

Technical Communication

Unit 1 - Exercise 2

1. Expound formal flows/channels of communication.
2. Explain informal flows/channels of communication or Grapevine Communication.
3. Grapevine communication does not have negatives only, it has positives also, elaborate.
4. Differentiate between Formal & Informal Flows / Channels of Communication.
5. Explicate various levels of communication.

1. Expound formal flows/channels of communication.

Formal Flows or Channels of communication:

The communication in which the flow of information takes a predefined channel is termed as Formal Communication. The communication follows a hierarchical chain of command which is established by the organization itself. In general, this type of communication is used exclusively at the workplace, and the employees are bound to follow it while performing their duties. The other name for formal communication is official communication. Formal flow of communication takes place through following four channels:

1. Downward Communication
2. Upward Communication
3. Horizontal or lateral communication (Peer)
4. Diagonal or Cross-wise Communication

1. Downward Communication



Downward communication refers to the communication from the higher level in managerial hierarchy to the lower ones. It is a communication from decision makers to the workers. It is a communication from seniors to their subordinate employees.

The main function of downward communication is providing direction and control. It involves the transfer of information, instruction, advice, feedback and ideas to the subordinate staff. It increases staff awareness and facilitates implementation of:

- New policies
- Guidelines
- Decisions
- Evaluations
- Appraisal of the performance of the employees.

Downward flow of communication is essential for the functioning of any organization.

Examples of Downward Communication:

A communication from General Manager of a company to the branch managers is an example of downward communication.

Other examples of downward communication include-

Annual Confidential reports

Performance appraisals

Notices

Project feed back

Announcements of company policies

Official instructions and so on...

Forms of downward communication may include-

Notes

Notices

Memos

Telephone conversations

Voice mails

Emails

Face to face conversations

Too much down ward communication may lead to reaction from subordinates and can hamper better employee - employer relationship.

2. Upward Communication:



This type of communication refers to-

- Communication from subordinates to superiors.
- Communication from employees to management.
- Communication from workers to decision makers.

Since upward communication involves the transfer of – information, request and feedback from subordinates to their seniors, it promotes better working relationships within an organization by giving the subordinate staff opportunities to share their views and ideas with their supervisors. It facilitates employee involvement in the decision making process.

Nevertheless, in any organization there has to be a balance between downward and upward communication channels.

Examples of Upward Communication:

A business report from the branch manager of a company to the managing director of the company is an example of upward communication.

Other examples of upward communication include –

- Business proposals
- Suggestion box
- Exit interviews
- Grievance redressal committees and so forth....

3. Horizontal or Lateral Communication (Peer)

It takes place between professional peer groups or people working on the same level of hierarchy.



It is the communication among workers at the same level.

The main objectives of horizontal communication are –

- Developing teamwork and Promoting group coordination within an organization.

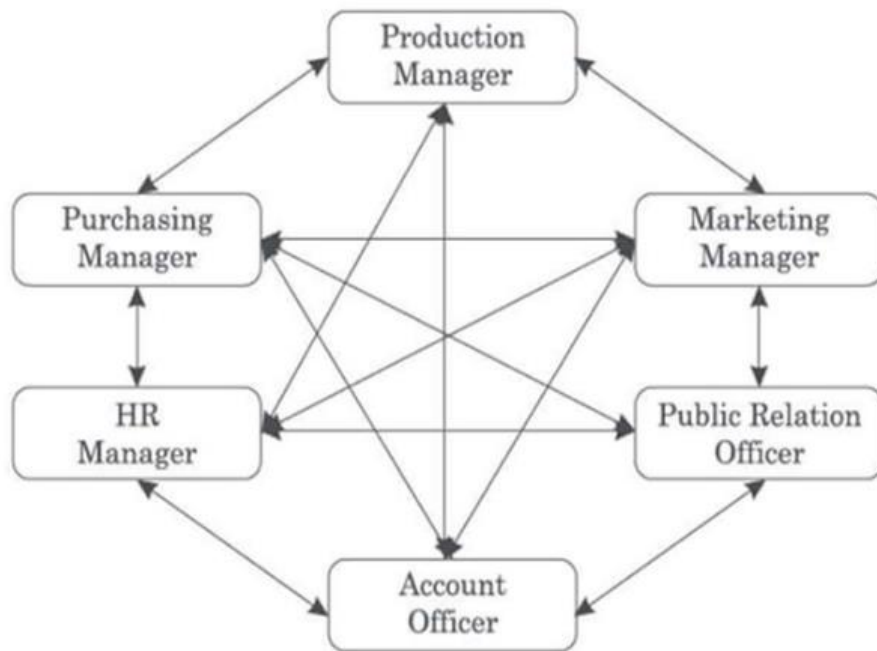
Horizontal communication is less formal and structured than both downward and upward communication and may be carried out through –

