective from its receiver fulfills the object of communication. The feedback is essential only in case of written communication and messages sent through messengers. In case of oral type of communication the feedback is immediately known.

6. Need for Communication Network:

The route through which the communication passes from sender or communicator to its receiver or communicate refers to communication network. For effective communication this network is essential. The managerial effectiveness will also depend upon the availability of adequate network.

7. Attention:

The message communicated must draw the attention of the receiver staff and ensure action from him in the right perspective. The efficient, sincere and prompt manager succeeds in drawing the attention of his subordinates to what he is conveying.

It is the psychology of the people that they watch their superiors closely and then respond to their orders or instructions. Lazy and insincere superiors fail to garner support for themselves and their instructions usually are not taken seriously by their subordinates. Adhering to the above principles shall make communication effective, minimize the human relations problems and increase the overall efficiency.