- Informal discussions
- Management gossip
- Telephone calls
- Teleconferencing
- Memos
- Routine meetings and so on....

4. Diagonal or Cross-wise Communication

It is the product of modern changes in information technology and management. It is basically a response to market needs that demand speed and efficiency.

Diagonal communication flows in all directions. As the diagonal channel occurs between people who do not have to follow rigid norms of communication protocol.



2. Explain informal flows/channels of communication or Grapevine Communication.

Informal Flows or Channels of Communication:

On the contrary, Informal communication refers to the form of communication which does not follow any pre-defined channel for the transmission of information. This type of communication moves freely in all directions, and thus, it is very quick and rapid. In any organization, this type of communication is very natural as people interact with each other about their professional life, personal life, and other matters. **The other name for informal communication is grapevine.**

Example: Sharing of feelings, casual discussion, gossips, etc.

Informal Channel of Communication: Grapevine

What do you mean by Grapevine?

In the context of an organization's communication network grapevine may be described as, "An informal system of information flow, like the far stretching branches of a grapevine, this system is very complex, uncontrollable and unpredictable.

'It feeds on rumour and gossip'.

A clever professional / manager knows how to use it for the betterment of the organization.

It is not unorganized communication, which happens automatically without any instructions or efforts by the authorities.

Informal Communication also known as Grapevine takes place during:

- Tea time gossips
- Casual gatherings
- Lunch time meetings.

Grapevine may be helpful in:

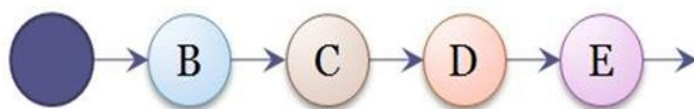
- Positive Group building.
- As a safety valve for pent up emotions.
- Building up organizational solidarity and harmony.

Grapevine (Informal communication) takes place through following channels:

1. Single Strand Chain
2. Cluster Chain
3. Probability Chain
4. Gossip Chain

1. Single Strand Chain:

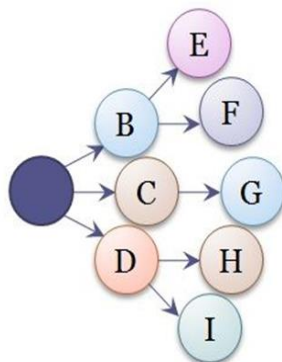
The communication in which one person tells something to another, who shares it with some other person and the process goes on.



Single Strand Chain

2. Cluster Chain:

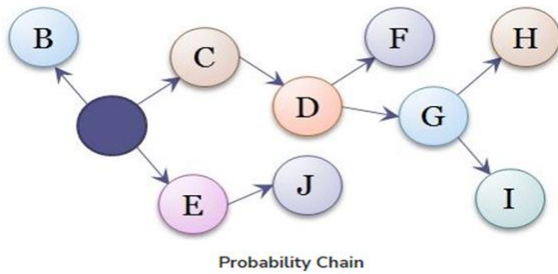
The communication in which one person tells something to some of its most trusted people, and then they share it with their trustworthy friends and the communication continues.



Cluster Chain

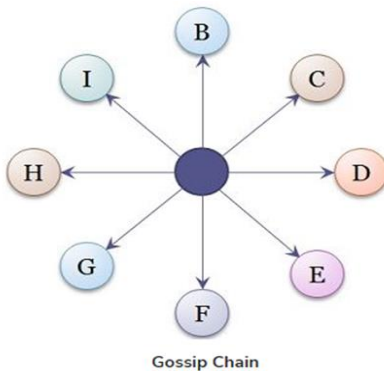
3. Probability Chain:

The communication happens when a person randomly chooses some persons to pass on some information which is of little interest but not important. Those people further share the information with other people and information flow continues.



4. Gossip Chain:

The communication starts when a person tells something to a group of people, and then they pass on the information to some more people and in this way the information is passed on to everyone.



3. Grapevine communication does not have negatives only, it has positives also, elaborate.

Grapevine communication is a type of informal communication that takes place within an organization. It is the sharing of information and rumours by employees, without the involvement of management.

This type of communication can take many forms, such as face-to-face conversation, written notes, or even through social media channels.

It can happen in any organization and is most prevalent in organizations that are larger. The grapevine is often seen as a way for employees to communicate with each other about important topics, such as changes in company policy or rumours about upcoming layoffs.

Positive effects of grapevine communication

Although this type of communication is given a bad reputation in the eyes of society, there are some definite positives associated with it. Let's go through the six main positive effects of grapevine communication in the workplace.

1. Messages can be sent around the firm rapidly
2. It can improve employees' understanding of the company's culture
3. It can build a sense of community among employees
4. It gives employees an outlet for their pent-up emotions
5. Feedback can be received quickly
6. Grapevine communication improves team's confidence

1. Messages can be sent around the firm rapidly:

As soon as employees get a sniff of a certain piece of confidential information, they are then likely to pass this information on through the grapevine — by telling a fellow employee who they are close with.

This employee then tells another employee who they are close with, and the message travels rapidly along the grapevine until all employees have an idea of what has been said.

This can make grapevine communication significantly faster and more efficient than official channels, such as memos or emails. This improved flow of information can lead to better decision-making and a more efficient workplace.

2. It can improve employees' understanding of the company's culture:

The grapevine is often used as a way for employees to find out information about the company's culture, such as what the dress code is, what the social activities are like and what the boss is really like.

This sort of information is difficult to convey formally as it can only be learned from those who are of a similar level to you. It is unlikely a company-wide email is being sent out over how nice your boss is!

This understanding can help employees feel more comfortable in their work environment and improve their job satisfaction.

3. It can build a sense of community among employees:

The grapevine can help employees feel more connected to their colleagues and the company as a whole.

By sharing informal information with one another, a close bond is formed between the employees. This can improve cohesiveness and lead them to work much more efficiently as a team.

Therefore this sense of community can lead to improved job satisfaction and motivation.

4. It gives employees an outlet for their pent-up emotions

Employees who feel like they can't express their emotions at work can turn to the grapevine as a way to vent their frustrations. This can be a positive thing, as it allows employees to release their

pent-up emotions and avoid bottling them up. This can lead to a more positive work environment overall.

Talking to your co-workers about issues can also make employees feel less isolated, as they feel there are others who will understand their situation.

5. Feedback can be received quickly

When there is an issue with a project or task, employees can quickly spread the word through the grapevine and get feedback from their colleagues.

This feedback can help employees improve their performance and avoid making the same mistakes in the future.

6. Grapevine communication improves team's confidence:

Grapevine communication can be used to your team's advantage by sharing information that builds confidence within the group.

When people feel confident, they tend to work harder and smarter. They also become more engaged with their work and are less likely to experience anxiety or stress.

This is where grapevine communication comes in — by sharing positive information about your team's work, you can help to build their confidence and make them more likely to succeed.

For example: If your team has just completed a difficult project and you share this news via the grapevine, it will help to boost their confidence.

On the other hand, if you share negative information about another team's work, it could have the opposite effect and damage your team's confidence.

Therefore, it is important to be mindful of the type of information you share via grapevine communication.

The negatives of grapevine communication

Grapevine communication has been linked with a lot of workplace problems. We have listed some of the most common ones below:

1. It can lead to rumours and gossip
2. It can create an environment of fear
3. It can be used to spread negativity
4. It can lead to mistrust
5. It can be time-consuming

1. It can lead to rumours and gossip:

The main issue with grapevine communication is that it can often lead to rumors and gossip. When people communicate through this method, they are not always accurate, and this can cause problems.

If the wrong information is spread around the firm, it can cause severe harm and reputational damage to the employee associated with the information, and potentially make them feel very uncomfortable and unsafe.

This can lead to HR getting involved if the employee feels they have been done wrong.

2. It can create an environment of fear:

Another problem with grapevine communication is that it can often create an environment of fear. This is because people are constantly talking about what others are doing, and this can make people feel like they need to watch their back.

This is a negative for any company and can lead to employees leaving the company due to its toxic culture. New hires can also get a whiff of a company's environment and may choose to work elsewhere to avoid it.

3. It can be used to spread negativity:

Grapevine communication can also be used to spread negativity. This is because people are more likely to share negative information than positive information.

This can create a bad environment within the company as mostly bad information will be shared, so it is important to keep a lid on certain information to prevent it from leaking out.

4. It can lead to mistrust:

When grapevine communication is constantly happening, it can lead to mistrust. This is because people are not always sure if what they are hearing is true, and this can make it difficult to trust others.

A lack of trust between co-workers can lead to them working together in a less cohesive manner, and therefore not fulfilling their potential.

5. It can be time-consuming:

Finally, grapevine communication can be time-consuming. This is because people often spend a lot of time talking about things that may not be important.

This can distract from business activities and lead to employees not being as productive as they should be.

How can we handle grapevine communication effectively?

Now we know the positives and negatives of grapevine communication, and what actionable steps can we take to keep a handle on grapevine communication, so the negatives don't overshadow the positives.

Here are some important tips the clever manager can use at the workplace to keep a grip on grapevine communication:

- **Encourage employees to communicate with each other more often.** This can be done by setting up regular team meetings or informal get-togethers.
- **Make it a point to listen to gossip and rumours.** By doing so, you will be able to nip them in the bud before they cause any damage.
- **Be transparent with your team.** If there is something that needs to be communicated, do so in an open and clear manner.
- **Make it clear that negative rumours will not be tolerated.** Detail to your employees that spreading negativity is not a part of your company's culture and so these topics should not be spread around.

Final thoughts

When stepping foot into any company, it's evident that grapevine communication plays a big part in how news spreads around the firm.

While grapevine communication can have its negative points — like when rumours get out of hand — there are also some definite advantages to this type of informal communication.

We have discussed both the negatives and positives and given out some important tips on how to handle grapevine communication as effectively as can be.

To conclude, use grapevine communication to improve your team's confidence by spreading the good news — and do your best to keep a lid on the negative information using the pointers highlighted above.

4. Differentiate between Formal & Informal Flows / Channels of Communication.

Differentiate between Formal & Informal Flows / Channels of Communication.

Sl. No.	Attribute	Formal Communication	Informal Communication
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1	Definition	A type of verbal communication in which the interchange of information is done through the pre-defined channels is known as formal communication.	A type of verbal communication in which the interchange of information does not follow any channels i.e. the communication stretches in all directions.
2	Another Name	Formal communication is also known by the name of official communication	Informal Communication is also known by the name of grapevine.
3	Secrecy	Full secrecy is maintained	Maintenance of secrecy is not possible
4	Form	Formal communication is written	Informal communication is oral
5	Speed	Formal communication is time-consuming	Informal communication is rapid and quick.
6	Reliability	Formal communication is more reliable	Informal communication is less reliable
7	Origin	Formal communication is designed by the organization	Informal communication starts itself due to the urge of 'human to talk'
8	Evidence	Documentary evidence is always available	supporting documents are not available
9	Information Flow	Only through predefined channel	Can move freely

5. Explicate various levels of communication.

Various levels of Communication:

Human communication takes place at various levels, which are as following:

- 1) Extra-personal
- 2) Intra-personal
- 3) Inter-personal
- 4) Organizational
- 5) Mass Communication

1) Extra-personal communication:

Communication between human beings and non-human beings is known as **extra-personal communication**. For example, when your pet dog comes to you wagging its tail as soon as you return home from work, it is an example of extra-personal communication. i.e. communication between pets (dogs, monkeys, parrot) and their masters.

2) Intrapersonal Communication:

This communication takes place within the body of the individual; we know that the brain is linked to all parts of the body by an electrochemical system. For example, when you begin to feel hot, the information is sent to the brain and you may decide to turn on the cooler, responding to instructions sent from the brain to the hand.

This kind of communication pertains to thinking, which is the basis of information processing. Without such internal dialogue, you can not proceed to the further levels of communication – interpersonal, organizational and mass communication.

In fact while we are communicating with the other party internal dialogue with oneself continues concurrently – planning, weighing, considering, and processing information.

At times you motivate yourself or consciously resolve to complete a certain task.

Self motivation, self determination and the like take place at the intrapersonal level.

3) Interpersonal Communication:

Communication at this level refers to the sharing of information among people, people are in close physical proximity to each other and feedback is immediate as it is direct interaction this form of communication is advantageous because direct and immediate feedback is possible. If a doubt occurs, it can be instantly clarified.

Interaction among friends and interaction with sales executives are examples of interpersonal communication.

4) Organizational Communication:

Communication which takes place within and outside an organization at different hierarchical levels is known as organizational communication.

It is extremely necessary for the sustenance of any organization.

Since a large number of employees are involved in different activities, the need to communicate becomes greater in an organization.

With a proper networking system, communication in an organization is possible even without direct contact between employees. It can be further divided in to –

Internal Operational:

All communication that occurs in conducting work within an organization is classified as internal operational.

External operational:

The work related communication that an organization does with people outside the organization or other organization is called external operational.

Personal:

All communication in an organization that occurs without purpose as far as business is concerned is called personal communication.

5) Mass Communication:

It refers to the communication involving large number of people as audience. As the messages are meant for large audience the approach is impersonal, also it is persuasive in nature than any other form of communication.

For this type of communication we require a mediator – such as journals, books, television and newspaper which mediate such communications.

Mass Communication Types:

Mass communication is of two types- Oral & Written

Oral: Oral form of mass communication takes place through mass media and requires some equipments such as microphones and amplifiers etc.

Written: Written form of mass communication needs print or visual media.

Characteristics of Mass Communication: Mass communication has following characteristics-

- Large Reach
- Impersonal
- Persuasive
- Presence of a gatekeeper

Characteristics of Mass Communication:

a) Large Reach:

Mass media communications reach audience scattered over a wide geographical area.

b) Impersonal:

This type of communication is largely impersonal as the participants are unknown to each other, as it is meant for large audience.

c) Persuasive:

Mass communication is persuasive in nature than any other form of communication.

d) Presence of a Gatekeeper:

Mass communication needs additional persons, institutions or organizations to convey the message from sender to receiver and these additional people are known as gatekeepers in mass communication.

This gatekeeper could be a person or an organized group of persons active in transferring or sending information from the source to the target audience through mass medium. For example in a newspaper the editor decides which news makes it to the hands of the reader. The editor therefore is a gatekeeper; in the mass communication process.

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